



Potomac River Watershed Questionnaire Answer Key

1. In your own words, what is a watershed?

A watershed is the area of land that drains into a particular body of water, such as a stream, river, lake, or bay.

2. What defines the boundaries of a watershed?

Watershed boundaries are determined by the highest areas of elevation, including mountains, hills, and other high points where water drains from.

3. Describe how water flows in a watershed. For example, what determines the direction in which it flows? Does it always flow south?

No, water does not always flow south. Water flows down in the direction of gravity (i.e., down a slope).

4. Does water that flows in one area of a watershed affect the water in other areas? If yes, explain how.

Yes, flowing water affects what is downstream of it. If water quality is poor upstream, it pollutes water downstream.

5. What is meant by the phrase “headwaters”? What/where are the headwaters of the Potomac River?

Headwaters are the source of a river, and are located at the upstream reaches where the river originates. The headwaters of the Potomac are the North Branch and South Branch, both of which originate from the Appalachian Plateau.

6. Into what body of water does the Potomac River ultimately flow?

The Potomac River feeds into the Chesapeake Bay. It is the second largest tributary to the Bay.

7. What are the five major physiographic regions of the Potomac River watershed?

The five major physiographic regions, as defined with special attention to the Fall Line, are the Appalachian Plateau; Valley and Ridge; Blue Ridge, Piedmont; and Coastal Plain.