

Strong Stream





This project has been funded by an agreement with the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, Nonpoint Source Program, and the United States Environmental Protection Agency.



This book is dedicated to raising awareness for plastic pollution and supporting water quality initiatives in East Tennessee.



Strong Stream was written by Julie Elfin and Alexis Jenkin, and illustrated by Lisa Cicchetti. It is one third of a trilogy of children’s books about water pollution created by the following CAC AmeriCorps Members:

- Lisa Cicchetti, Knox County Stormwater ‘18/’19 AmeriCorps Team**
- Lindsey Rasnake, Knox County Soil Conservation District ‘18/19 AmeriCorps Member**
- Alexis Jenkin, Knox County Stormwater ‘18/’19 AmeriCorps Team**
- Julie Elfin, Water Quality Forum ‘18/’19 AmeriCorps Member**

These books were created to be free teaching materials to make water quality and environmental education more approachable topics inside and outside of the classroom.

My name is Strong Stream. I run from the mountains into the city, where I flow into the Rolling River. Sometimes, people are too busy enjoying the water to listen to my voice. Will you listen?

I am so glad! Follow me in your boat and you can join me on my journey.



I begin at an underground spring high in the Appalachian Mountains. I may look like a trickle, but I am strong.

As I flow down the mountainside, other small trickles gather together to form a stream.

The stream has a rough, rocky bottom, where animals like fish, salamanders, frogs, snails and crayfish can hide and lay their eggs.



Someone is coming to greet us. Who is it? It's my friend the Salamander!

Will you say hello?

The Salamander has something to say to you. Listen closely.

“Welcome to my home! Strong Stream’s clean, cold, flowing water helps me breathe, and the rocks on the bottom give me places to hide and raise my family.”



Thank you for listening! Lots of different animals live in a stream, not just salamanders. Many of them need very clean, cold, flowing water to live in.



My small stream joins with other streams, growing bigger and stronger each time. At the bottom of the mountain, I widen out and move slowly through the valley.

Now my journey takes me through farmland. These farms have thirsty cows that walk down the bank into the creek, bringing dirt on their hooves. When dirt gets into water, it is called sediment.



I still have rocks on my streambed, but now they are covered with sediment and many hiding spots are filled in. There are no salamanders in this water.

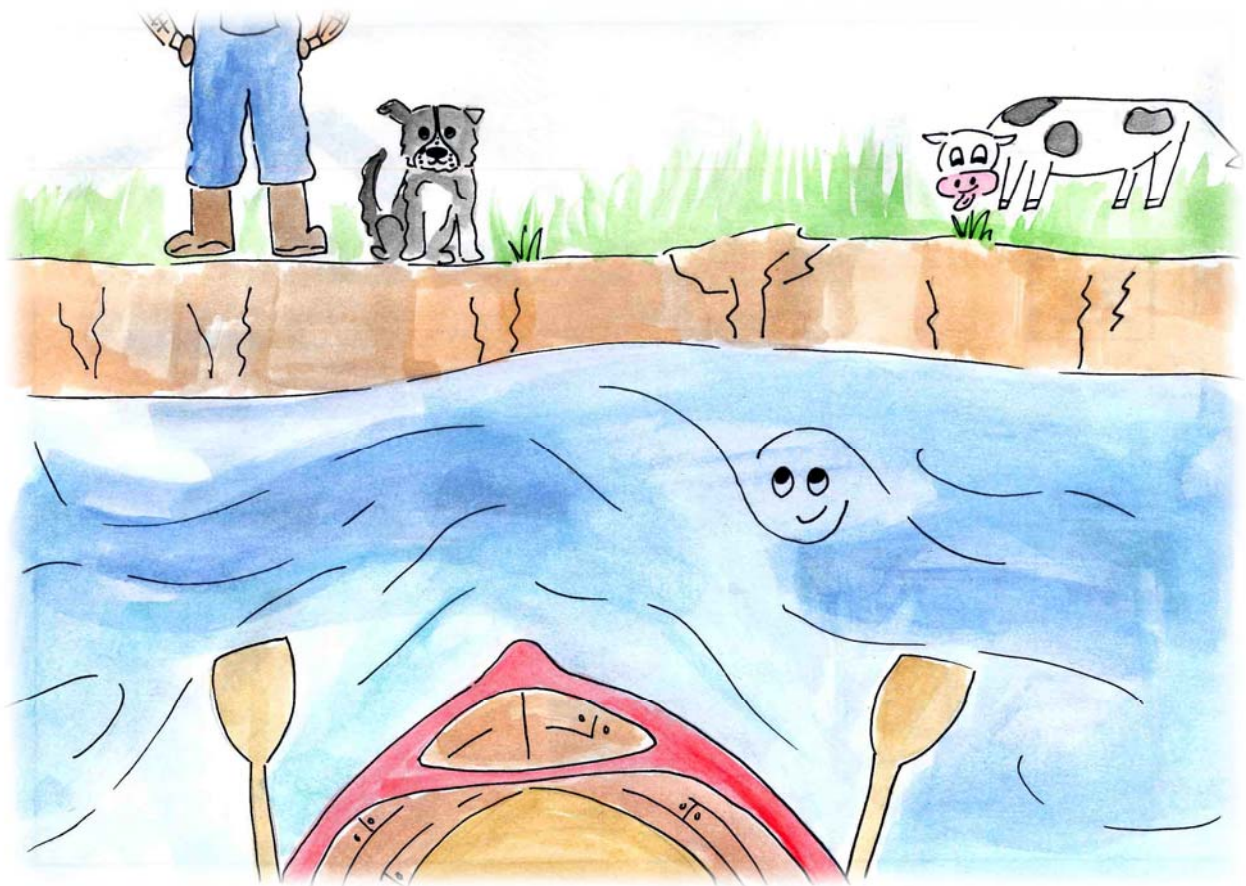
“Excuse me, cows!” I call. They do not hear me.

