

# Fountain Creek Watershed

Flood Control & Greenway District

## FACT SHEET

### Drainage



A watershed is a region that drains into a river, river system or other common body of water. The Fountain Creek Watershed is located along the central front range of Colorado. It is a 927 square mile area of land and water that drains to the Arkansas River at Pueblo and ultimately to the Gulf of Mexico. The watershed's boundaries are defined by the shape of the land – Palmer Divide to the north, Pikes Peak to the west, and a minor divide 20 miles east of Colorado Springs. Why is watershed protection important? Improving our waterways helps with water quality, stormwater management, flood prevention, creating recreational opportunities, and natural habitat for wildlife.



#### FOUNTAIN CREEK WATERSHED

A famous line from The Rime of the Ancient Mariner poem is, "Water, water everywhere, nor any drop to drink!" In his case, the writer was a thirsty sailor surrounded by saltwater he could not drink.

In our case, all that water from rainfall and snowmelt goes into our streams. The mission of the Fountain Creek Watershed Flood Control and Greenway District is to manage and control stream flow. The District has full land-use authority in the 100-year floodplain south of the City of Fountain and north of the City of Pueblo with recommending authority on projects and activities within the watershed located in El Paso and Pueblo County land use jurisdictions.

Through the District's efforts, drainage management projects are in the works (or have been completed) to collect and channel that precious commodity to curtail unruly waters and subsequent flooding in the watershed area.

A watershed is made up of a series of drainage basins. Other terms are catchment area, catchment basin and drainage area. Drainage basins act as a funnel by collecting all the surface water from rain runoff, snowmelt and nearby streams that run downhill towards a shared outlet, such as into a river or creek.

Fountain Creek starts in Woodland Park in Teller County and flows through El Paso County and Pueblo County to its confluence with the Arkansas River in Pueblo County. The 74.5-mile-long creek, once known as the Fontaine qui Bouille "Boiling Fountain Creek," is a tributary of the Arkansas River.

#### CATCHMENT FACTORS

The most significant issues determining the amount or likelihood of flooding include:

- **Topography.** Water always flows downhill. Water runs faster over land that has steeper slopes. A watershed is defined by the shape of the land. Each drainage basin is separated topographically from adjacent basins by a perimeter, the drainage divide. The divide makes up a succession of higher geographical features (such as a ridge, hill, or mountains) which form a barrier.
- **Shape.** The shape of the watershed impacts the speed with which the runoff reaches a river. A long thin catchment will take longer to drain than a circular catchment.
- **Size.** The larger the catchment, the greater the potential for flooding. The length and width of the drainage basin can also have an impact.
- **Soil type.** Sandy soils are free-draining, and rainfall on this soil is more likely to be absorbed by the ground. However, soils containing clay can be almost impermeable and therefore rainfall on clay soils will run off and contribute to flood volumes. After prolonged rainfall, even free-draining soils can become saturated. Any further rainfall will be less likely to be absorbed and will create surface runoff, leading to a higher risk of flooding.
- **Land use.** Rainfall on roofs, pavements and roads (hard surfaces) will concentrate and flow into rivers quickly and with almost no absorption into the ground.

In a watershed, the area in which precipitation that falls flows "down-gradient" towards the lowest point. In most valleys, the land slopes downhill somewhere, in which case, a river will form.

## WHY SHOULD WE CARE

Without the proactive planning and active measures taken by the Fountain Creek Watershed Flood Control and Greenway District (visit <https://www.fountain-crk.org/> and select "Projects" on the navigation bar), damage from recent floods could have been catastrophic to many lives and properties of those near our waterways, just as in the past. Here are just a few historical examples:

- August 7, 1904: a flash flood on Porter Draw (near Eden, north of Pueblo) washed a train from the tracks, killing 89 passengers. Flood waters weakened a railroad bridge, which gave way under the weight of the train.
- June 3, 1921: Pueblo's most devastating flood, primarily due to overflows on the Arkansas River, also included flooding along Fountain Creek. The main Arkansas River flooding left more countless people dead and hundreds homeless. Bridges and buildings on both waterways were washed out with property damage and losses estimated at \$25 million. Pueblo did not fully recover from this flood until the 1980's.
- May 30, 1935: the Memorial Day flood on Fountain and Monument creeks killed 18 people and washed away bridges and buildings in downtown Colorado Springs. Among the victims was a Pueblo couple stranded in a car on South Nevada Avenue. In north Pueblo, downstream flooding swamped businesses along Fountain Creek and parts of Downtown. Damages were estimated at \$500,00. Source: <https://coyotegulch.blog/2015/07/20/a-look-back-at-fountain-creek-flooding/>

