

WHAT IS A WATERSHED MODEL?

A watershed model is a solid, three dimensional birds-eye view of a river or stream and its surrounding landscape. It is used to demonstrate the integration of landscape, human impacts on the land, and the water. With such a model it's easy to see how river basins work, how they are damaged by pollution, and how our individual actions can make a difference. The best watershed models are do-it-yourself and hands-on, and they've become a powerful and economical tool for environmental education.



Watershed model at Brazilian public audience



Styrofoam construction of Gorge model in Victoria, BC



Forest details in Brazilian model



Gorge model under construction in Victoria, BC



Urban details of Brazilian model



Watershed models at work in Victoria, BC

THE VICTORIA EXPERIENCE

Victoria is a place of many watershed models. Local teacher Angus Stewart, along with his "StreamTeam" program, pioneered them here as large, Styrofoam-based interactive works of art. These traveling models have become indispensable tools for local schools, and community organizations contributing to both adult and children's education, and community planning.



THE BRAZIL EXPERIENCE



Youth from Três Marias, Brazil building and presenting their watershed model



São Francisco watershed and project area



Brazilian youth presenting watershed model at the World Urban Forum, Vancouver, BC



In 2005, World Fisheries Trust began to transfer the Victoria experience with watershed models to Brazil, specifically Jason Lasuik's experience with the Burnside-Gorge Community Association. The construction, design and application were adapted to the realities of small towns on the São Francisco River. This river is one of the largest and most threatened water basins of the country. So far, three very colourful models of local watersheds have been built by youth teams under Canadian guidance, and the young people have enthusiastically taken on the responsibility of "chaperoning" the models from one learning event to another.

The models have been presented at fairs and community events. They are already making a big difference in public understanding of pollution, environmental stewardship, and what individuals and business can do to ensure healthy watersheds. Incorporating the models into school curricula is an on-going process. A critical innovation, relative to the Victoria approach, has been to have the local volunteer youth actually build the models that they subsequently chaperone. This experience and opportunity has provided multi-faceted training and empowerment to the youth - new youth groups have been organized, job and entrepreneur opportunities are being created, and dedicated young environmental stewards and spokespeople are being formed. Partnerships with Canadian schools and community or youth groups are being sought.

Prepared by S. Lampe, A. Carolsfeld, B. Harvey, J. Carolsfeld
 Photos by: B. Beatty, S. Bryce, A. Carolsfeld S. Lampe, J. Lasuik