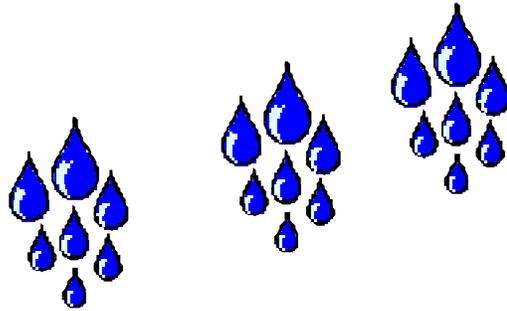


## FOCUS ON WATERSHEDS



### Objectives:

Students will:

- examine their surroundings,
- define what a watershed is,
- using the raised relief map, locate a watershed
- discuss what local, regional, and national watersheds are.

### Materials:

- Relief map
- Water container

### Background:

A watershed is the land area that is drained by a stream or river. The borders of a watershed are called “divides”, because they divide the water’s flow. In gently sloping terrain, divides may be hardly noticeable. In other areas, like the example contour map area, the divides can be mountains. Most small watersheds contribute to larger watersheds. Water moves through the watershed as part of the water cycle. To keep water clean or to make sure there is plenty to drink, we need to understand where water comes from and how and where it flows.

### Procedure:

1. Go outside and look at your surroundings. You can start anywhere – at home, school, or even downtown. Go to the highest point you can see within easy walking distance. If possible, go to the highest point in your community.
2. Look over the land and the way the ground slopes down from this high point. If it rained where would water flow? You are looking at a watershed or several watersheds. A watershed is the area of land where all water drains or “sheds” to the same body of water.
3. Does anything you see look like a possible water quality concern?
4. Brainstorm a list of the ways you can affect water. Be sure to think of activities inside and outside. Ask questions such as:
  - What activities use water? Two examples are: watering the grass or having a school car wash.
  - What activities create wastewater?
  - What do you already do to conserve or protect water?
5. Using the raised relief map, have a volunteer slowly pour water on what they define as the high point or “divide” of the watershed. Have students discuss which way the water travels. Why is the high point of the watershed called a divide? What are the small watersheds that start the flow of water? What larger watersheds do the smaller ones flow into? A watershed can be large, for example, the Mississippi River drainage base, or very small, such as the 40 acres that drain to a farm pond. Large watersheds are often called basins and contain many smaller watersheds.

**Extensions:**

Now that you have begun to explore your watershed, take a look at how your community fits in. Investigate ways people have changed your watershed. Visit libraries, museums, and cultural centers, or talk with people who have lived in your watershed a long time. See if you can answer these questions:

- What kinds of jobs do people have in your watershed today?
- How did people make a living here fifty years ago? 100 years ago? 150 years ago?
- How has transportation changed in your watershed? How do people travel today?
- List three things you enjoy doing in your watershed. List three things you cannot do there.