Now the farmers are coming down to the stream. Will you talk to them for me? The farmers will listen to you.

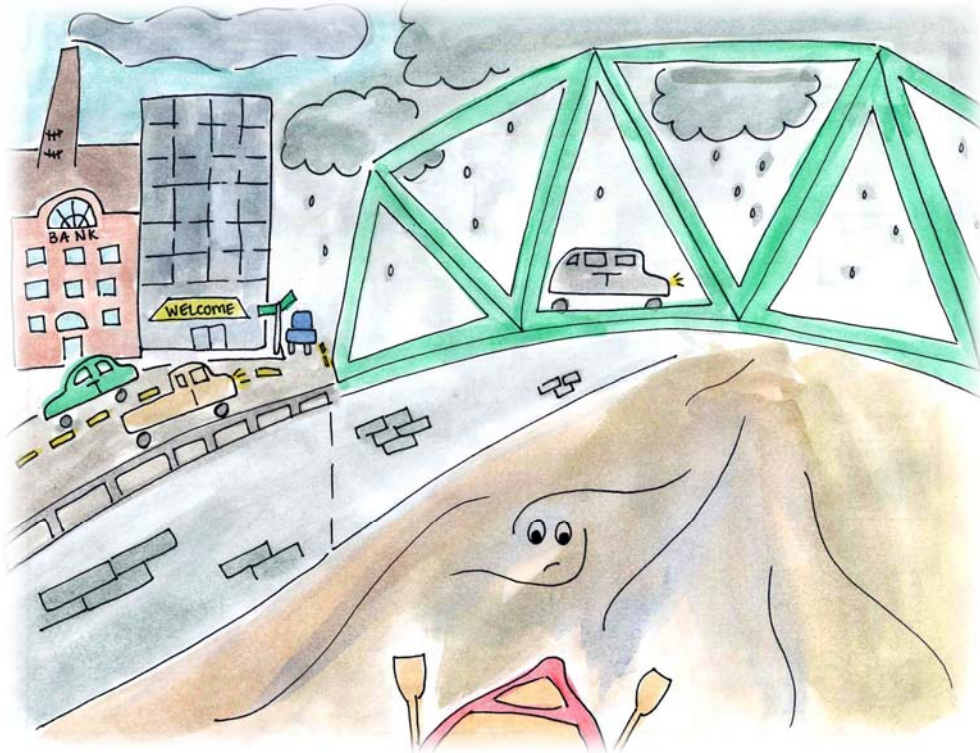


The farmers have agreed to help you! They will build a fence to keep the cows off the streambank, stopping sediment from polluting me. The cows will have a water tank up the hill to drink clean water from.

Thank you so much for sharing my message!

