



WATERSHED ACTIVITY

Start by watching the "What is a watershed?" video at Heritage Conservancy's website. Then build your own watershed with this activity!

Key terms

Watershed: All the land that drains into a body of water (like a lake, stream or river).

Pollutants: Something introduced into the environment with undesired affects.

Supplies

Two pieces of paper; Water-based markers (blue, brown, red, and others); Water;

Spray bottle; Cookie sheet or tray

Instructions

1. Take one piece of paper and crumple it up. Then open it up, but don't completely flatten it. Leave some raised areas (hills).
2. Using the blue marker, carefully trace lines from the tops of the hills to the bottom of the hills, being careful not to completely flatten your paper. This will be your prediction of where the water will flow when it "rains".
3. Put your paper watershed on a tray or cookie sheet. Then fill the spray bottle with water and use it to lightly spray ("rain") on your watershed.
4. What did you observe? Did the rain flow where you thought it would? Water flows downhill, so the water should have gone from the hills to the valleys of your paper.
5. Crumple your second piece of paper and then open it up, leaving some shape to it so it isn't completely flat.
6. Using your blue marker, trace rivers on your paper like you did before.
7. Mark the tops of the hills with the brown marker. Using the red marker, make buildings. Feel free to get creative and use other colors to draw other items in your watershed.
8. Place the paper in the tray and lightly spray it with water to make it "rain".
9. What did you observe? Did all the colors flow together as the water moved down hill?

Discussion

All the rain water flows from high areas like hills to low areas like valleys. As the water moves down hill toward a stream, lake, or pond, it can collect different pollutants along the way. All the things we do on the land can impact the water we drink.

EXTENSIONS

Brainstorm different ways to protect our watershed. Here are some ideas: pick up trash, add native plants to your garden, keep areas near storm drains clear, and pick up after your pets. Can you come up with others?

Take this activity outside

1. Build your own watershed—Get creative by using rocks, outside toys, branches, leaves, etc... to build the hills, valleys, and buildings in your own little watershed on your driveway. Use sidewalk chalk to draw where you think the streams will flow through your watershed.
2. Make your prediction—What do you think will happen when it “rains” on your watershed?
3. With adult permission, use the hose or a watering can to “rain” on your watershed.
4. What did you observe? Where did all the “rain water” go?
5. Was your prediction correct?

For older students

- Did you know that you live in a watershed? Each one of us does! Locate the watershed that you live in using the *Science in Your Watershed* tool from the USGS: https://water.usgs.gov/wsc/map_index.html
- Explore impacts on our watershed using this fun *Model My Watershed* site: <https://modelmywatershed.org/>
- Watch the “What is a watershed?” video again and identify each point source and nonpoint source form of pollution.