

What the heck is a watershed, anyway?

So, what the heck is a watershed, anyway?

A watershed is really just another word for a basin.

It is an area of land that drains into a common body of water. When it rains or snow melts, there are many paths that water can take.

It can soak into the soil and become groundwater, or enter a storm drain which then flows to a stream, lake, river or in our case, Grand Traverse Bay.

Watersheds are nature's boundaries. These boundaries transcend the jurisdictional boundaries that humans have imposed on the landscape such as counties, townships, cities, villages and private property lines.

The Grand Traverse Bay Watershed encompasses 973 square miles and covers major portions of four counties: Grand Traverse, Antrim, Kalkaska and Leelanau.

Small sections of the watershed also extend into Charlevoix and Otsego Counties.

The Grand Traverse Bay Watershed consists of the following major sub-basins: Elk River/Chain of Lakes, Boardman River, Mitchell Creek, Acme Creek, Ptobego Creek, Yuba Creek, East Bay Shoreline, West Bay Shoreline and Old Mission Peninsula

Do you know what watershed you live in? The map in the centerspread of this publication (Pages 8 & 9) shows these sub-basins in detail.

To learn more about the Grand Traverse Bay Watershed, visit our website at www.gtbbay.org.

Or, try out the EPA's "Surf your Watershed" site at www.epa.gov/surf/.



Boy, that's a lot of water!

■ The Grand Traverse Bay Watershed covers 973 square miles.

■ An estimated 373 billion gallons of water per year enter the Bay; 60 percent of the surface water in the bay comes from the Elk River/Chain of Lakes Watershed; 30 percent enters through the Boardman River Watershed; and the smaller tributaries supply the rest.

■ The bay is filled with 8.97 cubic miles of water.

■ If someone pulled the plug, it would take 26 years for the bay to fill up again!

■ The bay is 32 miles long and its shoreline totals 132 miles.

■ The bay is 10 miles across at its widest point.

■ The average depth of the bay is 180 feet. The deepest spot is where the drop off plunges to 605 feet in East Bay off the tip of Old Mission Peninsula.

Left, The Grand Traverse Bay Watershed is unique and diverse with miles of beautiful rivers, creeks and streams as well as spectacular inland lakes and miles of Lake Michigan shoreline.