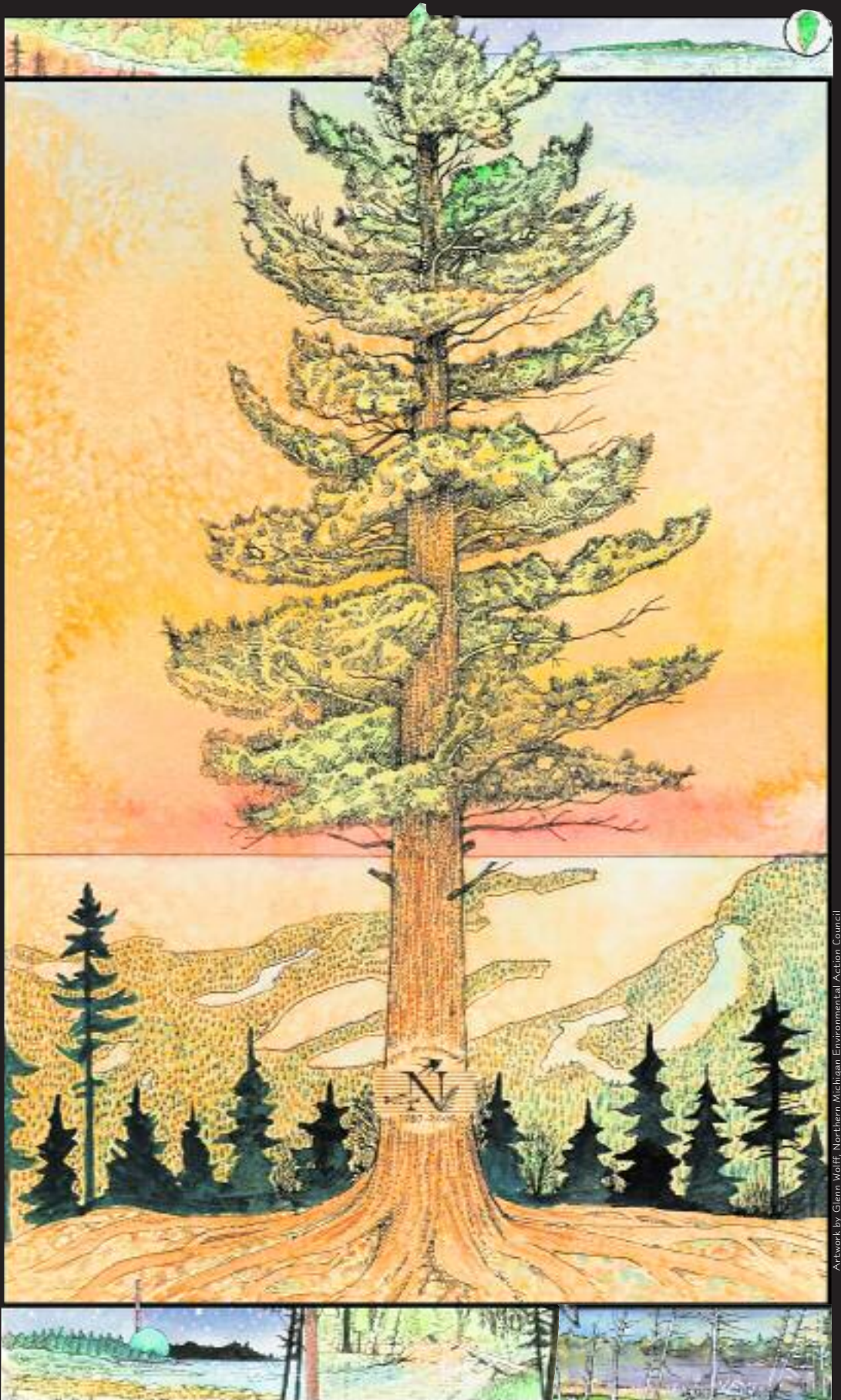


*Toolkit for Watershed Councils  
of the Upper Peninsula*



Artwork by Glenn Wolff, Northern Michigan Environmental Action Council

# Welcome...

## How to use this Toolkit

The Superior Watershed Partnership *Watershed Council Toolkit* is designed to provide you with a set of tools to make your participation in a watershed council group more effective and/or your group's activities more productive. The ultimate goal is to facilitate positive change in your watershed.

The *Toolkit* describes a process for organizing stakeholders into an effective group that can a.) assess the watershed's condition, b.) create an action plan for addressing issues and maintaining or enhancing the watershed's health, and c.) carry out those actions, including finding funding and conducting necessary monitoring and follow-up activities.

