














2026 ACTIVITIES









Students are scheduled to attend 6 classroom activities, a stage show and lunch. Each session is 25 minutes. Activities are held in three campus buildings and outdoors.

 Groundwater Quality  Groundwater Quantity  Watersheds  Soil & Grasslands  Wildlife & Ecosystems  Water Cycle  Energy & Water  Human Health





CCC = Central Community College

-  **Aquifers and You! How We Impact Water Quality (CCC 210)** *DWEE Department of Water, Energy & Environment* Create your own topographic terrarium to learn how different land formations impact rainfall, water tables and surface pollution.
-  **Critter Cube Count (CCC 522)** *Grand Island Izaak Walton League* Role dice to identify macroinvertebrates, then use math to calculate the health of a stream and how it affects groundwater.
-  **Goopy Garbage (CCC 311)** *Grand Island Area Clean Community System* Build a mini landfill and find out if it can keep goopy pollution from leaking into groundwater.
-  **Groundwater: It's In What You Drink (CCC 101)** *Ensign Beverage, Hastings* We'll take a virtual tour of a kombucha brewing facility and see the tanks, ingredients, and finished drinks while learning how groundwater is part of everything we drink.
-  **Hidden Household Hazards (CCC 102)** *Meridian Enrichment Program* Learn how household cleaners can affect groundwater and explore safer alternatives at hands-on stations.
-  **Life in a Lake (CCC 312)** *UNL Extension - Adams County* Learn about the organisms that live in lakes and learn why they are important to the health of the water environment.
-  **NRCS Awesome Aquifer (CCC 405)** *NRCS Natural Resources Conservation Service* Learn about the location, size, and function of the High Plains Aquifer by constructing your own model.
-  **Rock & Roll: Geology and My Water (CCC 261)** *Central Platte NRD* Using candy bars and a straw, we'll drill a core sample and learn how historical geological events affect the water available to us.
-  **Soil & the Water Cycle (CCC 211)** *NRCS Natural Resources Conservation Service* Students will see how water and soil interact with a tabletop rainfall simulation, and then get their hands dirty making their own soil profile cards as they learn about soil!
-  **Test the Mystery Water for Water Quality (CCC 262)** *Central Platte NRD* Help a community solve a mystery by testing water samples for nitrate and turbidity to see if their water is safe.
-  **The Great Food Journey: Where Every Bite Begins with a Drop (CCC 454)** *UNL- Food and Science Technology* We'll use an interactive train model display to follow the journey of food from the farm to your table.
-  **The Incredible Journey (CCC 456)** *EA Engineering, Science and Technology* Roll dice to simulate the movement water within the water cycle.
-  **The Raptor Connection (CCC 355 Cafeteria)** *Raptor Conservation Alliance* See live raptors and learn why all wildlife depends on groundwater for survival.













CCC = Central Community College

-  **USGS Awesome Aquifers (Outside - CCC Entrance)** *U.S. Geological Survey* Using a model of an aquifer, students will mimic groundwater responses to various inputs.
-  **Visualizing Urban Stormwater Pollution (CCC 212)** *Nebraska H2O-Grand Island and Kearney* See how pollution moves through a watershed and learn how our everyday actions can impact water quality.
-  **Wastewater Jeopardy (CCC 524)** *Nebraska Water Environment Association* Team up and play a water-themed Jeopardy game while answering fun questions about water and wastewater.
-  **Water Explorers: The Journey Through Soils (CCC 555)** *Central Community College Environmental Sustainability* Become soil particles to discover how water moves through soil, then use trial and error to figure out how to clean "dirty" water.
-  **Water Trailer: Connected Waters (Outside CCC 405)** *Dawson County Extension* Use a stream table model to explore how surface water and groundwater are connected and why they are important to Nebraska agriculture.
-  **We All Live in a Watershed (CCC 566)** *Lower Loup NRD* Scenario: You have \$5 million to develop riverside land however you want. See how your choices can impact the watershed.
-  **Weather & Water Feud (CCC 525)** *National Weather Service* Play an interactive game while answering fun questions about weather & hydrology.
-  **Where Water Wanders (CCC 552)** *UNL Extension Hall County 4-H* Become a water molecule in the water cycle by rolling a die to see where you travel next, while creating your own water cycle story bracelet.