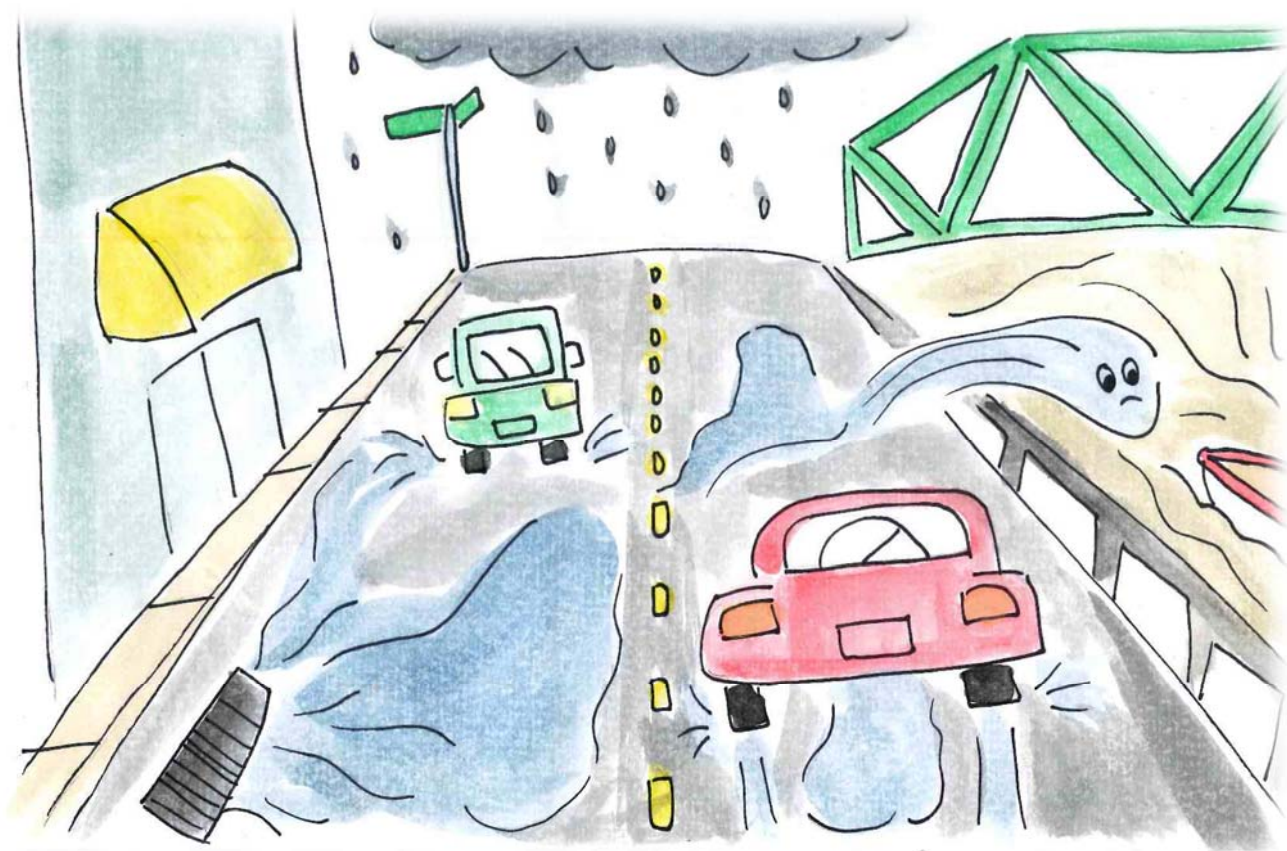


As I move into the city, the land around me looks different. In the mountains, I was surrounded by tall trees that kept me cool and shaded. In the farmland, I saw grassy hills and open spaces.



But in the city, I see lots of buildings, roads and sidewalks. Rain rolls right off of them, bringing me lots and lots of water very quickly when it rains.

It's hard for me to hold all this water. When I'm full, it spills over my banks and I flood. Floods bring more sediment with them when rain flows over land and into streams. Flood water carries other icky things, too, like litter and pollution from pets and cars!



These builders are building new houses in the city. They are not careful, and remove all the plants and trees.

Sediment flows from the bare ground into the street and down the storm drain when it rains. That storm drain leads to me! People need places to live, but so do my friends in the stream.

“Excuse me!” I call.

The builders do not hear me.



Now my waters are muddy and brown. My animal friends have nowhere to live!

Plants and trees will help keep my banks strong and healthy. Without them, land washes away when it rains. More of my animal friends, like birds and chipmunks, can live in these plants and trees.

Too much sunlight reaches my water and warms me up without the shade of trees and plants. My friends don't like warm water. It's hard for them to breathe.



Will you help me tell the builders?

The builders have listened to you!

They will plant beautiful gardens. Now my waters will be less muddy and brown, and much cooler. My animal friends will have somewhere to live!

Thank you so much for sharing my message!



As I flow through the city, something is changing. I see a house being built, but the workers are building ways to keep sediment out of the water.

Look at this! The builders are planting trees and plants near my banks.



A family sits by the bank, enjoying the water.

I am too shy to say hello. Will you say hello for me?

After hearing the story of our journey, the family is so happy.

“We love this stream. It provides us with water. It used to be too muddy to enjoy, but we are lucky! Someone told the workers about what the stream needs.”



Our message is being shared!

The love this family has for clean water makes me so happy. Thank you for sharing my story!

Our journey is coming an end, but there is one more thing to see.



I leave the city and join with the Rolling River. All the sediment that has entered my waters on our journey will travel with me. But your message is helping to change that!



Look! The farmer and the builders are all here! There is the family, too!

Here is my friend Green Heron.

“Green Heron, what is happening?”

“Strong Stream, all of these people have heard about your hard work! Someone has shared your message! They are planting your favorite plants by the river bank! I will now have a wonderful place to raise my family, thanks to you and your friend.”



When I stay clean, people can swim, fish, paddle and play in my waters.

You have helped me so much just by listening to my story. Your message has traveled very far.

Will you keep sharing my message?





Strong Stream is the story of a child who goes on a journey with a stream. They begin in the mountains, flowing through farmland and all the way into a city. The child learns about different ways a stream can become dirty and how we can help keep the stream clean and strong.



This book was written to be read aloud to children in lower elementary grades. It is one third of a trilogy aimed at making water quality and environmental science approachable topics inside and outside of the classroom.

