

CONSERVATION POSTER CONTEST

2026-2027 HANDBOOK

“Soil and Water: Yours for Life”



Sponsored by:



WAKE SOIL AND WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
<u>Contest Overview</u>	3
<u>Poster Topic & Research Questions</u>	4
<u>Recommended Web Resources</u>	5
<u>Helpful Tips</u>	6
<u>Rubric</u>	7
<u>Judging & Awards</u>	8
<u>Name Card</u>	9
<u>Rules</u>	10
<u>AI Usage Policy</u>	11
<u>Form - AI Usage Policy</u>	12
<u>Standards Correlations</u>	13
<u>Background on the Poster Contest</u>	14
<u>Poster Contest Big-Picture</u>	15
<u>Last Year's Winners!</u>	16
<u>Registration & Contact</u>	17

Contest Overview

2026-2027 Theme: "Soil and Water: Yours for Life"

WHO?

3rd, 4th, and 5th graders in Wake County!

Open to all public, private, charter, and homeschool students, and clubs

WHAT?

Create an *informative* and *artistic* poster showing your connection to soil and water and how we can protect them!

WHEN?

October 9, 2026	Registration deadline
October 23, 2026	Poster submission deadline
November 4, 2026	Wake District Judging
Spring 2027	Regional & State Contests



WHY?

- ★ *Fun way for kids to combine art and science!*
- ★ *Supports NC Science and Visual Arts standards*
- ★ *Prize money for winning!*

HOW?

- 1 Teachers** - Sign your classes up through the registration form by **Oct. 9th**
- 2 Students** - Do research on the topic and create your poster using the provided resources and rules in this handbook.
- 3 Teachers** - Select the best poster from each class.

Arrange for Wake SWCD staff to pick up your posters by Friday, October 23rd. District judging will be on Nov. 4th.

Prizes!

District	Regional	State
- All submitted posters receive a ribbon - Top 10 posters in each grade level receive a certificate 1st place: \$75, 2nd place: \$50 (for each grade level)	1 st place: \$100	1 st place: \$200 2 nd place: \$100

Poster Topic & Research Questions

MAIN IDEA:

Show why healthy soil and water are important and how we can protect them.

Your poster should teach someone about soil and water conservation and answer the 3 questions research questions below. Use the provided printable study guide and web resources below to get started with research for your poster! Try to use the words in the glossary too.

Research Questions:

1

Why are healthy soil and water important and how do they affect you?

2

What are the main problems affecting soil and water health?

3

How can we protect soil and water for now and our future?



Recommended Web Resources

Use the [Printable Study Guide](#) as your main source of information, and *explore more* using the web sources below!

Articles



- [Soils4Kids.org](#)
- [Why Soil Matters - National Geographic](#)
- [Water Quality and Distribution](#)
- [The Origins of Pollution and the Reason Clean Water is Important](#)
- [Water Conservation - EPA](#)

Videos



- [Introduction to Water Quality](#)
- [Erosion and Soil](#)
- [3 Ways to Prevent Sediment Pollution](#)

Activities



- [Non-point Source Pollution Hands-on Activity](#)
- [A Drop in Your Hand: Water Stewardship](#)

Helpful Tips!

Check out this video showing ways to make a creative poster!



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NHXidLH-dBw>

Step 1:

Find the important information.

Step 2:

Take notes on the main points you want to include.

Step 3:

Group the information into sections.

Step 4:

Choose your materials.

Step 5:

Create your poster!

DOs... ✓

1. Make sure your poster answers the 3 research questions! (page 4)
2. Use the conservation vocabulary words from the study guide and show you understand them!
3. Put **effort** into making your poster **neat, colorful, and organized**. Use correct grammar and spelling.
4. Make it colorful and creative! You can use paint, colored pencil, markers, and photos you have taken. Pastels are not recommended since posters will be stacked and moved.
5. Read the rubric (page 9). Practice scoring your poster as if you were a judge! (Ask a parent or teacher to help you if needed.)
6. Fill out the name card with the help of a parent and your teacher, and glue/tape it to the **BACK** of your poster. Please **DO NOT** put your name anywhere on the front of the poster.

