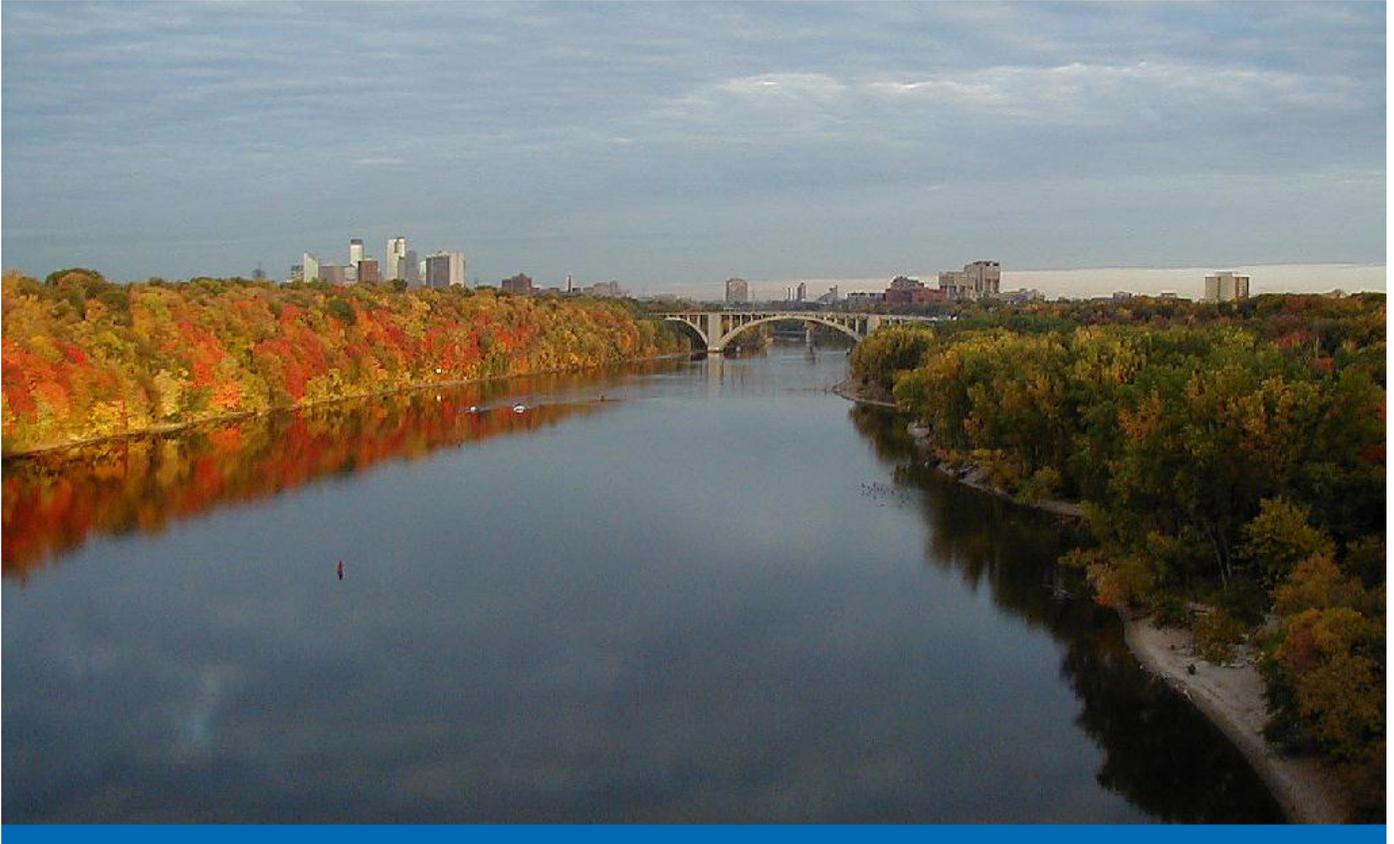


Protecting land and water



Minnesota is known for its abundance of water and natural resources. Hennepin County has a diversity of landscapes and habitats ranging from formal gardens and urban parks to prairies, forests lakes, streams and wetlands. Natural resources provide critical habitat for wildlife, protect water quality, offer recreational opportunities and serve as the foundation to the region's environmental well-being, economic prosperity and collective quality of life. Protecting the health of our natural resources is important for air and water quality, recreation, wildlife and tourism. However, our natural resources are under increasing pressure from population growth, development and climate change.

