



Where Does Rain Go?

Understanding Watersheds (K–2)

Grade: K–2

Time: 30 minutes

Subjects: Science, Environmental Education

Overview

Students learn that rainwater moves downhill into streams and rivers, and that trash left on the ground can be carried into water. Through a hands-on watershed model activity, students observe how water travels across land and how pollution can spread. Students connect this concept to keeping Sevier County clean by reducing and reusing materials.

Local Connection

When it rains in Sevier County, water flows downhill into local rivers and streams. If litter is on the ground, rain can carry it into the water. This affects wildlife, water quality, and the beauty of our community. Keep Sevier Beautiful works to prevent litter so trash does not wash into waterways. Students learn that reducing waste helps protect our rivers.

Learning Objectives

Students will:

1. Understand that rainwater flows downhill.
2. Observe that water can carry trash into rivers and lakes.
3. Identify ways to reduce trash to protect water quality.
4. Use a model to explain how human actions affect the environment.

Tennessee Standards

Kindergarten:

K.ESS2, K.ESS3

1st Grade:

1.ESS1, 1.ESS2

2nd Grade:

2.ESS2

(Standards support understanding rain patterns, water movement, and human impact on water quality)

Vocabulary

Watershed – An area of land where all water drains to the same river or lake

Runoff – Water that flows over land after rain

Pollution – Something harmful added to the environment

Reduce – Use less

Reuse – Use again instead of throwing away

Materials

- Used white paper (1 sheet per student)
- Crayons or markers (blue, green/brown, red)
- Spray bottle with water
- Chart paper or whiteboard

Background for Instructor

Rain does not disappear after it falls. It moves downhill into streams and rivers. All the rain that falls in an area flows into connected waterways — this area is called a watershed.

If trash is left on the ground, rain can carry it into water systems. This lesson introduces the concept of runoff and pollution in a visual, developmentally appropriate way for primary grades.

Lesson Procedure

1. Introduction (5 minutes)

Say:

“Have you ever seen water run down a slide? Rain does the same thing — it runs downhill! All the rain that falls here in Sevier County flows into the same rivers. That whole area is called a watershed.”

Ask:

- Where does rain go after it falls?
- Does rain stay in one spot?
- What might it carry with it?

Explain that Keep Sevier Beautiful helps keep trash off the ground, so it doesn't wash into rivers.

2. Activity: Build a Watershed Model (20 minutes)

Step 1: Make the Land

- Crumple a piece of used paper into a ball.
- Gently open it back up.
- Explain that the bumps are “mountains” and the dips are “valleys.”

Step 2: Color

- Color blue in the low spots (water).
- Color green or brown on the high spots (land).
- Add a few red dots to represent “trash.”

Ask:

- Should trash be near rivers?

Step 3: Make It Rain

Lightly spray the paper with water.

Say:

“Watch where the rain goes!”

Let students observe how the water moves downhill and carries the red “trash” dots.

3. Discussion (5 minutes)

Ask:

- Where did the water go?
- What happened to the red trash dots?
- Should trash go into rivers?
- How can we help keep our water clean?

Reinforce:

“When we use less stuff and throw away less trash, there’s less that can wash into rivers when it rains.”

Connect back to Keep Sevier Beautiful and protecting local waterways.

4. Wrap-Up (5 minutes)

Ask:

- What is a watershed?
- What happens when trash is left on the ground?
- What is one way you can help keep water clean in Sevier County?

Close:

Rain connects our whole community. When we keep the ground clean, we protect our rivers, animals, and neighbors.

Student Understanding Page

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What is a Watershed?

A watershed is:

- A playground
- An area where water flows to the same river
- A type of animal

2. What Happens When It Rains?

When it rains, water:

- Stays in one spot
- Flows downhill
- Disappears

3. Helps or Hurts?

Write H (Helps) or U (Hurts).

- ___ Throwing trash on the ground
- ___ Picking up litter
- ___ Reusing paper
- ___ Leaving plastic near a stream

4. Cause & Effect

If trash is on the ground when it rains:

- It can wash into rivers
- Nothing happens

5. Draw & Write

Draw one way YOU can help keep water clean in Sevier County.

My picture shows: _____

Water Protector Pledge

I promise to help Keep Sevier Beautiful by keeping trash off the ground and protecting our water.

Signature: _____