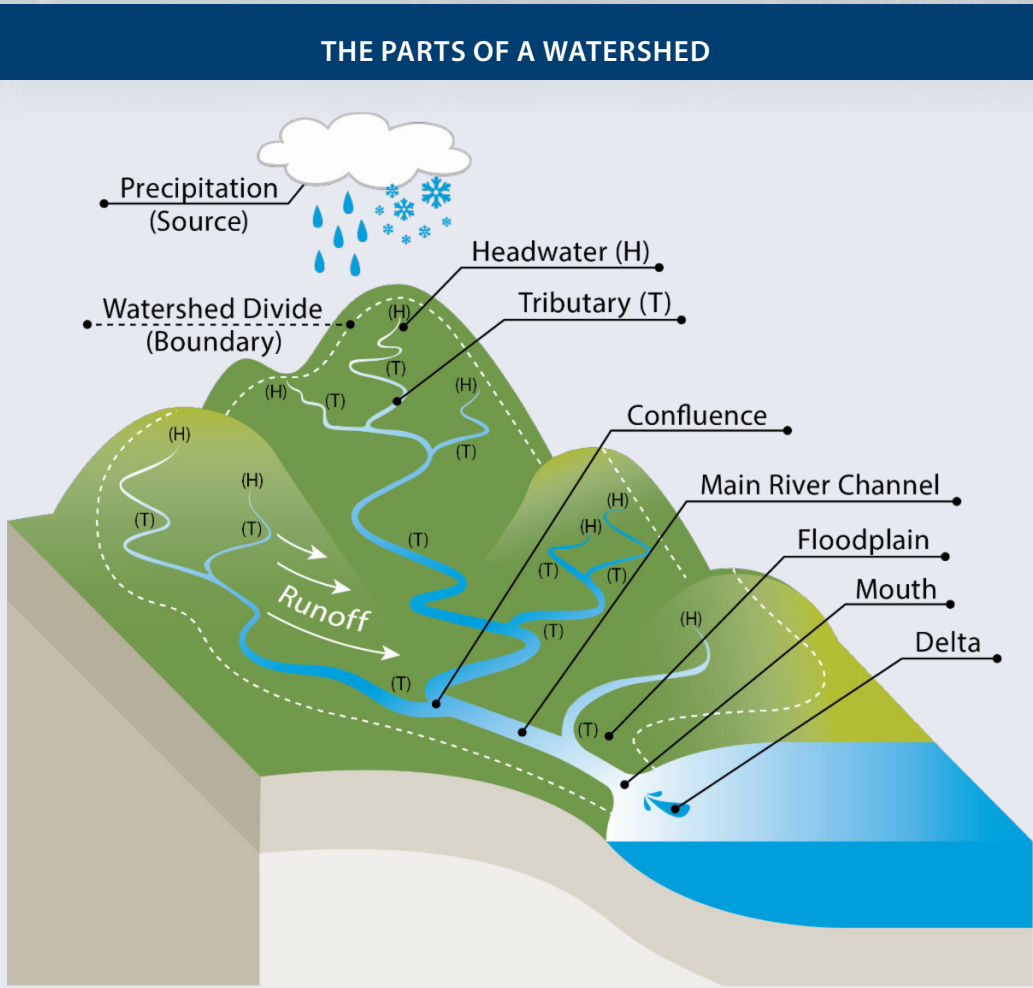


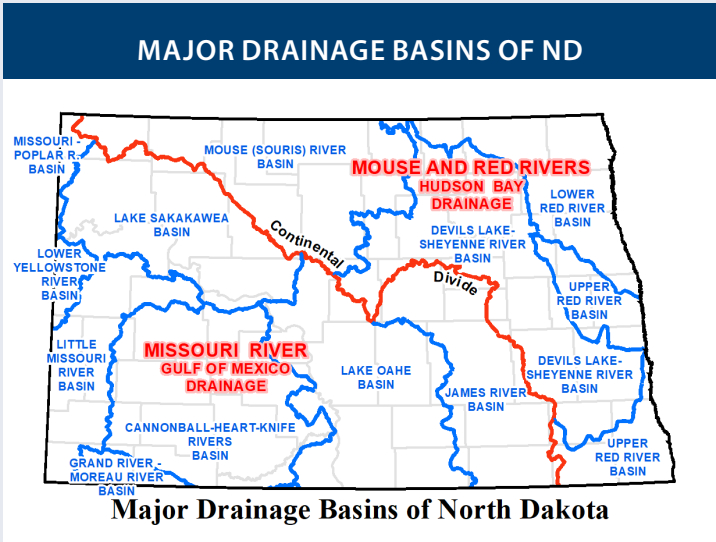
# UNDERSTANDING NORTH DAKOTA'S WATERSHEDS

Watersheds play a key role in North Dakota's landscape, directing the flow of water through rivers, streams, and creeks, and providing resources to the environment and communities. The state is divided into two major basins: the Missouri River Basin and the Hudson Bay Basin. These basins are part of a larger network that connects North Dakota's waters to distant locations like the Gulf of Mexico and Hudson Bay. Understanding how watersheds function is important for managing water resources, supporting agriculture, and protecting the habitats that rely on this system.

No matter where you live, you are in a watershed. Watersheds (or basins) are an area of land that is drained by a system of rivers, streams, creeks, and other drainage systems to a common point. Watersheds impact everyone, every community, farm, ranch, and forest. They provide a vital resource for all living things to survive and thrive. All watersheds are interconnected, creating a land-water system that conveys water to its destination such as a river, lake, wetland, estuary, or ocean!



- **WATERSHED DIVIDE:** The ridge or high point that separates drainage basins. Water on one side flows to one body of water, while water on the other side flows to a different body of water.
- **HEADWATER:** The source of a river or stream where water begins to flow.
- **TRIBUTARY:** A smaller river or stream that flows into a larger river or lake, contributing additional water and nutrients to the main waterway.
- **CONFLUENCE:** The point where two or more rivers or streams meet and combine their waters.
- **MAIN RIVER CHANNEL:** The primary course through which a river flows, carrying the bulk of its water downstream.
- **FLOODPLAIN:** The flat, low-lying area adjacent to a river that is subject to periodic flooding. Floodplains often support diverse ecosystems and agriculture.
- **MOUTH:** The point where a river or stream flows into a larger body of water, which could be an ocean or lake.
- **DELTA:** A landform created at the mouth of a river, where sediment is deposited as the river slows and spreads out, forming shallow areas or even new land.



Watersheds come in all shapes and sizes. They can also cross county, state, and national boundaries. North Dakota is located in two large watershed basins: the Missouri River Basin, and the Hudson Bay Basin. These two basins are separated by a continental divide. The Missouri River Basin joins the Mississippi River in Missouri, which later flows into the Gulf of Mexico in Louisiana. The Mouse and Red River Basins, including the Devils Lake Basin, flow north toward Canada and the Hudson Bay.

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