DON'Ts... ✗

1. Don't write so small that it's hard to read.
2. Don't add too much information that's scattered around randomly.
3. Don't put materials on that will fall off easily or get stuck/rub off on other posters.
4. Don't use characters or ideas that you didn't come up with. Judges can tell!
5. Don't let your parents or a teacher do it for you. They can help you get the materials and stay on-track with getting your poster done in time, but **YOU** must create your poster yourself!

Rubric



Below is the same rubric that the judges will use at the district, regional, and state competitions. Try scoring your poster using the rubric!

<u>Criteria</u>	<u>Points</u>
Conservation Message Message shows clear understanding of why this natural resource is important & explains how people can & should conserve this natural resource.	50 points
Visual Effectiveness Readability (use of white space, type choice, neatness); originality; effect on audience (which poster will you remember next year?)	25 points
Universal Appeal Is your poster easily understood by the general population?	10 points
Originality Entry expresses the contest theme in a fresh, inventive, or novel way of using independent thought and creative imagination, and using the unexpected to full advantage.	10 points
Hand-drawn Elements Shows good skill with original hand drawn elements.	5 points
INFRACTION 1 - Violates Copyright Student clearly copied images or text.	-5 points
INFRACTION 2 - Exceeds Size Limit Poster is any size other than 22" x 28"	-5 points
Name on Front of Poster	DISQUALIFICATION
Total:	_____ / 100 points

Judging & Awards

Wake SWCD staff will select the top 10 posters from each grade level to be judged by a panel of 5 judges from a variety of backgrounds in visual arts, soil conservation, and water quality.



The Wake SWCD Board of Supervisors will make the final selection of the 1st and 2nd place winners for each grade level using the rubric in this handbook.



(1st place winners of the Wake District contest will go to the regional competition in March 2027)



Winners of Wake District contest will be announced to teachers via email in early December.

Wake SWCD staff will visit the schools of the 1st place winners to present the cash awards and take photos with the students and their posters. Winners will be featured in Wake County newsletter and social media posts, and will be part of our Annual Awards video in December!

Prize money is
generously
donated by:

novonesis

AWARDS:

All submitted posters receive a ribbon.



The Top 10 posters in each grade level receive a certificate.



For each grade level:

1st place receives a cash prize of \$75

2nd place receives a cash prize of \$50



Name Card

Print this page, fill out the card with a parent and your teacher, then cut and glue/tape the card to the **BACK** of your poster. This is **REQUIRED** for all posters submitted to Wake SWCD.

* Note, this card is only needed for the **posters that are selected to be submitted for the Wake SWCD poster contest**, not for the class's contest. *



POSTER NAME CARD
2026-2027 "Soil and Water: Yours for Life"

Student's Name: _____ Grade: _____

Student's Address/Parents' Email, Phone: _____

Teacher's Name and Email: _____

School: _____

County: _____ District: _____

Media Permission (for parent):
I agree that images of the student and their poster, as well as the student's name, grade level, and school, may be shared on Wake County's website and social media posts to celebrate their success.
☐ Yes ☐ No



Note: All posters entered into District sponsored competition become the property of the respective District. These entities are entitled to use these posters for promotion of the Conservation District program. However, the intention is that posters will be returned by the end of the school year.

Rules

Click [here](#) to view the full official rules
from the NC Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts

1

Individual Project!

Each poster should be the work of ONE student (no group work).



2

Poster Size:

All posters must be **22" x 28"**
(standard poster size)



(new rule!)

3

2-D Materials:

Pictures or other materials may be mounted on the posters, if they won't fall off.



Mounted materials may not stick out more than 1/8 of an inch from the paper.

4

Name on Back:

Posters must have the name card taped/glued to the BACK (print out the card on page 8 and cut out).



If the student's name is on the front, it will be disqualified!!

(new rule!)

5

Don't Roll It!

Posters should be submitted flat and not rolled.



Posters must be the original work of the student.
Read the copyright section below!



What is Copyright?

Have you ever had a great idea, and someone else shared it as if they came up with it? Or copied something that you made?

They stole your idea!

Copyright is a way to protect ideas and artwork so that other people can't steal them and get false credit by claiming it was theirs.

It's important to make sure that with all of your school projects, you either **say** where you got an idea or image from, or make sure that you come up with it **yourself**.

*** For the poster contest, don't use pictures, cartoon characters, or phrases that you didn't come up with yourself. The judges will take off points if they see that you copied from someone else! ***

AI Usage Policy



The following information comes from the North Carolina Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (NCASWCD) that applies to all levels of the poster contest in the state.

