



# Adopt Your Watershed

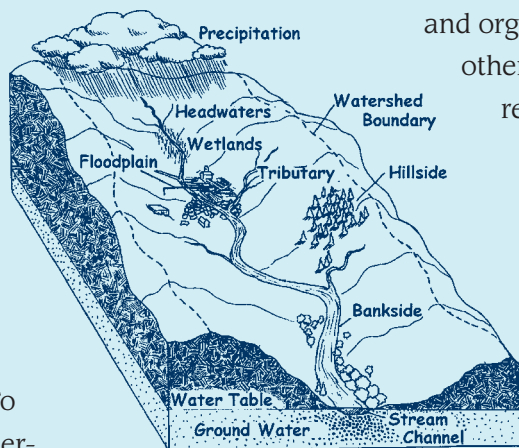
Volunteer today  
to help protect your local  
stream, river, lake,  
beach or wetland.

[www.epa.gov/adopt](http://www.epa.gov/adopt)



## What is a watershed?

No matter where you live, you live in a watershed. A *watershed* is the land area that drains to a single body of water such as a stream, lake, wetland or *aquifer* (an underground layer of water). Watersheds come in many different sizes. A few acres might drain into a small stream or wetland, or a few large rivers might drain into an *estuary*—where fresh water and salt water mix. The actions of people who live in a watershed affect the health of the waters that run through it. Rainfall and snowmelt wash chemicals, fertilizers, sediment, and other pollutants from the land into water bodies. To achieve healthy watersheds, EPA needs the help of people like you!



## What is the Adopt Your Watershed campaign?

To encourage stewardship of the nation's water resources, EPA challenges citizens and organizations to join the Agency and others who are working to protect and restore our nation's valuable rivers, streams, wetlands, lakes, ground water and estuaries.

## What do we mean by "adoption"?

"Adoption" means participating in a citizen-based effort—large or small—to restore or protect a watershed, river, lake, wetland or estuary.

Examples of adoption activities include

- Volunteering to monitor water quality
- Marking or stenciling storm drains
- Organizing stream cleanups
- Planting trees along eroding streambanks
- Hosting a water festival



All groups currently registered for the Adopt Your Watershed database can now update their information online at <http://yosemite.epa.gov/water/adopt.nsf/update>. It's important that the information in the database is accurate, so we strongly encourage all groups to update their records! You can also e-mail changes to: [adopt@epa.gov](mailto:adopt@epa.gov).

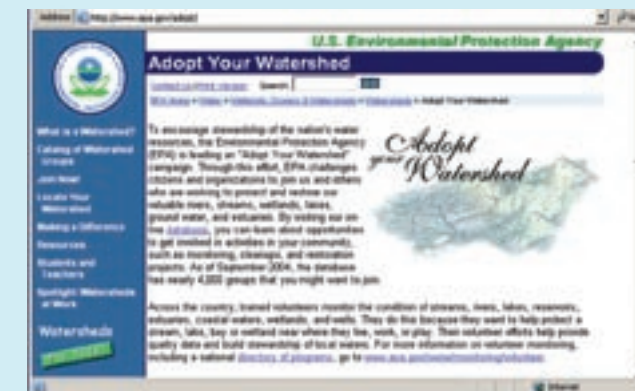
The Adopt Your Watershed web site also has a form for groups interested in receiving a Certificate of Appreciation for their efforts.

- Working with local government agencies and others that make water quality decisions
- Tracking the development and implementation of Total Maximum Daily Loads (i.e., pollution budgets) and watershed plans

## How can I find out what groups are active in my community?

Go to [www.epa.gov/adopt](http://www.epa.gov/adopt). This online catalog showcases opportunities to get involved in activities in your community. With hundreds of active volunteer monitoring groups, 12,000 classrooms, and more than 3,000 watershed alliances working nationwide, there are many opportunities to join an organized effort in your community.

If you don't have Internet access, you can call EPA's Water Resource Center at 202-566-1729.



We call the earth the water planet because water covers 70 percent of its surface. Americans depend on clean water to drink, to irrigate crops, and to run industries. Water resources provide opportunities such as fishing and swimming, and wetlands provide protection from floods. Rivers, lakes, estuaries, and wetlands also provide critical habitat for wildlife. Estuaries serve as birthplace and nursery for most saltwater fish and shellfish!

## How Can I Make a Difference?

### Top Ten Watershed Tips

1. Conserve water every day. Take shorter showers, fix leaks and turn off the water while brushing your teeth.
2. Don't pour toxic household chemicals down the drain. Take them to a local hazardous waste collection center instead.
3. Use hardy plants that require little or no watering, fertilizers or pesticides in your yard.
4. Do not over apply fertilizers. Consider using organic or slow release fertilizers.
5. Recycle yard waste in a compost pile and use a mulching mower to leave grass clippings on the lawn.
6. Use surfaces like wood, brick or gravel for decks, patios and walkways. They allow rain to soak in and not run off.
7. Never pour used oil or antifreeze into the storm drain or the street. Visit [www.earth911.org](http://www.earth911.org) to find out where you can go to dispose of hazardous wastes properly.
8. Pick up after your dog, and dispose of the waste in the toilet or the trash.
9. Drive less—walk or bike instead. Many pollutants in our waters come from car exhaust and car leaks.
10. Adopt your watershed! Learn more at [www.epa.gov/adopt](http://www.epa.gov/adopt).

