



NEWS RELEASE

Illinois Environmental Protection Agency

1021 North Grand Avenue East, P.O. Box 19276

Springfield, Illinois 62794-9276

Phone: 217/782-3397

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Kim Biggs

Kim.Biggs@Illinois.gov

217-558-1536

Illinois EPA Launches Annual Environmental Education Competition for Fifth and Sixth Grade Students

Agency Encourages Youth Creativity About How to Protect the Environment

SPRINGFIELD – Fifth and sixth grade writers and artists from around Illinois are invited to compete in this year's Poster, Poetry and Prose Contest sponsored by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). This year's contest theme is *Algae: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly... How Can You Keep Your Local Pond Healthy?* focusing on how algae can affect waterbodies (good and bad). The theme also emphasizes how to prevent nonpoint source pollution, including nutrient runoff, to maintain healthy water ecosystems. Educators are asked to introduce these topics using the Illinois EPA's newly developed, free curriculum: Environmental Pathways surface water unit *Why is the Pond Green?* The unit was developed by the Office for Mathematics, Science, and Technology Education (MSTE) at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and is aligned with Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS).

Each school can enter up to eight works (four posters and four written) depicting this year's theme. Entries must be postmarked and sent in to the Illinois EPA by February 3, 2020. An in-house panel from the Illinois EPA will judge all entries to select the finalists, and those entries will then be judged by an outside panel of authorities to determine the top twelve winners.

All finalists, together with their families and teachers, will be invited to an awards ceremony and reception on April 18 at the Old State Capitol historic site in Springfield. After the awards ceremony, participants are invited to attend the City of Springfield's Earth Awareness Fair on the Old State Capitol's lawn. Finalist entries will be on exhibit in the atrium of the Illinois EPA's headquarters building in Springfield from April 20 through May 13, and the top winners will be featured on the Illinois EPA's website.

Information about the annual event can be obtained on Illinois EPA's website at:

<https://www2.illinois.gov/epa/topics/education/contest/Pages/default.aspx>, or by contacting Kristi Morris, Environmental Education Coordinator for the Illinois EPA, at 217-558-7198, or by email at Kristi.Morris@illinois.gov. The Environmental Pathways curriculum unit can be found at: <https://pathways.mste.illinois.edu/>.

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