Neighborhood Water Walk

We know that we use water in our homes all the time, but can we also find signs that water is used outside too? Does the amount and location we find water affect which living things are a part of our community?

To begin, create a science journal. You can use any notebook, or simply staple a few sheets of paper together. Write “My Science Journal” on the front and use this journal as a space to write down observations, draw pictures, and write down questions that come up during this and other scientific activities. On a blank page, make two columns. Title one "Natural Systems" and the other "Human Systems."

Go for a walk in your neighborhood, around the block, or ideally to a nearby park. Starting at your front door, write down anywhere you see any amount of water, or even evidence of water. For example, all plants need water to grow, so what does a plant growing from a crack in the sidewalk tell you? Get creative and don't worry if you're not sure, just write it down! Be on the lookout for places water might flow or collect after rain.

You'll write it in the "Natural Systems" column if it didn't take any people or manufactured items to get the water where you find it (ie. river, ocean, rain, snow, etc).

You'll write it in the "Human Systems" column if the water did take people and manufactured items (ie. sprinklers, hoses, cement canals, etc.) to get it to where you find it. Again, don't worry about being right or wrong, just be observant and make an educated guess.

When you get back home, discuss what you observed with your family. Here are some questions to help guide your conversation:

- Were you surprised at how much or how little water you found?
- Was there more water from natural systems or human systems?
- How could you tell the difference between the two? Was it always clear?
- For water from human systems, what did it take to get the water there?
- How would your neighborhood be different without the human sources of water?
- Do you think the recent or current weather had an affect on how much water you saw? How?

- Do you think there is any water in your neighborhood you cannot see? (in plants, soil, underground pipes).
- How does the amount of water you saw affect plants or animals in your neighborhood?
- Do you think the water you saw is clean or polluted?
- If the water was moving, make a guess about where it was going.
- For moving water, how do you think it will affect plants and animals along the way, and when it gets to its destination?
- If it wasn't moving, what would happen to it in the next day, week, month?
- How does what you observed connect to the water cycle?

Try walking the same route on a different day. Did anything change a day, week, or month later?

Resources:
What is runoff, and where does it go? https://h2oc.org/resources/runoff-101/what-is-runoff/
My Watershed (Orange County)https://h2oc.org/show-me-my-watershed/
WaterCycle https://www.discoverwater.org/water-cycle/
The Water Cycle for Schools https://water.usgs.gov/edu/watercycle-kids-beg.html