

## WHAT IS A WATERSHED?

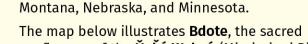
A watershed is an area of land that drains to a common lake, stream, or river. We all live in a watershed and watersheds come in all shapes and sizes. Watershed boundaries cross county, state, and national boundaries.

The Hahá 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.

Hahá 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 Hahá Wakpádan/Bassett Creek is a small part of the larger Mississippi River basin.

The Dakota people cherished the **Hahá** 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.

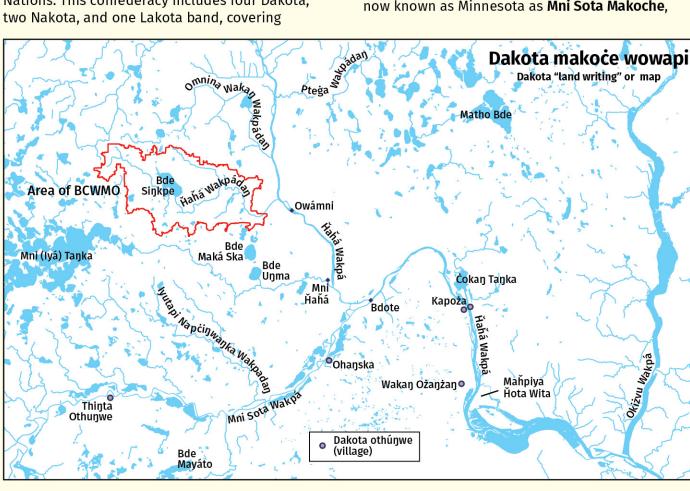
Birthed as one people in Mni Sota Makoche (modern-day Minnesota) from their home in the constellation of the bison's backbone, the Dakota are part of a larger confederacy known as the **Oceti Sakowin Oyate**, or the Seven Council Starfire Nations. This confederacy includes four Dakota, two Nakota, and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



footprint at www.epa.gov/watersense.

confluence of the **Hahá Wakpá** (Mississippi River) with the Mni Sota Wakpá (Minnesota River) and the Hahá 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 birthed onto **Maka 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 Makoche,



#### TREAT YOUR CURB LIKE A WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

The Bassett Creek Watershed **Management Commission** 

(BCWMC) works to reduce

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/

BCWMC projects have included restoring stream

banks to eliminate erosion and improve habitat,

installing ponds to treat stormwater before it

enters a lake or stream, and improving flood

for stormwater management when a site is

and pollution models. The BCWMC also uses

a variety of avenues to educate and engage

YOUR WATER FOOTPRINT

their communities.

watershed residents about ways they can help

improve water features on their properties and in

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.

production. Water is a crucial part of creating the

goods and services we buy and rely on every day.

your watershed footprint—a measure of how much

water you use in total every day. Learn where you

current territories in North Dakota, South Dakota

use the most water and where you can reduce your

Combine all these elements and you arrive at

Water is used to produce the food we eat and

the beverages we drink, as well as in energy

storage capacity to reduce potential property

damage. BCWMC policies include requirements

developed or redeveloped. The BCWMC collects

data on water quality, aquatic biology, and water

levels to track conditions and maintain hydrologic

flooding and to protect and

improve the condition of lakes,

streams, wetlands, and ponds

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 Hahá 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,

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.

essentially turning every curb into a shoreline.

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.

You can learn to pronounce the creek name through a short YouTube video at www.youtube.com/

watch?v=IwDrekIIiNM.



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.

Hahá Wakpádan/Bassett Creek leads to the falls in **Hahá Wakpá** (Mississippi River), hence the name **Hahá Wakpádaŋ**, or "Creek to the River of

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.

## BE PART OF THE SOLUTION



**OUR WATERS NEED A LOW-SALT DIET** 

CHALLENGES AHEAD

is toxic to freshwater organisms like fish, frogs, and bugs. Once it's in the water, there

Salt (aka

"chloride")

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.

#### 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) 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.

## 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

If you live on a lake, creek,

or wetland, create a buffer

of native vegetation that

provides wildlife habitat

and filters runoff before

Vegetation along the water

streambanks, protects your

property from erosion, and

stabilizes shorelines and

it reaches the water.

improves habitat.



Watershed Awareness and Protection

#### 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.

appreciate the need for water protection and and Westwood Lake are designated by the MN DNR as Fishing in the Neighborhood (FiN) lakes.

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.

You don't have to be a water scientist to get

8. TAKE A KID FISHING!

water conservation are those who learn its value through experience. In this watershed, Wirth Lake

## 9. CONSERVE, CONSERVE, CONSERVE

#### **10. GET INVOLVED**

"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 Maka 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

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.

found the Hahá Wakpádan and its watershed to

in New Hampshire, came to Minneapolis in 1850

purchased land near the creek and started a farm.

and began working in the lumber industry. He

He became the first probate judge of Hennepin

County. Because of his business and community

stature, locals began calling the creek "Bassett's

Working as an Indian Agent at Crow Wing from

designed to concentrate the Ojibwe population

in a single place. It encouraged them to farm

elsewhere in order to open forests to logging.

