

# A Watershed Approach

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Obed Watershed Community Association

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## Watershed Definitions

**A watershed** is the entire area that water flows across, under, and through on its way to a particular waterbody.

**Watershed Conservation:** the efforts to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of rivers, streams, and other waterbodies in a given watershed.

**Watershed Approach:** a systematic approach to watershed conservation.

## Values of Using Watersheds as Boundaries

Ridgelines divide landscapes into geographic units within which natural problems can be effectively addressed. The critical factor is water, the medium through which energy, elements, soil, and pollutants circulate through the biosphere. Watercourses tie together the headwaters and the river, the land and the water, the forests and the farmland and the cities. Watersheds have become the most practical unit for an ecosystem approach to resource issues.

Watersheds are also useful to address social issues. The activities of people upstream affect lives downstream. Our quality of life depends upon the well-being of our watershed and all who live in it. We have to follow the problems that afflict our rivers to their sources in land-use, follow them all the way from the beginning to end. Non-point pollution is by far the most serious threat to river systems - polluted runoff from farms, timber and mining extraction sites, and developed areas. The watershed approach gives us a way to get a handle on the forces that determine whether our rivers will live or die.

Political boundaries are drawn and most often drawn by people who do not live within the lines they draw. So many of the issues that confront us cannot be resolved within the limits of a city, county, multi-county district, or state. Living in a watershed gives us all a kind of citizenship based on real things: water, soil, and geography. The quality of our drinking water is the premier environmental concern and drives us toward a watershed perspective.

A watershed perspective binds people together within a sense of place. Loggers, miners, farmers, retirees, city dwellers, and water users everywhere all share the natural resources that sustain life. When people recognize how much they have in common, their differences become surmountable.

## Components of a Watershed Approach

- Recognition that watershed components are interrelated and the health of each component is dependent on that of others.
- Recognizes the interrelationships between watershed health, human health, and the economic health and quality of life of the communities within the watershed.
- Identification of needs, setting of priorities, and development of action plans on the basis of reliable information and clear methodology.
- Involvement and engagement of watershed stakeholders (individual and entities) in all phases of watershed assessment, planning, implementation, and program evaluation.

processes.

The Obed Watershed Community Association has as its purpose community appreciation and volunteer involvement in ongoing research of the natural and cultural heritage of the Obed River watershed within Cumberland County. Louise Gorenflo, OWCA director, produced this fact sheet. Those wanting to join this membership organization or more information may contact OWCA at 484-0937 or at 185 Hood Drive, Crossville, TN 38555.