



Manatee River Soil & Water Conservation District

Manatee River Soil and Water Conservation District Speech Contest

TOPIC: From Source to Sea

The contest uses the NACD 2027 Stewardship Week theme

Speech Contest Date = **Monday November 9th**
at 6:00 pm



Contest will be held at the Manatee County Extension Office*

Kendrick Auditorium

1303-17th St. W.

Palmetto, FL 34221

Sponsored by: Manatee River Soil and Water Conservation District (MRSWCD)

This speech contest is designed to develop leadership through public speaking activities and stimulate interest in conserving our natural resources.

Speech length is 5-7 minutes.

Intent to compete form: Due October 19, 2026

ELIGIBILITY

The contest is open to public, private, parochial, charter, or home school students from 6th through 12th grade who live within a Florida Soil & Water Conservation District. For the local contest, the Manatee River Soil and Water Conservation District boundary is Manatee County. *

**This event serves as a qualifying event for FFA and 4-H organizations to receive a MRSWCD Conservation Award.*

Speech Contest Awards: awards section is specific to the Manatee River SWCD contest

1st place.....\$250

2nd Place..... \$200

3rd Place..... \$100

To increase recognition for middle school students who are competing along with high school students in the Manatee River SWCD competition, the 1st-3rd place middle school students will be awarded ribbons. A possible scenario is provided here; if the top scoring middle school student places 2nd overall they will receive \$200 and be awarded a ribbon for 1st place among middle school students.

Monetary rewards are presented to the top three scoring speakers, the total monetary awards for the competition will be \$550.

Each teacher that has a participating student in the contest will be entered into a drawing (one entry per teacher) for a \$50 gift certificate for educational supplies. One teacher will be selected.

SPEECH PREPARATION & PRESENTATION

Participants may choose any subject within the National Association of Conservation District's (NACD) 2027 Stewardship theme **'From Source to Sea'**. The theme highlights how the ocean, land, and freshwater ecosystems are closely interlinked and interdependent. This approach explores how actions taken on land, in rivers, lakes, and aquifers have cascading effects. The goal of the 'Source to Sea' theme is to apply a holistic view to the interlinkage of the land and water to better understand, and benefit, the entire system.

Speeches must be original, not previously used, and created by the contestant. Official judges of this contest shall disqualify a participant if they speak on another subject, plagiarize their speech, or are found to have used AI to create their speech.

MANUSCRIPTS

Participants must submit their manuscripts to their designated District by that District's set deadline. Late or lost manuscripts may disqualify a participant. The MRSWCD, FCDEA or AFCD are not responsible for any late or lost manuscripts. In addition, a mandatory signed release form must accompany the manuscript to qualify for entry into the Contest.

Manuscript requirements:

- Formatted to 8 1/2" x 11" double spaced with a 1" margin
- Cover page must include the speech title, participant's name, parent or guardian's name, email, home address, phone number, grade level, and school name. The name of the contestant will not appear on their speech.
- Font size must be 12 point using a serif (Times New Roman, Cambria, etc.) or sans serif font (Arial, Calibri, etc.)
- A complete and accurate reference list should be included at the end of the manuscript. (All participants should give credit to others where any direct quotes, phrases, etc. are used in their manuscript, in order not to be guilty of plagiarism.)

Penalties will be assessed for manuscripts not meeting these guidelines. Content and composition of all manuscripts will be scored by qualified individual(s) and recorded on the official score sheet.

TIME LIMIT

Speeches must be five to seven minutes in length. Time under or over these limits will result in a 2-point deduction for each 15 second increment or part thereof, with a maximum 10-point deduction. Deductions will be taken off the cumulative score. No time warnings will be given.

PRESENTATION

The speaking order will be randomly determined by event officials. The program chairman shall introduce each participant by their contestant number during the Contest, and then, he or she will formally introduce all contestants after all speeches have been given. Contestants must not give their name or introduce themselves in their speech or wear any attire that identifies them with any organization, such as 4-H, school logos, and/or FFA. A participant will be permitted to

use notes while speaking, but deductions in scoring may be made for this practice if it detracts from the effectiveness of the overall presentation. No props, audio or visuals are to be used. Applause shall be withheld until all participants have spoken. Photographs will be taken only during and after award presentation.

JUDGING

A standard score sheet, the official rubric, will be used for all contestants. Three judges and one timekeeper will be used at the district, area, and state competitions. A qualified judge should be experienced in public speaking and should not be elected SWCD supervisors, district staff, and/or affiliated with any contestant.

Prior to the event, the manuscripts will be scored for content and composition, by the judge(s) using the official rubric. At the time of the event, the three judges, who were provided with copies of the manuscripts, will use this rubric to score each participant on the delivery of their speech. After the oral presentation, both the manuscript and presentation scores, along with any deductions, will be tallied to determine a winner. The highest overall score will be the first-place winner. Judge(s) comments, if applicable, will be presented to the participants after the event.

Special Requirements:

Deliver a manuscript of the speech and the signed release form by 4 pm on Wednesday October 21st, in one of the following ways:

Email (*preferred*): samanthatanaka@ufl.edu

OR

Mail or hand deliver* to: **MRSWCD
USDA/NRCS
6942 Professional Parkway
Sarasota, FL 34240**

*To arrange hand delivery call Samantha Tanaka, Speech Contest Coordinator, at 907-0011 Ext. 3142

Deadline: E-mail (preferred) or deliver a double-spaced copy of the speech and the signed release form, by 4 pm on Wednesday October 21st.