

# We All Live Downstream



Wherever you live, chances are there is water nearby. That water could be a small stream, a pond, or a large river. It could even be the ocean! Can you name the body of water that is closest to you?

The area where water flows on land is called a **watershed**. All of the water in a watershed flows to the same point. That point can be a river. It can also be a lake or an ocean. The term watershed helps us understand an area of land by looking at how the water in that land moves.

There are many different watersheds in Virginia. There are large ones like the Chesapeake Bay watershed, which includes all of the land that has water flowing into the Chesapeake Bay. There are also small ones, like the Big Sandy watershed in Western Virginia. This land has all of the water that flows into the Big Sandy River.

Every place in Virginia is part of a watershed. If a stream flows past your house, it keeps moving until it reaches the point where it empties. This means that we all need to be careful about how we treat the water around us. If we put garbage in a river, the garbage doesn't go away. It keeps moving downstream.

People who study water say, "We all live downstream." This means that the things we do to our water can affect people, plants, and animals that live downstream. If someone upstream from us pollutes a river, the pollution affects us. What does the saying "We all live downstream" mean to you?



The James River flows through Richmond. It is part of the Chesapeake Bay watershed.



It is important to take care of our water.