



National Hydrography Dataset

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[Watershed Boundary Dataset](#)

What is the WBD?



The Watershed Boundary Dataset (WBD) defines the areal extent of surface water drainage to a point, accounting for all land and surface areas. Watershed Boundaries are determined solely upon science-based hydrologic principles, not favoring any administrative boundaries or special projects, nor particular program or agency. The intent of defining Hydrologic Units (HU) for the Watershed Boundary Dataset is to establish a base-line drainage boundary framework, accounting for all land and surface areas. The selection and delineation of hydrologic boundaries are determined solely upon science-based hydrologic principles, not favoring any administration, special project, program, or agency. At a minimum, the WBD is being delineated and georeferenced to the USGS 1:24,000 scale topographic base map meeting National Map Accuracy Standards (NMAS). Hydrologic units are given a Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC). For example, a hydrologic region has a 2-digit HUC. A HUC describes where the unit is in the country and the level of the



unit.

"A hydrologic unit is a drainage area delineated to nest in a multi-level, hierarchical drainage system. Its boundaries are defined by hydrographic and topographic criteria that delineate an area of land upstream from a specific point on a river, stream or similar surface waters. A hydrologic unit can accept surface water directly from upstream drainage areas, and indirectly from associated surface areas such as remnant, non-contributing, and diversions to form a drainage area with single or multiple outlet points. Hydrologic units are only synonymous with classic watersheds when their boundaries include all the source area contributing surface water to a single defined outlet point."

The Watershed Boundary Dataset is being developed under the leadership of the [Subcommittee on Spatial Water Data](#), which is part of the [Advisory Committee on Water Information](#) (ACWI) and the [Federal Geographic Data Committee](#) (FGDC). The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), along with many other federal agencies and national associations, have representatives on the Subcommittee on Spatial Water Data.

As watershed boundary geographic information systems (GIS) coverages are completed, statewide and national data layers will be made available via the [Geospatial Data Gateway](#) to everyone, including federal, state, local government agencies, researchers, private companies, utilities, environmental groups, and concerned citizens. The database will assist in planning and describing water use and related land use activities.

Links

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URL: <http://nhd.usgs.gov/wbd.html>

Questions or Assistance: [Contact USGS](#)

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