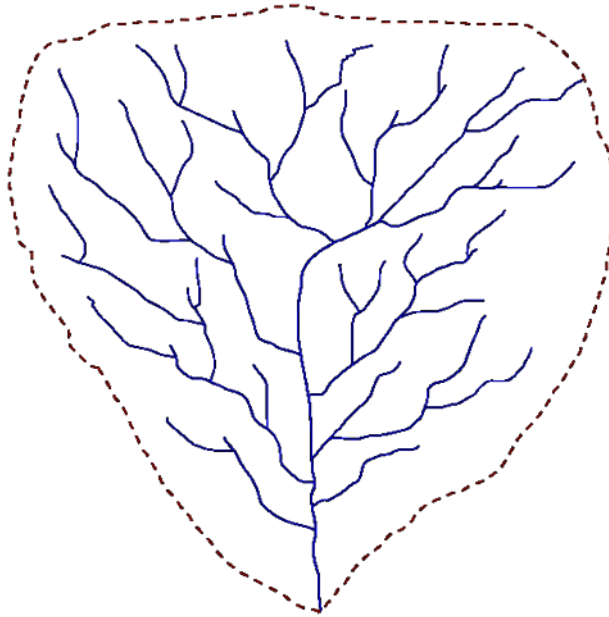


What Is a Watershed?

Basic questions we will address in this section:

- What is a watershed?
- How do we measure water?
- What influences how water moves?
- How does water impact the land?
- Are precipitation patterns changing?

A watershed is an area of land that drains to a river, lake or other body of water. The outlet of a watershed is sometimes called its **POUR POINT**.

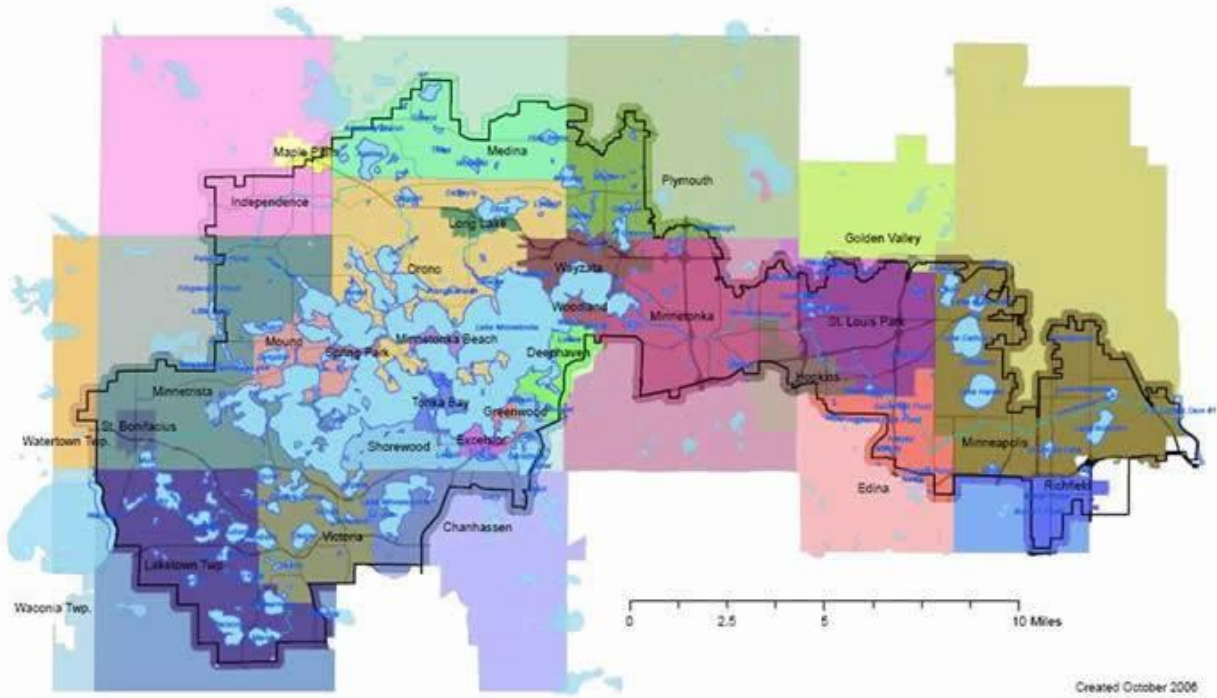


Watersheds can be all different sizes. They can be as large as the Mississippi watershed, which encompasses the center of the US, or as small as a neighborhood.

