



# The Sucker Series

## Introduction to Your Watershed

Unlike a township or other political boundary, a **watershed** is a natural boundary. It determines an area of land where rain or snowmelt flows to the same lake or river. This boundary depends on the lay of the land, or the **topography** of the land.

Rain or melted snow either flows across the land or soaks into the soil or groundwater. When water flows across the land, it has a chance to pick up pollutants before it eventually gets to a river or lake.

In order to keep our stream in good shape, we can't just think about the people who live next to the Sucker River, we have to consider every person and every property in the entire **watershed** that contributes water to the Sucker River.

Every yard, rooftop, driveway, farm, and home in the Sucker River watershed contributes water runoff to the stream.

By doing a few simple things, every resident can help protect the Sucker River (see the flipside of this fact sheet for details). Like a healthy body keeps a person strong and alive, a healthy watershed keeps a river and the trout within it thriving.

It may seem strange, but **YOU** are the most important factor in keeping Sucker River special!

### WHY did I receive this Fact Sheet?

This Fact Sheet is an introduction to the Sucker River Watershed. The South St. Louis Soil & Water Conservation District is working on a project to keep the Sucker River a healthy, thriving trout stream. One way to help protect the Sucker is to raise awareness of how citizens can:

- Maintain and protect the high quality of Sucker River
- Reduce problems, like erosion
- Improve wildlife habitat on your property
- Increase your land value
- Make a difference in your community

*If you have questions/comments about protecting the Sucker River, call Mindy Granley at the South St. Louis Soil & Water Conservation District at 218.723.4867*

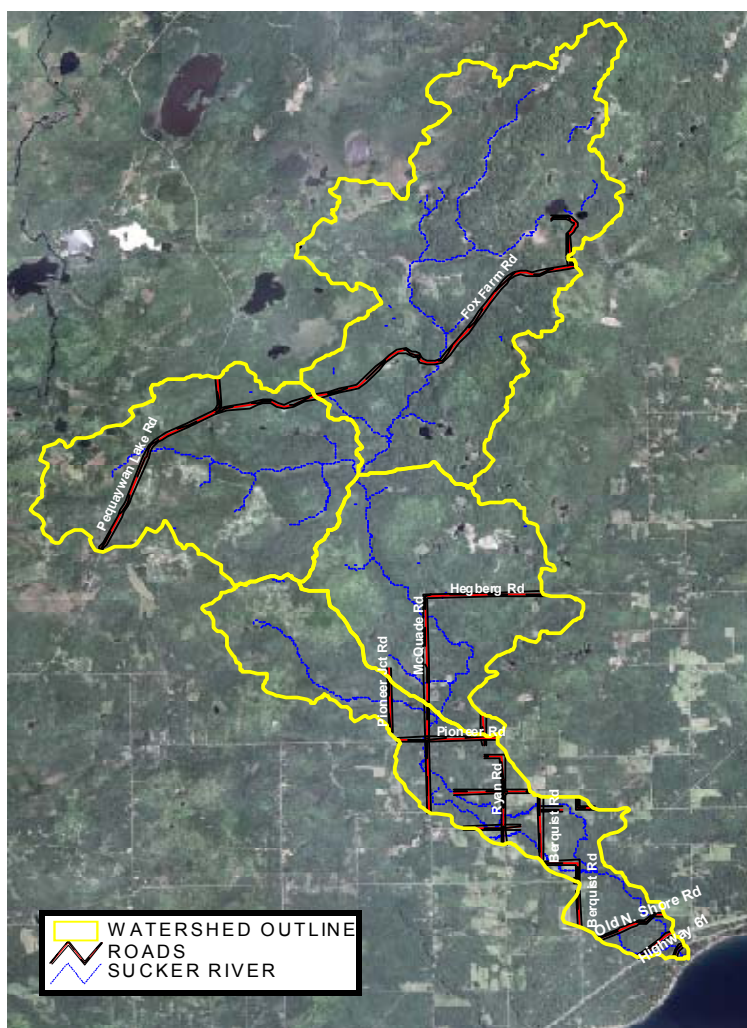


Photo: A map of the Sucker River Watershed.

### The next issue of The Sucker Series will cover: **FORESTS**

- Discover the role forests play in a watershed, get tips on keeping your trees healthy, and learn about Forest Stewardship Planning- a management plan for your land.



### WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP THE SUCKER?

- Leave a forested buffer between your house and the stream
- Direct rain runoff from your house into a vegetated area
- Install a rain barrel
- Don't dump leaves or yard debris into culverts or ditches
- Dispose of household hazardous waste properly- call the WLSSD Waste Hotline: 218.722.0761
- Reduce the size of yard that you mow- especially near the stream.
- Plant native trees and grasses on your property
- Have your septic system pumped regularly and inspected to make sure it is functioning properly

### Baffled by Culverts?

Recently, the DNR Lake Superior Area Fisheries group partnered with Trout Unlimited and the Forest Service to conduct a stream-crossing assessment to evaluate barriers to fish passage at major road crossings on North Shore tributaries, including 8 crossings on the Sucker River.

Of the 8 Sucker River crossings studied, the box culvert passing under Highway 61 poses the most difficulty for fish passage. The 12 x 12 foot box culvert is over 400 feet long, and the length, slope and design parameters of this culvert could prevent upstream fish passage.

The study found that the Hwy 61 culvert would be impassible during times of too little water in the culvert (low flow) or too much water in the culvert (high flow).

Fortunately, the culvert is fitted with a baffle system to slow water velocities along one side of the culvert. In fact, during the study, small minnows were observed in the resting pools created by the baffles.

Observations from anglers show that the baffle system allows passage of at least some adult rainbow trout in the spring. Exactly how well the baffles work as a whole is unknown, but we do know that the baffles are important and without them upstream fish passage would not be possible.

*If you'd like more information on this study, contact DNR Fisheries Specialist Joe Ostazeski via phone (218) 525-0853 ext. 224 or email:*

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**Photo: Baffle system in a Sucker River box culvert, under Highway 61.**