

WaterWays Science Festival – Public Waterway Education

Population / Audience

The City of Cape Coral is a rapidly growing coastal municipality in Southwest Florida with approximately 250,000 residents and an extensive network of canals, waterways, and stormwater infrastructure. Launched in 2024, the annual WaterWays Science Festival serves a broad and diverse audience, including families, students, educators, businesses, and residents of all ages. The event is designed to increase understanding of how local waterways function and how individual actions affect stormwater quality, flooding, and environmental health. Data from the 2026 festival confirms strong community engagement, with over 1,200 attendees during the six-hour event and an average dwell time of approximately two hours per visitor.

Personnel Involved

The WaterWays Science Festival is led and organized by the City of Cape Coral with participation from six City departments encompassing 14 divisions and units. More than 30 federal, state, county, nonprofit, and private environmental education partners contribute expertise and programming. Over 50 volunteers, including high school students, college students, and community members, support the event. The 2026 festival featured more than 70 interactive educational stations. City staff from environmental science, engineering, stormwater operations, survey, code compliance, solid waste, utilities, parks and recreation, fire, and police marine units develop and staff hands-on activities. Participating agencies provide demonstrations and instruction on stormwater flow, water quality, canal systems, habitat and wildlife enhancement, conservation, restoration, marine research, and pollution prevention.

Budget and Funding

The festival is funded through City operational funds for planning, logistics, advertising, and event execution, supplemented by in-kind contributions from participating agencies and volunteers. These contributions include staff time, travel, equipment, educational materials, and giveaways. By leveraging existing City assets and cross-departmental resources, the event delivers high-impact environmental education at minimal additional cost, ensuring that the festival remains free, inclusive, and accessible to the entire community.

Goals and Objectives

The festival's mission, as presented on the City website and integrated throughout its messaging campaign, is to encourage community action on environmental issues through education, games, volunteerism, and interactive science activities. Core objectives include increasing public understanding of the connection between landscaping practices, stormwater systems, water quality, and ecosystem health; educating residents on how canals, swales, and drainage infrastructure function; and promoting pollution prevention strategies. Through experiential learning and direct engagement with professionals, the festival promotes long-term behavior change and strengthens community stewardship of Cape Coral's waterways.

WaterWays Science Festival – Supporting Information

1. Event Overview & Impact Metrics

The 2026 WaterWays Science Festival was held at Cultural Park in Cape Coral, Florida, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The free, family-friendly event focused on environmental education, stormwater awareness, and community stewardship.

- Over 1,200 attendees during the six-hour event.
- Average dwell time of approximately two hours per visitor.
- More than 70 interactive educational stations.
- Participation from over 30 federal, state, county, nonprofit, and private partners.
- More than 50 volunteers supporting event operations.

2. Educational Programming

Educational stations addressed stormwater system functionality, canal operations, water quality protection, habitat enhancement, marine research, conservation practices, and pollution prevention. Interactive demonstrations allowed residents to visualize how swales, canals, and drainage infrastructure function and how individual landscaping and disposal practices directly affect water quality.

3. Community Engagement & Partnerships

Six City departments encompassing 14 divisions collaborated to deliver this event. Cross-departmental coordination included Environmental Resources, Stormwater, Surface Water, Utilities, Solid Waste, Parks & Recreation, Police Marine Unit, and Fire Rescue. The event strengthened relationships between municipal agencies and environmental partners while providing direct public access to subject-matter experts.

4. Photo Documentation (Representative Examples)

Representative photographs included in this package demonstrate: • Interactive stormwater flow demonstrations • Educational booths and hands-on science activities • Public engagement with City engineers and environmental staff • Volunteer coordination and community participation • Marine and habitat educational displays (Photos should be inserted here in final submission package.)

THE CITY OF CAPE CORAL INVITES YOU TO THE THIRD ANNUAL

WATER WAYS

Science Festival



SATURDAY

FEB 7, 2026

10:00 AM - 4:00 PM

528 CULTURAL PARK BLVD.



CLICK OR SCAN TO CHECK
OUT OUR EVENT PAGE

DISCOVER LANDSCAPING PRACTICES
THAT PROMOTE
WILDLIFE, WATER QUALITY, CONSERVATION

NATIVE PLANT GIVEAWAYS & VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES



2026 Hands-On Water Testing Laboratory Experiments



2026 Wetlands and Uplands Wildlife, Native and Invasive



2026 University of Central Florida Algae Bloom Effects on Human Health



2026 Plastic Pollution Save the Mermaid!



2026 Septic to Sewer Engineering activity



Vertical Oyster Garden Calusa Waterkeeper



2026 Native Landscaping Education, Planting, and Giveaways activity



2026 Hands-On Science Education



2025 Festival snapshot of attendance at same location



2024 Inaugural festival snapshot of attendance at different location



2026 Final Cleanup after festival