



Keeping North Dakota's streams, rivers and lakes clean demands more than dockside diligence. Even if you don't live along the shores or banks, you may be contributing to the pollution of lakes and streams because they are larger than their shorelines. They're part of a system called a watershed.

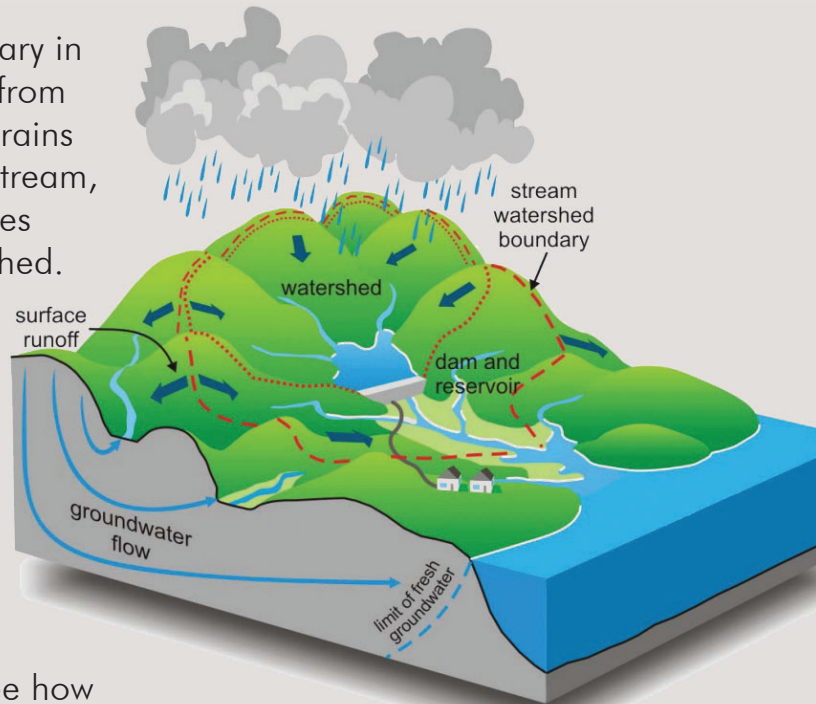
WHAT IS A WATERSHED?

Water from rainfall or snowmelt that doesn't evaporate or soak into the soil runs into ditches, streams, wetlands or lakes. The area of land from which the water drains is called a watershed.

Watersheds vary in size. If water from a few acres drains into a small stream, those few acres are its watershed.

This stream and others like it run into larger streams or lakes. Small watersheds make up larger ones.

It's easy to see how the watersheds of North Dakota's lakes can have land areas many times larger than their lake surfaces.



The Mississippi River watershed covers 58% of North Dakota and 41% of the United States.

HOW DO YOU FIT INTO YOUR WATERSHED?

Wherever you live in North Dakota you are in a watershed. Your watershed may be covered with towns, industrial areas or farmland. Any excess nutrients, sediments and pollutants in your watershed are carried by runoff to surface waters.

You and the other people

WATERSHED MANAGEMENT TIPS

Minimize erosion by adopting practices that slow the flow of water over your property.

Reduce excess nutrients that could wash off your land.

Collect waste oil and other automotive wastes to be recycled, rather than letting them run on to the ground.



No-till practices improve soil health and water quality. Photo credit No-Till Farmer



Rain gardens are shallow depressions that capture and treat stormwater naturally. Photo credit U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

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who live in the watershed potentially influence the water quality in nearby streams and lakes, depending on how careful you are in your day-to-day activities.

Understanding that actions on land impact water quality should lead you to cast a more critical eye on many common activities such as gardening, lawn care, automobile maintenance, farming and ranching. These and other activities can contribute excess nutrients, sediment and pollutants to the streams, rivers or lakes in your watershed.

WHAT CAN YOU DO FOR YOUR WATERSHED?

In rural areas you can:

- Practice building soil health.
- Use conservation tillage.
- Practice crop rotation.
- Install grassed waterways.
- Plant filter strips around feedlots.
- Retire highly erodible land.
- Practice sound pesticide and fertilizer use.
- Recycle agricultural chemical containers.
- Construct diversion dikes or channels around feedlots.
- Recycle fluids from vehicles and machinery.

In urban areas you can:

- Maintain plant cover to reduce runoff.
- Mulch gardens and exposed soil.
- Terrace land to slow runoff.
- Direct runoff to areas where it will soak into the soil.
- Minimize pavement and impermeable surfaces.
- Minimize soil disturbance at construction sites.
- Maintain septic systems.
- Use low- or no-phosphate soaps.
- Recycle automotive fluids.