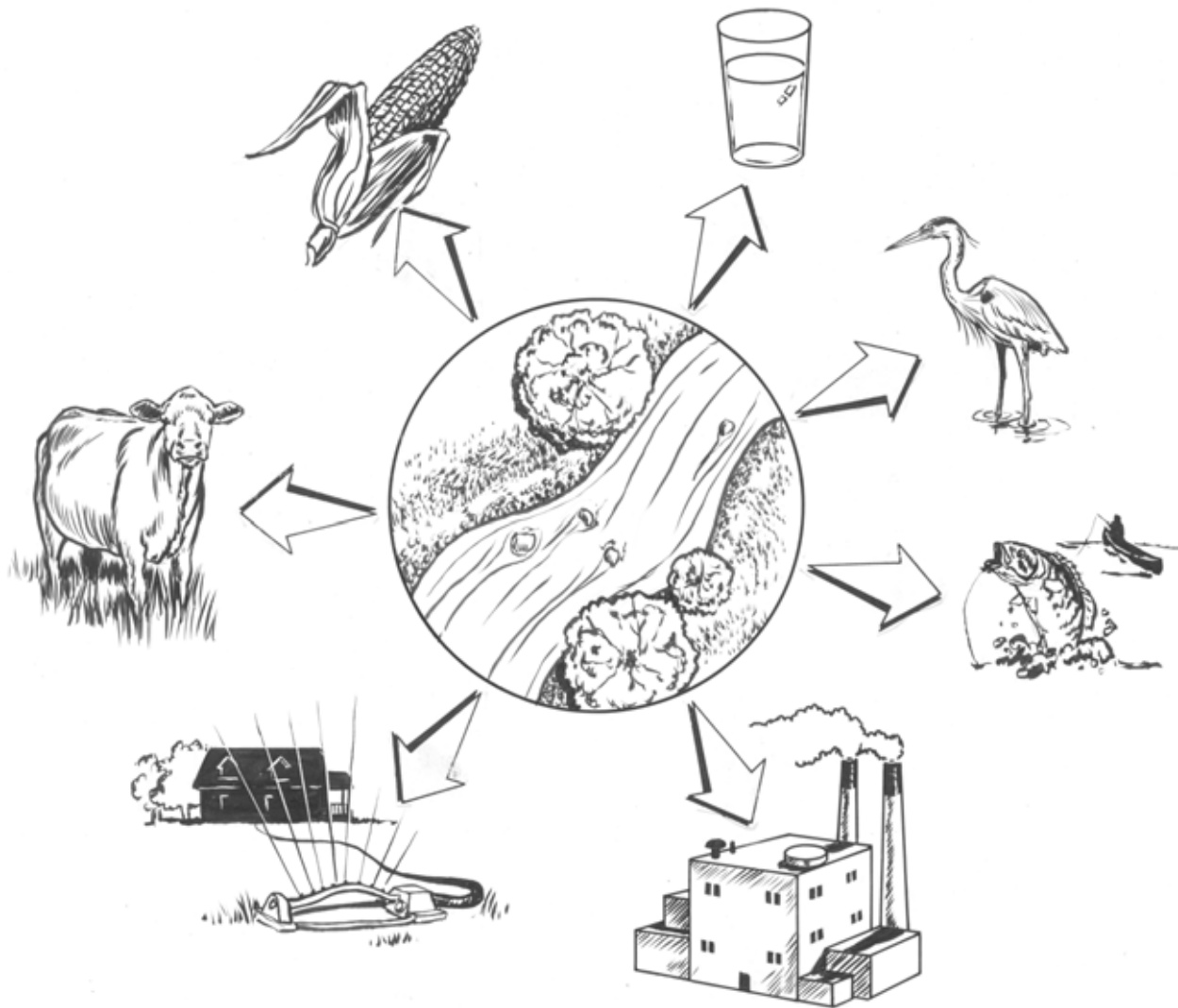


## Streams and Society Module

Multiple uses of water resources leads to diverse and sometimes conflicting demands in a watershed. Cooperation between all water users is imperative to assure ample water quality and sufficient water quality.



## Introduction

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in the federal government sets minimum standards for water quality protection. In Missouri, the Missouri Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) is the designated authority to write water quality standards that meet or exceed federal guidelines for protection. The state cannot write standards that are less than the federal standards. To carry out these responsibilities, the MDNR receives much of its funding from the EPA. In addition, MDNR issues permits to point source polluters, such as sewage treatment plants, concentrated animal feedlot operations, and other large businesses which discharge pollutants into Missouri waterways. The MDNR enforces state and federal pollution laws; but, it does not enforce local planning and zoning laws. Watersheds and their basins do not follow the political boundaries of counties, states, and national borders that have been outlined by society. Therefore, the EPA handles pollution problems that cross state lines. Within states, the EPA steps in and enforces state laws if the state agency is not adequately enforcing existing laws.

The MDNR and EPA have limited tax dollars and personnel. They spend a portion of their budget educating citizens to try to prevent pollution problems. Therefore, active participation in local, state, and national decision making processes is important for preventing and solving water pollution problems. Individuals, businesses, community, state, and county governments are all involved in water resource management and economics on a daily basis.

The cost of water influences individual and community decisions. It is as simple as deciding whether or not to take longer showers or as complicated as planning an upgrade for a wastewater plant. Prudent methods of decision making are important in resource management and include constructing a list of alternatives, identifying the pros and cons for each, and projecting possible outcomes. Factors to consider include cost (monetary and environmental), time, energy, persons likely to be affected, personal values, etc. Emotions and instincts also influence decisions. Citizens, as water users, need to realize that in conjunction with their rights they have responsibilities to other water users and inhabitants of their watershed. People can become involved in protecting water resources in a variety of ways. One of the most powerful methods is education. Helping others better understand the background and implications of an issue promote appreciation and concern. Examples of education activities include hosting water festivals, writing letters to editors of newspapers, sponsoring public debates, and making presentations to community groups or informational posters about water related issues.

Some problems can be corrected by people taking direct action through community service projects. For example, an education campaign to encourage citizens to implement water conservation practices helps conserve the community's water supply. Fundraising activities can help provide monetary support for a group or organization.

It is important for individuals, groups, or school classes contemplating a project to establish goals and objectives, select realistic projects, and thoroughly research the issue before deciding on what action to take. If projects are approached with a positive win/win strategy, then everyone will benefit.