"As technology develops, we realize that the use of AI is becoming a popular tool in assisting with writing essays, gathering ideas for public speaking and creating slideshows. Our NC of Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts encourage participants to show their original work when competing in our contests.

To keep our contests fair and not violate copyright rules, we are incorporating an AI usage policy to be signed by participants, their parents/guardians and teachers to certify that AI was not used in their essay, slideshow or speech.

Districts will be checking student work for the use of AI before allowing the entry to move to the area level contest."

NCASWCD AI Use Policy:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1NbrK_PeEbUX2CqszvV2QP4oyd7DuC2A/view?usp=sharing

Please have students sign the following page to acknowledge they have read and understand the NCASWCD AI Use policy. The signature page will need to be submitted to the district with the winning entries.

If you have any questions about this policy, please contact Jessica Davis at jessicam.davis@randolphcountync.gov

Form - AI Usage Policy

Print this page and provide a copy when submitting posters to Wake SWCD.



Teachers, have your students sign this AI policy as part of their contest entry process.

I have reviewed and explained the NCASWCD Education Contest AI Use policy with my students:

Teacher Signature _____

Date

School/District

I acknowledge and understand the NCASWCD Education Contest AI Use Policy

[illegible]

Standards Correlations

Below are the strongest correlations with the poster contest project, but many other standards in these subject areas could be addressed as well!

	NC Science Standards (2023)	NC Visual Arts Standards
3rd Grade	LS.3.3 Understand how environmental factors aid in the survival of plants. ESS.3.2 Understand the structures of the Earth's surface using models.	3.V.1.4 Understand characteristics of the Elements of Art, including lines, shapes, colors, textures, form, space, and value. 3.V.1.5 Understand characteristics of the Principles of Design, including repetition, movement, emphasis, contrast, balance, proportion, harmony, and unity. 3.V.2.1 Create art through a process that includes generating ideas, planning solutions, and producing original art. 3.V.3.2 Use a variety of media with refined skills. 3.CX.2.2 Understand how to use information learned in other disciplines, such as math, science, language arts, social studies, and other arts in visual arts.
4th Grade	ESS.4.2.3 Use models to explain changes in Earth's surface over time (to include slow changes of erosion and weathering, and fast changes of earthquakes, landslides, and volcanic activity). ESS.4.3 Understand changes caused by human impact on the environment.	4.V.1.5 Understand how the Principles of Design work in relation to each other. 4.V.2.2 Use ideas and imagery from North Carolina as sources for creating art 4.CX.2.2 Apply skills and concepts learned in other disciplines, such as math, science, language arts, social studies, and other arts, in the visual arts.
5th Grade	LS.5.2 Understand the interdependence of plants and animals within their ecosystem. ESS.5.1.4 Use models to explain how the sun's energy drives the processes of the water cycle (including evaporation, transpiration, condensation, precipitation).	5.V.3.1 Evaluate how to manipulate tools safely and appropriately to reach desired outcomes. 5.V.3.2 Use appropriate media for the creation of original art. 5.CX.2.2 Exemplify how information and skills learned in art can be applied in other disciplines.

Poster Contest Background



The conservation poster contest is an educational contest sponsored by the [North Carolina Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts](#) and the [Division of Soil and Water Conservation](#) (under the NC Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services). The poster contest is one of several educational contests that Soil and Water Conservation Districts across North Carolina offer. Districts have the option to offer the essay, computer designed slideshow, and public speaking contests, which all follow the conservation theme for that year.

The themes follow a 5-year rotation:

2025-2026 "We All Live in a Watershed"

2026-2027 "Soil and Water...Yours for Life"

2027-2028 "Water...the Cycle of Life"

2028-2029 "The Living Soil"

2029-2030 "Wetlands are Wonderful"

The annual Conservation Poster Contest in Wake County has a long history – it's been going since the 1980s! The contest has a lasting impact on the students who participate; many now-adults remember fondly how hard they worked on their poster and have a sense of pride in it, even if they didn't win. It's a great way for students to do a deep dive into a topic and make their learning their own!



Retired Wake SWCD Environmental Educator Sheila Jones with a poster contest winner.

