



Chesapeake AWWA

American Water Works Association

What is a Watershed?

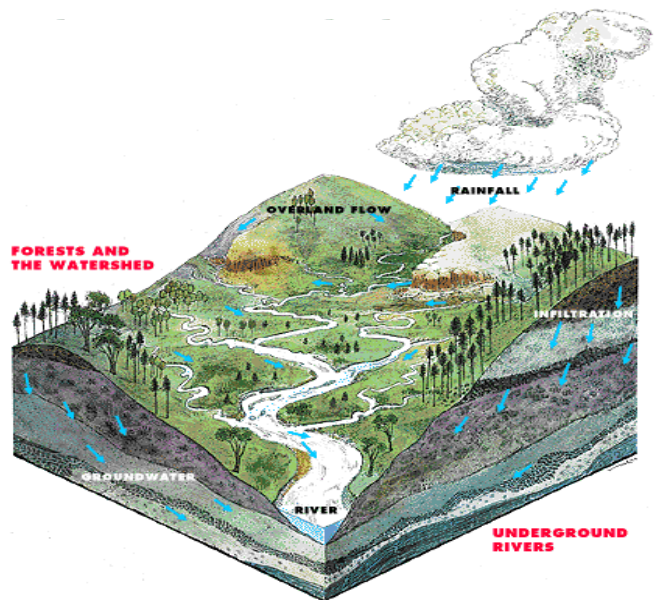
This activity will help you understand what a watershed is and how learning about watersheds can help you protect local water ways.

Think about the water cycle, describe what happens to precipitation once it falls to the ground as rain. Where does the rain go? Does it stay in one place? Does it travel around your community?

Think about water going downhill, what tells water the direction that it flows? (Hint it starts with the letter G). _____

When people hear the word **watershed** they think mostly about water ways (rivers, streams, and creeks) that send water to a large body of water like the Chesapeake Bay. But when we're talking about watersheds it's important to remember **the land that water flows over when it rains**. If a community lives in the Chesapeake Bay watershed it means that when it rains in that community the water will flow over the land then make its way to a body of water that connects to the Chesapeake Bay.

Everyone lives in a watershed, but not everyone lives in the Chesapeake Bay water.



Let's build a watershed:

Here are the materials you need:

- Empty cardboard or plastic box
- Paper from your recycling bin, the paper and plastic bubbles that come from packages, or scraps of fabric.
- 2 or 3 plastic bags (they should be able to easily cover the top of your box)

- An empty spray bottle or a paper or plastic cup with holes punched in the bottom with a nail or fork
- A cup of water and food coloring
- A towel or rag to clean up any spills
- A phone or camera to take a picture or video

Activity

This activity is best done outside or in an area that can get wet, like next to your kitchen sink or in the bathtub.

1. Put your box on the ground
2. Now use your paper, plastic bubbles, etc. to build landforms in your box – think about making mountains, hills, valleys, plateaus, etc.
3. Cover your landforms with the plastic bags (the plastic bags are like the landscape that we'd see if we were flying over our neighborhood, so roads, parking lots, grassy areas, neighborhoods, etc.) make sure the plastic bags overlap and tuck the edges into the sides of the box.
4. Draw your watershed and mark the areas where you think water will collect if it rained over the land.
5. Gather your water, spray bottle/cup with holes and food coloring. Add a few drops of food coloring to your water.
6. You may need a helper for the next step.
7. Grab your phone and get ready to take a video or pictures.
8. Time to make it rain! Spray water all over your watershed, make sure it rains evenly over your community.
9. Observe what happened. Did water collect where you thought it would?

10. Describe the landforms you've created.

Extensions

Brainstorm a list of things that people put on the ground that could get into waterways when it rains. What's one thing you could do to help keep pollutants from entering local waterways?

Visit <https://mywaterway.epa.gov/> and enter your address or zip code to learn about waterways in your community.