

Soil.

Where it all Begins



Bollinger County Soil & Water
Conservation District



**Let's start by telling you who
we are, and a little about how
our journey brought us into
your classroom.**

**We are the
Bollinger County Soil & Water
Conservation District**

**You can contact
Beth, Megan, or Tessah
@ 573-238-2671 ext3**



Conservation districts began many years ago when we learned that caring for the land was important for everyone.

In the 1930s, large windstorms called the **Dust Bowl** blew away huge amounts of soil because conservation was not yet widely understood and many people did not realize how important it was to protect the soil. Without healthy soil, crops could not grow, and animals lost their homes.



To fix the problem, farmers and neighbors worked together with the government to start conservation districts. Led by soil scientist **Hugh Hammond Bennett** and the newly formed **Soil Conservation Service**, communities met to plan better ways to protect the land, prevent **erosion**, plant windbreaks, and manage water more carefully.

These new conservation districts provided local support and guidance, helping farmers restore their soil, rebuild the land, and bring farming back in a healthier, more sustainable way.

The **Soil Conservation Service (SCS)** was created in 1935 to help farmers protect their land from erosion and restore soil after the Dust Bowl. It later became the **Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)**, which continues working with conservation districts and landowners to protect soil, water, and other natural resources.





The lessons learned during the Dust Bowl shaped how we care for the land today. Farmers choose to take part in **conservation programs** because they care about protecting the land for the future. These programs are **voluntary**, meaning farmers join by choice and may receive help or **guidance** to make conservation easier. They use **best management practices** such as planting cover crops, managing water wisely, and reducing erosion to keep soil healthy.

By working with their local conservation districts, farmers help protect **natural resources** for future generations while keeping their land productive and sustainable.





Each year, a national theme is chosen for the poster contest such as soil, water, or habitats that sparks creativity and action across the country. The theme inspires hands-on lessons, outdoor projects, and community events that help people discover the importance of conservation.

IN 2026 WE CELEBRATE SOIL!

The thematic phrase “**Soil. Where It All Begins.**” reminds us that everything starts with healthy soil. Soil grows our food, filters our water, supports wildlife habitats, and provides the foundation for our communities. Without soil, there would be no farms, forests, or places for humans and animals to thrive.

This theme helps us remember that caring for soil is the first step in protecting all of our natural resources and keeping the land healthy for the future.

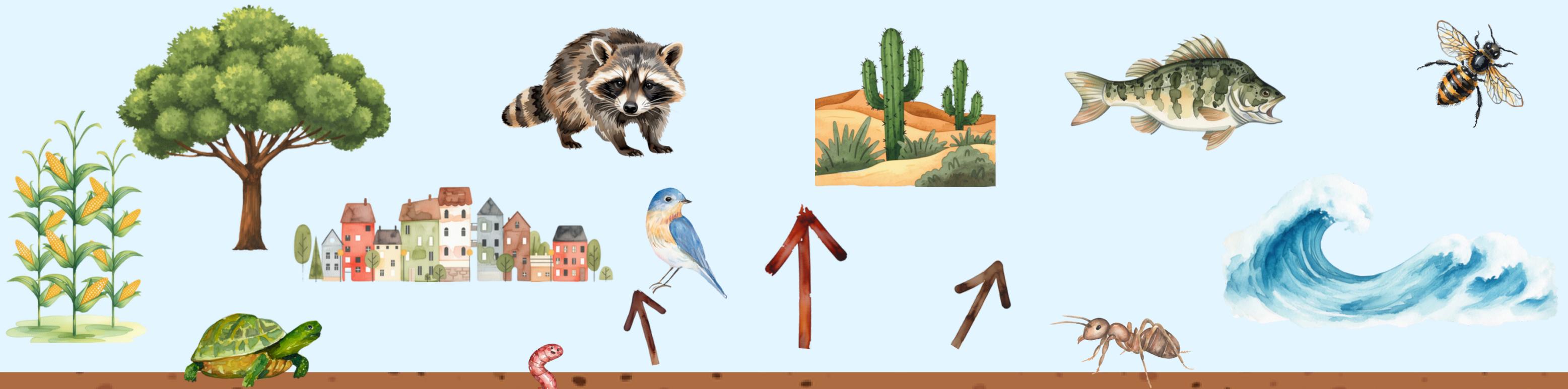
WHAT IS SOIL?

Soil is more than dirt. It's made of **minerals, air, water, and organic matter** (bits of plants and animals). It's alive with **tiny organisms** that help plants grow and keep the land healthy.



Why Soil Matters

Soil is the foundation of life across every landscape, whether coastal, desert, forest, island, or grassland.