A watershed approach is the most effective framework to address today's water resources challenges. Watersheds supply drinking water, provide recreation, support tourism, and sustain life. The watershed approach is a coordinating framework for environmental management that focuses public and private sector efforts to address the highest priority problems within hydrologically-defined geographic areas, taking into consideration both ground and surface water flow. This approach should be based on the following principles:

- A. **Partnerships** -- Those people most affected by management decisions are involved throughout and shape key decisions.

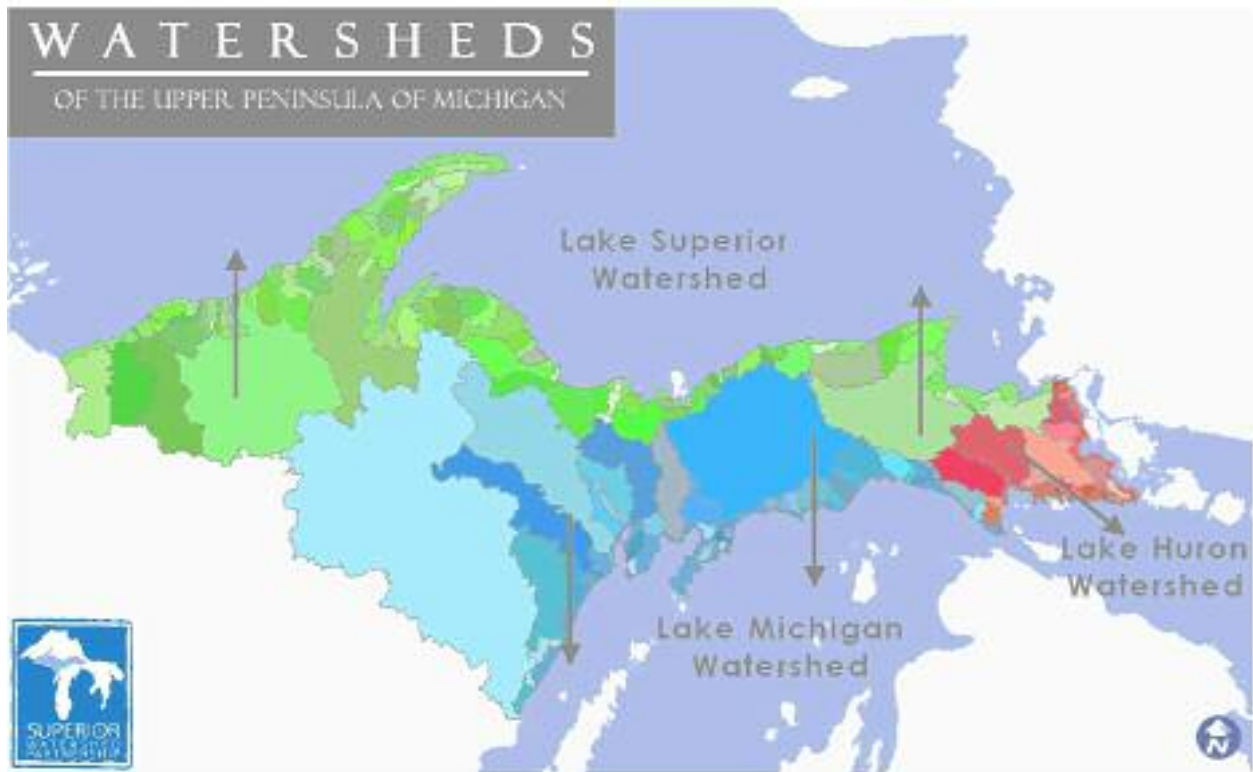
This ensures that environmental objectives are well integrated with those for economic stability and other social and cultural goals. It also provides that the people who depend upon the natural resources within the watersheds are well informed of and participate in planning and implementation activities.

- B. **Geographic Focus** -- Activities are directed within specific geographic areas, typically the areas that drain to surface water bodies or that recharge or overlay ground waters or a combination of both.

This is how the Superior Watershed Partnership approaches ideas and issues surrounding watersheds and water quality protection. That is why you are reading this, because you are willing to look at watershed protection in a new way and we're willing to help you. Your *Watershed Council* is an important stakeholder and should be at the forefront of decision making on issues affecting water quality.

We hope you will enjoy being a steward of your watershed. Please share this booklet with others in your group. We would be happy to send more if you need them.

The Superior Watershed Partnership is pleased to have you aboard.



