



## THE SWC'S WATER EDUCATION PROGRAM

---

# IMPROVING UNDERSTANDING THROUGH OPPORTUNITIES

Water is an amazing substance that is taken for granted on a daily basis until you get too much or too little of it - making the need to understand the complex dynamics of water a must. So where does this understanding begin, and who is responsible for teaching others to appreciate how water can be lifesaving, gratifying, and devastating all at once? This is a role that the Water Commission's Water Education program takes on with pride, and works to improve with each passing year.

Many of us have fond memories related to water. Whether it's our first snow sled ride down a steep hill, summer slip and slides in the back yard, scoring our first goal in hockey on ice, or catching our first fish on a nearby lake. One could conger up example after example of special moments in life involving water. At the same time, never giving thought to where water comes from, that not all people have access to safe water, or that at any given moment, cities, states, or countries around the world are constantly faced with water-related challenges through floods, droughts, or pollution.

The North Dakota Water Education Program recognizes that a better understanding of our water resources has to be present at all walks of life if we are to improve our efforts in managing this vital resource for the benefit of all. With this in mind, the program supports water education through three primary avenues: water festivals, educational tools and information, and professional development workshops.

Water festivals allow students across the state to engage in hands on water-related activities and experiments. Students learn about a variety of topics, such as: how important water is to their bodies, the concept of watersheds, how water is shared among many users, the scientific properties of water, cool bugs that are indicators of water quality, non-point and point source pollution, human impacts on water, and how scarce fresh water is compared to all water on earth. Currently, eleven water festivals are hosted annually throughout the state, targeting students enrolled in grades third through sixth.

In 2018, water festivals hosted over 7,537 students and this year's events are expected to have an even greater number of students in attendance. Rebecca, a 4th grader from Oakes Elementary said, "I think that the water festival is a fun experience. You learn a lot of stuff like aqua bodies and there are lots of interesting activities. By the time you leave, you have learned tons and tons of facts about how water really works."

The Water Education Program's second focus is developing, publishing, and distributing water-related information through print, electronic resources, and social media. Through the agency's website, there is a tremendous amount of water-related information available on a continual basis. In addition, Facebook users have access to special announcements concerning workshops, training opportunities, or general agency-related happenings that might be of interest.



Water Festivals, Facilitator Training, and Watershed Institutes - Make Learning Fun!

Another valuable resource specifically focused on water education through the national Water Education for Teachers (WET) program is ProjectWET.org. Here, educators and students will find a variety of education and curriculum-based materials. Student water enthusiasts may also enjoy exploring DiscoverWater.org. This site provides valuable educational experiences demonstrating the complexity of water through a variety of self-directed, fun, and engaging game-like activities.

The Water Commission’s Water Education Program also hosts workshops throughout the year that allow formal, and non-formal educators to learn about the state’s water resources, water science-based curriculum opportunities, and to learn more about the watershed they live in through North Dakota’s “Explore Your Watershed” program.

In addition, each February the agency offers a Project WET Facilitator Leadership Training for two graduate credits. These workshops are perfect for K-12 teachers, informal educators, and leaders who work with kids and want to share the importance of water in our lives. These workshops introduce participants to numerous water curriculum guides and activities. The guides are designed to challenge students and introduce new science, social

studies, language, and math concepts – with a special focus on water. Upon completion of a facilitator training workshop, participants will be awarded a Project WET facilitator certification allowing them to lead programs.

Every summer, the Water Education Program furnishes an opportunity to experience current watershed management and development issues in one of North Dakota’s watersheds. While exploring the issues and identifying solutions, participants receive real world, user friendly, and classroom ready instruction from specially trained Project WET facilitators, resource professionals, and scientists. Participants experience hands-on, minds-on learning through a balance of presentations, discussions, activities, field tours, and environmental investigations that are transferable to practical classroom applications.

If you have an interest in receiving more information about water-related educational resources or opportunities available through the Water Commission’s Water Education Program, we invite you to join us on Facebook @NDStateWater, utilize our website at [www.swc.nd.gov](http://www.swc.nd.gov), or contact our ND Water Education Program Manager, Tina Harding, at 701-328-4833 or [tinamharding@nd.gov](mailto:tinamharding@nd.gov).