

## Why Study Water?

Water is essential to life on this planet. Let's look at some of the basic questions to ask as we study water:

- How do we characterize it?
- Where does it come from?
- Where does it go?
- What happens to it on its journey?

Some water impacts are landscape-scale, such as the forces that carved the Grand Canyon. Water can change the very landscape



Some water impacts are site-scale. Shingle Creek may not be carving a Grand Canyon, but the owner of the blue house is very interested in how the streambanks are eroding his property.



Water is a basic human need. We need it for sustenance, both to drink and as a food source. We need it for transportation. We need it for hydropower. We need it for entertainment, recreation, aesthetic and spiritual reasons. The Native Americans considered the Falls of St. Anthony a sacred site. The early settlers considered the Falls and the Mississippi River a valuable resource there to make them rich and successful.



St. Anthony Falls, 1867

Minnesota Historical Society

As humans settled the land, we began to make impacts. We used the water, but we also influenced the water. We tamed it, we relocated it, we dumped stuff in it. All that stuff goes somewhere and does something, and hydrology helps us understand those impacts.



### Learning Activity

Pause now, and take a minute to find a photo of an area in YOUR watershed that shows evidence of how water has shaped the land. You can either find one online, or if an eroded site is near you, go take a photo of it.

- If you are doing this module as part of a group, take a few minutes to talk about where the water comes from that eroded this location, and where the water drains to.
- If you are doing this module individually, post your photo in the appropriate Discussion forum, with a brief description of photo, why you chose this photo, the location where the photo was taken, where the water comes from that eroded this location, and where the water drains to.