

Activity #4: Create a Watershed

Introduction

This activity makes the concept of a watershed more concrete. It helps students understand what a watershed looks and functions like, and how all activities within the watershed affect its health.

Time: 20 minutes, plus discussion

Ages: upper elementary and older

Prep Work: none after gathering materials

Materials, per group of 3-5 students:

- Water-based markers
- Shallow baking pan or cookie sheet with sides
- Spray bottle filled with water
- A large sheet of stiff paper

Procedure

1. Have students crumple the paper into a ball and then unfold it, leaving ridges, depressions, and elevated areas.
2. Color along the ridges and "hills" of the watershed with green, brown, and gray markers to represent different land uses and pollutants, e.g. green could represent fertilizer and gray could represent industrial waste.
3. Use a blue marker to trace the streams or paths over which you think water will flow.
4. Lay the sheet in the pan and arrange it so that it resembles landforms.
5. Begin **slowly** misting the watershed with the spray bottle. Encourage students to discuss what's happening as colors flow downstream and mix, and notice how far they travel.

Discussion

Ask students what happened to the colors as it "rained" on the watershed. How does this reflect what happens in a real watershed? What happens if communities don't protect watersheds with responsible practices and policies?

Adapted from Earth Force GREEN *Protecting our Watersheds Activity Book*, Activity #1, "Create a Watershed." See <http://www.green.org/> to order.