When concerned about the quantity and/or quality of water in a particular stream, river or lake, one needs to analyze where the water comes from. A **watershed** is an area of land in which all surface water drains to a single outlet or particular point of interest; often a body of water such as a stream, lake, or estuary. Watersheds are defined by topography with adjacent watersheds separated by ridgelines that act as divides. Watersheds can be any size and shape, depending on the outlet selected and land topography.

There is some variation in terminology for watersheds. Large watersheds are sometimes called **river basins** or **drainage basins** (e.g., Red River Basin), but there is no generally accepted size for this designation, and the basic definition is the same. In most English speaking countries other than the USA, the term watershed refers to the divides between drainage basins, and **catchment** is more commonly used to refer to the land area that drains to a particular point.

The USGS and other agencies have organized all watersheds in the US into a hierarchy of “Hydrologic Units” or “Hydrologic Unit Areas” (HUAs), and each HUA is identified a Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC) number. The largest HUAs have a 2 digit HUC, and are called Water Resources Regions. There are 21 Water Resources Regions in the US.

![USGS Hydrologic Unit map.](image-url)
Each Region is subdivided into *sub-regions*, which are identified by a 4 digit HUC, with the first two digits of each sub-region being the same as the Region HUC. Each sub-region is subdivided into *accounting units*, which are identified by 6 digit HUCs; the first 4 digits of the HUC within a sub-region will be the same as the sub-region HUC. Each accounting unit is subdivided into *cataloging units*, which are identified by 8 digit HUCs; the first 6 digits of the HUC will be the same as the HUC for the accounting unit. The HUC for our area is:

**Region 12  Texas-Gulf Region** -- The drainage that discharges into the Gulf of Mexico from and including Sabine Pass to the Rio Grande Basin boundary. Includes parts of Louisiana, New Mexico, and Texas.

**Subregion  1203 -- Trinity:** The Trinity River Basin above Trinity Bay. Texas.

Area = 18000 sq.mi.

**Accounting Unit 120301 -- Upper Trinity:** The Trinity River Basin above and including the Richland Creek Basin. Texas. Area = 11800 sq.mi.

**Cataloging Units**

12030102 -- Lower West Fork Trinity. Texas. Area = 1510 sq.mi.
12030103 -- Elm Fork Trinity. Texas. Area = 1840 sq.mi.
12030104 -- Denton. Texas. Area = 727 sq.mi.
12030105 -- Upper Trinity. Texas. Area = 1370 sq.mi.

**12030106 -- East Fork Trinity.** Texas. Area = 1300 sq.mi.
12030107 -- Cedar. Texas. Area = 1070 sq.mi.
12030108 -- Richland. Texas. Area = 917 sq.mi.
12030109 -- Chambers. Texas. Area = 1070 sq.mi.