CHTS = Center for Health & Technical Science

-  **Energy Through the Food Web (CHTS 929)** *Prairie Loft - Hastings* Explore how energy moves through the food web and how the availability of groundwater affects the organisms living in an ecosystem.
-  **Good Fire, Healthy Grasslands (CHTS Outside - Field Near Tent)** *Central Platte NRD* Learn about prescribed fire through a hands-on equipment demonstration, along with threats to Nebraska's grasslands and their role in protecting groundwater quality and quantity.
-  **Nebraska Water History Bingo (CHTS 959)** *Nebraska State Historical Society* Play a fun game of Bingo while learning how groundwater has shaped Nebraska's history, inventions, and famous Nebraskans.
-  **Renewable Grid Simulator with VR Headsets (CHTS 965)** *Nebraska Public Power District* Use VR headsets to explore how water is used to generate electricity, how it is kept clean, and how invasive plants and zebra mussels can impact canals.

CP = College Park

-  **Awesome Aquifer (CP 103/104)** *Lewis and Clark & Lower Niobrara NRDs* Build an aquifer model to explore the connection between surface water and groundwater and see how pumping and pollution can affect aquifers.
-  **Fax Gilbert Interactive Performance (CP Auditorium)** *Fax Gilbert* Enjoy a lively stage show with fun characters and skits that bring aquifers, the water cycle, groundwater and contaminants to life.
-  **Green/Gray Relay (CP Extension Room 2)** *Nebraska Extension* Join a water relay and learn the difference between green & gray infrastructure.
-  **H2O Olympics (CP Extension Room 1)** *Little Blue NRD* Compete in the Water Olympics by performing tasks that investigate the adhesion and cohesion properties of water.
-  **Infiltration Station (CP Outside - Room 101 Door)** *JEO Consulting Group* Use water guns to simulate rainfall and compare how different soil and surface types affect runoff and infiltration.
-  **The Incredible Journey (CP 207/208)** *Hastings Museum* Become a water molecule and move through the water cycle by collecting beads along your journey to make a bracelet.
-  **Water: A Limited Resource (CP 105/106)** *Nebraska Farm Bureau* Think like a farmer! Explore water and soil to model Earth's limited freshwater, learn how farmers conserve it, and discover how soil affects what crops can grow.
-  **Water Rockets (CP 203/204)** *Grand Island Groundwater Guardian Team* Use water and compressed air to build a water rocket and learn about Grand Island's water system. Then launch your rocket!
-  **Watershed Jenga & Wetland Wonder! (CP Multipurpose Room)** *Audubon Rowe Sanctuary* Test your skills with Jenga while discovering how everything in our local watershed is connected and why wetlands are essential to the Platte River watershed.
-  **Watershed Mayhem (CP Outside/Left of Auditorium)** *Lower Platte South NRD* Line up to create a watershed. Demonstrate how seasonal precipitation impacts not only the watershed but also groundwater.
-  **Well, Well: How Deep Does It Go? (CP Outside - North Parking Lot)** *Shane's Pump and Windmill Service* See firsthand how to measure water depth and well depth from College Park's irrigation well.
-  **Wetlands Bingo (CP 209/210)** *Upper Big Blue NRD* Learn why wetlands are important ecosystems that support plants, animals and insects through Bingo and a video.

A special thanks to the presenters and volunteers whose time, knowledge, and enthusiasm make this festival possible each year!

Welcome Students and Teachers!

