

Terry McLaughlin and Connie Nielson have recently visited Mariposa, Lake Don Pedro, El Portal, Yosemite and Catheys Valley Elementary Schools. Our kid-friendly watershed model helps students visualize how conservation and life style choices can prevent pollution and conserve water. Using harmless powders, students simulate the application of fertilizers on the watershed model's farmlands, then generate a spray bottle rainstorm and watch as this non-point source pollution enters a nearby waterway. Imitation soil runs off of a hillside left bare following clear cutting (more non-point pollution). A factory spews mock industrial waste directly into a stream.

Once the students recognize these land-use problems, they brainstorm for solutions. Native (water conserving) vegetative groundcover is applied to hold soil in place; the factory improves its waste disposal methods; farmers on the model are encouraged to apply fertilizers in the right amount and at the right time of year; and the water we all share stays clean. It's a lot of fun and a lesson that sticks!

At the Council's Conservation Landscaping Project, 5039 Fairgrounds Road, you can learn to incorporate conservation features in your own yard. Visit any time and take home a free brochure. You'll be able to impress your local fifth grader with your knowledge!