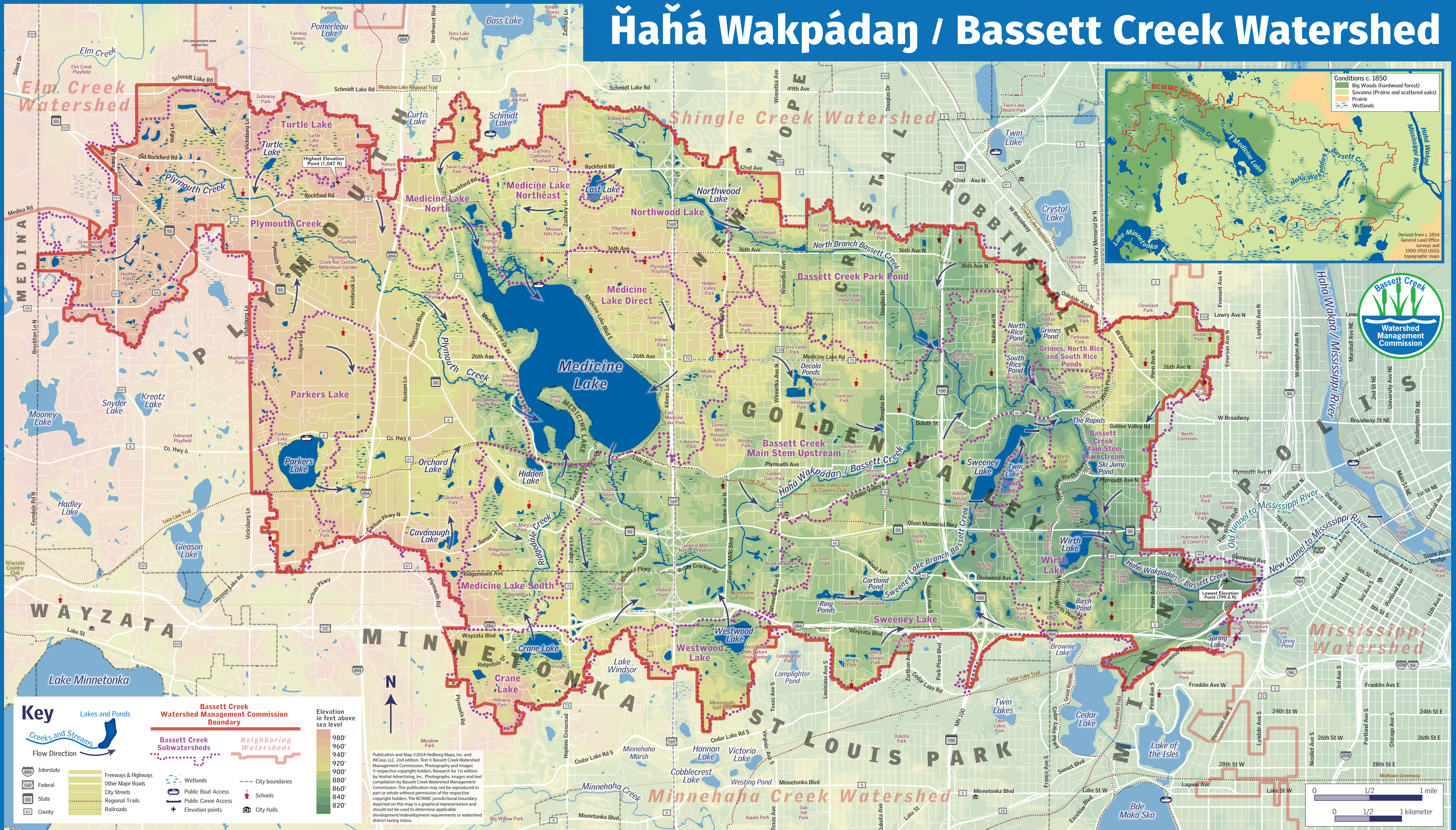


# Ĥaĥá Wakpádan / Bassett Creek Watershed







Northern Medicine Lake. Photo by Hughes Company Innovations

## WHAT IS A WATERSHED?

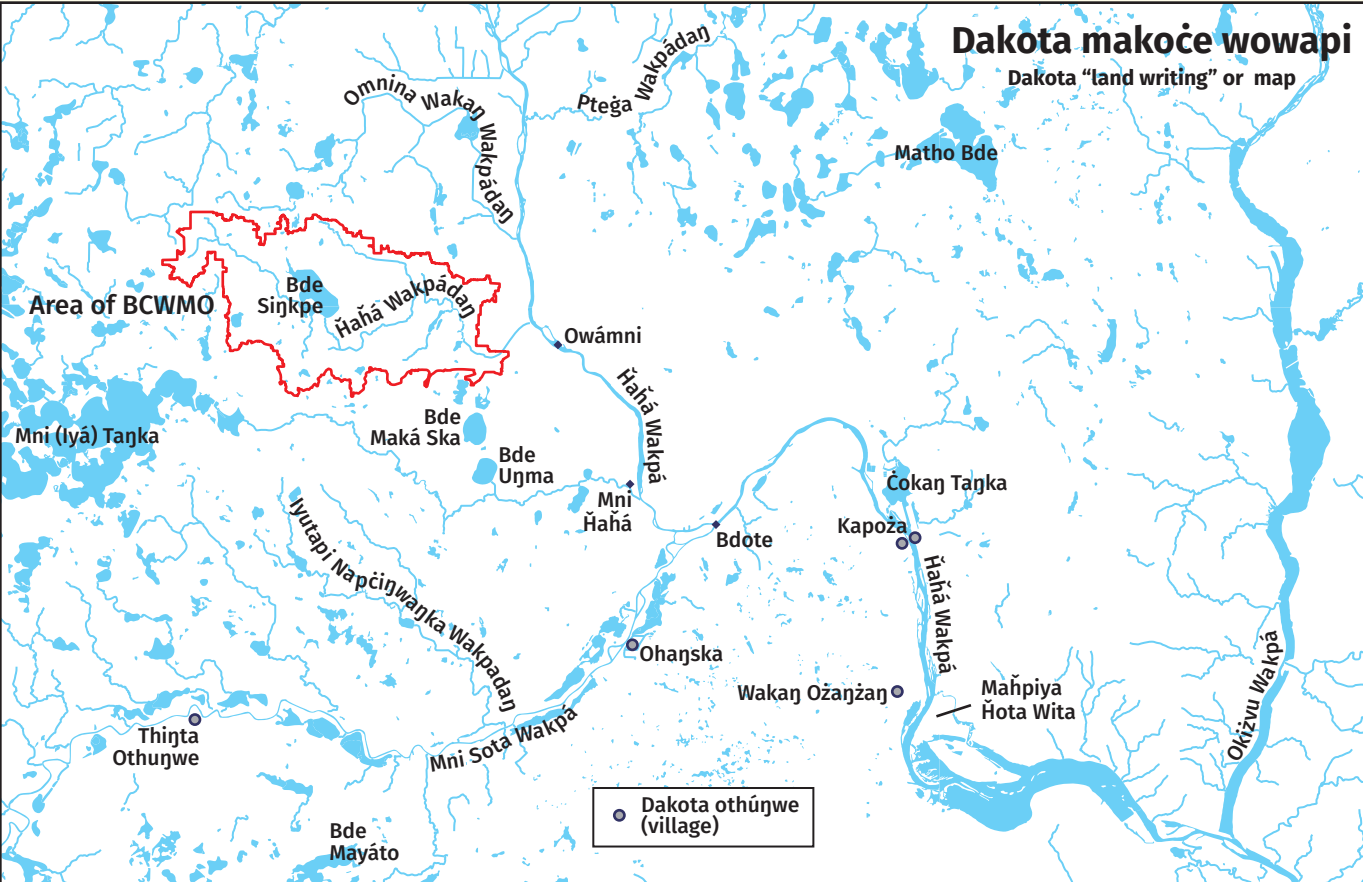
A watershed is an area of land that drains to a common lake, stream, or river. We all live in a watershed and watersheds come in all shapes and sizes. Watershed boundaries cross county, state, and national boundaries.

The Ĥaĥā Wakpádan/Bassett Creek watershed is about 40 square miles. It begins in western Plymouth, where ponds, wetlands, and swales or ditches drain to Plymouth Creek, which flows southeasterly before emptying into the western side of Medicine Lake.

