

UNIT 5. LIFE IN A WATERSHED

INTRODUCTION

Why do you live in your neighborhood? Is it a matter of livability? A job? The beauty of the region? Something brought you here, something told you that “this is the right place.” Do salmon have this experience of knowing when they’re in the right place? If so, how can we find this out?



You may not have consciously applied criteria to possible places to live. However, when you chose your place, you knew it was the right place. So it is with our salmon friends. No matter how old they are, they know the right place. What makes a place “right” for them? In this unit, we examine the places where salmon choose to live, and attempt to understand why. Understanding why is not easy -- we can’t interview a salmon!

After completing this unit, students will better understand watersheds. They should know the characteristics of good habitat for salmon, and understand how physical and biotic activities up- and downstream affect this habitat. They should also be aware of the concept that the presence of an organism in an environment is an indication of its ability to adapt to the range of physical and biotic parameters presented by its environment. Thus, the organisms that live in a habitat are a good indication of its condition.

OBJECTIVES:

Students will:

- know and understand physical features, functions and management of watersheds.
- ascertain the characteristics and qualities of good salmon habitat.
- know and understand how salmon are a key indicator species of watershed health.
- learn how to use aerial photos and maps to learn about watersheds.
- develop and demonstrate how watersheds work.
- know and understand the relationship between wetlands and salmon.
- know and understand the properties and benefits of wetlands.
- identify and understand the physical characteristics of streams.

SECTIONS

- A. Watersheds
- B. Water quality and quantity
- C. The role of wetlands
- D. Physical structure of streams
- E. Salmon as an indicator of the health of a watershed