

2018 Poster Contest Watershed Background Info

What is a watershed?

A watershed is an area of land that drains all the streams and rainfall to a common outlet such as the outflow of a reservoir, mouth of a bay, or any point along a stream channel. -USGS

Drainage basin, catchment, or just basin are words that are also sometimes used to describe a watershed. The watershed consists of all water within the defined area including: groundwater, lakes, streams, wetlands, and reservoirs. Watersheds can be any size, from as small as the roof of your house to large enough to encompass multiple states – it all depends on what common outlet of water that you choose (think about the storm drain in front of your house as an outlet vs. the mouth of the Mississippi as an outlet).

Watersheds are important because they give scientists, politicians, and citizens a way to define an area of impact for water resources big and small. This can help us find, monitor, and clean-up pollutants that enter our waterways. Everything is connected! Most times, the outlet of one watershed leads into or is part of a larger watershed. This is why it is important to take care of our own watershed – so that we don't pollute downstream.

What watershed do we live in?

Most of Elkhart County is in the St. Joe River Basin, except for the very southwest corner of the county. The Elkhart River Watershed (part of the St. Joe River Basin), extends roughly from the City of Elkhart to the southeast corner of the county. Included in this packet are maps of each of these watersheds.

Online Resources

Overview of water resources	https://water.usgs.gov/edu/
Find your watershed	https://water.usgs.gov/wsc/map_index.html
Elkhart River Restoration Assoc.	http://www.elkhartriverrestorationassociation.org/
Elkhart County SWCD	http://www.elkcoswcd.org