

Allen County Partnership for Water Quality

WATER MATTERS

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A Watershed: You're in one now!

No matter where you are, you are in a watershed. You can't escape it, no matter what! Do you know why?

A watershed is an area of land where all of the water that is under it or drains off of it goes into the same place. Homes, farms, forests, shopping malls, small towns, big cities and more can make up watersheds. Some watersheds cross county, state, and even international borders. The Maumee River Watershed, which we all affect, is one of these watersheds, as it ultimately leads to Ohio and Lake Erie.

Watersheds are either open or closed systems. In closed systems, such as the Great Salt Lake in Utah, water collects in a low point that lacks an outlet. The only way water leaves the system is through evaporation or seeping into the ground. Most watersheds are open and the water that collects eventually empties into the sea.

What things can harm the water quality in a watershed? Paved surfaces, such as parking lots, streets and roofs affect the watershed by not allowing water to be absorbed into the ground. Instead, water runs off streets and parking lots, collecting pollutants and is deposited into the waterways via storm drains. Overuse of agricultural chemicals and misuse of lawn fertilizers can affect the watershed as well. If not used to manufacturers' specifications, these chemicals can run off the land and directly into our waterways. Soil that runs off of farmland and construction sites can also pose a threat to our watershed. Muddy water can block sunlight from reaching plants, clog waterways, and physically harm animals.

Learn more about watersheds by visiting the Environmental Protection Agency's website at www.epa.gov/owow/ or the Center for Watershed Protection at www.cwp.org.