What is a watershed?

A watershed is a geographic area of land in which all surface and ground water flows downhill to common point, such as a river, stream, pond, lake, wetland, or estuary.

Water from falling rain and melting snow generally drains into ditches, streams, wetlands, lakes, and coastal waters, or seeps into the ground. As water moves over the land it picks up sediment and dissolved materials and transports them to lakes, rivers, ponds, streams and coastal bays. Vegetation, leaf litter, fallen logs, and the naturally uneven terrain of forests and other natural areas slow down and filter runoff. Water flowing over parking lots and other developed areas speeds up and can pick up a variety of pollutants en route to water bodies.
*Source: Mass.gov **MassDEP Watershed-Based Plan**

(also visit http://public.dep.state.ma.us/Watershed/Intro.aspx)



The Massachusetts Watershed-Based Plan (WBP) supplies essential information to improve the health and beneficial uses of the Commonwealth's waters. This website has interactive maps to help local officials, watershed groups and concerned citizens learn about the problems affecting local waters, as well as potential solutions.

The WBP combines many reports about pollution sources affecting Massachusetts' waters. It provides complete information about pollution problems, recommended remedies, and resources that can enable water quality improvements. This website was prepared by the BETA

Group for the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, using federal grant funds.

The WBP has guidance for managing all of the state's watersheds.

View Massachusetts Watershed Map...

It is an interactive web site with many web links. Information on the WBP website includes:

- Introduction, Background, Information Sources, and How to Use the Watershed-Based Plan.
- Interactive Map. Detailed information is supplied using the map tools to identify watershed of interest.
- Causes of water quality problems, which are shown for each watershed.
- Total Maximum Daily Load Analyses (TMDLs) identify pollution sources and offer recommendations to restore the health of damaged waters. TMDLs are shown for many rivers and waterbodies in Massachusetts. The MassDEP web site also provides details about TMDLs that have been prepared.

- Sources of Pollution from land uses in each watershed. A link to the Nonpoint Source Management Manual enables visitors to easily find Best Management Practices to control pollution sources.
- A Technical Memorandum for each basin, describing water quality modeling and justification for the results. Web site links enable the reader to easily access supporting documents.