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NEWS RELEASE

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Editor's note: Three photos accompany this article. Captions and photos are at the end of the article.

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Water Rocks!

AMES, IA—What do rubber ducks, dogs, pirates, poop, and poodle skirts have in common? These are all tools being used to promote a new statewide awareness campaign called “Water Rocks!”.

As a part of Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, Water Rocks! delivers entertaining and engaging activities to inspire kids of all ages to appreciate water resources. Through classroom visits, interactive website, an award-winning computer game, songs, music videos, dogs, enhanced learning activities, public service ads, teacher/peer mentor workshops and geocaching, Water Rocks! offers an original, light-hearted approach to this vast topic.

“It begins and ends with water,” explains Jacqueline Comito, director of the campaign. “The long-term health of our land and water rests in our youth, the future decision-makers. We use music, science, math, art, video and technology as the means of reminding students of the fact that water is elemental to life.”

Through music

The campaign uses music in a big way to show that water really does rock. Kids, families and classrooms can watch original music videos on the Water Rocks! website or YouTube channel. “Human Landfills,” “Everybody Poops” and “Will U B the H 2 my O?” offer catchy tunes and

great visuals to make learning easier. Audio recordings of original water-related songs including “Dino Water” “Shout Out to the Trout” and “Climate Change Remix” are also on the website.

“Music is elemental to our lives. Something sung is more powerful and easier to remember than spoken word. It triggers our imagination and touches our heart,” says Comito.

In person

The Water Rocks! team visits K-12 classrooms across Iowa, at no charge, teaching kids about water, natural resources and agriculture. Weaving science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) with the arts, students complete learning activities including We All Live in A Watershed, Wetland Bingo, Habitat Hopscotch, Creature Cache, and more. Within a class period, kids could learn a new song, learn what a watershed is and which one they live in, or about soil properties; the age-appropriate lessons are fun and memorable.

The team may also bring the Conservation Station in the spring and fall months. The Conservation Station teaches how agriculture and urban areas are connected through water. Its rainfall simulator shows the effects of rainfall on various surfaces including bare soil, no-tilled soil and types of pavement.

In 2014, Water Rocks! will hold a teacher summit where selected Iowa educators and student peer mentors meet to discuss water education and will take a kit of the Water Rocks! activities back to use in their classrooms.

Through nature

Water Rocks! encourages everyone to spend more time outside and appreciate Iowa’s natural areas. Geocaching is a great activity to do as a family, in small groups, or alone. Using a GPS device or smart phone, geocachers seek treasure boxes, or caches, hidden all over Iowa. Water Rocks! caches will use riddles and fun facts to teach the participants about watersheds, water quality and the parks. These caches have been placed in 11 Iowa state parks for geocachers to find while exploring these beautiful areas. Coordinates to these caches are on the Water Rocks! website.

Through media

The website also has videos that resonate with the affection that Iowans have for the state. “Treasures of Iowa” and “I am an Iowan” are reminders of how wonderful Iowa is and why water quality is important here. Watch and listen for the public service ads “What’s in your water?” on WHO and KWWL television stations as well as on RadioIowa affiliated stations.

The nationally recognized computer game “Rock Your Watershed!” uses agricultural scenarios to teach the effects of different land treatments. On 10 parcels of land within a watershed, players choose combinations of land uses, along with tillage choices and rates of fertilizer to aim for the highest score. But rainfall could be a lot or a little, affecting the land and the score. The game recently won national honors from the American Society of Agricultural and Biosystems Engineers (ASABE).

All of the videos, songs and the computer game can be found on the Water Rocks! website: www.waterrocks.org. New videos and educational materials will be released on a monthly basis starting in September 2013.

The sister website: www.conservationpack.org, explores natural resources through the Conservation Dogs. Like dogs working together in a pack, kids can work together to conserve natural resources. The Conservation Dogs are busy visiting people who work with some aspect of water in the video series “Adventures of the Conservation Pack.” The Water Rocks! team uses stories and photographs of the dogs also help younger students in the classroom to learn about natural resources.

Water Rocks! encourages everyone to appreciate the abundance of water that Iowa has and not take it for granted. The campaign brings awareness and education to a wide variety of audiences using different learning approaches. Visit the website to learn more and to request a classroom visit: www.waterrocks.org, or follow us on Facebook.

Partners of Water Rocks! are Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, Iowa Water Center and Iowa Learning Farms.



Photo 1 caption: The cast of “Will U B the H 2 my O?” pauses during filming. The music video can be seen on the Water Rocks! website.



Photo 2 caption: One of the public service ads “What’s in your water?” replaces rubber ducks with raindrops so we may see what is in our water more easily.



Photo 3 caption: At a school visit, the Water Rocks! team helps students see the cumulative effect of pollutants in the water. Students contribute representations of bacteria, chemicals, soil and other things to the water source in the watershed.