

2026 VASWCD Photo Contest Rules

Eligibility

The Virginia Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts (VASWCD) Photo Contest is open only to legal residents of the United States. Panel Judges (of the VASWCD Photo Contest), as well as immediate family (spouse partners, siblings, and children) and household members of those judges, are not eligible to enter.

Entry Period

The VASWCD Photo Contest begins February 2026 and ends on August 1, 2026. Entries submitted before or after the entry period will not be eligible. Winners will be announced September 2026.

What to Enter

The VASWCD is committed to conservation of natural resources through stewardship and education programs, and we want to see it through your eyes. For our 2026 Photo Contest, we'd like you to take photos that showcase "**Stewardship in Sight**". Capture those vibrant moments and express what stewardship looks like to you!

All photographs must be taken within the Commonwealth of Virginia. Photographs taken outside the state of Virginia will be disqualified.

Entries should include the following information.

- Name
- Age (as of August 1, 2026)
- Address
- Email
- Telephone
- Photo Title
- City or County where photo was taken
- Optional Caption that describes photo and answers (Limit to one paragraph)

By submitting your entry, you (parent/legal guardian if entrant is a minor in his/her state of residence) agree that the photograph(s) conforms to the guidelines and content restrictions.

By entering, entrants (parent/legal guardian if entrant is a minor in his/her state of residence) represent and warrant that the photograph(s) that they submit: are their own original creations; do not infringe any other person's or entity's rights; including trespassing on private land.

Entries must be submitted by the original creator. Photograph(s) created by someone other than you but submitted by you will be disqualified. You must be the sole owner of the copyright of any photograph(s) submitted. Incomplete entries will not be accepted and will be automatically rejected.

To ensure eligibility for the contest, please submit files at least 3 MB at the time of entry. Higher resolution files of at least 300 dpi/ppi will be requested should an entry be preselected to be awarded a prize or an honorable mention. All photographs should accurately reflect the subject matter and the scene as it appeared. Photos that have been digitally altered beyond standard optimization (red eye removal, removal of dust, cropping, reasonable adjustments to exposure, color and contrast, etc.) will be disqualified, which is left to the Panel's discretion.

Entries may originate in any format — including, but not limited to digital files, digital prints, color transparencies, color prints, or black and white prints — so long as they are submitted electronically in a .JPEG .jpg, or .png form. Multiple exposures that have been combined to produce a single "High Dynamic Range" image are acceptable.

Previously published material for which non-exclusive rights were granted may be entered as long as you still maintain the right to grant us a license (see "Your Rights" below). You must be able to disclose when and where the photo appeared previously to VASWCD upon request.

If you choose to include people in your submission, you are responsible for obtaining the necessary releases from the individuals depicted and must be able to provide copies of those releases to VASWCD upon request.

The following submissions are ineligible:

- Images of captive animals photographed in zoos and commercial game farms.
- Photos that violate or infringe upon another person's rights, including but not limited to copyright.
- Photos that contain sexually explicit, nude, obscene, violent, or other objectionable or inappropriate content.
- Images that involve the willful harassment of wildlife, or damage to the environment by the photographer or photo subjects.
- Images that involve putting any individual or animal in danger.
- Images taken more than three years prior to the beginning date of the Contest (February, 2026).

The VASWCD shall determine entry eligibility in its sole and absolute discretion.

How to Enter

You may enter up to ten (10) images during the entry period, however only one winning photo per person. The VASWCD reserves the right to reject any additional entries or entries that do not comply with these Official Rules. By entering, you indicate your unconditional agreement to, and acceptance of, these Official Rules and VASWCD's decisions, which are final and binding. You cannot win a prize unless you comply with all requirements in these Official Rules.

Entrants may be asked to supplement their submission (such as with a paragraph about their photo or the highest resolution version of their photo).

Judging

Photos will be judged on originality, technical excellence, composition, overall impact, artistic merit and subject matter relevance to conservation, except that the People's Choice award will be determined based on which of the honorable mentions receives the most votes. Judging will be conducted by a panel of VASWCD and or SWCD employees/officials (the "Panel"). The Panel will evaluate all valid entries and pick winners in the following categories:

Categories:

1. Overall Winner (1 winner): Illustrates how people interact with their environment and care for the natural resources around them.
2. People's Choice (1 winner): Overall winner selected from among the 10 honorable mentions based on the highest number of votes received during public voting to be held on the VASWCD Facebook page in August 2026.
3. Young Photographer (1 winner): Best vibrant moment of conservation, taken by a photographer under 18 years of age.

The honorable mentions will be notified and will appear on the VASWCD website. At that time, the public can vote for one People's Choice winner from the honorable mentions. All potential winners will be revealed online by September 30, 2026.

All judging decisions are final. Please do not contact us about the status of entries or judging. The VASWCD will notify the winner via the contact information provided at the time of entry.

Disqualification

No alteration or manipulation of photographs is permitted except for standard optimization (red eye removal, removal of dust, cropping, reasonable adjustments to exposure, color and contrast, etc.). However, photographic techniques such as HDR, light-painting and long exposures are allowed. Photographs with watermarks, writing or symbols of any kind will be rejected.

Photograph(s) depicting anything that does not adhere to the rules of the VASWCD Photo Contest, contain unsafe acts, present resource or public use management concerns or photographs that are inappropriate, indecent or obscene, as determined by VASWCD in their sole discretion, shall be disqualified.