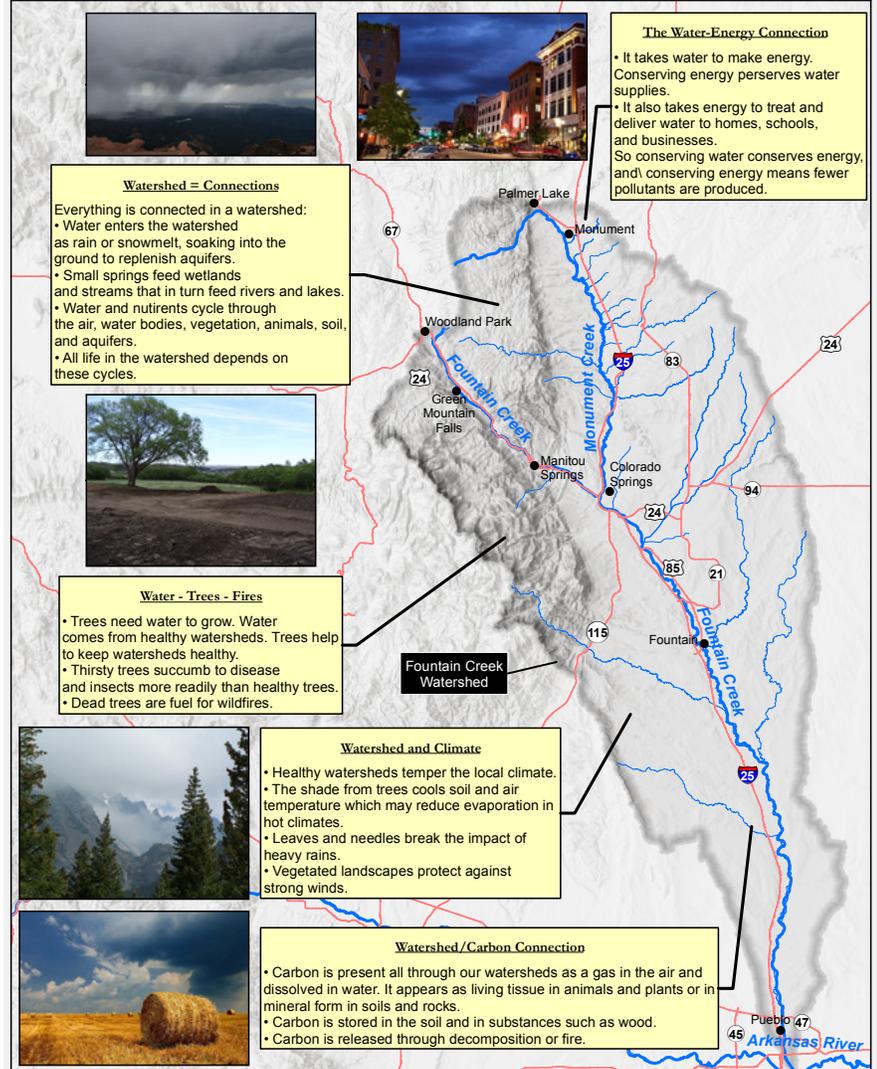


- June 17, 1965: fifteen days of steady rain flooded the Arkansas and South Platte rivers and Fountain Creek. President Lyndon B. Johnson declared Colorado a major disaster area. In Pueblo, 1,000 residents were evacuated from their homes as the raging Fountain Creek washed out the Pinon Bridge north of the city. Rainfall was estimated at 14 inches with \$2.7 million in damages. Source: <https://coyotegulch.blog/2015/07/20/a-look-back-at-fountain-creek-flooding/>

Thankfully, communities, organizations and visionary leaders collaborated to form the Fountain Creek Watershed Flood Control and Greenway District where they manage, administer, and fund the capital improvements necessary to mitigate flooding, erosion and sedimentation and improve drainage, among other impacts and benefits. somewhere, in which case, a river will form.

## WHAT IS A WATERSHED?

A watershed is the region of land that drains to a particular body of water, such as a river or lake. Rain that falls anywhere in that watershed eventually flows to that body of water. It may travel overland as surface water or flow underground as groundwater.



## PROJECT CONTACTS

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) includes technical experts appointed by the District Board to provide recommendations on public policy or expenditures for the benefit of the watershed. They also conduct investigations, make measurements, collect data, make analyses, studies, and inspections pertaining to facilities, projects and property within and outside the district. The TAC generally meets at 1 p.m. on the 1st Wednesday of the month, Fountain City Hall, Fountain, CO, 116 Main Street, 2nd floor. The meeting date, time and location are subject to change so please check the calendar for changes.

For more information about the statutory authority and purpose of the Fountain Creek Watershed, Flood Control and Greenway District see C.R.S 32-11.5. You can also visit <https://www.fountain-crk.org/> and call 719-447-5012.