## *What is a watershed?*

A watershed is the area of the land's surface that drains to a particular water body. Boundaries are generally based on high elevations. For instance, the continental divide is North America's most famous watershed boundary. On the east side of the continental divide, the rivers and other water bodies all drain to the Atlantic Ocean. On the west side of the continental divide, all of the waters drain to the Pacific Ocean. In the Upper Peninsula there are three major watersheds draining into Lake Superior, Lake Huron and Lake Michigan (see map).

## *Watershed size*

Watersheds may also be characterized by their size. Large watersheds may encompass thousands of square miles; small watersheds may include only several square miles. The Lake Michigan Watershed, a large watershed, includes 49,300 square miles encompassing parts of Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Ontario. Lake Superior's water originates from precipitation falling throughout its watershed.

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## *Watershed features*

The features of a watershed influence the characteristics of its receiving water body. These features include things like:

- Soils
- Vegetation
- Climate
- Topography
- Geology
- Human land use

Because each watershed has different conditions, each lake and stream is unique. For instance, because of the limestone which is prevalent throughout much of the Lake Michigan basin, the water has high levels of calcium and magnesium (termed hardness), and carbonates (which create alkaline conditions), and as such, is well buffered against acid precipitation.



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## *Watershed quality and pollution*

*T*he water quality of a lake is a reflection of the activities surrounding it within its watershed.

There are two major types of pollution: point source and nonpoint source.

Point source pollution comes from an easily identifiable source, such as a discharge pipe from a factory.

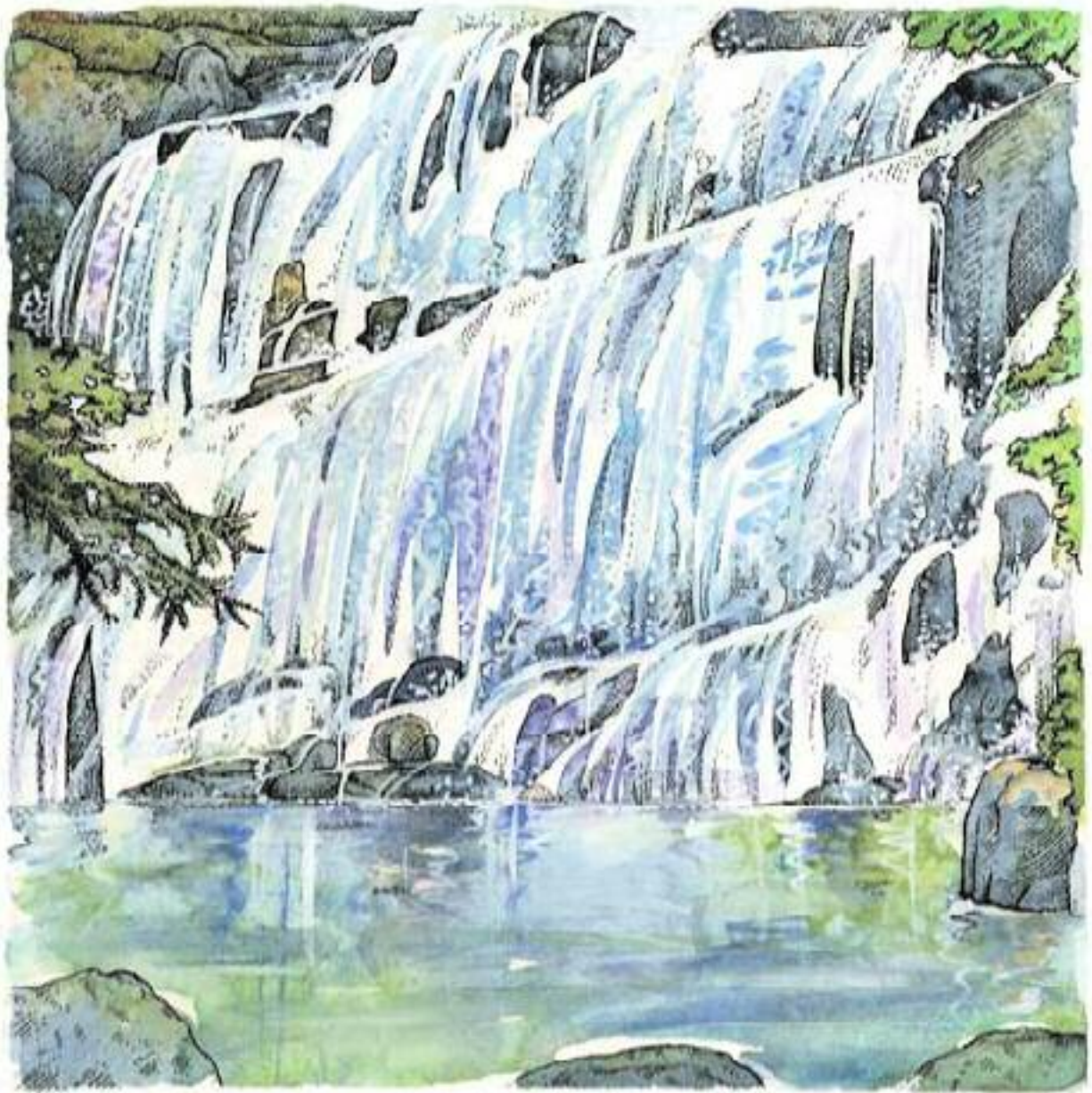
Nonpoint source pollution is pollution which comes from more diverse and diffuse sources that are not usually so obvious. Examples include soils that are eroded as a result of human activities, or substances which have been applied to land, such as fertilizers. Nonpoint source pollution reaches surface water primarily through runoff from rainfall or melting snow that picks up contaminants from the land. It can also include subsurface drainage such as leachate from septic systems, and airborne pollutants such as emissions from cars and power plants that produce acid rain. The following are some common examples of nonpoint source pollution:

1. Soil erosion from farmland fields as well as construction sites
2. Fertilizer runoff from both rural and urban areas.
3. Pesticide runoff from both rural and urban areas.
4. Animal waste management.
5. Paint, oil, anti-freeze and other contaminants poured directly into storm drains.
6. Activates near a water source that can easily be contaminated without care.
7. Illegal dump sites.
8. Failing septic systems.

## *What is a Watershed Management Plan?*

*A* watershed management plan identifies problems and threats to water resources and develops a framework to address these issues within a specific watershed. It is useful as both a process and a tool. The process alone is valuable.

The Superior Watershed Partnership has been a key party involved with the development of watershed management plans for many major watersheds as well as several sub-watersheds in our service area. For more information contact our office at 906-228-6095.



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## *What is a Watershed Council?*

*A* Watershed Council is a group of concerned citizens protecting the watershed in which they live. This group is referred to as the "watch dog" of the watershed and takes responsibility for the protection of the land and water within that watershed. It can be comprised of 2-40 individuals or as many needed to fulfill the obligations. A diversity of members of the council are encouraged for its success. However, the bulk of a Watershed Council is made up of ordinary citizens willing to do the work required to assure the protection of the watershed. With the assistance of the Superior Watershed Partnership, a Watershed Council can do many things to effect change and actively protect a watershed and its natural features:

- 1) Contact the Superior Watershed Partnership to assist the Watershed Council.
- 2) Educate yourself on watershed issues.
- 3) Help increase public awareness in your watershed (i.e. writing letters to the editor, public officials, and friends)
- 4) Offer to hold public meetings to educate about watershed issues.
- 5) Attend local government meetings where land use/management decisions are being made in the watershed.
- 6) Talk one-on-one to local officials about watershed management.
- 7) Run for public office.
- 8) Make sure that local schools are educating about watershed issues.
- 9) Learn about ways that pollution reaches our waterways through "non-point sources."
- 10) Talk to landowners about ways to protect the watershed:
  - a. Perform regular maintenance/inspection of septic systems
  - b. Encourage lawn and garden soil testing to determine fertilizer needs
  - c. Discourage the use of phosphate fertilizers and promote organic lawn and garden treatments
  - d. Ensure that hazardous materials have not been disposed or dumped on the land
  - e. Remove or replace any leaking underground storage tanks
  - f. Use native plants, trees and shrubs in gardens and along water (called a "buffer").

Everyone shares a watershed with its own unique set of water quality issues. Problems vary between communities that are large or small, rural or urban. By looking beyond water quality in a local pond to include the bigger watershed picture, communities can deal efficiently with issues of water supply, water use, and water quality.

The Superior Watershed Partnership will help you. Good Luck!