Ĥaĥā Wakpádan/Bassett Creek emerges from the southern edge of Medicine Lake and flows south and then east, picking up water from the North Branch and the Sweeney Lake Branch of Bassett Creek before entering a tunnel and traveling 2.4 miles underground to the Mississippi River. The map on the other side shows land elevation in a color gradient. The highest elevations at the “top” of the watershed in Plymouth (light reds and yellows) gradually lead to the lower areas to the east (light then darker greens). The watershed of Ĥaĥā Wakpádan/Bassett Creek is a small part of the larger Mississippi River basin.

The Dakota people cherished the Ĥaĥā Wakpádan/Bassett Creek waterway long before European settlers arrived. The creek teemed with fish and aquatic life. The Dakota harvested wild rice from nearby waters and sustainably hunted wildlife for food, hides, and tools.

Birthered as one people in Mni Sota Makoċhe (modern-day Minnesota) from their home in the constellation of the bison's backbone, the Dakota are part of a larger confederacy known as the Oceti Šakowij Oyate, or the Seven Council Starfire Nations. This confederacy includes four Dakota, two Nakota, and one Lakota band, covering



## WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO



The Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission (BCWMC) works to reduce flooding and to protect and improve the condition of lakes, streams, wetlands, and ponds

within its borders. The BCWMC is a cooperative organization among the nine cities within the watershed. It uses a multi-pronged approach to managing waterbodies: projects, policy, data collection and analysis, and education/engagement.

BCWMC projects include restoring streambanks to eliminate erosion and improve habitat, installing ponds to treat stormwater before it enters a lake or stream, and improving flood storage capacity to reduce potential property damage. BCWMC policies include requirements for stormwater management when a site is developed or redeveloped. The BCWMC collects data on water quality, aquatic biology, and water levels to track conditions and maintain hydrologic and pollution models. The BCWMC also uses a variety of avenues to educate and engage watershed residents about ways they can help improve water features on their properties and in their communities.

## YOUR WATER FOOTPRINT

Did you know the average American home directly uses 110,000 gallons of water per year? That's 300 gallons a day. That's just the start. Each of us also consumes water on a far grander scale. Water is used to produce the food we eat and the beverages we drink, as well as in energy production. Water is a crucial part of creating the goods and services we buy and rely on every day. Combine all these elements and you arrive at your watershed footprint—a measure of how much water you use in total every day. Learn where you use the most water and where you can reduce your footprint at [www.epa.gov/watersense](http://www.epa.gov/watersense).

current territories in North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Nebraska, and Minnesota.

The map below illustrates Bdote, the sacred confluence of the Ĥaĥā Wakpá (Mississippi River) with the Mni Sota Wakpá (Minnesota River) and the Ĥaĥā Wakpá with the St. Croix River. Bdote is not only a geographical landmark; it is the sacred origin place of the Dakota where they were birthered onto Mako Ina (Mother Earth) as one people at the beginning of time.

For millennia, the Dakota referred to the land now known as Minnesota as Mni Sota Makoċhe,

## TREAT YOUR CURB LIKE A SHORELINE

Since we all live in a watershed, it's important to know some basics. Sometimes it's obvious that our property drains to a particular body of water; sometimes it's not. In urban areas, such as the Ĥaĥā Wakpádan/Bassett Creek watershed, runoff from most properties eventually gets to a lake or creek and from there into the Mississippi River. Even if you live several blocks or miles from the nearest creek or lake, runoff from your property drains through storm sewers under your street, essentially turning every curb into a shoreline.

Storm sewer systems are an important part of city infrastructure. They protect structures and property from floods by quickly and efficiently conveying water from parking lots, rooftops, and roads. Unlike the sanitary sewer systems that treat wastewater collected from inside the home, storm sewer systems do not treat runoff water before discharging it into a water body.

Stormwater runoff carries numerous pollutants, including salt from winter deicers, lawn fertilizers, nutrients from grass clippings and fallen leaves, pesticides, toxins from coal-tar driveway sealants, oil from leaking cars, and pet waste. In creeks and lakes, these pollutants accumulate and result in poor water quality. This affects aesthetics

and recreational enjoyment of the lakes. It's also bad for fish, insects, birds and their habitats.



