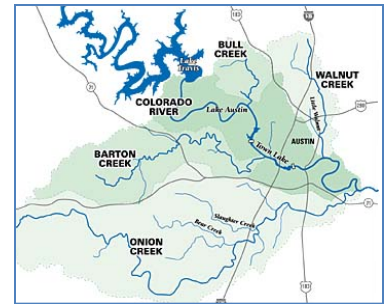
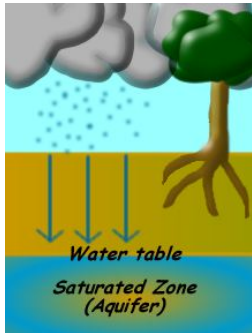


Watersheds

Most of Earth's surface water is the salt water of the oceans. However, most of the surface water on the continents is fresh water. These waters are divided into watersheds. A watershed is an area of land where all of the water that drains off of it goes to the same major body of water, such as a river or lake. Eventually, the waters of each watershed drain into the ocean.



Most water enters a watershed as precipitation. Some falls directly into lakes and rivers. Much of it falls on land and becomes runoff. The runoff flows over the ground and eventually reaches surface waters.



Some precipitation does not runoff; instead it soaks into the ground. As it soaks through the soil it passes through layers of porous rock. Porous rocks allow for water and air to travel through small spaces. The water will sink down until it reaches a layer of rock or clay that it cannot pass through. The water that collects on top of the rock or clay is called groundwater.

The layer of saturated rock is called an aquifer. The top level of an aquifer is called the water table. The depth of the water table can vary from very deep to very shallow and can even be on the surface of the Earth.

Analysis Questions:

- 1- What is a watershed? _____
- 2- How are runoff and groundwater different? _____

- 3- What is the connection between surface and groundwater? _____

- 4- What is an aquifer? _____
- 5- What is porous rock? _____
- 6- What would happen to the surface water level if the level of precipitation was low? _____

- 7- How does the amount of precipitation affect the amount of water in an aquifer? _____

- 8- How do bodies of groundwater form? _____
- 9- What two things can happen to water as it hits the ground? _____
- 10- What is the water table? _____