Steps you can take to protect land and water

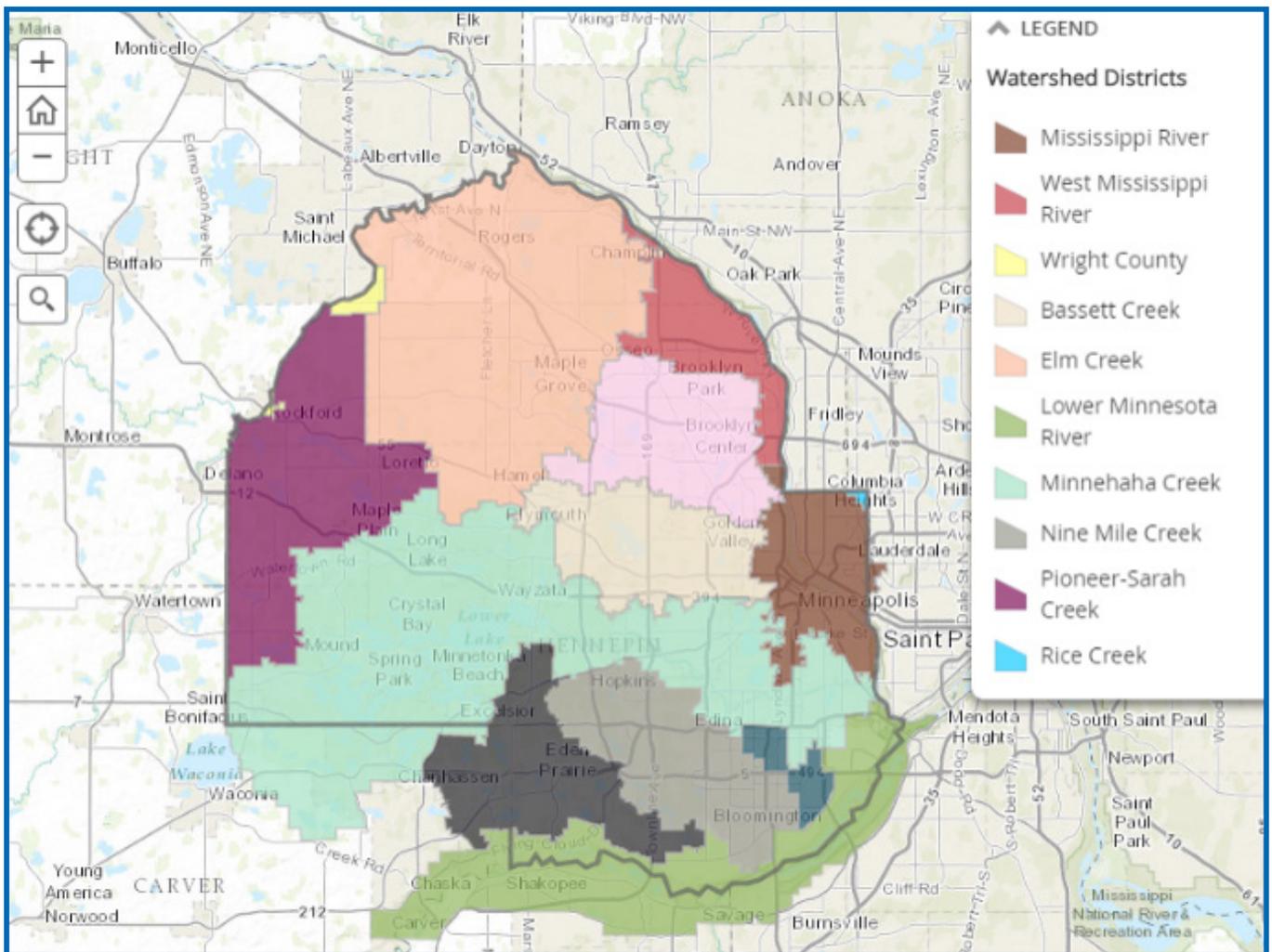
- **Use your runoff.** When it rains, the water that runs off driveways, lawns, houses and parking lots can carry pollutants such as oil, paint and chemicals down storm sewers that drain directly into nearby lakes, streams, rivers, and wetlands. Instead of letting it run off, you can capture rain water to reuse on your lawn and garden by directing your downspouts onto your lawn or garden or into a rain barrel.
- **Keep grass clippings and leaves out of the street.** Grass clippings and leaves in the street can be washed into the storm sewer where they are carried to nearby lakes, streams and wetlands. Clippings and leaves contain phosphorus and other nutrients that, like fertilizer, feed algae and other aquatic plants, contributing to algae blooms. Leave grass clippings and leaves on your lawn, use them in your backyard compost bin, or bag them up and bring them to a compost site.
- **Scoop the poop.** Grab a bag when you grab the leash and pick up after your pets. When waste is left behind, rainwater washes it into lakes and streams. Pet waste contains bacteria that can cause illnesses and nutrients that can contribute to excessive algae growth in lakes and streams.
- **Use chemicals wisely.** Use lawns and garden chemicals according to label directions, and use the minimum amount needed to control the problem. Sweep up any fertilizer or other chemicals that spill onto hard surfaces. Consider alternative or natural remedies to control weeds and pests.
- **Keep a healthy lawn.** Aerate your lawn, seed bare patches and mow at a higher setting. A vigorous lawn needs less watering, fewer chemicals and less maintenance.
- **Plant a rain garden.** Rain gardens are planted depressions designed to capture rainwater and allow it to soak into the soil. Find out more about rain gardens at www.bluethumb.org.
- **Replace turf with native plants.** Many native plants develop deeper root structures than turf grass, which reduces runoff by slowing the flow of water and allowing it to filter into the soil. Native plants can also provide food and habitat for birds, bees, butterflies and other wildlife. Drought-resistant native plants may require less watering than grass.
- **Reduce paved surfaces.** Replace paved surfaces, such as sidewalks, patios and driveways, with porous surfaces that allow water to seep through. Options include pervious pavers, grass strips and gravel.
