

South Dakota  
High School Students

**Win**

**\$2,500**  
**in Scholarships**

Enter the  
65<sup>th</sup> Annual

# Resource Conservation Speech Contest

2026 Topic:

**“Urban Conservation: Healing Our Communities”**

Sponsored by:



Touchstone Energy®  
Cooperatives  
of South Dakota

South Dakota Department of Agriculture & Natural Resources  
The South Dakota Association of Conservation Districts

## Contest Rules

1. Any student attending high school (public, private, or home-school), grades 9-12, in South Dakota, is eligible to participate.
2. Entries in the conservation district contest must be accompanied by attached entry blank.
3. Two winners from each district contest will be eligible to participate in their respective Natural Resource Area contest.
4. Two winners from each of the seven area speech contests will be eligible to compete at the State Speech Contest.
5. District and area elimination contests must be held on or before the dates listed in the schedule of events (see back page). State Contest date is also listed.
6. East River Electric Power Cooperative, Inc. will pay scholarships to any college, university or accredited vocational technical school in the State of South Dakota chosen and attended full-time by the winners. Dual course credits are not eligible.
7. Scholarships will be held one year after graduation from high school or one year after release from armed forces.
8. Speeches are to be five minutes in length. Each judge will assess a five-point penalty for any speech less than 4 or more than 6 minutes.
9. Speech must be original, although quotes will be permitted; contestant must write his/her own speech.
10. Notes may be used, but any speech read in text will be disqualified.
11. Each speech should incorporate our natural resources – soil, water, animals, plants and air – as applicable to the theme of the speech.
12. Contestants may, but are not required to, introduce themselves. Score is not affected.
13. No person will be admitted or may leave the room while a contestant is speaking.
14. Speaker's time will be kept by two timekeepers using stopwatches. Time is to be announced at the conclusion of each speech.
15. Judges who have knowledge of speaking and/or conservation should be selected. Each judge will be given copies of score sheets, rules and regulations and other pertinent information of the contest.
16. Score sheets will be totaled, and winners announced by contest coordinator.
17. Speakers at district, area, and state contest will draw a number, be introduced and speak in order of the number drawn. After the winners have been selected, speakers will be introduced by name, school and the sponsoring conservation district.
18. All contestants in the state contest must submit one legible copy of their speech at the registration table.
19. Scholarships will be awarded to the top three place winners.
20. The first place winner in the state contest will not be eligible to participate in future contests. Other place winners can continue to participate in future contests until graduation or winning first place.
21. Contestants will not be allowed to submit a video of his or her speech in lieu of appearing in person at local, area, or state contest.
22. No alternate date will be set for the State Finals except in the event of adverse weather conditions.



**\$2,500 in scholarships  
awarded by**

- **East River Electric Power Cooperative**
- **Rushmore Electric Power Cooperative**
- **South Dakota Rural Electric Association**

State Champion ..... \$1,200  
 Second Place ..... \$800  
 Third Place ..... \$500

*All finalists will receive certificates.*

**Schedule of Events:**

**Local conservation district contest:**

Must be completed on or before February 28, 2026. Two winners will be eligible to advance to their respective area contest. Contact your local conservation district for contest times and location.

**Area contest:**

Must be completed on or before March 14, 2026. Two winners will be eligible to advance to the state finals.

**State Finals:**

A maximum of fourteen speakers, representing the seven Natural Resource Areas, will participate in the state finals. Three scholarship winners will be chosen - first, second and third places. State finals will be held in Pierre, March 28, 2026 at 9:00 a.m. (CDT) in room 414 in the State Capitol.

<b>Point Limits</b>	<b>Explanation of Score Sheet Points</b>
20	Speech adheres to the topic and is appropriate to the subject/topic
20	Speech shows originality
15	Good use of emphasis, voice control
15	Clear enunciation and pronunciation
10	Speaker has poise, shows enthusiasm
5	Thoughts and statements are not contradictory
5	Speech is developed around a logical sequence
5	Logical conclusions are, or can be drawn
5	Personal appearance
<b>100</b>	<b>Total maximum score</b>

# Entry Blank

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_ Year in School \_\_\_\_\_

School you attend \_\_\_\_\_

Conservation District \_\_\_\_\_

Parents' Names \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

*Used ONLY for contest-related correspondence – we will never sell or share your email address.*

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## **For further information contact:**

Your local conservation district. See directory for contact information  
<https://apps.sd.gov/ag60consdistdir/>

OR

Resource Conservation and Forestry Division  
523 E. Capitol Avenue  
Pierre, SD 57501-3182  
Telephone: 605.773.3623