

Developing a Watershed-Based Plan in the Mississippi North Central Watershed

Stakeholder Information

Rachel Curry, Watershed Outreach Associate

What is a Watershed?

A watershed is an area of land that drains to a body of water, such as a lake, stream, or river. Watersheds can be as small as the drainage area for a pond or as large as the Mississippi River Basin. The Mississippi North Central (Flint-Henderson) watershed is a sub watershed within the larger Mississippi River Basin. It covers approximately 1.1 million acres and encompasses portions of six counties in Illinois. Over 65 tributaries make up the Mississippi North Central watershed, including Henderson Creek, North Henderson Creek, Edwards River, and Cedar Creek.

What is a Watershed-Based Plan and Why is it Needed?

A watershed-based plan summarizes the overall condition of the watershed. It provides a framework to effectively and efficiently restore and protect water quality. Watershed planning and implementation is a voluntary effort. Active watershed stakeholders are needed to assist in developing a plan that results in implementable actions.

Excess nutrients (phosphorus and nitrogen) in water bodies can impair drinking water quality, harm aquatic life, and cause harmful algal blooms. The Mississippi North Central or (Flint-Henderson) is identified as a nitrate-nitrogen priority in the Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy. This means that the Flint-Henderson is one of the state's most critical watersheds in terms of nitrate-nitrogen losses.

| County | Acres | Percent |
|--------------|------------------|------------|
| Henry | 168,209 | 15.0 |
| Mercer | 297,679 | 26.6 |
| Knox | 82,285 | 7.3 |
| Henderson | 243,040 | 21.7 |
| Warren | 200,324 | 17.9 |
| Hancock | 128,247 | 11.5 |
| Total | 1,119,784 | 100 |

TABLE 1 Distribution of Mississippi North Central watershed areas by county. Source: NRCS

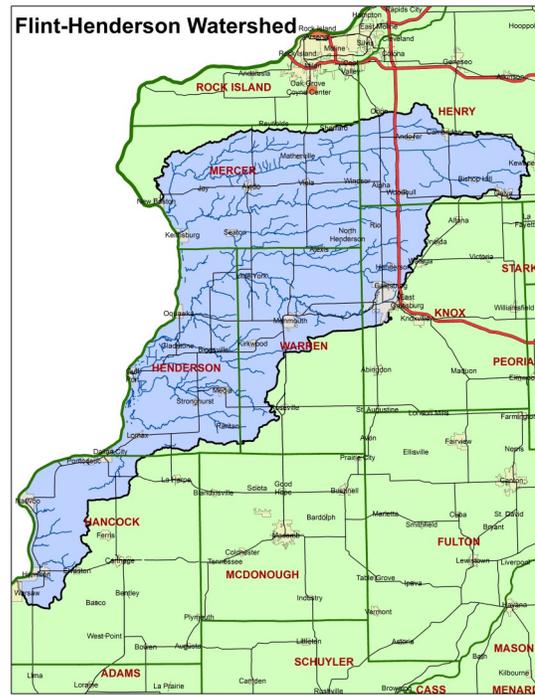


FIGURE 1 Map of the Mississippi North Central (Flint-Henderson) Watershed. Source: Illinois Extension

Need to Know Items

- ☑ Over 70 percent of the land area in the Mississippi North Central watershed is in cultivated crops. The remaining land falls into deciduous forests at 11%, developed land at 7%, and hay/pasture ground at 6%. All other land use percentages in this region are at 3 percent or less.
- ☑ A watershed plan outlines clear and measurable objectives, identifies best management practices, and provides a timeline for implementation
- ☑ The process of the development of a watershed plan typically takes two years.
- ☑ Stakeholders in the watershed can utilize watershed plans to secure grant funds. Stakeholders can use these funds to implement Best Management Practices to reduce nutrient losses into local water bodies. **Having an approved watershed plan in place increases the chances to receive funding.**
- ☑ Recently, the Rock Island Soil and Water Conservation District received approval for a "Section 604(b)" grant to develop a watershed plan for Mill Creek.
- ☑ Watershed plans have a life of 10 years.
- ☑ Stakeholders such as the University of Illinois Extension, Illinois Farm Bureau, and local Soil and Water Conservation Districts are supportive of utilizing a consultant to developing a watershed-based plan in the Mississippi North Central watershed, with a focus on one or two subwatersheds.

Questions?

Contact Rachel Curry at
217-265-0851 or
rccurry@illinois.edu