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California Water Service Launches Fourth Annual Student Water Conservation Competition

Students Invited to Design and Submit Solutions to Local Water Issues

SAN JOSE, Calif., Dec. 11, 2017 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- (NYSE:CWT) -- California Water Service (Cal Water) and its partner, the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE), announced today the launch of the fourth annual Cal Water H₂O Challenge. Fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade classrooms in Cal Water service areas are eligible to compete for cash prizes and an overnight field trip by designing solutions for local water conservation issues.

The Cal Water H₂O Challenge classroom contest is a project-based competition for schools seeking to enhance students' understanding of water-based science concepts. Over the course of four to eight weeks, students and their teachers will initiate, develop, and implement a project focused on a community-based water issue. Each portfolio submission will include a description of the project goals, student research, science and/or engineering experimentation, actions to solve a local water issue, public outreach efforts, and student/teacher reflections.

The program offers a unique opportunity for teachers to incorporate English, math, and language arts Common Core State Standards into a hands-on learning project, and complements Next Generation Science Standards. Participating teachers will also receive technical, expert, and monetary support via educational resources and consultants throughout the competition.

"The students participating in the Cal Water H₂O Challenge continually inspire us with their creativity and viable, real-life solutions," said Martin A. Kropelnicki, Cal Water President and CEO. "Their innovations benefit our state and encourage their communities to actively address water conservation. We're sure this year will be equally rewarding."

Christiane Maertens, NAAEE Deputy Director, sees no end to the program benefits. "The Cal Water H₂O Challenge shows how involving students in hands-on, water conservation projects leads them to grasp the importance of local and global natural resources," Maertens said. "The program is creating next-generation conservationists. Students are walking away with stronger values of social responsibility, environmental stewardship, and community involvement."

The grand prize-winning classroom will receive \$3,500 and an all-expenses-paid, tent-camping trip for the classroom students to the Santa Monica Mountains with NatureBridge for a nature and science education experience. Other winning classes will receive grants and additional prizes for students and teachers, while early registrants will be entered into a lottery for a chance to win one of 20 \$500 grants.

Last year's grand-prize winner, Emily Akimoto and her fifth-grade students from Sierra View Elementary (Chico, Calif.), developed a project inspired by the water quality disaster in Flint, Mich.: They set out to measure the levels of constituents in the water at their school. Ms. Akimoto explains the impact of the project on her class: "My students were so excited about this project, and that excitement translated into authentic learning. My students were willing to give their own time, often spending their lunches in my classroom researching and writing. They would work at home. They found ways to use technology to collaborate with each other. In short, their excitement for learning and passion for the project was something that could have never come from a textbook."

For more information, visit challenge.calwater.com.

About Cal Water

California Water Service serves about 2 million people through 482,400 service connections in California. The company has provided water service in the state since 1926. Additional information may be obtained online at www.calwater.com.

About NAAEE

The North American Association for Environmental Education is a membership organization dedicated to accelerating environmental literacy and civic engagement through education. NAAEE supports a network of more than 20,000 members working in environmental education in more than 30 countries through direct membership and 54 regional affiliate organizations. For more information, visit www.naaee.net.