Conservation Districts of Iowa
Website: cdiowa.org
Phone: (515) 289-8300
Email: admin@cdiowa.org

2027 Iowa Conservation Poster Contest Rules

Purpose

CDI partners with the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) and local Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) to offer the 2027 Iowa Conservation Poster Contest. The NACD Stewardship and Education Committee has developed a five-year rotation for stewardship topics – water, soils, habitat, forestry, and a topic of interest – and determines them every year.

Each year, the winning posters highlight the work of conservation districts and their state conservation associations, auxiliaries, and agencies in protecting and enhancing natural resources. These events involve our youth in conservation outreach initiatives while giving them an opportunity to learn and express their creativity. Any child who resides in Iowa and is a public, private, or homeschool student in K-12th grade with a participating SWCD can participate. Visit https://costshare.iowaagriculture.gov/districts and 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 "**From Source to Sea. Every Drop Has a Journey.**"

Every drop of water has a journey. Rain falling in a forest or on a farm may soak into the soil, flow into a stream, or travel through rivers towards the ocean. Along the way, water connects people, agriculture, wildlife, and communities.

Everyone lives in a watershed, and what happens upstream can affect water quality downstream. Healthy soils, forests, grasslands, and wetlands help absorb rainfall, reduce erosion, and protect water. Conservation districts work with landowners, schools, and communities to care for the connected natural resources.

Please note the 2027 deadlines!

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2027 Application Process & Deadlines

Submissions

- **December 2026**: Participating SWCDs get the word out about the 2027 Conservation Poster Contest
- **Friday, April 30, 2027**: Applicants must submit their poster, accompanied by a 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 SWCD's information; otherwise, the poster cannot be considered. Make sure a copy is securely attached to the back of the submitted poster.

Deliberation

- **Friday, June 25, 2027**: The local SWCD chooses one district winner for each grade division in any of the poster contests submitted to their district and submits them ELECTRONICALLY to their CDI Regional Director via email. A photo of each winner's 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 their posters as: CategoryCode_Grade_First Name Last Name (example: "HD_2-3_John Doe" or "Digital_7-9_Jane Doe") so we may correctly identify the artist of each poster.

Category Codes

Digital (Digital Poster Contest)

HD (Hand Drawn Poster Contest)

Braille (Braille Poster Contest)

Assist (Additional Assist Poster Contest)

- **Friday, July 30, 2027**: CDI Regional Directors will choose regional poster winners to move forward for state consideration. The number of regional winners depends on the number of district submissions in each grade division and contest type. For each of the nine regions, Regional Directors can choose up to this number of winners:
  - Five hand-drawn winners
  - Two digital winners
  - Five braille winners
  - Five additional assist winners

  CDI Regional Directors will submit, via email, a photo of each winning poster and their poster contest entry form to CDI.

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Please see the Rules & Selection Criteria section for more information on grade divisions for each contest type.

- **Wednesday, August 25, 2027**: CDI Regional Directors & Alternates will choose one state winner from each grade division for all poster contest types submitted at the 2027 CDI Annual Conference.

Announcements

- **Friday, September 3, 2027**: CDI will announce winners to local SWCD offices, who will, in turn, notify the students, the schools, and local news.
- **Friday, September 24, 2027**: CDI will send posters to local SWCD offices. The state-winning poster 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 district 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 division will receive a **$35** cash award via mail.
- Each of the first-place state winners will receive a **$50** cash award via mail rather than $35. They will then be sent to the national poster contest for consideration for a national award.

Rules & Selection Criteria

All posters are judged based on the following criteria:

- ☐ 50% for Conservation Message
- ☐ 30% for Visual Effectiveness
- ☐ 10% for Originality
- ☐ 10% for Universal Appeal

Hand-Drawn Poster Contest

- The hand-drawn poster contest is open to **all students in K-12**.
- Posters must reflect and include the title of this year's contest theme, "**From Source to Sea. Every Drop Has a Journey,**" on the poster. All other phrases will not be considered, per the national poster contest rules.

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- *Size:* Posters must be made on regular poster paper. The poster size can range from 8.5 x 11 inches to 22 x 28 inches.
- *Media:* Includes paint, crayons, colored pencils, charcoal, stickers, magic markers, paper, or whatever inspires the students. No three-dimensional effects are allowed.
- *Originality:* Posters must be **created by an individual student** – team projects are not permitted.
- Iowa children who participate in the hand-drawn poster contest are divided into **five grade 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

Additional Assist Poster Contest

- The additional assist poster contest is open to **all students in K-12** who require additional assistance in completing a poster for the contest**.** While the hand-drawn poster contest encourages individual creation, the additional assist poster contest celebrates the abilities of all participants and **allows for adult assistance.**
- Posters must reflect and include the title of this year's contest theme, "**From Source to Sea. Every Drop Has a Journey,**" on the poster. All other phrases will not be considered, per the national poster contest rules.
- *Size:* Posters must be made on regular poster paper. The poster size can range from 8.5 x 11 inches to 22 x 28 inches.
- *Media:* Includes paint, crayons, colored pencils, charcoal, stickers, magic markers, paper, or whatever inspires the students. No three-dimensional effects are allowed.
- *Originality:* Posters must be created by an individual student. While an adult assistant is allowed in this category, the entry must reflect the contestant's original creation and may not be traced from photographs or other artists' works.
- Iowa children who participate in the additional assist poster contest are divided into **five grade 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

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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, "**From Source to Sea. Every Drop Has a Journey,**" on the poster. All other phrases will not be considered, per the national poster contest rules.
- *Size:* Posters can be horizontal or vertical, measuring 8.5 x 11 inches.
- *Media:* Any mixed media suitable for reproduction as a poster, such as Canva, PicMonkey, Google Slides, Photoshop, InDesign, etc., is allowed.
- *Originality:* **Digital posters must be original art** and shall not include trademarked or branded marks, images, or phrases, besides the NACD-themed logo, if desired. **Fully AI-generated posters are not eligible for the Iowa Conservation Poster Contest.**
- *Submission format:* Digital designs should be submitted as a **300 dpi JPEG or PNG.**
- Iowa students who participate in the digital poster contest are divided into **two grade divisions:**
    - Division 1 – Grades 7 through 9
    - Division 2 – Grades 10 through 12

Braille Poster Contest

- The Braille poster contest is open to **all students in K-12** who are blind or have low vision and require Braille or tactile assistance to participate.
- Participants can create Braille posters in a variety of ways:
    - By using imagination to draw, add tactile elements, fabrics, or other mixed media, and then incorporating Braille labeling with a Braille embosser or similar tools.
    - By using a Brailler (a Braille typewriter) to create Braille elements and then adding color or additional drawings.
- *Size:* Braille posters can be any size that accommodates the student's needs.
- *Media:* Any media may be used for tactile elements, including Braille, raised textures, and other materials.
- Iowa children who participate in the Braille poster contest are divided into **five grade 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

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Resources

Please use the downloads on the poster contest page on the CDI website (https://cdiowa.org/get-involved/poster-contest/) and visit the NACD website (https://www.nacdnet.org/contests/) to view the NACD Stewardship and Education Materials, fully understand the Conservation Poster Contest guidelines, and access great education and poster-creation resources.