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 2025:** Participating SWCDs 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 where 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 for each of the five grade categories in the hand-drawn contest and for each of the two grade categories in the digital contest to ELECTRONICALLY submit to their CDI Regional Director via email. A photo of each winning poster and its corresponding poster contest entry form are required for submission. When sending the electronic poster submissions to your regional director, we ask that districts please save the posters as: CategoryCode_Grade_First Name Last Name (Example: "HD_2-3_John Doe" or "Digital_7-9_John Doe") so we may correctly identify the artist of each poster.

Category Codes
Digital Poster Contest (**Digital**)
Hand Drawn Poster Contest (**HD**)

✦ **Friday, July 24, 2026:** CDI Regional Directors will choose 45 hand-drawn and 18 digital regional poster winners to move on for state consideration. From each of the nine regions, five hand-drawn and two digital poster contest winners will be selected (one for each grade category in each region)**.** CDI Regional Directors will submit, via email, a Photo of Each Winning Poster and their poster contest entry form to CDI.

✦ **August 24, 2026:** CDI Regional Directors & Alternates will choose one state winner from each of the grade categories for both poster contests. Five state winners from those 45 regional winners in the hand-drawn poster contest and two state winners from those 18 regional winners in the digital poster contest.

✦ **September/October 2026:** CDI will announce winners and send awards to local SWCD offices, who will, in turn, notify the students, the school & local media.

✦ **September/October 2026:** The seven state-winning posters will be sent to the national poster contest for consideration of a national award and will be displayed at the NACD Annual Meeting.

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

Awards
- ✦ Local SWCDs may finance awards for winners at the county level.
- ✦ Regional poster contest winners (posters that were selected by CDI Regional Directors to move on to state consideration) who were not selected as state winners in their category will receive a **$35** cash award.
- ✦ Each of the first-place state winners (five for hand-drawn and two for digital) will receive a $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 poster size can range from 8.5x11 inches 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 Hand-Drawn 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
- ✦ The Digital Poster Contest is open to **7th to 12th-grade students.**
- ✦ 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 2026 themed logo, if desired.
- ✦ *Submission format:* Digital design should be submitted as a **300 dpi JPEG or PNG.**
- ✦ Iowa children who participate in the Digital Poster Contest are divided into **two grade divisions:**
- ✦ Grades 7 through 9
- ✦ Grandes 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

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**!