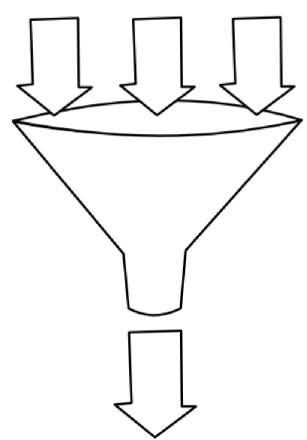


Rivanna River Watershed

What is a watershed?

A watershed is an entire region draining into a single river, river system, or other body of water. In addition, a watershed is an area that catches rain and snow which then drains or seeps into a stream, river, lake, or wetland. Watersheds drain the land surface as well as the area below the surface (groundwater). All bodies of water have watersheds, or drainage basins.



To simplify the term watershed, imagine what happens when a single raindrop falls from the sky to land on the ground. That raindrop might soak into the earth to become groundwater, it might evaporate, or it might flow downhill towards a wetland or river. Or it might fall on a paved surface (street, parking lot or other impervious surface) to become stormwater runoff that will flow into a storm drain, then through a pipe and into a stream or river.

To visualize a watershed – think about a funnel with the water collecting in the top, running down the sides, then to the bottom of the funnel exiting to another watershed or waterbody.

In the same way, the high ground around the Rivanna River shapes the funnel for the Rivanna River Watershed before the river empties into the James River.

Know your watershed - it's where you live!

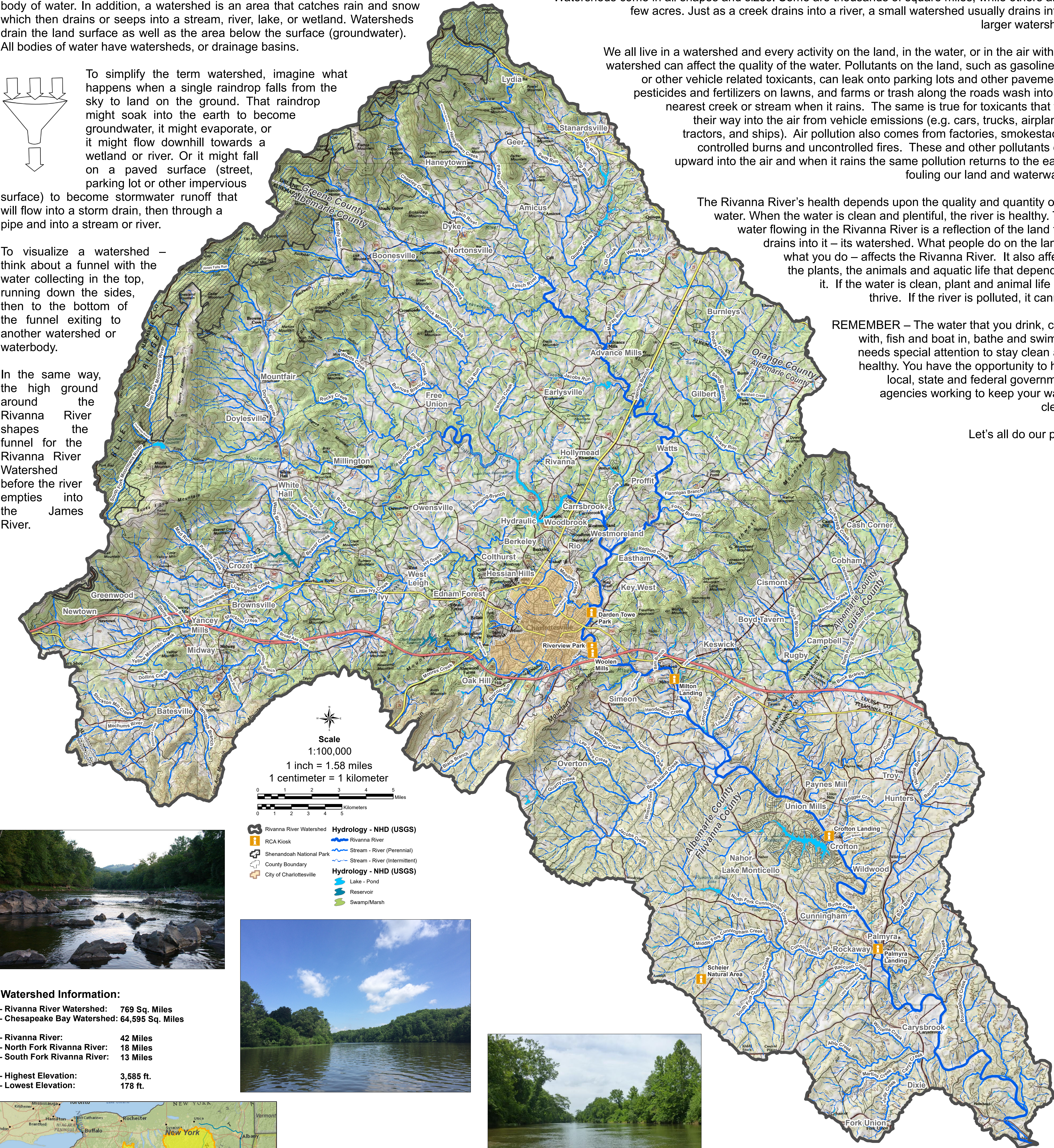
Watersheds come in all shapes and sizes. Some are thousands of square miles, while others are a few acres. Just as a creek drains into a river, a small watershed usually drains into a larger watershed.

