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AUTHORS

Morrison, Karen
Bunch, Martin J.
Hallstrom, Lars

ABSTRACT

Public health is usefully defined and managed at a variety of spatial spaces. This place-based, healthy settings approach has led to the formation of a number of successful programs and policies, such as the healthy cities, healthy neighborhoods, healthy schools and healthy homes movements. The application of a healthy settings approach to watersheds creates a powerful frame for public policy that enhances both natural and social systems, and is particularly relevant to discussions around climate change. Health and well-being are impacted by the governance and management of watersheds, at multiple scales, in ways that go well beyond the traditional focus on flooding or drinking water. Drawing on examples from watersheds, this chapter outlines the policy implications of watersheds as a setting for health and well-being. It highlights the need for a more strategic approach to watershed governance that actively seeks linkages with public health institutions in order to more effectively leverage scarce resources to meet common goals. It fills a gap in our understanding of the links between watershed-level programming and public health.

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