

# Start Shooting for the 2009 Photo Contest

sponsored by the Sweetwater County Conservation District (SWCCD).

A picture can be worth even more than a thousand words. Good photographs can lend a helping hand to numerous projects: they strengthen publicity for a fund-raiser, make a newsletter more appealing, and reveal the beauty of private and public land to elementary students. To recognize individuals who use this tool effectively and creatively, SWCCD is sponsoring its first annual photo contest.

## CATEGORIES

Photographs may be entered in the following categories:

- **Annual Theme** "Water is Our Future"
- **Conservation** Photos of volunteers planting trees or of district personnel advising a farmer could be entered in this category. Think of photo shots of conservation best practices, close up conservation in action, and agriculture and conservation across Sweetwater County.
- **Education** Entries in this category might show a workshop for local teachers or a farmer learning about wetlands. This is also the place to enter your best photos of children taking part in conservation activities.
- **Trees and Plants** Enter anything from a field of wildflowers to a gnarled oak tree.
- **Wildlife** In this category, you might show deer running through the woods or a bird nest in an urban neighborhood. Landscapes Sunsets, mountains, city parks and other impressive views are appropriate subjects for this category.
- **Agriculture** Photos will be selected that depict the diversity of agriculture, horticulture, and natural resources on the counties' farms and ranches throughout the year.
- **Youth Only** This category is designed for youths up to age 18. Photos may cover any category. All photos will be judged as one category.

## GUIDELINES

1. The contest is open to amateur photographers (those who make less than 50 percent of their income from photography) who are residents of the United States or its territories. Each participant may enter up to, but no more than, five photographs. **Photos will not be returned.**
2. Black-and-white prints, color prints, color slides, and prints from digital photos are all acceptable and will be judged together. Do not send photo reproductions from a printed publication. There is no size requirement — **however, judges prefer that photos be no larger than 8x10 and that they not be matted.**
3. Images must not have been digitally altered in any way other than necessary burning dodging and cropping.
4. A completed entry form must accompany each photograph submitted.
5. A 3x5 note card containing the following information must be attached to the back of each photo. For slides, please enclose the slide in a plastic square from a slide protector sheet and staple the square to the card. Include:

- A. Photographer's name and phone number.**
- B. Title of photograph.** Please use same title as on entry form.
- C. Subject.** Names and titles are needed for each person in the photo. (Take care to identify each person and spell names correctly.)
- D. Location.** If the photograph is of a district technician helping a farmer, identify the farm, county and state. If the photo shows a city park, mention the name of the park and the state.
- E. Description.** Is the child with the magnifying glass examining a crack in the sidewalk or a line of ants carrying food?
- F. Date of photo.** Exact dates are not necessary, but at least give the year.
6. All entries become the property of SWCCD, and SWCCD reserves the non-exclusive right to use all photographs in publications or for promotional purposes. Entrants should keep negatives or extra prints of their photographs.
  7. All winners will be asked to email a copy of their winning photo as a .jpg file to SWCCD.
  8. Judges will select one winner in each of the six categories. Each first place winner will receive a **\$100 cash prize**. 2nd and 3rd place winners will receive a \$25 gift card prize.
  9. **All entries must be in the Sweetwater County Conservation District by October 1, 2009.** Placing a piece of cardboard in the envelope and writing "**Photographs: Do Not Bend**" on the envelope will help ensure that photographs arrive in good condition. **Send entries to: Sweetwater County Conservation District, 79 Winston Dr. Suite 110, Rock Springs, WY 82901**

## Judging Standards

### TECHNICAL MERIT

For technical merit, judges may check to see if the photo is:

**Well-framed** - The photographer should be close enough to the subject to leave irrelevant or distracting items out of the shot. For example, photographs usually should not include unnecessary space above subjects' heads or the shoulder of someone not intended to be part of the photograph. However, objects like tree branches, tall grass or a railroad track can sometimes create a nice effect if carefully and purposely included in a picture.

**Properly Exposed** - Subjects' faces should not be washed out or shadowy. Backlighting, improper use of a flash and incorrect exposure settings on the camera often cause exposure problems.

**Sharp and Clear** - The center of interest should be sharp and clear; however, not everything in the photograph must be sharp. In fact, selective focus adds greatly to the appeal of some photographs. A blurred hand can sometimes be effective at showing action, for instance. Carefully adjusting your focus and correctly using shutter speed and f-stop settings will produce sharp photographs.

### COMPOSITION

For composition, judges determine if the photo features:

**A Recognizable Center of Interest** - The photo should generally be well organized, so that the eye immediately recognizes one subject as the most important element of the picture. This element should not necessarily be in the center of the frame, but should follow the rule of thirds.

**Action** - A photograph should usually show some kind of action, particularly if people are the subject. However, some photographs, such as landscapes, do not require action.

**Imagination and Creativity** - An interesting camera angle or lighting effect can make the difference between a technically good but boring photograph and an award-winning photograph. For example, a photographer who lays on her back next to a row of carrots while the gardener is harvesting may capture the expression on the gardener's face and the soil falling away from the carrot as it is uprooted. An eye-level shot would probably show the top of the gardener's head and a bag of carrots. Many traditional photographic rules can be broken for the sake of creativity.