



## Hometown USA Environmental Story

*This story is written by John Ezzell*

### Instructions

Read the following story aloud to the class.

You live in the Potomac River **watershed** in Hometown. Hometown is located downstream of another town, Neighborville, which has a population of 22,000 people. Last year in Neighborville, two large factories were built, generating new jobs and a growth in population. As a result, several new, large housing developments were built, as well as a shopping center, offices, service stations, a school, and additional roads. All of this has put a strain on the sewage system in Neighborville.

Increased heavy rainfalls during the past year in the form of violent thunderstorms now result in rapid **runoff** of water from the developments, paved parking lots, and additional roads. This stormwater runoff directly enters the waterways or goes to be treated at the **sewage treatment plant**. Because of the increased development in Neighborville, developers in Hometown have announced that they plan to build another development in the hopes of attracting people who would work in the factories in Neighborville to live in Hometown. The developers are trying to get the town council members to zone an additional wooded area for residential use. This will require many trees to be cut down to build homes and streets, which would significantly increase the extent of **impervious** surfaces. The increased development would also cause strain on the sewage system in Hometown.

Recently, your class tested the water in a local stream near the school and found it had a high **concentration** of **nitrogen**. After some research, the class discovered that during heavy rains, sewage pipes allow raw sewage to overflow into the streams located in Neighborville and Hometown. Runoff from lawns in the developments is also flowing into nearby streams. After the sewage and runoff enter the waterways in Neighborville, the water flows downstream into Hometown, where it combines with the sewage and runoff entering the water from Hometown. The combined effects of the development in both communities is significantly polluting the water.

Your class is very upset to learn this and wants to take action. After completing additional research, you decide that the best course of action is to encourage the town officials to require developers to incorporate more environmentally friendly practices into their building standards. Such practices could include planting **rain gardens** around parking lots and increasing the number of **riparian forest buffers** along waterways by planting trees. To do this, you and your class decide to write an **advocacy** letter explaining your views and what you want done about the problem.

