

## *Watershed Is Where It's At*

*(15 minute activity)*

- Objectives* Students will be able to:
- 1) Describe the watershed concept
  - 2) Give their watershed address
  - 3) Cite ways people affect their watershed

- Materials*
- Paper and Pencils
  - Paper Bags
  - Branch with twigs extending out from it

*Background* Ask students to explain the *watershed* concept. If they are unfamiliar with it, help generate discussion by using a bare tree branch to explain the definition found in the glossary. Pointing to different features, explain that the branch has twigs leading to a central stem and everything that happens to the twigs affects the stem. In every watershed, water flows to the lowest point, represented by the stem, which usually contains a receiving body of surface water. It begins with small rivulets and gathers in larger streams. On its way, water travels over the surface and across farm fields, forest land, suburban lawns, and city streets, or it seeps into the soil and travels as groundwater. All land on Earth is part of a watershed. A watershed may even be a drainage area surrounding a lake that has no surface outlet. Large watersheds are made up of many smaller watersheds, such as those that drain into the Columbia, Sacramento, and Mississippi Rivers or the Chesapeake Bay. Watersheds usually have the same name as the main body of water that drains them. In mountainous areas, watersheds are easy to delineate. However, even land that looks flat is part of a watershed. You could use the analogy that a watershed is like a raincoat; because... rain falls on it, water runs off it, water runs across it, its shape depends upon what's underneath, water pools on it, etc.

**Watershed Influences:** The personal actions of every watershed resident or visitor can affect it in numerous ways: Car oil and exhaust is washed off roads into streams, poorly maintained septic systems leak into groundwater, detergent from washing autos on pavement flows into nearby storm drains, and removal of riparian plants near homes and businesses allows pollutants to enter freely. All of these become part of the non-point source pollution that directly

*Background*  
*continued* impacts water quality. Conversely, people can benefit watersheds by turning off the faucet while brushing teeth to conserve water, planting green belt areas to filter urban runoff, and using non toxic methods to control home insect problems.

- Procedure*
1. **Watershed Address:** Have students think about their home addresses. Most addresses describe where someone lives using numbers and the names of streets, towns, and states. Point out that the first part of the address is so specific that it is probably different for each student. The latter parts of the address (town and state) become more general, so they are probably the same for all students.
  2. Ask students to write their home watershed addresses on a separate small piece of paper, keeping it anonymous. Does everyone in the class have the same watershed address? What is the watershed address for the closest town? The county? The state? The school? Watershed address examples are: Mission Creek or Icicle Creek, tributaries of the Wenatchee River, which is a tributary of the Columbia River, that flows into the Pacific Ocean.
  3. Place the addresses in a bag. Have each student pick one out. Can they guess who belongs to each address?

- Assessment* Ask students to:
- Conduct a research project on their home watersheds to determine understanding of the concept. Include land use practices, riparian plants typical of the area, and any known information about water quality. Assess the watershed's health and justify the rationale. Draw a map of the watershed to accompany the written document, labeling businesses, homes, schools, parks and other features.