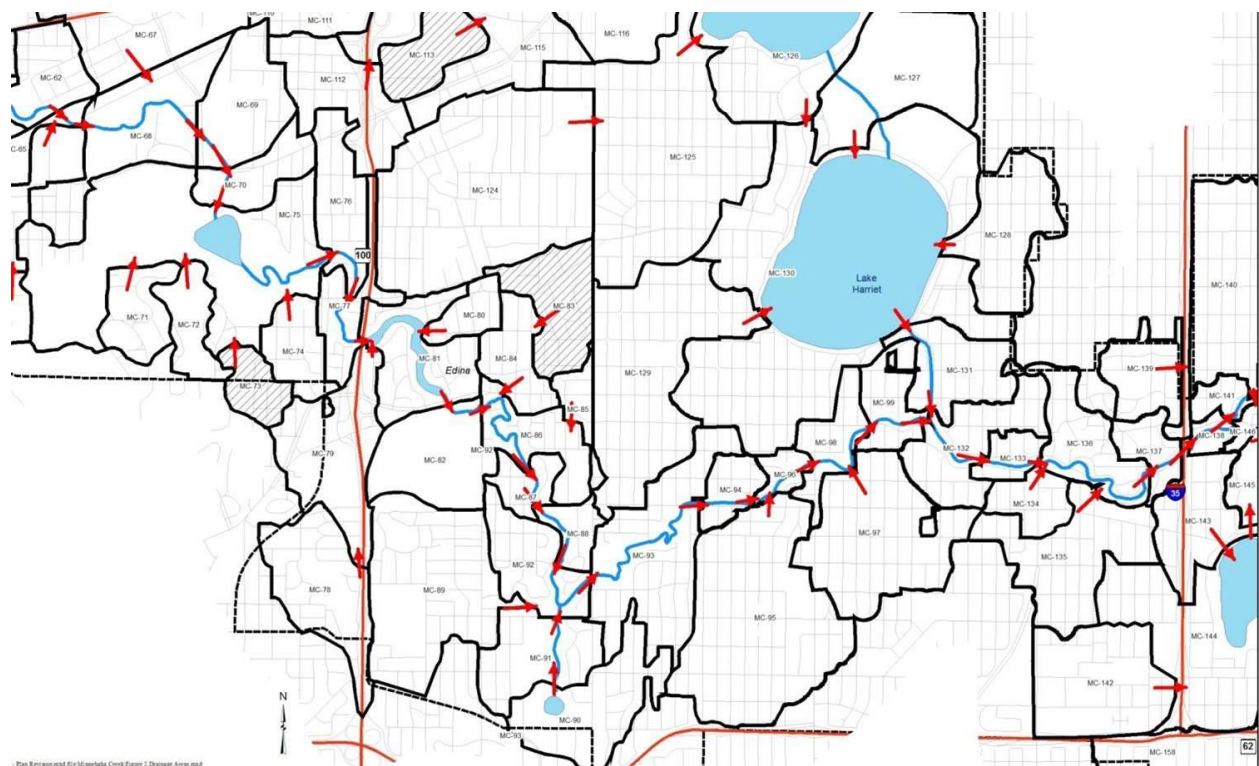


The Minnehaha Creek watershed of 173 square miles is divided into eleven subwatersheds. The upper watershed includes nine lake and stream systems and the direct drainage area into Lake Minnetonka. The outlet of Lake Minnetonka is Minnehaha Creek, which flows 22 miles to the Mississippi River.

Minnehaha Creek Watershed District



Another term often used interchangeably with watershed or subwatershed is Catchment. Some people use Catchment to refer to small, local drainage areas.



Learning Activity

Visit <http://www.pca.state.mn.us/aj0re98> to find out more about watersheds and basins in Minnesota.

Visit <http://bwsr.state.mn.us/planning/metro/> to find out more about Twin Cities Metro Area watershed planning. What basin and watershed do you live in? Post a response in the Discussion Forums.