



Florida A&WMA Student Environmental Challenge International (ECi) Student Competition

2026

Protocol

General Description

The Florida Section of the Air & Waste Management Association (A&WMA) is pleased to host the 2026 Florida Student Environmental Challenge international (ECi), an academic competition designed to engage students in solving a complex environmental problem reflective of real-world issues faced within the state. The Challenge provides students with an opportunity to demonstrate their technical, regulatory, economic, and communication skills while interacting with environmental professionals and gaining exposure to the types of multidisciplinary problem-solving required in practice. The event also supports the Section's broader goal of fostering student involvement in A&WMA and strengthening connections between academic institutions and the environmental professional community.

The goals of the ECi are to:

- Engage students with A&WMA and the Florida environmental professional community
- Provide hands-on experience addressing complex environmental issues
- Offer opportunities for students to demonstrate technical and communication skills
- Support networking with environmental professionals, agencies, and potential employers

The ECi is designed to promote formation of student teams with the broadest feasible range of environmental disciplines including engineering, planning, policy, economics, and various other sciences. The problem will be relevant to the Florida and current events. Teams must research the problem background, as well as the technical, social, economic, and political aspects of the situation. Teams must stay apprised of ongoing events related to the problem, adjusting their solutions appropriately leading up to and during the conference.

Although winning solutions to the proposed problem must have sound engineering and technical bases, the solution does not require a full engineering design presentation. Similarly, all problems pose economic and political issues that must be addressed. Solutions are expected to provide reasonable resolutions applying basic engineering and scientific knowledge to research scenarios and critical questions.

Student teams should start to form following the posting of the problem. Just as corporations and other organizations pull together teams from their staff to address any given project most



effectively, so too should each student team begin by identifying and recruiting representatives from appropriate disciplines as needed to address the problem holistically. Schools may wish to consider combining students to make balanced teams and are encouraged to do so.

Student teams must register for the ECi by Chrissy Schaub (cschaub@quadraticconsultingllc.com). The email should be sent by one team member and have the subject “FL A&WMA: ACE 2026 – ECi Registration.” Team registrations are due by Monday, April 13, 2026.

In the body of the email, you should include 1) Your team’s name, 2) The academic institution your team represents, 3) The name and email of each team member, and 4) A notation of the team leader.

Please note: Each team member must also register for the conference in addition to registering for the ECi. If all the team members are NOT registered, the team cannot participate. Register online at: 2026 Florida Section AWMA Annual Conference

ECi COMPETITION PREPARATION

Eligibility

Student teams may not contain more than 5 members and are generally comprised of 2 to 6 undergraduate students, graduate students, Ph.D. candidates, or recent graduates, or a combination thereof. Multiple schools may wish to consider combining students to create balanced teams and are encouraged to do so.

A student is defined as an individual who is enrolled in an academic institution or a recent graduate of no more than one year, and who does not hold a full-time job.

Expectations for proposed problem solutions

Solid technical analysis, logic train, process, conceptualizations, and creativity are all critically important to the proposal and presentation composition. Clear and concise presentation of your thoughts in a public forum is paramount to success. Your team will need to make reasonable assumptions as part of the solution. The assumptions must pass the “straight-face” test. This is (almost) the real world! The proposal must identify each team member by name and the role they will have in the presentation (e.g., “Sally Smith” is

Written Proposal

Each team must submit, via email to **Chrissy Schaub (cschaub@quadraticconsultingllc.com)** a written proposal in advance of the conference that addresses the problem. The proposal must be received by 5:00 p.m. ET on **Friday, May 10, 2026**. The written proposal should provide an outline of the approach that your team is going to take, the issues that you will be discussing, include the names and roles of each team member, and **shall not exceed 5 pages**.



The written proposal will contain a cover page with the team name, name of academic institution that the team represents, each team member's name and email address. The cover page is not counted as part of the proposal's 5-page limit. Additionally, references and appendices may be included but make sure these are clearly identified as such. If included, these are not counted in the proposal's 5-page limit and **please keep in mind the judges will only be scoring based on the 5-page proposal and may not consider this additional information.**

The written proposal should be 1.5-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman, with 1" margins.

The Tweak

No matter how much you research and preparation you conduct, unexpected events and changing expectations can and do occur in real life. To this end, you should expect (available on or about **Friday, May 10, 2026**, on the FL AWMA website as well as emailed to team leaders) some late breaking information that might alter your approach to the solution. The problem and the tweak will require that you find and talk to "experts" during the conference, for answers and important information.

Role Players

During the conference, you will be required to speak with role players involved with the problem. These role players will be project proponent(s), regulators, politicians, activists, and other expected or unexpected individuals critical to creating a solution to the problem. Role players will offer insight and clarify any additional questions each team may have in relation to the problem. During the ECi orientation, role players will be introduced, and their availability/locations will be made known. Role players will also be judging your interactions with them. When meeting with role players, please use professionalism during all business meetings and technical and plenary sessions and have fun while remembering your environment. While these role players are critical, so are the technical sessions and exhibitors that are related to the problem.

THE PRESENTATION

For the final presentation, teams must demonstrate their understanding of the issues in the written proposal and address the tweak. Sustainable approaches for these and other site issues are of great interest to the project owner(s). The winning team presentation will be strong in approach, logic, clarity, application, and creativity. Presentation order will be chosen randomly. A computer and projector will be provided for the presentation. Presentations are required to be prepared using Microsoft PowerPoint and teams must use the room computer. Please bring your presentation on a data stick/USB thumb drive in order to be transferred to the room's computer. You should plan for no more than a 15-minute presentation followed by 5 minutes of questions and answers. The presentation must address the tweak that was provided to you.

Infographic/PowerPoint Guidelines

Infographics and/or PowerPoint should be geared toward the general public and should condense the key points of your report and presentation into an engaging and informative summary.

- All infographics must be created in a desktop page layout software (PowerPoint, Adobe InDesign, QuarkXPress) or an online infographic design site that can produce high-res images.
- Infographics created in Microsoft Word or PageMaker will not be accepted.
- All art must be formatted as hi-res images at least 266 dpi in RAW .jpg format.
- Final document must be saved as a hi-res PDF with all art and images embedded.
- Infographic file shall be submitted zipped file.
- Be clear and concise with design and content. Overcrowding makes it difficult to read.
- Your infographic/ppt must include the university represented and all team member names. Figures, graphs, and tables should be uncluttered and simple and arranged in the sequence in which you want them to be viewed.
- Provide clear labels or headings for each section of your infographic/ppt.
- Remember contrast. Put light-colored text on dark backgrounds and dark text on light-colored backgrounds so that your viewer can see your text clearly.
- Drawings, illustrations, and/or diagrams (with the exception of open-source icons and clipart available through the design software of your choice) must be the student's own work

Tips for imbedded graphics:

- Use high-resolution images.
- Do not cut and paste art or screen-filled shapes from PowerPoint.
- Text may be copied and pasted from PowerPoint into the layout software, but it will require applying the "create to outline" setting after pasting.

Judging

Prize money (*) will be awarded to top scoring teams. Overall ECi winners will be announced at lunch on Thursday, May 21, 2026, from 12:00 PM to 1:30 PM local time.

*ECi Competition Prize denominations are subject to sponsorship level and may change prior the event. ECi Prize amounts will be determined closer to the conference.