Potential Winner Requirements

Except where prohibited, a potential winner may be required to complete and return an affidavit of eligibility, including proof of age, and liability/publicity release within 14 days. If a potential winner is a minor, his/her parent or legal guardian will be required to sign the documents on his/her behalf. If a potential winner fails to return these documents on time, an alternate potential winner may be selected in his/her place.

Prizes

Prizes will be determined by the VASWCD. A prize may not be transferred and must be accepted as awarded. A winner may not request cash or a substitute prize.

Your Rights

You will retain all rights to any photograph you submit -- including joint ownership with the VASWCD and participating districts.

If you submit a photograph to enter the Photo Contest, you grant the VASWCD a royalty-free, nonexclusive right during the Photo Contest and in perpetuity to:

- Display the photograph on the Photo Contest submission website
- Allow third-parties to share the photograph on the following social media platforms: Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, and district websites.
- Use the photograph on the Internet and in Social Media in support of our mission.

- Use the photograph in the VASWCD’s internal and external communications materials including but not limited to web sites and web publications, fact sheets, fund raising publications, advertising, multimedia, presentation, annual report and VASWCD District Directory.
- Provide your photograph to other individuals and organizations for VASWCD-related use in news stories, newsletters, reports, slide shows, displays, webpages, videos, and the like.
- Use, in connection with the Photo Contest, your name, city, and state of residence in promotions and other publications.
 - Retain a digital copy of your photograph that will be archived in the VASWCD photo library and accessible to VASWCD & SWCD staff. The VASWCD will endeavor to credit all photographs with the caption "Person's Name" when the full name is available.

By entering, entrants (parent/legal guardian if entrant is a minor in his/her state of residence) grant a non-exclusive, worldwide, royalty-free, perpetual license to the VASWCD to edit, adapt, make derivative works from, broadcast, publish and otherwise use any or all of the descriptions and/or photograph(s) submitted, and may use them for advertising, promotional and/or any other purpose in any and all media now or hereafter devised worldwide in perpetuity without additional compensation, notification or permission, unless prohibited by law. By entering this Contest, entrants (parent/legal guardian if entrant is a minor in his/her state of residence) agree to have their submitted photograph(s) used and displayed, either singularly or in combination with others and in any size, on the official VASWCD website and social media platforms and on the websites, social media, and print materials of the VASWCD as well as their SWCDs without any fee or other form of compensation due at any time for so long as desired by the VASWCD. Credits, descriptions or titles, if any, used with the photograph(s) are in the VASWCD’s sole discretion. In the event that ownership of any photograph(s) submitted is challenged in any manner by any person, the VASWCD may disqualify that photograph(s) and will discontinue use of the photograph(s).

General Conditions

In the event that the operation, security, or administration of the Photo Contest is impaired in any way, VASWCD may, in its sole discretion, either: (a) suspend the Photo Contest to address the impairment and then resume the Photo Contest; or (b) award the prize(s) from among the eligible entries received up to the time of the impairment. VASWCD reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to disqualify and seek damages from any individual who tampers with the operation of the Photo Contest, violates these Official Rules, or acts in a disruptive or unsportsmanlike manner. VASWCD’s failure to enforce any term of these Official Rules shall not constitute a waiver of that provision. Proof of sending any communication to VASWCD by mail shall not be deemed proof of receipt of that communication by VASWCD. In the event of a dispute as to the owner of an online entry, the authorized account holder of the e-mail address used to enter will be deemed to be the owner. The Photo Contest is subject to federal, state, and local laws and regulations and is void where prohibited.

Release and Limitations of Liability

By entering, you (parent/legal guardian if entrant is a minor in his/her state of residence) agree to release and hold harmless VASWCD, Facebook, their respective parent, subsidiaries, affiliates, and each of their respective officers, directors, employees, and SWCD agents (the “Released Parties”) from and against any claim or cause of action arising out of participation in the Photo Contest or receipt or use of any prize, including, but not limited to: (a) unauthorized human intervention in the Photo Contest; (b) technical errors; (c) printing errors; (d) late or undelivered mail; (e) errors in the administration of the Photo Contest; or (f) injury or damage to persons or property. You waive the right to claim any attorney’s fees and any damages whatsoever, including, but not limited to, punitive, consequential, direct, or indirect damages.

Privacy and Publicity

Any information you submit as part of the Photo Contest will be used in accordance with VASWCD’s Privacy Policy. The information you provide when you enter is provided to the VASWCD. Except where prohibited, you consent to VASWCD’s use of your name in any list of winners (if applicable) and for promotional purposes in any media without further payment or consideration.

Disputes

You agree that any and all disputes, claims and causes of action arising out of, or connected with, the Photo Contest or any prize awarded shall be resolved individually, without resort to any form of class action, and exclusively by the appropriate court located in Virginia. All issues and questions concerning the construction, validity, interpretation and enforceability of these Official Rules, your rights and obligations, or the rights and obligations of the VASWCD in connection with the Photo Contest, shall be governed by, and construed in accordance with, the laws of Virginia, without giving effect to any choice of law or conflict of law rules (whether of Virginia or any other jurisdiction), which would cause the application of the laws of any jurisdiction other than Virginia.

Questions

Please contact the VASWCD by contacting Shannon Mitchum at Shannon.Mitchum@vaswcd.org or by calling (804) 559-0324