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Friends of Lakes Folsom & Natoma

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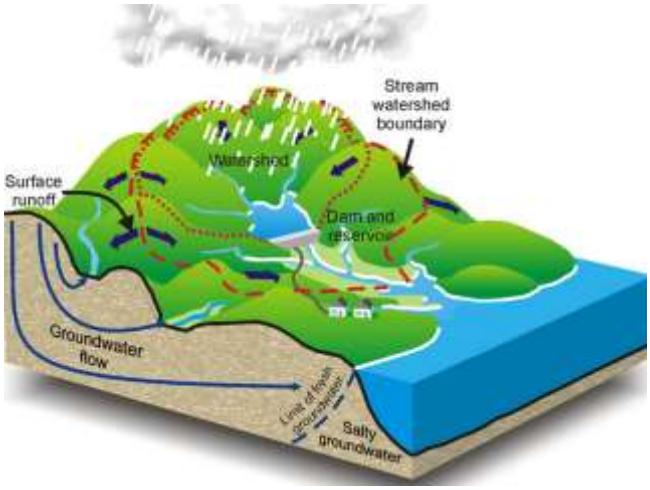
Your Watershed

What is a watershed?

A watershed is a land area that captures surface water, including rainfall, snow and ice, and drains it to a particular river, lake or stream, where it eventually empties into a larger body of water (usually an ocean). There are also watersheds within watersheds.

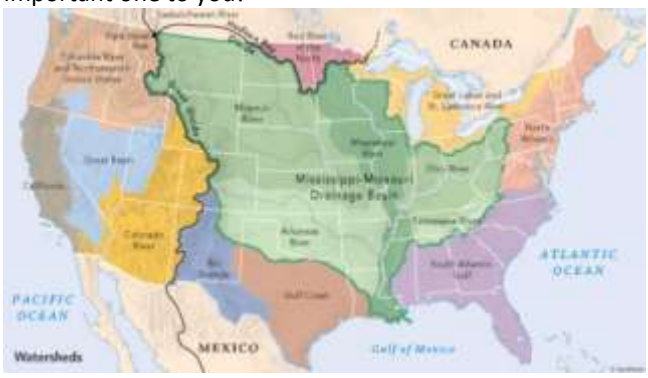


Why are watersheds important?

People and the environment depend on clean and safe water. Good management of our watersheds is essential for ensuring that we have clean and safe water.

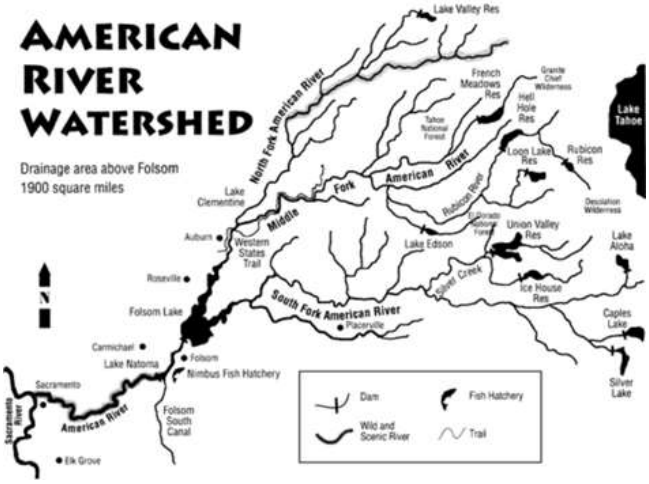
What are the three main watersheds in the United States?

The Gulf of Mexico Watershed, Atlantic Ocean Watershed, and Pacific Ocean Watershed are considered the three most important watersheds in the United States. However, the watershed where you live is probably the most important one to you!



What is the name of the watershed you live in?

Most of us who live in the Sacramento region, or between Sacramento and Lake Tahoe, live in the American River Watershed.



How can you protect your watershed?

Follow these seven rules:

1. **Practice water conservation**
   Use low-flow faucets, shower heads, reduced-flow toilet flushing equipment, and water saving appliances such as energy star dish and clothes washers. Repair leaking faucets, toilets, and pumps. Do not over-water your lawn or garden. Use slow-watering techniques such as drip irrigation.

2. **Use native vegetation and don't overuse fertilizers**
   Landscaping with native wildflowers and grasses improves the environment and brings a taste of wilderness to urban, suburban, and corporate settings by attracting a variety of birds, butterflies and other animals. Once established, native plants do not need fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides or watering, thereby improving the environment and reducing maintenance costs. Select plants that have low requirements for water, fertilizers, and pesticides. Cultivate plants that discourage pests but encourage honey bees. Minimize grass areas which require high maintenance. Use landscaping techniques such as porous walkways to increase infiltration and decrease runoff. Do not overuse fertilizer! Over-fertilization is a common problem, and the excess can leach into ground water or contaminate rivers or lakes. Nutrients from fertilizer cause excess weed growth which depletes the oxygen supply for fish and aquatic insects and makes the water unusable for boating and swimming. If you must have a lawn, leave your lawn clippings on the lawn so that nutrients in the clippings are recycled and less yard waste goes to disposal. Compost yard trimmings and use to naturally fertilize the lawn. Avoid using fertilizers near surface waters. Do not apply pesticides or fertilizers before or during rain due to the strong likelihood of runoff. Use slow release fertilizers on areas where the potential for water contamination is high.

3. **Capture and reuse rainfall**
   Don’t allow roof gutters to drain directly to the street or storm sewer. Allow drainage from the roof to flow over your lawn or capture in a barrel for reuse.

4. **Properly dispose of pet waste**
   Clean up after your pets. Pet waste contains nutrients and pathogens that can contaminate surface water. Scoop up waste and flush it down the toilet, or seal the waste in a plastic bag and put it in the garbage. You can bury small quantities of pet waste in your yard where it can decompose slowly, or use a pet waste compost bin.

5. **Eliminate vehicle leaks and spills**
   Allowing vehicles to leak oil and other fluids is bad for the environment. Antifreeze, for example, is deadly for pets and other animals. One quart of oil can contaminate up to two million gallons of otherwise clean water. So fix those leaks! Never put used oil or other chemicals down storm drains or in drainage ditches! Recycle used oil and antifreeze by taking them to service stations or other recycling centers!

6. **Properly dispose of chemicals and hazardous materials**
   Many household chemicals are toxic. Buy wisely. Buy products labeled biodegradable, non-toxic, non-phosphorus, and non-surfactant. Use non-toxic substitutes wherever possible. Soap, baking soda, vinegar, washing soda, ammonia, borax, alcohol, cornstarch, and certain food ingredients may be used to lift out spots and stains, deodorize, polish wood or metal, disinfect, scrub, repel pests, clean pets, wash and starch clothes, and perform other household tasks. Take unwanted household chemicals to hazardous waste collection centers; do not pour down the drain or on the ground! Use low-phosphate or phosphate-free dishwasher detergents.

7. **Support an organization that protects watersheds!**
   Participate in clean-up activities in your community!

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