

Learn about watersheds and how they impact your community.

KNOWING YOUR WATERSHEDS

A watershed is an area of land that drains to the same place. Just as several leaves attach to one twig on one branch of one limb on a tree, watersheds are nested within one another. Large watersheds are made up of many smaller watersheds.

THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF YOUR COMMUNITY

Watersheds are the natural infrastructure that everything else is built on. They also point to how well lands function where we live, work, and play. When watersheds thrive, communities face fewer risks. A healthy watershed is a watershed with clean water, includes natural areas to support wildlife, and handles large rainfall events. Healthy watersheds also provide numerous services at a fraction of the cost it would take expensive new infrastructure to do the same thing. They are the cheapest, best way to build a thriving community. However, climate change directly impacts the health of watersheds. Warmer temperatures and variable precipitation can directly affect the availability and distribution of water.



Healthy and thriving watersheds serve our community four ways:

Reduce drinking water costs by maintaining cleaner water sources.

Reduce flood damage costs for communities and residents.

Boost property values by providing access to natural areas.

Attract recreational interest and tourism revenue.

HEALTHY WATERSHEDS (continued)

Reaping the Benefits

You can tell a healthy watershed by how it works. We need water, sediment, and nutrients flowing through watersheds, but in the right amounts. These amounts can be highly sensitive to many factors, such as climate change. Natural areas slow the flows of these resources, so we get their benefits without the headaches. When we preserve large natural areas or connect many small ones together, the benefits multiply even further.



JUST THE FACTS:

For every \$1 spent on preserving natural floodplains, communities can save over \$5 in avoided flood damages.

For every \$1 spent on protecting open spaces, communities can save \$6 on water supply costs.

GROWING STRONG WITH WATERSHEDS

You can help your community thrive and embrace watersheds by:

- Learning about the watersheds where you live, work, and play.
- Working with local leaders to make natural areas part of every decision-making process now and for the future.
- Preserving existing prairies, floodplains, and forests.
- Tackling climate change which impacts water quantity, quality, and distribution.
- Restoring large open spaces that have been degraded.
- Adopting small changes at home and on the farm to help water get into and stay in the soil.
- Partnering with local organizations on

**Coastal
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