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Sustainable Systems

Reading Response

The “Water quality Reference Guide” talks about the natural water cycle. The natural water cycle includes processes called the hydrological cycle. This is a continuous movement of water between the Earth and the atmosphere. Water can get trapped in glaciers or aquifers. Aquifers are underground bodies of water. Water is rarely found in its pure form because of its ability to dissolve large amounts of substances. Even when it rains, water will carry traces of organic and/or inorganic material from the atmosphere.

The natural water cycle includes six main parts that include evaporation, transpiration, condensation, precipitation, collection, and infiltration. Evaporation is when heat from the sun turns water into vapor or steam. Transpiration is when plants lose their water through their leaves as the water is transformed into vapor and rises into the atmosphere. Condensation happens when water vapor is cooled to a point when it can become a droplet of water. These water droplets cluster together to form clouds. Precipitation is when the droplets become too condensed and the heavier droplets fall back down to Earth. Collection is a term referring to when water gathers in streams, rivers, ice caps, and runoff. Infiltration is the process of water seeping into the Earth and then meeting with groundwater again.

Watersheds are discussed in the text and described as an area where water from the ground and surface sources collect and drain into a common body of water such as a stream, wetland, river, estuary or ocean.