



Frequently Asked Questions

1 What is a watershed?

A watershed is the **area of land that catches precipitation and drains into a larger body of water** (such as a marsh, stream, river or lake). Watersheds fulfill three primary functions: to capture water, to filter and store water in the soil and to release water into a water body. Within the complex living system of a watershed, everything is connected.

The Battle River starts at Battle Lake and flows eastward along the North Saskatchewan River, through Alberta to Saskatchewan, eventually emptying into Hudson's Bay. The Battle River watershed contains all lands that drain into the Battle River. A number of creeks in the Battle River watershed feed into the Battle River, including Pipestone, Iron, Paintearth, Ribstone, & Pigeon Lake Creeks.

Thinking of a watershed as a giant sponge helps explain the connections between all parts of the watershed and how a river like the Battle River can always be flowing. As precipitation falls, it is stored in the watershed's land and water bodies (the giant sponge) and slowly released through shallow water discharge into the river.

The Battle River watershed covers approximately **30,000 square kilometres** (17,667 square miles). 83% of this area is within Alberta; the remainder is in Saskatchewan. The Battle River extends 800 km from Battle Lake to the Saskatchewan Border. It joins the North Saskatchewan River in Battleford, Saskatchewan.

BATTLE RIVER
WATERSHED ALLIANCE



2 How many watersheds are there in Alberta?

There are seven major watersheds in Alberta: the Peace/Slave, Athabasca, Hay, North Saskatchewan, South Saskatchewan, Beaver and Milk. The Battle River watershed is a sub-basin of the North Saskatchewan watershed; the Battle River flows into the North Saskatchewan River at North Battleford, Saskatchewan.

3 What is the history of the Battle River?

The Battle River has a long and important history in central Alberta.

The Battle River has **First Nations significance** in terms of territorial mapping and historical events. In earlier times, the Battle River hunting grounds were contested between the Cree Nation primarily in central and northern Alberta, and the Blackfoot Nation primarily in southern Alberta. Other locations, such as the Neutral Hills and Dried Meat, along the Battle River also have historical significance.

The Battle River also played an **important role as settlers moved west** to claim homesteads in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Settlers relied on the Battle River and its tributaries as a water source, a transportation corridor and for agriculture. The Battle River was an **important source of water for early railroads**. The Battle River and its water levels have changed over time in response to climatic and ecological variations.

4 What makes the Battle River watershed unique?

The natural lands, abundant wetlands and riparian areas in the Battle River watershed make it an extremely rich and diverse landscape. The Battle River provides critical habitat for numerous wildlife species, including waterfowl, songbirds, ungulates and various sportfish. It also contributes to the quality of life of local residents and visitors.

The Battle River is a prairie fed river. Its modest water supply comes entirely from local surface runoff, including rain and snow melt, and groundwater flows. The fact that the Battle River is prairie fed, not glacial fed like many other rivers in Alberta, makes it unique.





5 Why is the Battle River watershed important?

The Battle River is the lifeblood of the Parkland Natural Region in east-central Alberta, supplying important water resources and an aquatic environment to plants, fish and wildlife. The Battle River **provides free ecoservices** to everyone in the watershed including: supplying and purifying water, reducing floods, offsetting drought, improving soil fertility, providing food, habitat, and providing beauty and recreation opportunities. Maintaining these ecosystem services is essential to protecting the health and function of the watershed. A healthy, functioning watershed ensures sufficient flows and water quality for human needs and is important for protecting the ecosystem and biodiversity of the Battle River.

The Battle River and its tributaries are an **important water supply** throughout the Battle watershed. Municipalities rely on the Battle River system for drinking water, household use, and business and industry. Agriculture uses the river for irrigation, stock watering and intensive agriculture. Industry uses the river for power generation and oilfield injection. Residents use the river for recreational fishing, canoeing and boating. The Battle River also supports the most important fishery in east Central Alberta. Fish found in the Battle River include: northern pike (above the Forestburg Dam) and northern pike, walleye, mooneye and goldeye (below the Forestburg Dam).

The Battle River watershed provides **critical habitat** for numerous wildlife species, including waterfowl, songbirds, ungulates and a number of species considered to be endangered or threatened, including: piping plover, northern leopard frog, peregrine falcon, ferruginous hawk, burrowing owl, spragues pipit, loggerhead shrike, long-billed curlew and prairie falcon. It also contributes to the quality of life of local residents and visitors. The natural lands, abundant wetlands and riparian areas in the Battle River watershed make it an extremely rich and diverse landscape.

6 How do my activities impact the Battle River watershed?

We are all stewards of the Battle River watershed and what we do affects downstream and future users. From drinking water, doing laundry, watering the lawn, fishing or using water for agriculture or industrial uses, everyone impacts the watershed they live in.

Everything we do affects the watershed, whether at home, work or play. Household soaps, cleaners, pollutants from lawns, roads and driveways – even pharmaceuticals in household wastewater -- can end up back in the river. Urban development and shoreline landscaping, as well as recreational activities on or close to rivers and streams can also impact water quantity and quality. As a result, everything we do in the Battle River watershed has the potential to affect water quality and quantity in the Battle River.

7

What can I do to protect the Battle River watershed?

Because everyone impacts the watershed they live in, it's important for people to think about things they can all do in their daily lives to protect water quality. Picking up pet waste or avoiding putting toxic products down the drain are a good start. Using environmentally friendly products around the home and garden is also a step in the right direction in protecting our watershed. It also helps to soil test to prevent overusing phosphorous fertilizer.

Residents of the Battle River watershed recognize the importance of wise water use and many are already taking steps to improve their water conservation efforts. These include reducing lawn watering and using low-flow fixtures (such as low-flow toilets and showerheads) and energy efficient appliances (such as an Energy Star dishwasher). Such steps may mean that future demands for water can be adequately met.

Citizens, municipalities, agriculture, industry and government all share responsibility for managing watersheds in Alberta, and they are seeking ways to **work together to improve local conditions.** Several local watershed stewardship groups and community organizations are already working on conservation and protection initiatives to manage for a healthy Battle River watershed. The Iron Creek Watershed Improvement Society, for example, has developed a demonstration site in the Battle River watershed along Iron Creek to promote good watershed management.

Participation in local community activities and initiatives are great ways to contribute to good stewardship. Become a member of the Battle River Watershed Alliance or your local Watershed Stewardship Group. By responsibly managing and conserving water, the environmental, economic and social health of the Battle River watershed can be protected and enhanced. Recognizing the importance of living within the capacity of the Battle River watershed is a means of ensuring the sustainability of this important natural resource.

Want to do more? Take part in Alberta Water Quality Awareness activities held every June across the province. Everybody that tests water quality of a stream, lake, river, wetland or pond with an Alberta Water Quality Awareness test kit, can share their results to contribute to a province-wide snapshot of water quality.”



The Battle River Watershed Alliance represents residents and stakeholders (such as government, watershed stewardship groups, environmental organizations, industry, academia and private citizens) and works in partnership to help balance the social, economic and environmental needs within the Battle River watershed. By carefully managing and protecting the watershed, we can all ensure that this important resource remains for future generations.

For more information visit the Battle River Watershed Alliance website at:
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