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**All Water is Somebody's Source Water**  
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Water is a fundamental element for human existence but many concepts associated with water issues can be confusing. In grade school we learn the basics of the water cycle and "ground" water versus "surface" water. However, one term that many find confusing is "source water".

A Google search of "Source Water Protection" resulted in 224,000 hits! The topics range from drinking water protections to surface water quality to wellhead protections to recommendations for open space acquisitions. The one clear connection between all the sources of water and efforts to protect them seems to be whether someone drinks the water in question. Wells draw from groundwater and are therefore, source water. Public water systems often pull from local rivers, streams and reservoirs and they are source water too. So it seems that "source water" is any water that is the source of someone's drinking supply.

Pennsylvania has more miles of creeks, streams and rivers than any other state except Alaska; many of them are the source water for municipal water supplies. Pennsylvania is also blessed with abundant ground water supplies. But if all water is someone's source water, is it possible to protect every drop? Maybe it is best to start with our elementary basics and see where the water flows.

A drop of rainwater forms as water vapor in the atmosphere condenses and falls as precipitation. Our little raindrop either soaks into the surface materials where it lands or begins a long journey to the ocean where it will evaporate and begin the cycle anew. If our raindrop falls on a tree, chances are good that it will remain there for a while as it slowly works its way down through the leaves or trickles down the limbs and trunk. During a typical, moderate rain shower, trees can hold thousands of gallons of stormwater. Not only do trees slow the rate of stormwater run-off, the leaf debris on the