With capital from several investors, Bassett built

lumber and flour-milling operations lasted into

a steam-powered sawmill along the creek. His

be valuable property. Joel Bean Bassett, born

# **DISCOVER**

Haha Wakpadan

Aap & Guide

Bassett Creek

Watershed

the secrets of Hahá Wakpádan and the Bassett Creek Watershed - a great waterway hiding in our own backyard

## **MEMBER MUNICIPALITIES**



**BASSETTCREEKWMO.ORG** 

... stlouisparkmn.gov

1865 to 1869, Bassett helped enforce a land treaty Golden Valley.. .goldenvalleymn.gov Medicine Lake... cityofmedicinelake.com Minneapolis... Minnetonka. .minnetonkamn.gov New Hope ... ..newhopemn.gov Plymouth.... .. plymouthmn.gov Robbinsdale robbinsdalemn.com

St Louis Park.

By the late 1880s, Bassett was convicted of fraudulent timber harvesting, and in 1902 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that J. B. Bassett & Co. and others had illegally taken timber from the White Earth reservation. Contracts let them take 2.8 million board feet of dead and downed timber. But Bassett and the other defendants harvested far more, ultimately taking 17 million board feet, including standing timber — more than six times

Source: MN Humanities Center, MN Indian Affairs

Vegetation in c. 1850 Big woods and Conifer bogs Savanna Prairie Wet prairie and marsh Modern water **BCWMO** Area "The Original Vegetation of Minnesota." compiled in 1930 by F. J. Marschner

foragers, and farmers, as well as knowledgeable pharmacists and healers.

The Dakota maintained a triangular solstice sunrise path between Medicine Lake and the Mississippi River, which served both as a ceremonial route and a pathway for gathering food and medicine. Villages were intentionally not built along this path as it was regarded as the land's pharmacy and grocery store. The watershed supported a variety of vegetation, including rice (**Psin**), wild strawberries (**Ważušteċaša**), chokecherries (**Čhaŋpa**),

mulberries (**Chanska**), blueberries (**Haza**), raspberries (**Takaŋheċa hu**) and wild plums (**Kaŋta**). Mother Earth also provided protein through bison, deer, duck, fish, and turtles.

Today, the tribes of Mni Sota continue teaching their children Indigenous ways of life and impart the wisdom and importance of protecting land and water to others. Indigenous people of many different tribes live, work, and play throughout Minnesota, including in the suburbs of the Hahá Wakpádan/ Bassett Creek watershed. Their stories, memories, and knowledge were captured in the Bassett Creek Oral History Project, started by the Valley Community Presbyterian Church in collaboration with the Hennepin History Museum and the Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission, All fifteen interviews are available as podcasts. Search "Bassett Creek Oral History Project" wherever you get your podcasts.

Learn more about



Hahá Wakpádan and Indigenous heritage at www.bassettcreekwmo. org/haha-wakpadanindigenous-culture

BCWMC Land and Water Acknowledgement Statement (June 2024)

We acknowledge that the waterways of the Hahá Wakpádan, lo-

cated in Mni Sota Makoċe, the homeland of the Dakota peoples,

Historically, the Haha Wakpadan provided material, nutritional,

and spiritual sustenance to the Dakota peoples. We acknowl-

waterways that nurtured them as relatives. And, we recognize

the environmental degradation that continues in the watershed

edge the forced removal of the Dakota from the lands and

are living waters which are part of a larger living ecosystem.

- Roxanne Biidabinokwe Gould, Professor Emeritus of Indigenous and Environmental Studies, living in Golden Valley near the Hahá Wakpádan Additional resources include: A note on the current creek namesake, Joel Bassett: • The book What Does Justice Look Like?: The As Europeans began to settle the area, they

Struggle for Liberation in Dakota Homeland by Dakota scholar and activist Waziyatawin of Peżihutazizi 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

- 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.

The living waters of Hahá Wakpádaŋ remain significant to the

ly live in the watershed. The Bassett Creek Watershed Man-

agement Commission seeks to identify and integrate Native

ecosystem health for all living beings in the watershed.

peoples who live in the watershed today.

Acknowledging the complex past and present traumas and

Dakota and other Native peoples, including many who present-

wisdom by collaborating with Indigenous peoples and commu-

nities to reduce the impacts of climate change and improve the

triumphs is a step toward healing for the land, watershed, and

the 1890s.

what was allowed.

Council treatiesmatter.org/treaties/land/1867-

# Learning About Hahá Wakpádan

