

# Cloquet River Watershed



## Why is it important?

The Cloquet River Watershed in Northeast Minnesota is relatively untouched compared to other watersheds in the state. Pristine areas remain throughout much of the watershed, making it a popular destination for outdoor enthusiasts.

The Cloquet River drains an area of roughly 800 miles and contributes to the St. Louis River and Lake Superior Basin.

## Highlights of report

- Overall, waterbodies within the Cloquet River Watershed are in good to excellent condition with the exception of some identified impairments.

## About this study

In 2015, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) performed biological monitoring on streams and rivers within the Cloquet River Watershed (8-digit HUC code 04010202). Based on the Intensive Watershed Monitoring (IWM) design, MPCA staff established monitoring stations near the outlets of tributary streams and along the Cloquet River. From these points, they collected and tabulated aquatic communities of fish and macroinvertebrates (bugs). Biological monitoring is an excellent indicator of water quality, as these organisms constantly endure water quality conditions, and respond to different environmental stressors. A healthy stream or river system will sustain a variety of aquatic life and include species which are more sensitive to change and less tolerant of stressors. Because of this dynamic nature, biological monitoring often detects issues that other methods may miss or underestimate.

Within the Cloquet River Watershed, researchers sampled 33 locations for biology in 2015. In addition, various water chemistry parameters were also monitored at six watershed stations between May and September of 2015 and 2016. These monitoring stations were located along the Cloquet River and on tributary streams where they meet the Cloquet River. Data from these sites show that bacteria levels are low and recreation is supported in streams across the watershed.

Major reaches within this watershed include the Cloquet River, West Branch Cloquet River, Langley River, and Us Kab Wan Ka River. Several other smaller tributary reaches are also present within the watershed.

July storms brought heavy rains statewide in 2015, which raised water levels and delayed monitoring for a few weeks. Despite this, sites were completed later in the summer. Overall, good to excellent aquatic communities were identified at most monitoring stations.

Lakes in this watershed also benefit from the intact watershed, with low levels of disturbance. Several of these lakes, Fish, Boulder, Wild Rice, and Island are large reservoirs. Overall lake water quality was very good, with high clarity and low levels of algae present.

## About this study (cont.)

In 2017, the biological and chemistry data was used as a means to evaluate (“assess”) the condition of water quality. A Watershed Monitoring and Assessment Report, which summarized the findings of the monitoring and assessment results, was completed and made available in July 2018.



*A nice day while sampling fish on the Cloquet River.*

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## Full report

The report can be found here: <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/sites/default/files/wq-ws3-04010202b.pdf>

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