

Ripple Effect #42

DEMYSTIFYING INTEGRATED WATERSHED MANAGEMENT

Integrated watershed management seems to be a term that is used more and more, but what does it mean? Integrated Watershed Stewardship and Management is made up of three key components: natural vs. political boundaries, sound science, and partnerships and stakeholder involvement.

An essential element of integrated watershed management is that it focuses on land and water management using natural vs. political boundaries. While man-made boundaries reflect administrative requirements and serve many useful purposes, they often fail to address the fundamental reality that what happens upstream impacts what happens downstream. A watershed refers to the geographic boundaries of a particular water body, its ecosystem and the land that drains into it. A watershed also includes groundwater aquifers that discharge to and receive discharge from streams, wetlands, ponds and lakes.

Watershed management is a holistic approach which recognizes that all ecosystem components and functions are interconnected and that management must take into account everything that occurs within a watershed, including both naturally occurring and human based activities. This is a departure from the traditional approach of managing individual water and land management issues.

Sound scientific research and data is needed to inform this process and when watersheds cross jurisdictional boundaries the standardization and sharing of data becomes particularly important.

Watersheds transcend political, social, and economic boundaries. Therefore, it is important to engage all effected parties in the designing and implementing goals for the watershed. This means bringing together representatives from all levels of government, public interest groups, industry, academic institutions, private landowners, concerned citizens and others.

To summarize integrated watershed management involves managing natural resource by watershed vs. political boundaries, using sound research and data to drive decisions; and involving stakeholders in the decision-making process

Always consider the “ripple effect” of your actions, everything you do in your watershed impacts others!

For more information on watershed management check out the EPA website @ <http://www.epa.gov/owow/watershed/wa1.html>.

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.

