

GEHR Watershed Minute #10

What's a Watershed?: (172 words)

The term “watershed” originally meant the dividing line between two drainage basins, from an old term *shedding*, meaning splitting or dividing. Today, a watershed is considered the area of land that drains into a body of water such as a river, lake, stream or bay. It is separated from other watersheds by high points in the area such as hills or slopes.

It includes not only the waterway itself but also the entire land area that drains to it. For example, the watershed of a lake would include not only the streams entering that lake but also the land area that drains into those streams and eventually the lake.

Every place is in a watershed. Homes, farms, forests, small towns, big cities and more are all in watersheds. Some watersheds cross county, state, and even international borders. Watersheds come in all shapes and sizes. Some are millions of square miles, while others are just a few acres. Just as creeks drain into rivers, watersheds are nearly always part of a larger watershed.