Storm drains in Bryn Mawr, Minneapolis  
Photos by Neil Cize

You can learn to pronounce the creek name through a short YouTube video at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=IwDrekIliNM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IwDrekIliNM)



meaning “the land where the water reflects the skies.” This area remained Dakota homeland until the 1700s, when both Ojibwe and European settlers began to enter the territory. In 1849, Minnesota became a territory, and within two years, the U.S. government annexed it entirely, except for a seven-mile tract intended for the Dakota people. Cut off from their traditional means of hunting and foraging, the Dakota faced starvation, which was the spark that ignited the 1862 U.S.-Dakota War. Following the war, the Dakota were imprisoned in a concentration camp at Fort Snelling, where hundreds died from deplorable conditions. The aftermath saw the largest mass execution in U.S. history, where 38 Dakota men were hanged. Survivors were forcibly exiled from their homeland. The Dakota still feel the impact of the 1862 war today.

Ĥaĥā Wakpádan/Bassett Creek leads to the falls in Ĥaĥā Wakpá (Mississippi River), hence the name Ĥaĥā Wakpádan, or “Creek to the River of the Falls.”

In the late 1800s, scientists categorized natural vegetation according to its ecosystem. In the map above, diversity appears limited to certain plants. In reality, before colonization, the watershed was a beautiful and abundant place full of wildlife, food, and medicine. Although the Lakota and Nakota went west to the prairies, the Dakota remained near the lakes, rivers, and wetlands, which gave them access to the greatest biodiversity of plant life for food and medicine.

# Watershed Awareness and Protection

## CHALLENGES AHEAD

### OUR WATERS NEED A LOW-SALT DIET



Salt (aka “chloride”) is toxic to freshwater organisms like fish, frogs, and bugs. Once it's in the water, there is almost no way to

remove it. It only takes **one teaspoon** of salt to permanently render five gallons of water too salty for freshwater critters. Most salt pollution comes from winter deicers on roads, parking lots, and driveways. In fact, a University of Minnesota study found that about **78 percent of salt** applied in the Twin Cities for winter maintenance is either transported to groundwater or remains in local lakes and wetlands. Salt can also come from water softeners, fertilizer, manure, and dust suppressants. You can reduce winter salt use on your property by shoveling early and often to avoid ice buildup. Consider **using sand** or grit instead of salt, or only using salt sparingly. (Just twelve ounces of salt are enough to melt 250 square feet of ice!) **Sweep up** salt lying on dry pavement and reuse it during the next storm. If you hire winter maintenance crews, make sure they are Smart Salt certified through the MN Pollution Control Agency. **Advocate for reduced salt use** where you see it piling up at stores, schools, work, etc. Ask city or BCWMC watershed staff if you'd like to learn more about salt reduction ideas.

## BE PART OF THE SOLUTION

### 1. CUT THE SALT

It only takes one teaspoon of salt to permanently pollute five gallons of water so that it's no longer usable by freshwater organisms such as fish, frogs, and bugs. See at left for salt alternatives and other low-salt tips.

### 2. CLEAN STREETS LEAD TO CLEAN WATER

Rainwater gets away from us too quickly sometimes. With it go grass clippings, leaves, fertilizer, and anything else that can run off our rooftops, driveways, and sidewalks. If left to accumulate, these organics find their way through storm drains into our lakes and rivers. Keep your hard surfaces and street front clear of clippings, leaves, and excess fertilizer. Regularly inspect your local storm drain and remove debris where possible. Consider “adopting” your drain ([www.adopt-a-drain.org](http://www.adopt-a-drain.org)) to track your clean-up progress.

### 3. PICK UP AFTER YOUR PET

When pets leave waste behind, even on grass or in your yard, rainwater can wash it into lakes and streams. Pet waste contains bacteria, including E. coli, that can cause illness in people, pets, and wildlife. Pet waste also contains nutrients that cause destructive algae blooms in lakes and streams.



Photo by Laura Jester

### 4. REPLACE SOME TURF, BUILD A RAIN GARDEN

Trade some of your turf for native plants or choose a turfgrass alternative. Native plants are great for pollinators and require less maintenance and irrigation. Better yet, install a rain garden to catch rainwater runoff in your yard. Rain gardens have plants that tolerate occasional, partial flooding. They provide beautiful landscaping and wildlife habitat. By soaking up rain where it falls, they also slow stormwater runoff, help prevent erosion, and remove pollutants.

