Michelle H. Cooper - SOCOP
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High School Counselors:
Denver City High School, Plains High School

December 16, 2025

Dear Counselors,

The **Sandy Land Underground Water Conservation District** is sponsoring the annual essay contest for senior students at Denver City and Plains high schools. All senior students are eligible to enter the essay contest. First place contest winners from each school district will receive a **$2,000 scholarship** and second place winners will receive a **$1000 scholarship** to the college or university of their choice. Scholarship funds will be paid directly to the university/college upon confirmation of enrollment in classes (not to the individual student). *Scholarships will be awarded contingent upon receipt of qualified submissions based on the criteria outlined below as determined by the scholarship committee.*

2026 Essay Prompt:

"Groundwater is an essential yet often overlooked natural resource that supports drinking water supplies, agriculture, ecosystems, and economic development, not only in Texas, but around the world. However, increasing demand, pollution, and other factors are placing significant pressure on groundwater systems here in Texas.

*In an essay of **500-650 words**, discuss the importance of groundwater conservation and propose practical strategies to protect and sustainably manage this resource."*

Points to *consider* when writing your essay:

- Why groundwater is critical to communities, ecosystems, and future generations
- Key threats to groundwater quantity and quality at the local, regional, or global level
- The role of individuals, governments, industries, or technology in groundwater conservation
- A real-world example or case study that demonstrates successful groundwater management *or* a personal experience that shaped your understanding of water stewardship
- Your vision for how innovative policies, education, or science can improve groundwater sustainability in the future

*Essays will be evaluated on **clarity of thought, depth of analysis, originality, and demonstrated commitment to environmental stewardship, and organization** based on submission criteria provided below.*

Contest essay **criteria**: READ CAREFULLY!!!

1. The essay **must** have a **minimum** of 500 words and **maximum** of 650 words.
2. The essay **must** be typed and double-spaced in MLA format.
3. The essay **must** have **a cover sheet** containing the following: *student's name, email address, physical mailing address, phone number, essay title, name of local high school, and date.*
4. References **must** accompany paper in the form of a works cited page, including web references.
5. Essays MUST BE submitted electronically via email to *savegroundwater@gmail.com*. A reply receipt will be sent to the applicant noting their submission was received.
6. Electronic submissions are **due no later** than **Friday, April 10, 2026 (11:59pm).**

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All electronic submissions must be received by SOCOP at the email address in criteria #5 by 11:59pm **Friday, April 10, 2026 (11:59pm).** Applicants will receive an email reply noting receipt of your submission.

Recipients will be notified individually if awarded a scholarship. High School counselors will be informed of winners prior to end of year awards. Presentations will be made during local high school awards assemblies and/or in accordance with school guidelines.

For further information, please contact the district office at (806)456-2155 or email the education coordinator at savegroundwater@gmail.com. Thank you for your time.

Best wishes,

Michelle H. Cooper
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