

## Introduction

This activity is designed to help you better understand just what a watershed is.

Essentially, a watershed is an area of land inside a ridge or landform that funnels water downwards into streams, creeks, and eventually larger rivers. Every drop of water that falls as snow or rain, or condenses from fog or mist inside these boundaries, helps supply water to ecosystems and communities below.

Watersheds can be tiny, like a small gully near your home, or large, like the entire Columbia River Basin! Watersheds may contain lakes, wetlands, and other water features, and the quality of water coming out the bottom is affected by all the natural and human-caused changes within that watershed.

Time: 15 minutes

Materials: Computer, tablet, internet connection, note paper or journal, pen or pencil

## Instructions

First, **watch this video** – an introduction to the Columbia River watershed. Then **select the Google Earth Flyover** of your community watershed. Watch the flyover and pick out some of the key features you might see if you were flying over your watershed. Notice some of the natural features, and some of the human features that might affect water quality in your watershed. To the best of your ability, answer the following questions based on what you see in the flyover.

## Questions

1. What is the name of your watershed?
2. Pretend you are on the phone with a friend who lives elsewhere. How would you describe the geography (the shape of the land) of your community watershed?
3. How does water get into the creek or river in your watershed? (hint: Remember the water cycle). **Watch**

**this short (5 minute) NASA video.**

4. What are some of the human activities in your watershed that might impact how clean, clear, and cold the water might be, for better or for worse? You might see some of these in the Google Earth Flyover, or you might have some personal awareness of activities in your watershed.

## Summary

Watersheds can be large or small, and each watershed has its own unique set of challenges and opportunities related to the natural features of that watershed, the ecosystem that relies on it, and the human activities that take place in that watershed. Knowing a little bit more about the names of your local watersheds, where your water comes from, and some of the challenges faced by water managers in your local community can help you understand more about how important water is, and why we all need to work together to protect this precious resource.

## Extensions

Using either **Google Maps** (turn on Satellite view) or **GoogleEarth**, get to know your local watersheds better by exploring the creeks and rivers around your community. Take note of the obvious human activities such as mining, roads, and logging and think about their potential impacts on how clean, clear, and cold the water might be as a result of these.

Pick a random location on Google Maps you've never been to near your community and learn more about it. It should be an obvious feature of some kind that you wonder about. Are there roads nearby? What is the nearest creek or lake? What are the names of mountains near it?

## Resources

To learn more about the Know Your Watershed Program **visit our web page.**