

Central States Water Environment Association Invites you to join the WATER'S WORTH IT campaign by writing a short essay about your watershed

## Guidelines

- ✓ **Students must reside in Illinois and be in grades 6-8th.**
- ✓ Select a provided prompt for your essay: **research or creative writing**. Students may only submit one essay for the 2024 contest.
- ✓ Essays must be between 400-800 words. Source citations are suggested but not required. Citations do not count towards essay word count.
- ✓ Font size should be between 10-12 and font should be legible (ex: Arial or Times New Roman).
- ✓ **Essays must include a cover page containing: Essay Title, Student's Name, grade, school, and which prompt the student chose.**
- ✓ Essays must be submitted in Word or PDF format by the end of the day, April 1st, 2024.

## Awards and Prizes

Winners for both the Research and Creative Writing Categories will receive:

- **Cash prize + gifts!**
- **Certificate of Achievement!**
- **Their essay published in Central States Water Magazine!**

**1st place cash prize: \$200**  
**Runner-up cash prize: \$100**



## Essay Topic: Your Watershed

**Did you know your home is located in a watershed?**

- ▶ A watershed is an area of land that drains or “sheds” water into a specific body of water. All the rain and melted snow that seeps into the ground drains into streams and rivers or into underground reservoirs called aquifers. Other precipitation ends up on hard surfaces like roads and parking lots, from which it may enter storm drains that feed into streams. Following gravity, the water eventually flows into larger bodies of water like lakes, bays, and oceans.

**How we use the land within our watershed directly impacts the health of our water!**

- ▶ Some examples of impactful land use are agriculture, forestry, urbanization, recreation, and industrialization. Unfortunately, 40-50% of our nation's waters are impaired or threatened. This could mean that the water is not suitable to drink, swim in or to consume the fish that was caught there. Not all is lost, though. With proper watershed management and public education, we can work together to keep our waterways clean and safe for the plants, animals, and communities that rely on them.

# How to Participate

## 01 Select a prompt

### Research

- Give details on the name, size, and health of your watershed.
- Explore your water ways; are they impaired? How does this impact wildlife and society.
- Are there conservation, restoration, or watershed management efforts?
- Reflect on how this affects you personally and how you can help keep your watershed healthy.
- Conclude with your thoughts on what you have learned about your local watershed.

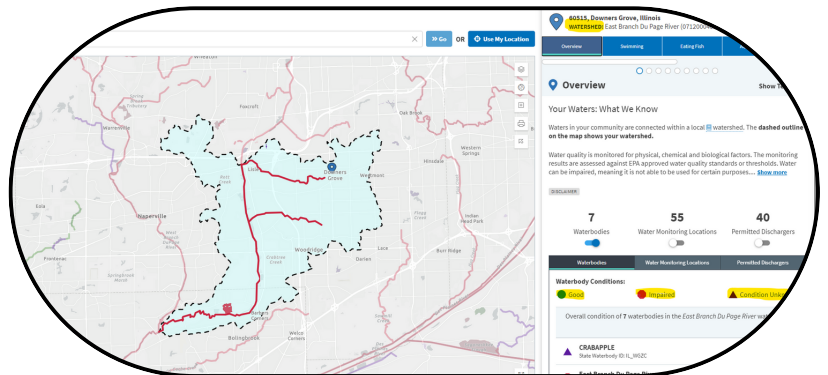
### Creative Writing

- Explore your local watershed (name, size, health).
- Pick a waterway within your watershed that holds specific importance to you and write a creative story centered around this waterway.
- Highlight how the waterway is used, its health, and the importance of proper watershed management.
- The story should leave the reader feeling compelled to help keep their own watershed clean and healthy.

## 02 Research your Watershed

[mywaterway.epa.gov](https://mywaterway.epa.gov)

- ✓ Go to the “How’s my Waterway?” homepage
- ✓ In the search box under “Let’s get started,” enter your home address or zip code and click “Go.”
- ✓ Find the name of your Watershed.
- ✓ Explore your watershed by clicking on the different waterways. Take note of water conditions, identified issues, their potential causes, and plans for repair.



## 03 Submit your essay

[cswea.wufoo.com/forms/il-2024-waters-worth-it-essay-competition/](https://cswea.wufoo.com/forms/il-2024-waters-worth-it-essay-competition/)