

Name: _____

Date: _____

Adapted from: <http://ga.water.usgs.gov/edu/watershed.html> and
<http://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/estuary.html>

What is a watershed?



When looking at the location of rivers and the amount of streamflow in rivers, the key concept is the river's "watershed". What is a watershed? Easy, if you are standing on ground right now, just look down. You're standing, and everyone is standing, in a watershed. A watershed is the area of land where all of the water that



Footprint on the Moon - if it did rain on the Moon, then this footprint would be a watershed. (Credit: NASA)

falls in it and drains off of it goes into the same place. Watersheds can be as small as a footprint or large enough to encompass all the land that drains water into rivers that drain into Chesapeake Bay, where it enters the Atlantic Ocean. This map shows one set of watersheds in the continental United States; these are known as National 8-digit hydrologic units (watersheds).

A watershed is an area of land that drains all the streams and rainfall to a common outlet such as the outflow of a reservoir, mouth of a bay, or any point along a stream channel. The word watershed is sometimes

used interchangeably with drainage basin or catchment. Ridges and hills that separate two watersheds are called the drainage divide. The watershed consists of surface water--lakes, streams, reservoirs, and wetlands--and all the underlying ground water. Larger watersheds contain many smaller watersheds. It all depends on the outflow point; all of the land that drains water to the outflow point is the watershed for that outflow location. Watersheds are important because the streamflow and the water quality of a river are affected by things, human-induced or not, happening in the land area "above" the river-outflow point

The Estuary: where fresh and saltwater mix



Estuaries and their surrounding wetlands are bodies of water usually found where rivers meet the sea. Estuaries are home to unique plant and animal communities that have adapted to brackish water — a mixture of fresh water draining from the land and salty seawater.

Estuaries are among the most productive ecosystems in the world. Many animals rely on estuaries for food, places to breed, and migration stopovers.

Human communities also rely on estuaries for food, recreation, jobs, and coastal protection. Of the 32 largest cities in the world, 22 are located on estuaries!

Estuaries are delicate ecosystems. Congress created the National Estuarine Research Reserve System to protect more than one million acres of estuarine land and water. These estuarine reserves provide essential habitat for wildlife, offer educational opportunities for students, and serve as living laboratories for scientists.

**NEW YORK CITY
Outline Map**



NORTH ATLANTIC OCEAN



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(Created on 22nd February, 2013)