

# watersheds

## Do you know your water address?

You know your house number, zip code and the county you're in, but can you name your watershed?

## Watersheds will be the planning units of Arkansas' water future

Considering water in terms of watersheds helps us better understand who our water neighbors are and what that means for our water quality. The daily actions of your upstream neighbors affect your water quality, just as your habits affect your downstream neighbors. And who those neighbors are isn't always obvious. After all, you can't fix a leak in your own living room by patching someone else's roof.

Water law and policy are likely to change a great deal in the next several years, and many issues will be couched in terms of watershed. Basically, a watershed is an area that drains into a particular body of water. The boundaries are defined by the shape of the land and don't usually match city and county borders. Arkansas has 57 "coded" watersheds (also called

*All who live and work within a particular watershed are bound to the same water future.*

hydrologic units), which together form seven regional watersheds.

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the same water future. The land that makes up the watershed — the pavements and farms and forests that water travels over and through — has a significant impact on the quality of the water. Ideally, it performs a filtering function for precipitation and runoff as it winds its way to the water body.

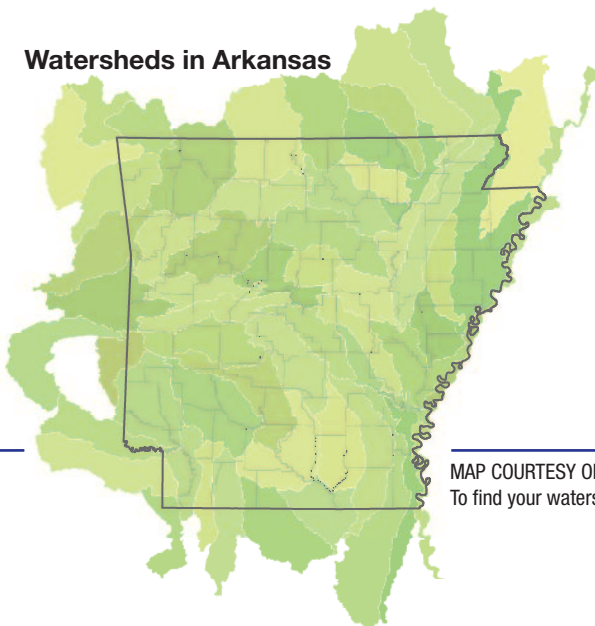
**No one owns Arkansas' water.** However, responsible citizenship demands that we manage water for the benefit of all. By developing a stewardship ethic, solutions to water problems can be prevented with advance planning and collaboration, rather than battled out in court after the fact.

## Challenges

The challenges to watersheds are the challenges of living together in society. What is best for all, present and future, while accommodating the interests of individuals and institutions? What provides economic opportunity while safeguarding recreational interests and wildlife? At what point is water quality in danger, and what can we do about it?

Someone is mapping out your water future. Shouldn't it be you?

## Watersheds in Arkansas



MAP COURTESY OF CAST, UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS  
To find your watershed, visit [www.watersheds.cast.uark.edu](http://www.watersheds.cast.uark.edu)

## Arkansas is at a critical juncture in water management.

Decisions we make now can move the state toward or away from crisis. Citizens and institutions have the opportunity to participate in those decisions now and in the next few years, or risk being left high and dry after decisions are made by others.

Arkansas' Water Future Coalition maintains that well-managed water, both now and in the future, must start with the protection of water quality, water quantity, healthy natural habitats and the recharge of groundwater aquifers.

The **Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation** commissioned the following efforts to promote policy options that achieve sustainable water resources in Arkansas.

### **Water Issues in Arkansas: An Unfinished Story, 2008**

A summary report and a larger companion report include references, literature review and multiple perspectives on Arkansas water use.

### **Troubled Water (2008 AETN)**

This documentary film summarizes water issues and aired in April 2008.

### **Arkansas' Water Future Coalition (2008)**

The Coalition includes Audubon Arkansas, Arkansas Public Policy Panel, and The Nature Conservancy. The Coalition will assist the Foundation with strategies that engage Arkansans in efforts that focus on improving water policy.

## Thirsty for more?

### **Water Issues in Arkansas:**

**An Unfinished Story** can be found at [www.wrfoundation.org](http://www.wrfoundation.org)

Other websites of interest:

[www.anrc.arkansas.gov](http://www.anrc.arkansas.gov)  
[www.adeq.state.ar.us](http://www.adeq.state.ar.us)  
[www.arkansaswater.org](http://www.arkansaswater.org)  
[www.awag.org](http://www.awag.org)  
[www.watersheds.cast.uark.edu](http://www.watersheds.cast.uark.edu)

Arkansas' Water Future Coalition Members:

[www.ar.audubon.org](http://www.ar.audubon.org)  
[www.arpanel.org](http://www.arpanel.org)  
[www.nature.org/wherewework/northamerica/states/arkansas](http://www.nature.org/wherewework/northamerica/states/arkansas)



A Coalition of Audubon Arkansas, Arkansas Public Policy Panel & The Nature Conservancy, Arkansas Field Office. Funded by the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation.

## Water Glossary

### **Watershed**

A watershed is an area of land that drains rain and snow into a particular lake or river. Arkansas has 57 "coded" watersheds, sometimes called hydrologic units, and seven regional watersheds. Decisions made by stakeholders in a watershed will affect others.

### **Aquifer**

Groundwater is contained in aquifers, underground beds of saturated soil or rock. Arkansas is the fourth largest user of groundwater in the U.S. Water level declines and other measures indicate that aquifer withdrawals in the state are occurring at an unsustainable rate.

### **Riparian Zones**

A general term for land areas directly influenced by a body of water. Stream banks, lake borders and marshes are typical riparian zones. A healthy riparian zone contains native plants that filter sediment and other contaminants from water and provide wildlife habitat. Loss of healthy native riparian zones reduces water quality.

### **Runoff**

Runoff, as the term suggests, is any amount of water that runs off a surface, either into a waterway or absorbed by the soil. Runoff can transport sediment, nutrients and contaminants into surface and groundwater, and is a major culprit in loss of water quality.

### **Sedimentation**

Sediment is the largest pollutant of water worldwide. It's the deposit and accumulation of eroded soil into waterways. Erosion from deforestation, urbanization, roads and agriculture can contribute.

### **Point and Nonpoint Pollution**

In order to manage pollution's impact on a body of water, we must determine its starting point. If a pollutant can be traced back to a particular source, it's referred to as "point" pollution. If not, the pollution is referred to as "nonpoint."