

## Backyard Watershed Swap!

Adapted from Project Learning Tree, 2004

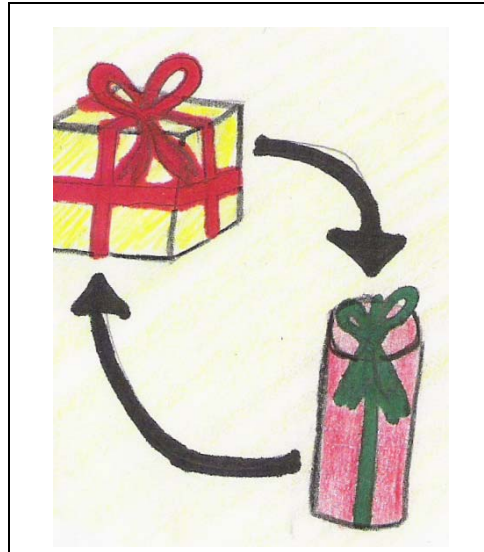
This activity will give students an opportunity to compile objects and notes that symbolise or teach about their area within the watershed, and also receive a similar box from students elsewhere in the watershed.

### Objectives-

- ✓ Learn the characteristics of their own environment and compare these characteristics to another region

### Estimated Time-

- ✓ 1 hour to prepare
- ✓ 1 hour and 45 minutes for the activity



### Materials (for each team of 4-5 students)-

- |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| ✓ Books about the natural history of your region | ✓ Crayons                |
| ✓ Markers  | ✓ Drawing paper          |
|  | ✓ Any other art supplies |

### Procedure-

- 1) Tell the students they are going to exchange “environments” with students at St. Mary’s School in Ballston Spa, NY or Saratoga Independent School in Saratoga Springs, NY. It is their responsibility to teach them about their place in the watershed, as they are located at opposite ends.
- 2) Brainstorm with the students a list of items to include in the box. Then have the students divide up the responsibilities of researching, collecting and preparing the materials for the box. They might want to consider some of the following items for their box:
  - a. Brief descriptions of your immediate area written by the students.
  - b. A collage of pictures of their place in the watershed (bodies of water, human impacts: road crossings, construction sites, etc) taken by the students or from newspapers, books, magazines.
  - c. A book with drawings of some interesting plants and animals they see in their backyards.

- d. Picture of the students and the school/meeting area.
  - e. Stories written by the students about their favorite things to do or favorite places to go.
  - f. A field guide prepared by the students to all the trees in their neighborhood.
- 3) While you are waiting for the box from the other school to arrive, ask students what they know about the other town, any places they have been to in that town, names of the bodies of water, etc.
  - 4) When the box arrives, examine the contents with your students. Have them compare the items with those they sent out, and look for signs of the box coming from the same watershed, but a different part of it.
  - 5) Have them draw pictures or write stories about the other town, and what they learned from examining the similarities/differences between them.
  - 6) Have all the students write a short thank-you note describing what they liked best about the box they received and their favorite things they included the one they sent. Allow them to ask questions about things they received and maybe why the other group chose some of the things they did.