

Adopt a Body of Water Curriculum

Lesson Plan 1: Introduction

To be sent ahead	Directions to local body of water or local watershed with accessibility to the water. Advise participants to wear appropriate clothing for the time of year/weather.
Title	Introduction
Session	1
Governing Scripture	Genesis 1:2
Place	If possible, local body of water or local watershed
Day	
Time	
Posted upon arrival	John Wesley Powell quote
Materials	
Technology	
Handouts	As people leave, handout drawing of watershed, Handout 1C

- 1. Posted for people to see upon arrival/entrance:** John Wesley Powell (the first non-indigenous person to run the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon in 1869) defined a watershed as:

...that area of land, a bounded hydrologic system, within which all living things are inextricably linked by their common water course and where, as humans settled, simple logic demanded that they become part of the community.

- 2. Prayer over water:**

Praise and gratitude to you, Creator, for sacred waters of the world, to the oceans, the mother of life, the womb of the plant life that freshens our air with oxygen, the brew that is stirred by sunlight and the moon's gravity into the great currents and tides that move across the earth, circulating the means of life, bringing warmth to

the frozen Arctic and cool, fresh winds to the tropics. We give thanks for the blessed clouds and the rain that brings the gift of life to the land, that eases the thirst of roots, that grows the trees and sustains life even in the dry desert. We give thanks for the springs that bring life-giving water up from the ground, for the small streams and creeks, for the mighty rivers. We praise the beauty of water, the sparkle of the sunlight on a blue lake, the shimmer of moonlight on the ocean's waves, the white spray of the waterfall. We take delight in the sweet singing of the dancing stream and the roar of the river in the flood.

We give thanks, in particular, for this watershed (body of water) and how it has fed and nourished us, how it continues to form the substance of our lives. May we, in gratitude and reciprocity, protect this, our sister, so that she flows as from your presence, crystal clear and free from our poisons. Blessed be her. Amen.

-adapted from Starhawk

2. **Genesis 1:2**

. . . the earth was complete chaos, and darkness covered the face of the deep, while the Spirit of God swept over the face of the waters.

This is how it all begins, with God hovering over the face of the waters. This is how we begin, immersed in our Mother's/mother's water.

3. **Introductions and intimacy:** Have each person introduce themselves by sharing a body of water that has been important to them or to their families. Why was that body of water important to you or your family?

4. **Observation:** Brock Dolman, a permaculturist in Northern California, believes that the only way we will halt our civilizational slide into ecological disaster is to re-orient our thinking toward "**watershed consciousness.**" He writes:

Watersheds underlie all human endeavors and form the foundation for all future aspirations and survival. The idea is one of a cradle, or a container as water flows overland, collecting into a river, and sometimes making its way to the ocean.

(Brock Dolman, *Basins of Relations: A Citizen's Guide to Protecting and Restoring Our Watershed*. Occidental, CA: Water Institute, 2008)

Questions:

- Do you know the name of your watershed?

- Or what are important bodies of water close to you that provide nurture and sustenance for you, your family, and your community?
- In seeking to protect the Missouri River and Lake Oahe, the Native/First Nations protest at Standing Rock in North Dakota, USA, used a phrase that became representative or a rallying cry of their movement: “Water is Life!” (*Mni Wiconi*: M’Nee wee Choh née).
 - What does it mean to say, “Water is life?”
 - What does that mean for you, your family, and your community?
 - What did it mean to those Water Protectors at Standing Rock?

- 5. Active Reflection:** Now encourage everyone to cup their hands and to take some of the water from the body of water where you are.



As people stand with water in their hands:

Now remember those bodies of water that we all shared as historically important to you, your family, and to your community that we all shared to introduce ourselves. You all shared intimate things.

Brock Dolman illustrates a watershed by cupping his hands which looks like a boat, concluding “Your home basin of relations *is* your lifeboat.”

Dolman believes we can’t save the whole planet. But we *can* engage in the struggle to preserve or restore the health of our watershed. And watersheds are, of course, interconnected in larger ecosystems.

- 6. Discernment Homework:** If you have time, you may want to solicit answers for this session and ask participants to also research and imagine for next session.
- What are the elements of a watershed?

These discernment questions and this educational experience are to eventually move you, your family, your faith community, and the wider community to action. As you answer these questions, be aware of God hovering in this moment.

- If you knew your life depended on this watershed, what questions would you ask for its care and protection?

- If you understood or knew this body of water as your sister, what daily, weekly, monthly, and annual practices would you make part of your routine, your family's routine, your community's routine?

7. Blessing: Adapted from Robin Wall Kimmerer

Water falls freely from the sky and waters our gardens and makes food grow and makes flowers bloom. This water that can be dew, it can be clouds, it can be snow, this long traveling molecule that animates life all over the planet, without which life simply would not exist. Water is a gift. This, our sister, is part of a reciprocity economy, a circular economy.

Water blesses us. In turn, today, we will end by holding out our hand, in gratitude and reciprocity, to bless this water. Water blesses us. Now say how you bless or shall bless water.

(You may want to go first to help people share simple blessings over the water. For example,

- "I bless this water with my gratitude."
- "I bless this water with a new dedication to protect this watershed."
- "I bless this water with my commitment to not use pesticides or insecticides on my garden which might leech off to harm this, my sister."
- "I bless this water by giving thanks every day in my prayers for it as a gift in my life."
- "I bless this water by drinking it as a gift from my tap to start each of my days."

8. Handout 1C: Watershed Drawing

Send out these questions as homework for the next session together, hoping people will have more time to research and imagine answers.

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Handout 1C

A Watershed

