

Giving back more for our future

As a young child growing up during the early 1980's in inner-city Chicago, environmental education and nature studies were not components of our academic curriculum.

Despite being born and raised in the Great Lakes Basin, nobody I knew was introduced to fishing, pond studies, nature hikes, and similar types of transcendental outdoor learning experiences.

I cannot recall a single memory of learning about our natural world during a time when it would have made a substantial impression upon myself and fellow classmates. Nature and her resources, I came to cherish and embrace well into my adult life.

Thankfully, things have changed. Most elementary aged children nowadays are provided generous opportunities to learn about nature and make connections between the health and survival of the smallest of organisms up to the larger components in the web of life.

Now I have a career where I celebrate daily with children all the amazing things we have to study, appreciate, and protect for our future and those to



MDNR employee Maureen Jacobs and members of East Jordan Cub Scout troop #17 studying Macros and water quality at Oden State Fish Hatchery.

come after us.

Water quality studies are an excellent method for turning young eager minds towards science and protection of our

water resources. At the Michigan Fisheries Visitor Center at Oden State Fish Hatchery in Oden, Michigan, we utilize our scale-model watershed to demonstrate how watersheds function and how clean water is essential towards life, health, and longevity for all flora and fauna.

Over 60 school groups every year come visit our site to participate in stream studies. Sampling for macroinvertebrates our 'biological indicators', testing the water for parts per million of dissolved oxygen and natural elements, truly helps kids make connections between how all life is effected up the food chain starting with the water in which they exist.

Our children will grow to be decision makers, legislators, voters, teachers, and parents. They will be responsible for the use and protection our water resources and how they are cared for into their future. It is our duty as adults to show them the beauty in this resource and not take for granted their watershed address.

— Maureen Jacobs
MDNR employee

What is your watershed address?

Sometimes it's hard to imagine that what you do in your front yard can have an impact on the health of the Great Lakes. To help you better visualize this point, figure out your watershed address. It's easy!

Just as your street address tells what street you live on, your watershed address tells you what watershed you live in. If you know your watershed address, you know which creek or river all the rain that hits your yard drains into, no matter how far away you are. Everything that happens in the watershed affects that body of water, so what you do in your front yard will affect your nearest creek or river.

What a responsibility! So, where does the water in your lawn go? Here are a few examples:

- If you live in Kingsley, your watershed address might be: Kingston Creek, Swainston Creek, Boardman River, Grand Traverse Bay, Lake Michigan

- If you live in Williamsburg, your watershed address might be: Battle Creek, Elk Lake, Grand Traverse Bay, Lake Michigan

- Here's a tricky one. If you live in Ellsworth, your watershed address might be: Skinner Creek, Ellsworth Lake, Wilson Lake, Ben-Way Lake, Hanley Lake, Intermediate Lake, Intermediate River, Lake Bellaire, Grass River, Clam Lake, Torch Lake, Torch River, Lake Skegemog, Elk Lake, Grand Traverse Bay, Lake Michigan

To figure out your watershed address, get a topographical map of your region, find your home and then follow your nearest creek downhill. For a map of the Grand Traverse Bay Watershed, call the Watershed Center at (231) 935-1514 or email info@gtbay.org.



Did you know?
The Great Lakes contain nearly 50% of the world's supply of surface fresh water.

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