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# Willows Fifth-Graders Win 2018 Cal Water H2O Challenge Grand Prize

## Murdock Elementary students taught their community how and why to preserve drinking water

WILLOWS, Calif., March 27, 2018 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- (NYSE: CWT)

Mike Buckley's fifth-grade students at Murdock Elementary (Willows, Calif.) learned today that they won the 2018 Cal Water H<sub>2</sub>O Challenge grand prize for their efforts to protect drinking water at school and throughout the community. The grand prize includes a \$3,500 grant for the classroom and a tent-camping trip to the Santa Monica Mountains in conjunction with the NatureBridge environmental science education program.

The Cal Water H<sub>2</sub>O Challenge ([challenge.calwater.com](http://challenge.calwater.com)) is a collaboration between Cal Water and the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE). It is open annually to students and teachers in grades 4-6 in schools served by Cal Water and asks participants to adopt a project that addresses a local or global water-related issue.

For their project titled "Protect Our Drinking Water," Buckley's students measured the safety of local drinking water, established a plan to protect the water supply, and educated the community on how and why they should help. During the project, students researched water quality and wrote essays, met with a local expert on groundwater, and visited a wastewater treatment facility. Students applied their findings by installing 25 storm drain markers to reduce littering into waterways; testing local water quality at 15 locations; and designing, engineering, testing, and redesigning water filters. Next, students shared their knowledge and findings by presenting to 16 classrooms, creating and distributing a brochure to limit the impact of potentially hazardous waste on the local water supply, and being featured in local newspapers.

Participating in the Cal Water H<sub>2</sub>O Challenge has created a classroom full of scientists, according to Buckley. He said: "The Cal Water H<sub>2</sub>O Challenge is a fantastic opportunity for the students to engage in a STEM project. They read about scientific concepts and engaged in experimentation. They used technology to research, make an action plan, create brochures, and make slideshows for classroom presentations and their Water Challenge portfolio. They engineered a water filter in class and then visited a wastewater plant and saw the work of professional environmental engineers. And, they used math to chart and analyze their water quality testing data and create a functional schedule for their classroom presentations. Essentially, this is a great real-world assignment that they can take with them for the rest of their lives and pass on to others."

"Once again, we are impressed by the creativity, commitment, and innovation all participating schools, teachers, and students showed in the 2018 Cal Water H<sub>2</sub>O Challenge, and I am especially proud of our winning class," said Shannon Dean, Cal Water Vice

President of Corporate Communications and Community Affairs. “Protecting our customers’ health and safety has been our highest priority since our inception in 1926, and seeing students engage in water issues and apply their learnings to real-world situations will help continue to improve the quality of life in our communities for generations to come.”

The Challenge also furthers NAAEE’s National Project for Excellence in Environmental Education goals, according to Christiane Maertens, NAAEE’s deputy director. “This competition is teaching kids how to be hands-on advocates for resources their communities value the most,” she said.

NAAEE’s partnership with Cal Water is expanding water conservation efforts throughout the state and building educational programs into school curriculums. “Students are learning the basics of science through environmental education,” Maertens said. “These projects give students the opportunity to integrate the learning principles of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) and NGSS (Next Generation Science Standards) into solving problems that directly affect our schools and neighborhoods.”

Other Cal Water H<sub>2</sub>O Challenge winners are:

2nd place: Julie Moore’s sixth-grade class from San Lauren Elementary in Bakersfield, Calif., developed public service announcements to teach fellow students to preserve their watershed. This class won a \$2,500 classroom grant along with a pizza party and Cal Water prize pack for each student in the class.

3rd place: Emily Akimoto’s fourth-grade students from Sierra View Elementary in Chico, Calif., were inspired to address the state’s drought issue by learning how to filter and reuse water that might otherwise be wasted. These winners received a \$2,000 classroom grant plus a Cal Water prize pack for each class student.

4th place: Caryl Brewbaker’s fourth-grade students at Oak Knoll Elementary in Menlo Park, Calif., explored the benefits of xeriscaping on the water cycle, global warming, and water conservation. The class received a \$1,000 grant and Cal Water prize pack for each student in the class.

### ***About Cal Water***

California Water Service serves about 2 million people through 482,400 service connections in California. The utility has provided water service in the state since 1926. Additional information may be obtained online at [www.calwater.com](http://www.calwater.com).

### ***About NAAEE***

For four decades, the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) has been dedicated to accelerating environmental literacy and civic engagement through the power of education. NAAEE supports a network of 20,000 educators and 56 regional affiliate organizations working in environmental education in more than 30 countries. For more information, visit [www.naaee.org](http://www.naaee.org).