Watershed Encyclopedia Article

Watershed

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Contents

Watershed Encyclopedia Article.....1

Contents.....2

Watershed.....3

Watershed

A catchment or **drainage** basin that is the total area of land that drains into a water body. It is usually a topographically delineated area that is drained by a stream system. **River basins** are large watersheds that contribute to water flow in a river. The watershed of a lake is the total land area that drains into the lake. In addition to being hydrologic units, watersheds are useful units of land for planning and managing multiple **natural resources**. By using the watershed as a planning unit, management activities and their effects can be determined for the land area that is directly affected by management. The hydrologic effects of land management downstream can be evaluated as well. Sometimes **land use** and management can alter the quantity and quality of water that flows to downstream communities. By considering a watershed, many of these environmental effects can be taken into consideration.

See Also

Watershed Management