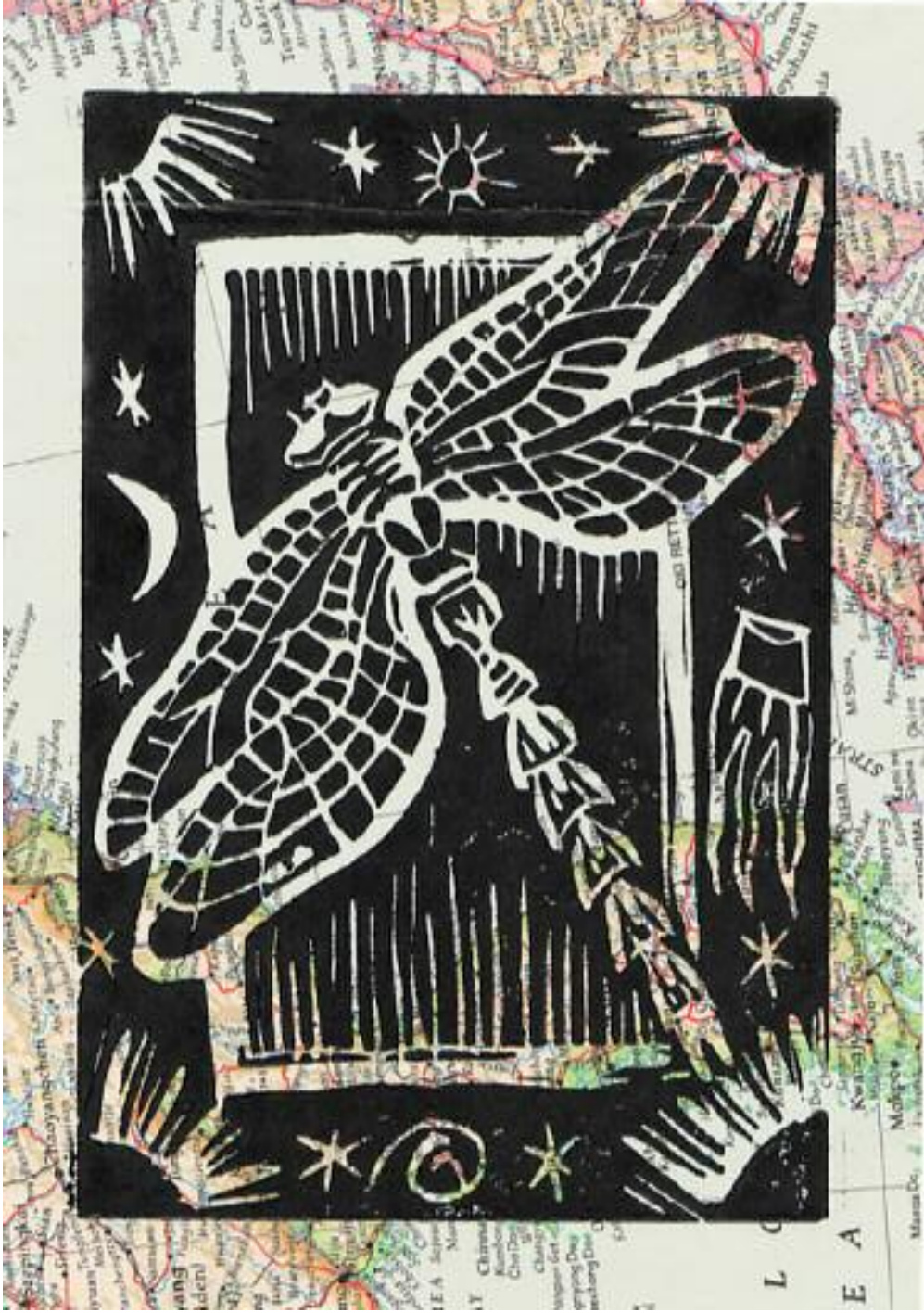
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## How to Get Started

One of the first things to do is talk to your friends and neighbors and set up a meeting. Don't be discouraged if only a few people respond. Sometimes the work of just a few can make a big difference.

- **Set up a meeting of concerned people.**
- **What are the issues? Here's an example of a few with questions to ask**
  - Non point source pollution - including run off from streets and sewers
    - What are the various sources of non point source pollution?
    - Where are they located or where do they originate from?
    - Is there an industry contributing to the source?
    - Are there riparian buffers protecting the river?
  - Sedimentation from road/stream crossings
    - Is there a culvert?
    - When was the road/stream crossing installed or last maintained?
    - Are there logging activities near the crossing?
    - What kind of traffic does the crossing see?
    - Who are the property owners where the crossing is located?
  - Development
    - Who is the developer?
    - What is the development?
    - How is it impacting the watershed/river system?
    - Who are the adjacent property owners?
- **Prioritize the Issues: what are the most important issues to focus on?**





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## *What the Superior Watershed Partnership can do for you*

Once your Watershed Council has decided on the priority issues for your watershed, the Superior Watershed Partnership can offer assistance and trainings in any of the following areas.

- Road/Stream Crossings Evaluation
- Erosion/Sedimentation Impact Evaluation
- Research, Inventories, and Monitoring of Aquatic Systems
- Public Education Tools
- Habitat Restoration
- Land Use Planning
- Pollution Prevention

Financial Assistance: depending on the issue and situation, the SWP may be able to assist financially for water quality improvements.

Please call our office at (906) 228-6095 for more information.





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