



Purpose

CDI partners with the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) and local Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) to offer the 2026 Conservation Poster Contest. Any child that resides in Iowa, is a public, private or home school student in Kindergarten through 12th grade with a participating SWCD can participate. Visit <https://costshare.iowaagriculture.gov/districts> and on the map, select the county in which your school is located to find your SWCD Office.

What's new?!

- ✦ This year's new Poster Contest Theme is **"Soil. Where It All Begins"**.
- ✦ Please note the 2026 Deadlines!

2026 Application Process & Deadlines

- ✦ **December 2026:** Participating SWCD's get the word out about the 2026 Conservation Poster Contest.
- ✦ **Friday, May 1, 2026:** Applicants must submit their poster accompanied by the Poster Contest Entry Form to the SWCD office in the county which their school is located. Entry forms must be legible and complete, including a guardian/parental signature and their SWCDs information or the poster cannot be considered. Make sure a copy is securely attached to the back of the submitted poster.
- ✦ **Friday, June 26, 2026:** The local SWCD chooses one county winner from each of the five grade categories to ELECTRONICALLY submit to their CDI Regional Director via email with a Photo of Each Winning Poster and their Poster Contest Entry Form. When sending the electronic poster submissions to your regional director, we ask districts to please save the posters as "age category/First Name/Last Name" (Example: "2-3_John Doe") so we may correctly identify the artist of each poster.
- ✦ **Friday July 24, 2026:** CDI Regional Directors will have chosen 45 winners to move on for state consideration, there is one regional winner from each of the 9 regions in each of the 5 categories. CDI Regional Directors will submit to CDI via email a Photo of Each Winning Poster and their Poster Contest Entry Form.
- ✦ **August 23, 2026:** CDI Regional Directors & Alternates will choose one state winner from each of the five categories from those 45 regional winners.
- ✦ **September/October 2026:** CDI will announce winners and send awards to local SWCD offices who will in turn notify the student, school & local media.
- ✦ **September/October 2026:** The five state winning posters will be sent to the national poster contest for consideration for a national award and displayed at the NACD Annual Meeting.



- ✦ **NO POSTERS WILL BE CONSIDERED IF SUBMITTED AFTER THESE DEADLINES.**

Awards

- ✦ Local SWCD's may finance an award to winners at the county level.
- ✦ The five winners in each grade category within each of the nine regions will receive a **\$35** cash award.
- ✦ Each of the five first place state winners will receive **\$50** cash award rather than \$35. They will then be sent to the national poster contest for consideration for a national award.

Rules & Selection Criteria for Hand Drawn Poster Contest

- ✦ Posters must reflect and include the title of this year's contest theme **"Soil. Where It All Begins"** on the poster. Don't use any other phrase; this is the only title eligible for the national poster contest.
- ✦ The following **rules** apply. Posters must be made on regular poster paper. The size of the poster can range from 8.5x11 inches up to 22x28 inches. Mediums including paint, crayons, colored pencils, charcoal, stickers, magic markers, paper, or whatever inspires the students can be used. No three-dimensional effects are allowed.
- ✦ Iowa children who participate in the poster contest are divided into **five divisions**:
- ✦ Division 1 - Grades K and 1
- ✦ Division 2 - Grades 2 and 3
- ✦ Division 3 - Grades 4 through 6
- ✦ Division 4 - Grades 7 through 9
- ✦ Division 5 - Grades 10 through 12
- ✦ Posters are judged based on the following **criteria**:
 - ☐ 50% for Conservation Message
 - ☐ 30% for Visual Effectiveness
 - ☐ 10% for Originality
 - ☐ 10% for Universal Appeal

Rules & Selection Criteria for Digital Poster Contest

- ✦ Posters must reflect and include the title of this year's contest theme **"Soil. Where It All Begins"** on the poster. Don't use any other phrase; this is the only title eligible for the national poster contest.
- ✦ Poster can be horizontal or vertical, measuring 8.5" x 11"
- ✦ *Media*: Any mixed media suitable for reproduction as a poster, such as Canva, PicMonkey, Google Slides, Photoshop, InDesign, etc., is allowed. Digital posters must be original art and shall not include any copyrighted, trademarked or branded marks, images or phrases besides the NACD 2022 themed logo, if desired.
- ✦ *Submission format*: Digital design should be submitted as a **300 dpi JPEG or PNG**.
- ✦ Posters are judged based on the following **criteria**:
 - ☐ 50% for Conservation Message
 - ☐ 30% for Visual Effectiveness
 - ☐ 10% for Originality
 - ☐ 10% for Universal Appeal

Resources

✦ Please utilize the **downloads** on the **CDI website**, [CDI Poster Contest](#) and visit the **NACD website**, [NACD Stewardship and Education Materials](#) to fully understand the Conservation Poster Contest guidelines and for great **education and poster creation resources!**