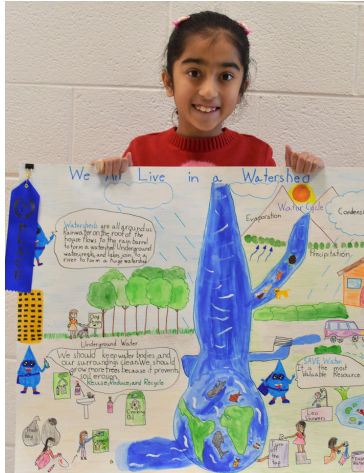
(Read from bottom to top)



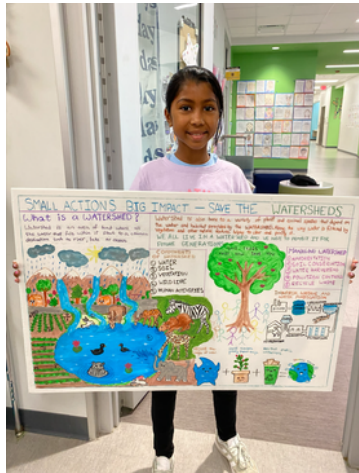
Last Year's Winners!

1st and 2nd place winners from the 2025-2026 Conservation Poster Contest,
"We All Live in a Watershed"

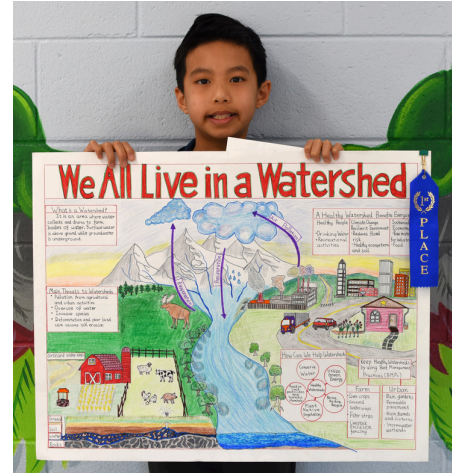
1st Place Winners



3rd Grade
Aarshvi Undale,
Morrisville Elementary

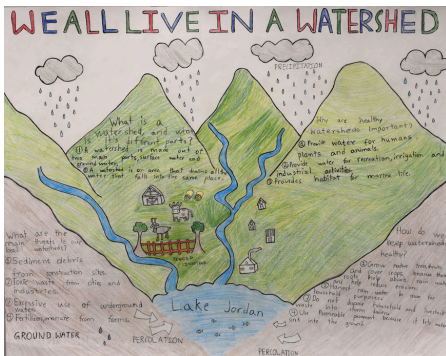


4th Grade
Ridhi Bevara,
Apex Friendship Elementary

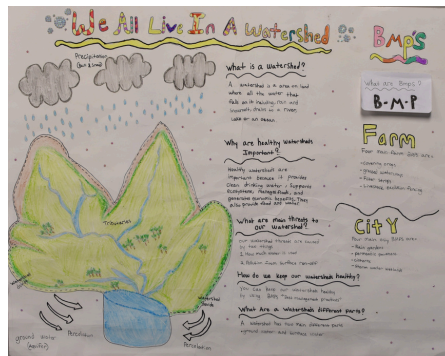


5th Grade
Edward Ng,
Green Hope Elementary

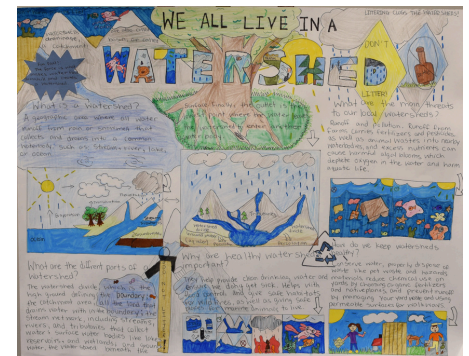
2nd Place Winners



3rd Grade
Aarav Vuppala,
Apex Friendship Elementary



4th Grade
Eleanor Church,
Abbotts Creek Elementary



5th Grade
Mira Tan,
Apex Friendship Elementary

REGISTRATION & CONTACT

Ready to sign your class up?
Fill out the registration form linked here:

Wake SWCD 2026-2027 Poster Contest

Check our website for updates!
wake.gov/postercontest



CONTACT

If you have any questions, please reach out to:

Leah Purvis | Environmental Educator
Wake Soil and Water Conservation District

✉ leah.purvis@wake.gov ☎ (919) 250-1065