We all live in a watershed and every activity on the land, in the water, or in the air within a watershed can affect the quality of the water. Pollutants on the land, such as gasoline, oil or other vehicle related toxicants, can leak onto parking lots and other pavements, pesticides and fertilizers on lawns, and farms or trash along the roads wash into the nearest creek or stream when it rains. The same is true for toxicants that find their way into the air from vehicle emissions (e.g. cars, trucks, airplanes, tractors, and ships). Air pollution also comes from factories, smokestacks, controlled burns and uncontrolled fires. These and other pollutants drift upward into the air and when it rains the same pollution returns to the earth, fouling our land and waterways.

The Rivanna River's health depends upon the quality and quantity of its water. When the water is clean and plentiful, the river is healthy. The water flowing in the Rivanna River is a reflection of the land that drains into it – its watershed. What people do on the land – what you do – affects the Rivanna River. It also affects the plants, the animals and aquatic life that depend on it. If the water is clean, plant and animal life can thrive. If the river is polluted, it cannot.

REMEMBER – The water that you drink, cook with, fish and boat in, bathe and swim in, needs special attention to stay clean and healthy. You have the opportunity to help local, state and federal government agencies working to keep your water clean.

Let's all do our part!



- Watershed Information:**
- Rivanna River Watershed: 769 Sq. Miles
 - Chesapeake Bay Watershed: 64,595 Sq. Miles
 - Rivanna River: 42 Miles
 - North Fork Rivanna River: 18 Miles
 - South Fork Rivanna River: 13 Miles
 - Highest Elevation: 3,585 ft.
 - Lowest Elevation: 178 ft.



Connected to the Chesapeake Bay

The Chesapeake Bay Watershed is made up of over 150 major rivers and streams, along with more than 100,000 smaller tributaries that drain a 64,000 square-mile land area. The Rivanna River Watershed is a part of the much larger Chesapeake Bay Watershed. The Rivanna River Watershed comprises approximately 1.18% of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

In comparison to the Chesapeake Bay, the Rivanna watershed is small. For every 1,000 square miles of land in the watershed there is only one cubic mile of Bay water. As the water winds its way through the landscape on its way to the Bay, water often picks up pollutants that will affect life in the Bay. Every action we take on the land directly effects what happens in the Chesapeake Bay.

The Chesapeake Bay is the nation's largest estuary, a body of water where the ocean meets fresh water from the rivers and streams within the watershed. Unique for its shallow average water depths, the Bay has extensive beds of underwater grasses – often called submerged aquatic vegetation – providing important habitat for animal life. In such a complex natural system, the more than 18 million people living in the Bay's watershed play an important role in its health.

The Rivanna Conservation Alliance

The Rivanna Conservation Alliance (RCA) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit watershed organization created to provide the community with a set of tools and programs specifically designed to help clean and protect the Rivanna River and its tributaries.

Our Vision: A healthy, thriving community that values its rivers and streams.

Our Mission: Protection of the Rivanna River and its tributaries through community involvement, conservation, education, recreation, restoration, water-quality monitoring and reporting.

RCA is dedicated to safeguarding the ecological, scenic, recreational and historic resources of the Rivanna River and its watershed.

For updated benthic and bacterial testing data please see the RCA-RivGIS 1.0 at the below website.



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