- **Adopt a storm drain.** Keep storm drains on your street free of leaves, seeds and grass clippings. Storm sewers drain directly into a nearby body of water. Water running into storm drains can carry with it anything dumped nearby including leaves, grass clippings, soil, oil, paint and chemicals.
- **Reduce salt use.** Salt, or sodium chloride, is commonly used on driveways, sidewalks, roadways and parking lots to improve traction and safety. However, too much salt is polluting our lakes and streams – it takes only one teaspoon of road salt to permanently pollute five gallons of water. Reduce salt use by shoveling or using a snow blower, using the right amount of salt, using sand instead of salt when it's too cold (most salts stop working when it's colder than 15°F), and sweeping up any extra.
- **Practice sustainable landscaping.** Practice earth-friendly landscaping in your lawn by utilizing low-maintenance grasses, planting native tree and plant species, or composting food scraps and yard waste.

Know your watershed

A watershed is an area of land that drains to a common lake, river, stream or wetland. Water resources are managed based on their watershed, which allows communities to work together to prevent and solve water-related problems. Watersheds districts and watershed management organizations are special units of local government that regulate land-disturbing activities, perform capital improvement projects and provide environmental education related to water issues.

The watersheds organizations in Hennepin County are:

- Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission (www.bassettcreekwmo.org)
- Elm Creek Watershed Management Commission (www.elmcreekwatershed.org)
- Lower Minnesota River Watershed District (www.watersheddistrict.org)
- Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (www.minnehahacreek.org)
- Mississippi Watershed Management Organization (www.mwmo.org)
- Nine Mile Creek Watershed District (www.ninemilecreek.org)
- Pioneer-Sarah Creek Watershed Management Commission (www.pioneersarahcreek.org)
- Richfield-Bloomington Watershed Management Organization (www.rbwmo.com)
- Riley Purgatory Bluff Creek Watershed District (www.rpbcwd.org)
- Shingle Creek and West Mississippi Watershed Management Commissions (www.shinglecreek.org)



Resources:

- Hennepin County's Ten Things You Can Do To Improve Minnesota's Lakes, Rivers and Streams brochure