



## GrayIsGreen

### Who are we?

**Gray Is Green** is an online gathering of older adult Americans aspiring to create a green legacy for the future. As environmentally conscious elders, we respond to a generational call: to co-create a future of economic justice, ecological sustainability and social justice.

We hold next generations of humans in mind and consider the future of ecosystems and other species. We are alert to the historic challenges facing our planet. And we are aware of the question arising from descendants generations hence:

*What did you do, when you knew?*

### What do we do?

We aspire to embrace our eldership, living beyond consumerism and ageism. **Our Curriculum for Gray-Green Living** offers a variety of ways to join—and re-engage with—this elder movement.

We offer a periodic newsletter, a speaker's bureau, online resources, a [Facebook page](#) for relevant updates. In partnership with congenial organizations, we serve as a central clearinghouse of ideas and communications for older adults interested in greening their lives, learning about sustainability, advocating for sound public policy, being creative stewards or grandparents, emerging as elders, and mentoring young people.

*We invite **you** to get involved!*

[www.grayisgreen.org](http://www.grayisgreen.org)

## Community Resilience

### What is a Watershed?

*"Water is the driving force of all nature."*

*—Leonardo da Vinci*

A watershed is the area of land that drains to one specific point, such as a lake, bay, ocean, stream, or river. Watersheds vary in size and can be nested within larger watersheds. For instance, the Mississippi River Watershed encompasses 40% of the continental United States<sup>1</sup> includes the Missouri, Arkansas, and Ohio River watersheds and all the watersheds for the rivers and streams that flow into those rivers. Other terms for watersheds include drainage basin (generally a larger watershed area) and catchment (generally a smaller watershed area.)<sup>2</sup>

Everyone lives in a watershed<sup>3</sup>. If rain at your location would flow into a nearby stream, even if that stream is dry most of the year, you are part of its watershed. To locate your watershed, the EPA has a web based tool called Surf your Watershed.<sup>4</sup>

### Water Flows

The built environment we live in also determines how water flows in a watershed. In a natural, undeveloped environment, rainfall will soak into the ground and flow into nearby streams. However, buildings, roads and parking lots are effective barriers to the natural processes of water soaking into the ground. These human-made barriers—referred to as [impervious surfaces<sup>5</sup> – force water to flow

more rapidly than normal into surrounding bodies of water.

### Watersheds and Water Quality

*"The health of our waters is the principal measure of how we live on the land."*

*—Luna Leopold*

Human activities that take place in watershed surroundings directly affect water quality in that watershed. When rain and other forms of precipitation fall over a watershed, they flow into the waterbodies. Those flows pick up both loose solid materials and water-soluble substances from within the watershed and carry them into the waterbodies. Loose materials include sediment, trash, and animal waste, while soluble materials include fertilizer and leaked automotive fluids. Waste products from manufacturing, farming, homes and businesses that have not been properly treated also add to the pollution in local waterbodies.

### Watersheds and Human Usage

Water used in our homes and gardens, and in commercial,

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## Community Resilience: What is a Watershed?

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industrial and governmental processes also affect a watershed's natural flows. The three biggest groups of water uses<sup>6</sup> in the United States are electric power, irrigation, and water utilities.

The relationship between our water use and the watershed where it came from is sometimes difficult

to envision. For example, water supplies are often pumped from one watershed for use in another, or water utilities may combine water from several different sources at a treatment plant before pumping it out for customer use. When we turn on a faucet and use water in our homes and gardens,<sup>7</sup> it is easy to forget that this water was removed

from another place. We alter natural flows in a watershed somewhere by removing water for our use.

- 1 <http://www.nps.gov/miss/riverfacts.htm>
- 2 [http://ucanr.edu/sites/UCCE\\_LR/files/180585.pdf](http://ucanr.edu/sites/UCCE_LR/files/180585.pdf)
- 3 <http://water.epa.gov/type/watersheds/whatis.cfm>
- 4 <http://cfpub.epa.gov/surf/locate/index.cfm>
- 5 see *Impervious Surfaces* subtopic
- 6 <http://pubs.usgs.gov/fs/2014/3109/pdf/fs2014-3109.pdf>
- 7 see *Home and Garden Water Use* subtopic



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