

Watershed Management

No matter where we live, we all live in a watershed. And we share that space with not only the plants and animals that live on the land (the terrestrial environment), but also those that live in the water (the aquatic environment). A watershed is like a funnel—the boundaries are set by the surface slope or topography of the land. Water draining into lakes, streams and rivers and ultimately into larger streams or rivers or larger lakes make up the sub-watersheds and sub-basins.

In the United States, watersheds—also called “hydrologic units” or “hydrologic unit areas” are identified by a unique set of numbers called the *Hydrologic Unit Code* or “HUCs.” The largest hydrologic units are referred to as “Water Resources Regions, and are identified by 2-digit HUCs. A smaller river basin will have an 8-digit HUC and the contributing tributary watersheds will have a 12- or 14-digit HUC. As an example:

St. Joseph River Basin—Lake Michigan Basin:	04050001
Little Elkhart River Basin:	0405000114
Little Elkhart Ditch-Topeka:	04050001140030

Because the watershed consists of both the land and water within the region, what happens on land is an important component of what happens with the water resource. Poor land use practices and policies will result in poor water quality, and variable poorly managed water quantity as well.

To insure that these environments are preserved and conserved, an effort is underway to develop “Watershed Management Plans”.

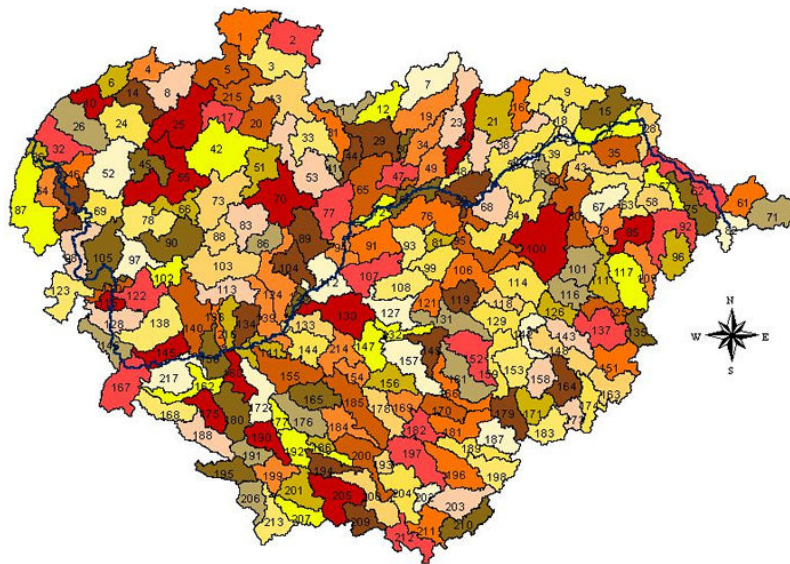
A successful watershed management plan includes identification of those resources that need protection because of their high quality, but also those that need improvements because of key elements within that waterbody that can contribute to the overall improvement of the watershed.

Public involvement is important not only during the planning process, but also public responsibility to insure identified activities in the Plan will eventually be accomplished and the watershed will be improved and preserved. Additionally, established watershed

management plans should be consulted and goals incorporated into comprehensive plans or during the review of local and regional ordinances related to landuse.

The St. Joseph River Basin is a sub-basin of the Lake Michigan Basin of the Great Lakes. There are 217 sub-watersheds in the St. Joseph River Basin.

Subwatersheds of the St. Joseph River Watershed



Watershed management planning has occurred or ongoing in a number of sub-watersheds in the St. Joseph River Basin. Successful plans are living documents, often referenced with written goals being met, and new goals being identified.

Watershed management plans contains links to various planning efforts completed or currently being conducted in the entire St. Joseph River Basin—Lake Michigan Basin. Where available a contact agency or person will also be included.