

THE FOREST REPORTER

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Get to Know Your Watershed

Water has been an important news item lately with all of the recent rainfall in the area. This makes it a great time to discuss watersheds and their importance for the health of our communities and planet.

Understanding watersheds is important because we all live in one! No matter where you are, mountaintop or city, you live within a watershed. Simply speaking, a watershed is an area of land that drains to the nearest outlet such as a stream, bayou or river.

Keeping watersheds healthy is very important, since the water travelling through them ends up in our lakes and oceans and gets used by wildlife and people along the way.

This diagram, courtesy of the EPA website, is an example of a watershed.

As shown, water moves from the highest areas and drains to the nearest outlet, in this case the bayou draining into the city port



Following the Path of Water

At the Outdoor Education Center, it is pretty easy for us to see the water travel through the watershed. During a storm the water collects and drains as it runs toward the lake. We could easily take a hike and follow that path for quite a while, watching the water flow.

In the city of Houston, it gets a little more difficult to follow the water's path. Much of the water that falls in the city runs into storm drains to lessen the chances of the flooding of streets and roads. This water then flows through pipes straight into a stream or river to continue its path through the watershed without going through a water treatment plant.

How You Can Help

A big help to the local watershed is by making sure pollutants stay out. We can see trash flowing toward the lake at the OEC, but it is out of site once it makes it to a storm drain in a city. Keeping trash, chemicals and even dirt and lawn clippings picked up will help prevent them from going into the storm drains and eventually streams and rivers where pollutants could harm people, wildlife and the ecosystem.

[Watershed Steward Workshop — July 22, 2015](#)



Where to Learn More

Take look at the [Buffalo Bayou Partnership](#)'s Master Plan for their [vision](#) of Houston and the surrounding watersheds in the future.

Learn about local watersheds from the [Bayou Preservation Association](#).

Find out how you can protect local coastal watersheds by visiting the [Texas Coastal Watershed Program](#) website.

Learn all about the watershed you live in with the Environmental Protection Agency's [Surf Your Watershed](#) website.

Local Places to Help

Become a watershed steward and learn how to protect our watersheds and educate others through Texas A & M Extension Services. Find out more at their [website](#).

Many of the organizations listed above have volunteer opportunities specific to helping the local watersheds at their websites.