

## North American Watersheds

A **watershed** is an area of land where all the water that flows off of it drains down to the same place. This includes both surface water and **groundwater**, which is water that seeps underground. This map portrays the six continental-scale watersheds which are defined by how water flows off the continent into three different oceans, Hudson Bay, and the Gulf of Mexico. The Great Basin is called a closed **basin** because **rivers** and **streams** fill low-lying areas between the mountains where the water collects to form lakes and then **evaporates** into the **atmosphere**. Evaporating water leaves behind **minerals**, which means that Great Basin lakes are saltier than the oceans.

The smaller inset map shows how the continental-scale watershed boundaries can be divided into smaller units within California. Water is managed and conserved within each unit.

