

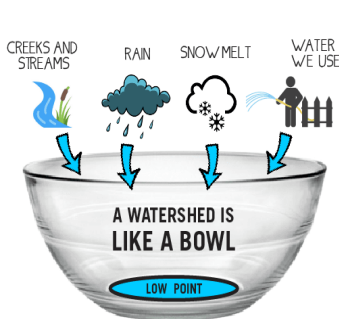
What Watershed are You? - Part 1

A series of watershed articles disseminated by the Long Prairie Watershed Collaboration of Todd, Douglas, Morrison, Wadena, East and West Otter Tail Counties

Like individual people, every **watershed** carries its own set of physical attributes, characteristics and boundaries. As a “citizen” is to its family, community, state, and country; a “watershed” is to the water resources of the county, state, nation, and world. Every decision and action made internally can result in a more profound impact outside of your personal or watershed boundary.



What exactly is a watershed?



Every lake, river, place, and home on earth is found within a watershed. A watershed is made up of topography and landscapes including fields, forests, hills, wetlands, neighborhoods and cities. A **watershed** is strictly a geographical area with its boundaries determined by the natural direction of water flow. We all know water flows downhill to the lowest point, but its direction of travel depends on the path of least resistance and what physical features lie in its way. Originating as precipitation, water that is not evaporated or ab-

sorbed, weaves its way around the base of hills, through crevices in rocks and soil particulates, through ditches, dips, valleys, lakes, creeks, and streams, often for miles, to reach a larger river base. If precipitation falls on a hill, on which side of the hill it lands determines the direction the droplet will flow. A watershed is named after its largest receiving body of water of which merges to another often larger watershed. For example, the Long Prairie Watershed, an area covering large portions of Douglas, Todd, and Morrison Counties with smaller portions in East and West Otter Tail and Wadena counties, is named after the Long Prairie River which transports water beyond its watershed boundary to the Crow Wing River. The Crow Wing eventually merges with the great Mississippi River. A **watershed boundary** is a connection of all points marking the farthest reaches in which all contributing waters fall and flow.

There are 81 major watersheds in Minnesota. Each watershed is broken into smaller sub-watersheds draining to the littler creeks, ponds, lakes, and streams in the more localized region. There are 5600 sub-watersheds in Minnesota!

A group of related Major Watersheds merging to the same region of the country or state is often referred to as a basin. Similar to the nesting or stacking toys from Russia called Matryoshka dolls, a sub-watershed fits inside a major watershed which fits inside a basin. As you might imagine, hydrologists who study water and water patterns in depth, have a classification system breaking land areas into even smaller units called **HUCs**- an acronym that stands for Hydrologic Unit Code.



So what watershed are you? Can you locate your neighborhood on the map?

<insert your County watershed map here>