### 5. NATURALIZE YOUR SHORE OR STREAMBANK

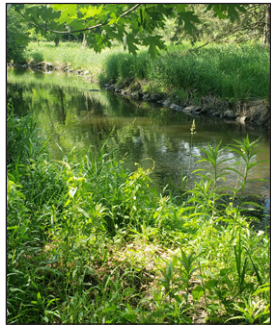


Photo by Laura Jester

If you live on a lake, creek, or wetland, create a buffer of native vegetation that provides wildlife habitat and filters runoff before it reaches the water. Vegetation along the water stabilizes shorelines and streambanks, protects your property from erosion, and improves habitat.

### 6. RECYCLE EXPIRED MEDICATIONS

Never put these in the trash or flush them down the toilet. Look for a secure Hennepin County medical waste recycling container at a public facility near you.

### 7. REDIRECT RAINWATER

Direct downspout back into your yard, away from driveways and sidewalks where it can run off your property. Make a shallow depression away from your foundation so downspout water will soak into the ground. Better yet, save that water in a rain barrel and use the reservoir for watering landscape plants in dry times.

*“Our first home and first medicine is water as we grew in our mother's womb. For Dakota's people mni/water is the lifeblood of Mako Ina/ Mother Earth, the sacred sustenance of life. You often hear Dakota people say “Mni Wiconi/ Water is life”. In this place we pay homage to the one who protects the water, Unktehi, the great horned serpent who travels the aquifers to protect the water.”*

- Roxanne Biidabinokwe Gould, Professor Emeritus of Indigenous and Environmental Studies, living in Golden Valley near the Ĥaĥā Wakpádan

Additional resources include:

- The book *What Does Justice Look Like?: The Struggle for Liberation in Dakota Homeland* by Dakota scholar and activist Waziyatawaj of Pežihutazizi Otunwe (2008) relates the history of her people before European arrival, and the often violent and traumatic history since that time. She brings to light the most important historical and continuing contemporary injustices against the Dakota people and gives clear suggestions for how Americans can support Indigenous people in their struggle for restorative justice and liberation.
- Diane Wilson's book *Spirit Car: Journey to a Dakota Past* (2006) connects modern suburban life as a Dakota community member with the trauma of the U.S.-Dakota War of the 1860s.
- Find more Dakota stories, culture, and history in *Mni Sota Makoċe: The Land of the Dakota* (2012) by Gwen Westerman, Bruce White, and Glenn Wasicuna. Birchbark Books.



Photo by Laura Jester

### 8. TAKE A KID FISHING!

Life isn't all about work. Those who most appreciate the need for water protection and water conservation are those who learn its value through experience. In this watershed, Wirth Lake and Westwood Lake are designated by the MN DNR as Fishing in the Neighborhood (FIN) lakes.

### 9. CONSERVE, CONSERVE, CONSERVE

Every drop counts and unlimited clean water isn't a guarantee, even in Minnesota. Swap out a shower fixture for a wa-ter-saving shower head or install a low-volume toilet. Turn off the water while you brush teeth or trade in that garbage disposal for composting organics. Capture rain in a rain barrel or get a rain sensor for your irrigation system. Lower your energy consumption and your purchasing consumption — energy production and manufacturing take a lot of water.

### 10. GET INVOLVED

You don't have to be a water scientist to get involved. There are plenty of things you can do with little effort. Monitor a local lake or wetland. Organize a fall clean-up. Learn to identify and control invasive species. Join a lake or neighborhood association. Participate. It's the way change begins.



BassettCreekWMO.org



# Map & Guide Watershed Bassett Creek Ĥaĥā Wakpádan

## EXPERIENCE

Ĥaĥā Wakpádan and the Bassett Creek Watershed – a great waterway flowing through our communities.

## MEMBER MUNICIPALITIES



Crystal.....crystalmn.gov  
Golden Valley.....goldenvalleymn.gov  
Medicine Lake.....cityofmedicinelake.com  
Minneapolis.....minneapolismn.gov  
Minnetonka.....minnetonkamn.gov  
New Hope.....newhopemn.gov  
Plymouth.....plymouthmn.gov  
Robbinsdale.....robbinsdalemn.gov  
St. Louis Park.....stlouisparkmn.gov

## BASSETTCREEKWMO.ORG



Photo by Dan Johnson

# Learning About Ĥaĥā Wakpádan