Schools **# Students**

Centennial, Utica	37
Dodge, Grand	81
Island Doniphan-	34
Trumbull Elba	6
Fillmore Central	36
Grand Island Central Catholic	25
Humphrey St. Francis	17
Newell, Grand Island	46
Ord	37
Palmer	26
Platte Center	21
Red Cloud	20
Sandy Creek, Fairfield	36
Shelby-Rising City	26
Shell Creek, Columbus	59
Shoemaker, Grand Island	81
St. Anthony, Columbus	12
St. Edward	11
St. Michael, Albion	10
St. Paul	51
Starr, Grand Island	63
Trinity Lutheran, Fremont	21
West Lawn, Grand Island	42

Fun Facts
2026 Festival

# Students	798
Teachers	40
Schools	23
Activities	36
Sponsors	32

Largest Classes
Dodge, Grand Island (81)
Shoemaker, Grand Island (81)

Smallest Class
Elba Elementary (6)

Traveled the Farthest
Trinity Lutheran, Fremont
2 hours, 6 minutes

Groundwater Discovery Challenge

- As you explore today's activities, see if you can discover the answers!
1. How does rainwater become groundwater?
 2. What is an aquifer and why is it important?
 3. Name one way wetlands help protect water.
 4. How can pollution reach groundwater?
 5. What is one thing people can do to help protect groundwater?
- Bonus Question**
Why is groundwater important to people, wildlife & farms in Nebraska?

The Children's Groundwater Festival was established by the Groundwater Foundation of Lincoln, Nebraska. In 2005, the Foundation asked the Central Platte NRD to coordinate the Festival. Festival Coordinators:

CENTRAL PLATTE NRD
Marcia Lee and Brody Vorderstrasse with support from Central Platte NRD Staff

CENTRAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE **COLLEGE PARK**
Karen Cox, Rob Briseno, Dave Stewart L.J. McCormick Jr.

THANK YOU!

We extend special appreciation to Central Community College, College Park and the Nebraska Extension for providing their facilities at no cost. Their partnership reflects the strong community commitment to advancing groundwater education.



The Nebraska Children's Groundwater Festival is made possible through the support of our generous sponsors. We gratefully acknowledge their support.

- Main Sponsor (\$10,000)**
Central Platte NRD
- Awesome Aquifer Adventurer (\$1,000 - \$5,000)**
Fred & Gloria Otradovsky
Hunter Industries Incorporated
- Legendary Lake League (\$400 - \$999)**
Hornady Manufacturing Co.
JBS Beef Production Facility
Lower Loup NRD
Nebraskaland Distributors LLC
Ramos Brothers Excavating & Grading
Rogge General Contractors
- Babbling Brook Benefactor (\$250 - \$399)**
Advantage Car Care
Coca-Cola of Grand Island
Copycat Printing and Signs
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Grand Island Rotary Club
Hansen Well Service
Nedelco Inc/Hamilton Telecommunications
Olsson Associates
Pepsi Beverages Company
Roger and Julie Frandsen
- Supreme Springwater Supporter (\$100 - \$249)**
Ace Hardware
Ag Services
Amur Equipment Finance
Doniphan Herald
Downey Drilling Inc
Mid States Irrigation
Sadd Publishing
Wanitsche Family
Wenzl Construction
- Festival Friend (\$25 - \$99)**
Lee's Family Restaurant
Middle Niobrara NRD The Trailer Shop

Learn more about the Groundwater Festival:
www.cpnrd.org/education

The Nebraska Children's Groundwater Festival is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Funds are administered through the Greater Grand Island Community Foundation. Tax ID: 47-6032570

Nebraska Children's Groundwater Festival

Educating youth on the importance of our most precious resource... GROUNDWATER.

Tuesday, May 12, 2026
Central Community College and College Park
Grand Island, Nebraska

WELCOME TO THE 41ST ANNUAL NEBRASKA CHILDREN'S GROUNDWATER FESTIVAL!

For more than four decades, the Nebraska Children's Groundwater Festival has connected students with water and natural resource professionals to explore the importance of groundwater conservation.

Each year, fifth-grade students from throughout Nebraska are invited to participate in hands-on classroom activities and an engaging stage show led by professionals in water, agriculture, wildlife and environmental science. This one-day festival brings groundwater science to life as students explore the many ways groundwater supports our environment, communities and daily lives.

A special thank you to our generous sponsors, whose support allows schools to attend at no cost and provides a free lunch for all participants; and to our dedicated volunteers who make this educational event possible.

The Nebraska Children's Groundwater Festival's success has inspired similar groundwater education events for environmental education in 42 U.S. states and in Mexico, Canada, India and the United Kingdom.