

A Watershed Approach

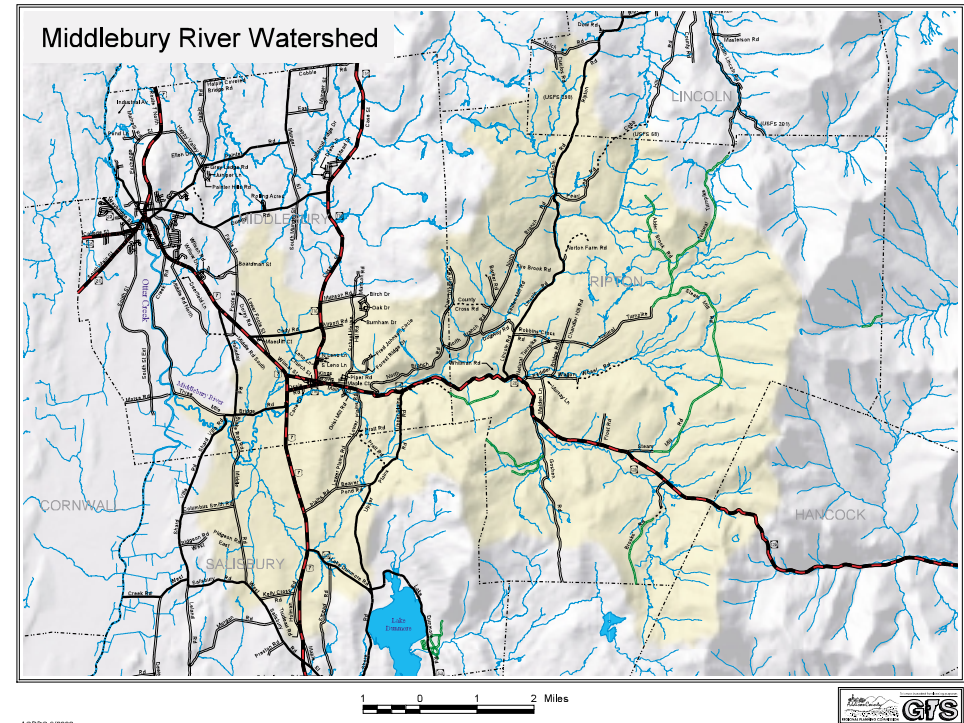
A watershed is..."a bounded hydrologic system, within which all living things are inextricably linked by their common water course and where, as humans settled, simple logic demanded that they become part of a community."

—John Wesley Powell, 19th century

A watershed is an area of land where all of the water that is under it or drains off of it goes into the same place. You're standing in the Middlebury River Watershed, a 1102-square-mile area. Every drop of water in this watershed eventually drains into Otter Creek and on into Lake Champlain, which, in turn, drains into the Saint Lawrence River and on to the Atlantic Ocean.

Why think in terms of watersheds?

If we want to manage our water resources well, we need to think like water droplets. A drop of water rolling downhill obeys only the law of gravity, heeding no human-made boundaries, rules, and regulations. Lake Champlain, for example, is part of both Canada and the United States, New York and Vermont and the waters within it flow freely across these jurisdictions. Promoting the water's health challenges us to think in terms of natural boundaries, rather than political ones, and to work cooperatively toward solutions that benefit the entire watershed.



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