

# Welcome to Your Rock River Neighborhood



## Home. Yard. Neighborhood.

The areas in our lives we're familiar with and know about, we live in, care for, and hold close to our heart. We know why and how to protect these cherished home areas.

## Watershed. Basin.

The areas on the earth we're less familiar with, but where we live, work and play. Generally, we don't know why and how to protect these broader areas that we live in. Each earth area is your neighborhood and is vital to you and your family's health, happiness and future. Many governmental agencies work to protect the environment. However, it's increasingly clear that federal, state and local governmental agencies cannot do the job alone. Every person's participation is essential to protecting our natural resources.

The Rock River Basin is your *River Neighborhood*. As a resident it's up to you to know and care for the Basin's resource health, heritage and future. No one else has as much at stake as you in protecting the environmental and economic well-being of the Rock River Basin.

The Rock River Basin is in southern Wisconsin. The Basin covers about 3,777 square miles or 2.4 million acres over ten counties. The Basin includes 26 cities ranging from the City of Madison to smaller cities like Janesville, Stoughton, Hartford, and Delavan. Our Basin also includes 36 smaller villages and in total about 760,000 people make their homes here.

The Basin has approximately 3,900 river miles; including both rivers flowing year round and intermittent streams. The Rock River is the Basin's main river. From the Rock River, major tributaries, like branches on a tree, reach out towards the Basin edges. These systems include the Crawfish, Yahara, Oconomowoc, and Bark rivers, and Turtle Creek and many other rivers and streams. Each river and stream drains a part of the Basin and feeds its collected water into the Rock River.

The headwaters of the Rock River start northwest of the City of Waupun. The northern most branches of the Rock River flow south through the internationally renowned Horicon Marsh. On the east near Allenton, the Rock River starts as cool trout streams that merge to form the East Branch Rock River. A short distance southward are the Cities of Oconomowoc and Delafield in the Lakes District of Waukesha County. On the west side of the Basin lies the City of Madison and its famous chain of lakes.

The main trunk of the Rock River, mid-basin, flows south through the Cities of Watertown, Jefferson and Fort Atkinson. The Rock River leaves Wisconsin at the City of Beloit and continues on through northwestern Illinois entering the Mississippi River at Rock Island, Illinois. In Illinois, the Sugar and Pecatonica Rivers flowing down from Wisconsin also join and merge with the Rock River. The Mississippi River outlets to the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean near the City of New Orleans. Overall the Rock River's flow is remarkably smooth with very little fast running water.

Over 443 lakes and impoundments dot the Basin. Some of the most historically, environmentally and economically important lakes include the Madison area lake complex of Mendota, Monona, Waubesa, Kegonsa and Wingra. Other significant lakes in the Basin include Lake Koshkonong, the largest lake impoundment in Wisconsin, and Beaver Dam, Pike, Oconomowoc, Rock, Okauchee, Whitewater and Delavan Lakes. Because these lakes are located within a short drive of many major cities, they're heavily used for boating, fishing and swimming. This makes them an important economic asset to the Basin.

The Basin has 28 watersheds varying in size from the 30 square mile Calamus Creek watershed to the 290 square mile Beaver Dam River watershed. These 28 watersheds include mostly larger slow-moving warmwater streams, as well as a few coldwater trout streams.

The watersheds form a mosaic of rich farm country, small culturally diverse towns and large city areas. Many small towns still strongly reflect the cultural heritage of the early settlers. Larger cities, like Madison and Milwaukee suburbs, reflect a broader diversity of historical settlement and contemporary immigration.

The Rock River Basin is located entirely within the southern region of the state in the Prairie-Forest Border Ecoregion. This region extends beyond southern Wisconsin into Minnesota, Iowa, and Illinois. The region is a large area of land and water that contains many geographically distinct groups of terrestrial communities.

**Watershed** ~ an area of land, ranging in size from a few acres to thousands, that drains or sheds its water to a body of water, such as a stream, river or lake.

**Basin** ~ a large geographic area comprised of many small watersheds



# **Map 1: Location of the Rock River Basin**

Please refer to the State of the Rock River Basin Report web page to view this map

## **Map 2: Rock River Basin Watersheds**

Please refer to the State of the Rock River Basin Report web page to view this map