



### Additional Web Resources

LAKE ERIE WATERSHED PROTECTION ALLIANCE  
[www.erie.gov/lewpa](http://www.erie.gov/lewpa)

ERIE COUNTY WATER QUALITY COMMITTEE  
[www.ecswcd.org/html/ecwqc.html](http://www.ecswcd.org/html/ecwqc.html)

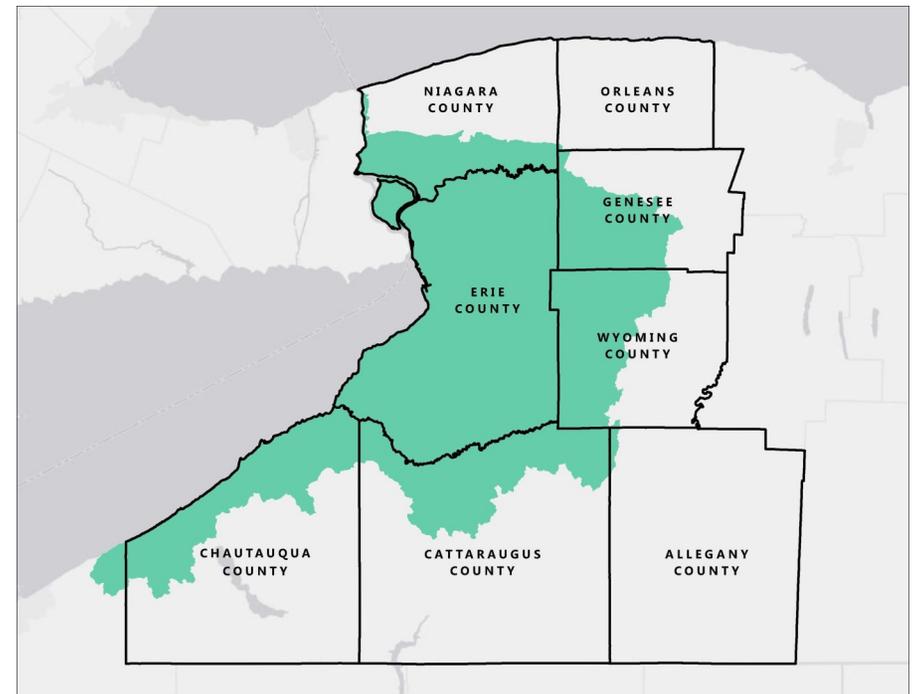
NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL  
CONSERVATION  
<http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/48024.html>

BUFFALO NIAGARA WATERKEEPER  
[www.bnwaterkeeper.org](http://www.bnwaterkeeper.org)

WESTERN NEW YORK STORMWATER COALITION  
[www.erie.gov/stormwater](http://www.erie.gov/stormwater)

TONAWANDA CREEK WATERSHED COMMITTEE  
<https://tonawandacreek.shutterfly.com/>

## Lake Erie Watershed Protection Alliance



*Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, and Erie Counties working together  
because water doesn't stop flowing at political boundaries.*

*Our mission is to foster collaboration and partnerships  
within the watershed to address regional water quality  
and quantity concerns and in doing so, protect and  
enhance our Lake Erie resource.*

## HOW WATERSHEDS WORK

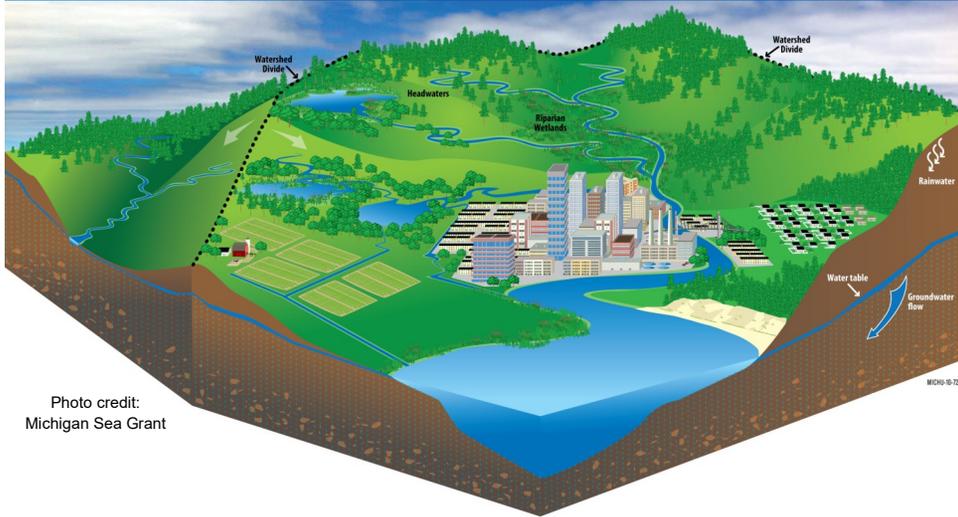


Photo credit:  
Michigan Sea Grant

## What is a Watershed?

A watershed is an area of land that drains to a common body of water, such as a nearby stream, river, or lake. Watersheds vary considerably in size. For example, when it rains, all the water from a small watershed may travel to a local creek. That creek will flow into a larger river, which in turn collects water from an even larger watershed. **We ALL live in a watershed!**

Lake Erie is the southernmost and shallowest of the five Great Lakes. This makes it the warmest and most biologically active and has allowed for a booming commercial fishing industry, as well as many other industries and recreational opportunities. Because it is part of the largest freshwater resource in the world, Lake Erie's watershed is densely populated, extensively farmed, and highly industrialized. With drainage from Ontario, Canada and the states of Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York, Lake Erie is impacted by the activities of approximately 12 million residents. It is critical that watersheds draining to this precious resource are managed effectively.

As water flows through a watershed, it may pick up pollutants that can harm plants, animals, or humans. What happens in your neighborhood can affect those downstream and you, in turn, can be affected by the actions of those upstream. **We need to work together to protect our watershed!**

## Problems Facing the Watershed:

- Erosion and Deposition—As soil washes away from fields and stream banks it can cause loss of land, disrupt agriculture, and endanger structures near waterways. This soil ends up filling the mouths of rivers making it difficult to launch boats for commercial or recreational purposes.
- Flooding—Development in floodplains disrupts the natural flow of water. By cutting down trees and adding impermeable surfaces, we have caused more stormwater to runoff surfaces faster than ever.
- Loss of Native Habitat—The presence of invasive plant species, concrete lined waterways, and developed areas without a natural buffer cause erosion, prevent fish spawning, and reduce native habitat for birds and wildlife.
- Pollution—Bacterial contamination from failing stormwater and wastewater infrastructure causes numerous beach closures every summer.

## What Can You Do?

- ◆ Storm drains and ditches can go directly to waterways without treatment. Any chemicals used to wash your car or treat your lawn/garden can contaminate drinking water.
- ◆ “Green” your yard. Utilize gravel, permeable pavers, or bricks to reduce the impermeable surfaces in your yard. Plant native vegetation to reduce erosion and attract birds and wildlife.
- ◆ Conserve water every day. Take shorter showers, fix leaks and turn off the water while brushing your teeth. Install green infrastructure such as rain gardens or trees to absorb stormwater and prevent runoff.
- ◆ Drive less. Many pollutants in our waterways come from car leaks and car exhaust.