Soil connects ecosystems by supporting vegetation, storing and filtering water, and providing the structure that sustains biodiversity and human communities.



WAIT. WHAT? THE OCEAN AND DESERT HAVE SOIL!

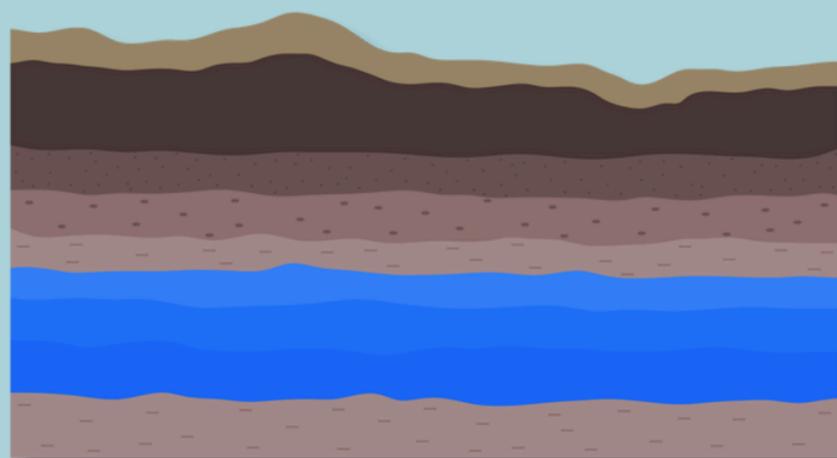
Both the ocean and the desert rely on soil because it connects and supports their ecosystems by **carrying nutrients** and **clean water to the sea**, while storing moisture and anchoring life in dry landscapes.

How the Ocean Relies on Soil:

- Soil **filters** and **cleans water** before it flows into rivers and oceans.
- Nutrients from soil **feed** tiny ocean plants called plankton.
- Coastal soils support wetlands and mangroves that protect shorelines and wildlife.



Plankton



How the Desert Relies on Soil

- Soil **stores water** deep underground for plants and animals.
- It **anchors roots** and prevents sand from blowing away.
- Healthy desert soil **supports plants** that **provide food** and **shelter** for wildlife.



SOIL FORMATION

Soil forms very slowly as rocks break down and mix with bits of plants and animals. Weather, land shape, and living things all help make soil over time.



LAYERS OF SOIL



- **Topsoil:** Where plants grow and roots live.
- **Subsoil:** Stores water and nutrients.
- **Parent Material:** Pieces of rock breaking down.
- **Bedrock:** The solid rock below all layers.



DECOMPOSITION

Topsoil forms through the **decomposition** of organic matter as **dead plants** and **animals break down** and mix with **small pieces of rock**.

Rain and weather help this process, creating rich, dark soil full of **nutrients** that support new plant growth.



Healthy soil means healthy food, clean water, and strong communities.

SOIL IS WHERE IT ALL BEGINS.

How can you help care for the soil where you live?



THIS!

RULES TO FOLLOW

WHEN CREATING YOUR POSTER

- Students FIRST & LAST name, SCHOOL & GRADE **MUST** be on the back of the poster!
- The title “Soil. Where It All Begins.” **MUST** be on your poster!
- The poster **MUST** also incorporate the theme in order to be judged!
- Entry **MUST** be student original creation and may not be traced from photographs or published works!
- Research the topic of the theme - “Soil”



WHAT MAKES A GOOD POSTER?

- ✦ Grabs attention
- ✦ Creative & Clear
- ✦ Connects to the theme
- ✦ Shares a strong message about Conservation
- ✦ Bold colors
- ✦ Neat drawing
- ✦ Your own ideas to show what the theme means to you!!

Remember, your poster should help others learn why caring for our natural resources is important!

Poster Contest Details:

Poster size must be 14" x 22"

Any media can be used to create a flat poster:

- Paint
- Crayons
- Colored Pencils
- Markers

Students First & Last name, Grade, & School **MUST** be on the back of the poster!

The poster **MUST** incorporate the 2026 theme "Soil. Where It All Begins."

Poster **MUST** be turned into the USDA Service Center by Friday, April 10, 2026





WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

4th, 5th, & 6th Graders in Bollinger
County Schools

HOW TO ENTER:

Teachers will collect the posters and turn them into the USDA Service
Center by Friday, April 10, 2026

Winning entries will be selected by staff @ local USDA Service Center.

For more information contact Beth, Megan, Tessah @573-238-2671 ext. 3
or email Beth at beth.eeftink@swcd.mo.gov

Ribbons and Monetary prizes will be awarded to the

1st, 2nd, & 3rd place winners!

1st place - \$100 2nd place - \$75 3rd place - \$50