



TEACHER INFORMATION SHEET

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2027 CONSERVATION POSTER CONTEST

Why This Matters

We all live in a watershed, even if we rarely think about it. Rain that falls on a farm field, backyard, road, or parking lot keeps moving, and as it moves across and through the landscape, it connects every part of Manitowoc County—from our soil and groundwater to streams, lakes, farms, communities, and ultimately Lake Michigan. Where a drop falls, how it moves, and what it encounters along the way all matter. Learning how land and water connect helps us understand how our everyday landscape is part of a much bigger system.

About the Poster Contest



National theme: "From Source to Sea. Every Drop Has A Journey."



This theme must be written on the front of each poster.



Students create original artwork; computer-generated posters will not be accepted.



Poster Size: 11" x 17"



Posters advance through local/county, area, state, and national levels.



Conservation message counts most in judging.

Quick Facts



Who Can Participate?

Grades K-12 (Public, Private, Home School)
Individuals only. No Team Projects!



Local Deadline

Friday, December 9, 2026



Where to Submit

Manitowoc County Soil & Water Dept.
4319 Expo Drive, Manitowoc



Judging Criteria

Conservation Message 50%
Visual Effectiveness 30%
Originality 10%
Universal Appeal 10%



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Easy Ways to Participate

Choose the level that works for your classroom!



QUICK

- ✓ Show the intro video
- ✓ Share contest information

A simple way to get involved.



STANDARD

- ✓ Intro video
- ✓ Follow Your Drop activity
- ✓ Students create posters

Build understanding and creativity.



FULL

- ✓ Complete lesson(s)
- ✓ Local watershed activity
- ✓ Students create posters

A deeper dive into our local water story.

What We Can Provide

Resources to support you!

- Find the Intro Video & Resources here:
<https://manitowocountywi.gov/departments/soil-and-water-conservation/education/>
- Our watershed model and rainfall simulators are available for check out! Contact Us! Call: 920-683-4183 email: tarawachowski@manitowocountywi.gov

Suggested Next Steps

- 1 Introduce the idea of a watershed.
- 2 Show the intro video.
- 3 Choose a participation level.
- 4 Give students time to brainstorm and create.
- 5 Submit posters by the local deadline.

Help your students explore where water goes after it falls. Our ready-to-use lessons, videos, and activities make it easy to bring the theme to life in your classroom.



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Follow Your Drop

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

From Source to Sea.
Every Drop Has a Journey.



Time

15 minutes



Grades

K-12 (adaptable)



Materials

Print scenario cards double sided (one per group), paper, pencils/markers



Big Idea

Every drop of rain has a destination. As it moves across the landscape, it connects our communities, streams, lakes, and Lake Michigan. What we do on the land can affect where the water goes and how clean it stays.



Learning Goals

- Understand what a watershed is.
- Explore how water moves through the landscape.
- Identify common sources of runoff pollution.
- Discoverer how simple choices can help protect water.
- Connect their ideas to the conservation poster theme.



Investigating Question

Where does a raindrop go after it lands?

Think
Pair
Share!

1

Start the Conversation (2 minutes)

Ask: "When rain hits the ground, where does it go?"

Let students share ideas. Introduce the big idea that water can soak into the ground, move across the surface, and enter ditches, streams, lakes, or groundwater — and we all live in a watershed!

2

Choose a Starting Point (3 minutes)

Give each group a scenario card:

- Farm field
- Backyard
- Parking lot
- Forest
- Wetland
- Roadside ditch



3

Map the Journey (5 minutes)

On their paper, have students draw or write the path their drop might take. Consider:

- Where does it go next?
- What does it encounter or pick up?
- Where might it eventually end up?

4

Make a Change (3 minutes)

Ask: "What could help protect the water along the way?"

Have students add one conservation idea and draw how it changes the drop's journey.

5

Connect to the Poster (2 minutes)

Ask: "What part of your drop's journey would make the most important story to show on a poster?"

Encourage students to use what they learned to inspire their poster for the 2027 theme:



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Follow Your Drop Scenario Cards

Cut apart and give one
card to each group.

Explore. Discuss. Make a Difference!

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Front

Farm Field



Your drop lands on a farm field.

Think about:



- Does the water soak in or run off?
- What might it pick up—soil, fertilizer, or manure?
- Where could it go next—groundwater, ditch, stream, or lake?



Add one change that could help protect the water.

Backyard



Your drop lands in a backyard.

Think about:



- Does it land on grass, garden, or driveway?
- What might it pick up—pet waste, fertilizer, or leaves?
- Where could it go next—soil, storm drain, ditch, or creek?



Add one change that could help protect the water.

Parking Lot



Your drop lands on a parking lot.

Think about:

- Does the water soak in or stay on the pavement?
- What might it pick up—oil, salt, litter, or dirt?
- Where could it go next—storm drain, ditch, stream, or lake?



Add one change that could help protect the water.



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Follow Your Drop Scenario Cards

Print Double Sided, Cut Apart & give a card to each group!
Explore. Discuss. Make a Difference!

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Back

Farm Field



CLUES

Healthy soil and growing plants can help water soak into the ground. Bare or compacted soil (soil pressed tightly together) may allow more runoff (water & what it picks up, flowing over land)



Need an idea?

Possible ways to protect water:

- Keep plants growing on the soil
- Slow water before it leaves the field
- Keep soil from washing away
- Leave grassy areas near ditches or streams

Backyard



CLUES

Grass, trees, gardens, and native plants can help slow and absorb rainwater. Hard surfaces send more water downhill.



Need an idea?

Possible ways to protect water:

- Plant flowers, shrubs, or trees
- Let rain soak into grass or gardens
- Pick up pet waste
- Keep leaves and grass out of the street

Parking Lot



CLUES

Pavement does not absorb much water, so rain usually runs toward drains, ditches, or low areas.



Need an idea?

Possible ways to protect water:

- Add planted areas where rain can soak in
- Keep trash out of storm drains
- Use less salt in winter
- Slow the water before it reaches a drain



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Front

Forest



Your drop lands in a forest.

Think about:



- Does the water soak into leaves and soil?
- What helps slow it down—plants, roots, or fallen leaves?
- Where could it go next—groundwater, creek, or stream?



Add one change that could help protect the water.

Wetland



Your drop lands in a wetland.

Think about:



- Does the wetland hold and slow the water?
- What might the wetland filter out?
- Where could the water go next—stream, lake, or groundwater?



Add one change that could help protect the water.

Roadside Ditch



Your drop lands in a roadside ditch.

Think about:



- Does the ditch carry water quickly after a rain?
- What might it pick up—grass clippings, sediment, salt, or litter?
- Where could it go next—culvert, creek, river, or lake?



Add one change that could help protect the water.



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Forest

Leaves, roots, and soil help slow water and allow more of it to soak in



Need an idea?

Possible ways to protect water:

- Protect trees and plants
- Keep the ground covered with leaves and plants
- Keep soil from washing into streams
- Avoid damaging wet or muddy areas

CLUES



Wetland

Wetlands act like sponges. They can hold water, slow it down, and help filter out some sediment and pollutants.



Need an idea?

Possible ways to protect water:

- Protect the wetland
- Keep plants growing around it
- Keep dirt and trash out
- Let the wetland hold and slow water

CLUES



Roadside Ditch

Ditches move water away from roads, often toward culverts, streams, or other waterways.



Need an idea?

Possible ways to protect water:

- Keep grass growing in the ditch
- Cover bare soil
- Keep trash and yard waste out
- Slow water before it reaches a stream

CLUES



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