



# Drinking Water 101

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## Contact Information

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## Grades

3-5

## Objectives

Students will find out where their drinking water comes from in Athens-Clarke County

## Background Information

Water is one of the most visible and important natural resources found on earth. Over 70% of the planet is covered in water. Without water, most life as we know it would not exist.

In the United States, we often take clean, safe drinking water for granted. For those users on a public water supply, it comes out of our faucets, showers, and garden hoses 24 hours a day, 7 days a week almost without fail. Rare has been the time when a customer turned the handle on the faucet and nothing came out.

We live in a world where 1.1 billion people must drink from unsafe water sources. As a result, some 9000 people die every day from preventable waterborne diseases, many of them children. Sophisticated water treatment and distribution systems prevent waterborne diseases in our drinking water. Athens-Clarke County meets every one of the United States Environmental Protection Agency's and Georgia Environmental Protection Division's high drinking water standards. As a result, safe water is supplied 24 hours a day to homes, businesses, schools, and hospitals.

## Procedure

1. There are two types of water supplies, public and private.  
Since some of the students may get their water from a private water supply system (wells), explain the difference between the two types of water supplies.

**Public Water Supply** - This is the water supplied by the water treatment plant and distributed to homes, businesses, schools, etc... Most people in Athens-Clarke County are on the public water supply system.

**Private Water Supply** - The other type of water supply, private, is water supplied to consumers usually by wells. These wells are not monitored or maintained by county personnel and are the responsibility of the homeowner to have them tested for water quality and safety.

## **Procedure (continued)**

2. Ask the students if they know what the public drinking water sources are for Athens-Clarke County and where they are located.

The three drinking water sources for the public water supply in Athens-Clarke County are the:

North Oconee River  
Middle Oconee River  
Bear Creek Reservoir

Students have likely passed over the North Oconee River and Middle Oconee River hundreds of times without realizing those are their drinking water sources. Both of these flow roughly north to south through the county. Bear Creek Reservoir is located slightly north of Bogart in Jackson County.

3. Have the students individually (or as a group trip) visit Ben Burton Park to view the Middle Oconee River and Dudley Park to view the North Oconee River. As they walk along the river have them note if there is any trash in or along the river, what color the water is, is there any wildlife, and any other interesting facts about the waterways. If going individually, have those students able to do so share what they saw with the class.

4. Back in the classroom, discuss:

- Did they see any trash in or along the rivers?
- Do you think people would throw trash in the river if they knew that was where their drinking water comes from?
- How will the students view these waterways now that they know their drinking water comes from them?
- If they saw any wildlife, do the students think wildlife is affected by all the garbage thrown in the rivers?
- Did they note what color the water was? Often, the water is muddy brown or discolored. Is the water safe to drink right from the river? How does it get so clean before we drink it? (the water goes through a treatment process which cleans the water before being pumped to their homes and schools).

Can the students come up with ideas or a class project to help protect these waterways?

### **Something to think about.....**

Now that students know where their water comes from, ask them where does all the water we use for cleaning, cooking, bathing, toilet flushing, and the hundreds of other daily uses of water go after we use it?

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