### Tools to Help You Adopt Your Watershed

#### Programs and Activities for Students

**Adopt-A-Watershed** [www.adopt-a-watershed.org](http://www.adopt-a-watershed.org)

**Educating Young People About Water**  
[www.uwex.edu/erc/eypaw](http://www.uwex.edu/erc/eypaw)

**Exploring Estuaries for Teachers and Kids**  
[www.epa.gov/owow/estuaries/kids](http://www.epa.gov/owow/estuaries/kids)

**Making Ripples: How to Organize a School Water Festival** [www.groundwater.org](http://www.groundwater.org)

**Project WET (Water Education for Teachers)**  
[www.projectwet.org](http://www.projectwet.org)

**River of Words Poetry and Art Contest**  
[www.riverofwords.org](http://www.riverofwords.org)

**Schoolyard Habitat Program of the National Wildlife Federation** [www.nwf.org/schoolyardhabitats](http://www.nwf.org/schoolyardhabitats)

**Wetland Education**  
[www.epa.gov/owow/wetlands/education](http://www.epa.gov/owow/wetlands/education)

**Girl Scouts' Water Drop Patch Project**  
[www.epa.gov/adopt/patch](http://www.epa.gov/adopt/patch)

**EPA Watershed Patch Project**  
[www.epa.gov/adopt/patch/certificates](http://www.epa.gov/adopt/patch/certificates)

**USGS Water Science for Schools** [ga.water.usgs.gov/edu](http://ga.water.usgs.gov/edu)

#### Tools for Watershed Partnerships

**EPA's Office of Wetlands, Oceans and Watersheds** [www.epa.gov/owow](http://www.epa.gov/owow)

**Low Impact Development Center**  
[www.lowimpactdevelopment.org](http://www.lowimpactdevelopment.org)

**The Clean Water Act: Online training course**  
[www.epa.gov/watertrain/cwa](http://www.epa.gov/watertrain/cwa)

**EPA's Watershed Academy Web**  
[www.epa.gov/watertrain](http://www.epa.gov/watertrain)

**Catalog of Federal Funding for Watershed Protection** [www.epa.gov/watershedfunding](http://www.epa.gov/watershedfunding)

**W.A.T.E.R.S.—Water Assessment, Tracking and Environmental Results** is an exciting new tool that allows mapping of data from many databases so it can be viewed at the same time. W.A.T.E.R.S. helps users find basic answers to questions like "How healthy is my watershed?" "Should I drink the water?" "Should I eat the fish?" [www.epa.gov/waters](http://www.epa.gov/waters)

**Total Maximum Daily Loads** [www.epa.gov/owow/tmdl](http://www.epa.gov/owow/tmdl)

**STORET—EPA's principal repository for water quality, biological and physical data** [www.epa.gov/storet](http://www.epa.gov/storet)

**Smart Growth Network** [www.smartgrowth.org/sgn](http://www.smartgrowth.org/sgn)

**Center for Watershed Protection** [www.cwp.org](http://www.cwp.org)

**Nonpoint Source Education for Municipal Employees (NEMO)** [www.nemo.uconn.edu](http://www.nemo.uconn.edu)

## Join the National Catalog of Watershed Partnerships!

To learn how your group can be included in EPA's online catalog of watershed partnerships, go to [www.epa.gov/adopt](http://www.epa.gov/adopt). Click on "Join Now."

The Adopt Your Watershed Web site also has a form for groups interested in receiving a certificate of appreciation for their efforts.

### Volunteer Monitoring

Across the country, trained volunteers monitor the condition of their local waters. Their efforts help provide quality data and build local environmental stewardship. For a national directory of volunteer water monitoring organizations and other information on how you can get involved, visit [www.epa.gov/owow/monitoring/volunteer](http://www.epa.gov/owow/monitoring/volunteer). On this site, you can also learn about **World Water Monitoring Day**—a worldwide event celebrated every October 18th—that affords students, teachers, families, Scouts, and others an opportunity to use a simple kit to test the quality of local streams, lakes and bays.



### Adopt Your Watershed

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
Office of Wetlands, Oceans and Watersheds (4501T)  
1200 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20460  
e-mail: [adopt@epa.gov](mailto:adopt@epa.gov)

**Web site: [www.epa.gov/adopt](http://www.epa.gov/adopt)**

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This is not a complete list of available resources, and mention of these Web sites, organizations or products does not mean that EPA endorses them. For a more extensive list, please visit EPA's Office of Wetlands, Oceans and Watersheds Web site at [www.epa.gov/owow](http://www.epa.gov/owow) or call the Wetlands Help Line at 1-800-832-7828 or EPA's Water Resource Center at 202-566-1729.