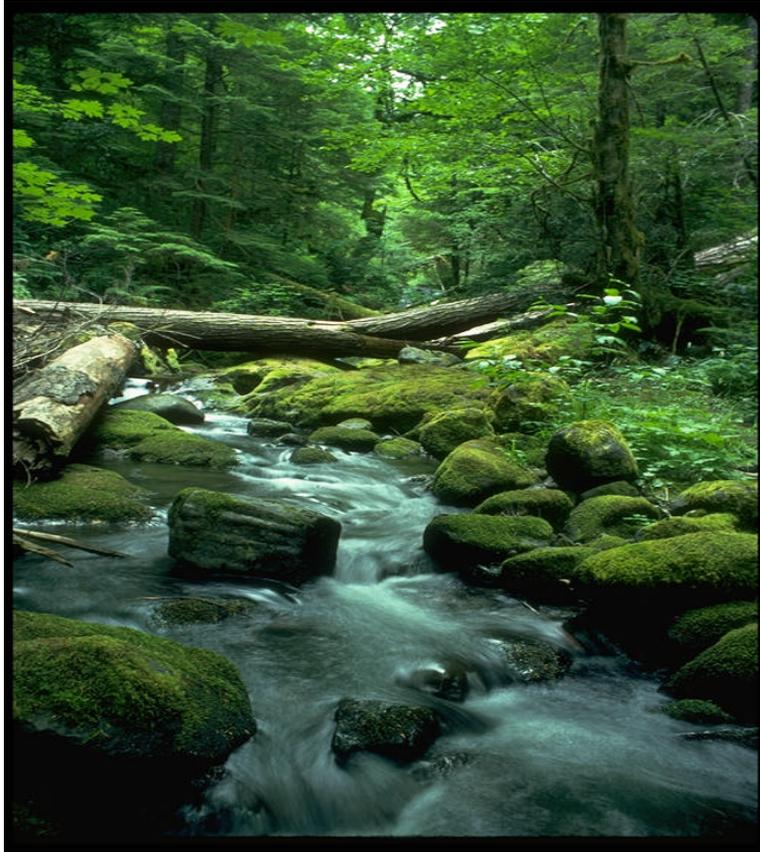


ECO-TIPS

"WHAT IS A WATERSHED?"



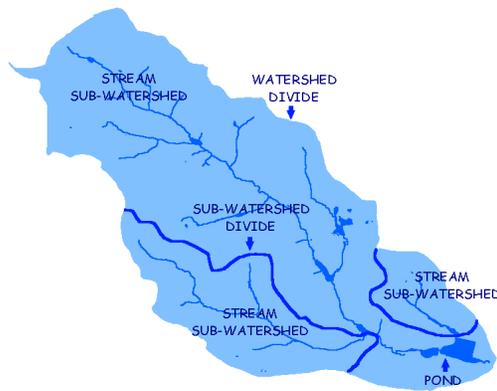
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WHAT IS A WATERSHED?

A watershed is all of the land that drains to one water body such as a river, lake, stream or bay. These land areas are separated by ridges called divides. These watershed divides are areas of high ground, where each side drains to a different body of water. A watershed can be further divided into sub-watersheds, when the waterbody is fed by several sources. For example, this illustration shows the watershed of a pond and its tributaries. The watershed of this pond can be further divided into the smaller sub-watersheds. The land area that drains into these streams, and ultimately to the pond are all part of the watershed.

A watershed can be as small as a neighborhood that drains to a local pond, or as large as several states that drain to a large river like the Delaware.



NON-POINT SOURCE POLLUTION

When rain water flows over the land within a watershed, it washes evidence of human or animal activity into the local waterbody. Water can wash many things downstream, such as soil, trash and pollutants. These pollutants can cause **Non-Point Source Pollution** (*NPS Pollution*). Sometimes *NPS Pollution* is called “pointless pollution” because it is difficult to find the “point” that the pollution came from. Instead of flowing out of a pipe, *NPS Pollution* is often “people pollution”, such as litter.

The kind of *NPS Pollution* can vary depending on the way the land within a watershed is used. A highly developed area, such as a city, may produce different types of pollution than an area which is used for farming. To determine if you have a pollution problem in your watershed, you can test your water quality. Depending on what you find, it may give you clues to the activities that are occurring upstream.

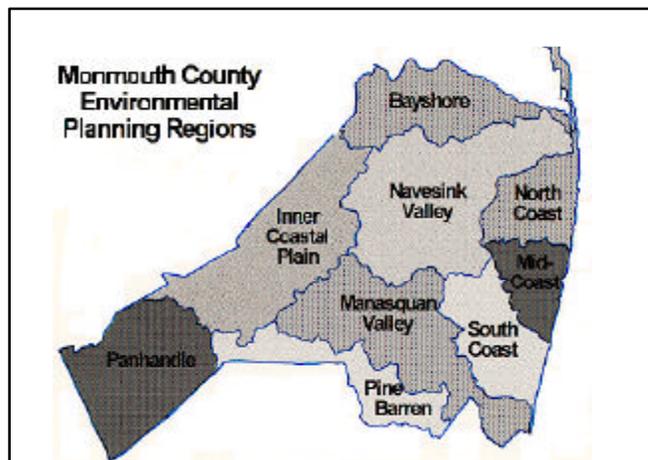
One common kind of “people pollution” comes from the everyday use of residential property, such as the care of lawns and gardens. Fertilizers and pesticides can be washed into local water ways by rain water runoff. This may cause an increase in nutrients, some of which are naturally occurring in the water ways. Too many nutrients, such as the nitrates and phosphates found in fertilizers and pesticides, can cause plant

life to over-grow. Too many plants can deplete the amount of oxygen needed to support aquatic life. The added nutrients can also speed up a natural process called eutrophication, by which water bodies fill in with decaying plant material and soil carried by rain water. If left alone, a lake could become a swamp and possibly even solid ground.

You can reduce the possible negative impacts you may have on the watershed by making a conscious effort to reduce what “people pollution” you may be contributing. The Monmouth County Planning Board can provide you with helpful information about reducing *NPS Pollution* through it’s regional watershed management programs.

WATERSHED PLANNING

As the flow of water is not dictated by town limits, efforts to reduce *NPS Pollution* can be managed regionally, by planning within watershed divides rather than municipal boundaries. Regional Watershed Planning began in Monmouth County when the Monmouth County Planning Board established nine environmental planning regions. These regions are based on ecology and bounded by watershed divides. Each region has it’s own combination of unique natural features. This regional approach created an opportunity for area municipalities to be actively involved in regional environmental planning for the future of the County and their watersheds. Regional Environmental Planning councils were established in each region, with representation from area municipalities. The Monmouth County Environmental Council acts as a liaison between these regional councils and the County Planning Board. Along with the County Environmental Council, these Regional Councils discuss regional environmental planning issues and implement regional environmental programs, such as the volunteer data collection programs. These programs involve local citizens interested in collecting information on the environmental quality of the County.



Watersheds can be used to monitor the effects of human activity on land and water. We are all upstream of some water body and our activities may affect the ecology and

water quality downstream. To learn more about how you can have a positive impact on your watershed:

Call

**Monmouth County Planning Board
Environmental Planning Section
at 732.431.7460**

or Write

**Monmouth County Planning Board
Environmental Planning Section
Hall of Records Annex
One East Main Street, Freehold, NJ 07728**