

Ripple Effect #82

What Watershed Do You Live In?

No matter where we live on the earth's surface, we live in a watershed. When it rains, the water drains somewhere – into a natural ditch perhaps, or a stream, or a major river. The area drained by a stream is called a watershed or, more precisely, a subwatershed. The major river into which the stream flows, along with the full basin that it drains, is called a watershed.

Thus, watersheds refer to a geographically defined drainage area, whether small or large. This is the case for the Red River and the 23 or so streams that flow into it, as well as for all other watersheds on the earth.

Here are a few facts about watersheds:

- Watersheds include all the human and ecological resources and processes in the drainage area. These can include vegetation, fish and animals, groundwater, storm water, point and non-point source pollution, water supply, wetlands, and sedimentation, among other elements.
- Activities that change the vegetation and surface characteristics in a watershed affect the quantity and quality of water contributed to a stream. These activities can range from how drainage is managed to what is allowed into a stream or the area's groundwater from the area it drains.
- Good watershed planning needs to take the entire watershed into consideration. This requires working across political boundaries, from the smallest local units of government to the federal levels. In the past, it has been all too easy for communities to overlook impacts on the full watershed when developing local projects.

These several facts suggest why the Red River Basin Commission (RRBC) continues to work year after year to bring people together from all parts of the Basin in order to identify and address water and land stewardship issues as a full watershed.

Today, the RRBC's work is focused on keeping alive for all parts of the Red River Basin a living vision for the Red River watershed as a whole by communicating shared goals to local entities in the Basin and, in turn, using the experiences and successes of these entities to expand and revise these goals.

Because, finally, it comes down to the fact that everyone who lives in a watershed affects what happens in that watershed. What watershed do you live in? What vision or goals are guiding its management?

Until the next Ripple Effect,

The Red River Basin Commission (RRBC)

The RRBC is a grassroots organization that is a chartered not-for-profit corporation under the provisions of Manitoba, North Dakota, Minnesota, and South Dakota law. Our offices in Moorhead, MN and Winnipeg, MB can be reached at 218-291-0422 and 204-982-7254, or you can check out our website at www.redriverbasincommission.org.

