fundamental information is provided below on identifying watersheds management units.

Watershed Management Units

It is important to understand the different watershed management units and the way they relate to one another. Watersheds may range in size from one acre or less for a small pond to thousands of acres for a river basin such as the Cape Fear. Presented below are three different watershed hierarchies that are used by different organizations.

Federal Watershed Hierarchy
Most federal government agencies, including the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) use a national uniform hydrologic unit system that is sponsored by the Water Resources Council. This system defines watershed areas as hydrologic units (HU) and divides the country into 21 regions, 222 subregions, 352 accounting units and 2,149 cataloging units.

A hierarchical code consisting of two digits for each of the above four levels combines to form an 8-digit HU (referred to as a cataloging unit). An 8-digit HU generally covers an average of 975 square miles. In North Carolina there are 54 of these HUs or cataloging units. River basins, the largest drainage areas, are usually composed of several 8-digit HUs.

These 8-digit units have been further subdivided into 11- and 14-digit units in the national scale. The 14-digit unit is the smallest scale used.

Table 5: USGS Hydrologic Units

	8-digit	11-digit	14-digit
Quantity in N.C.	54	438	1,602
Typical Area (sq. miles)	975	120	31.8
Range (sq. miles)	625 to 3,125	15.6 to 391	1.58 to 238.8
Name	Cataloging Unit	Sub Unit	Recording Unit

State Basinwide Planning Watersheds
In North Carolina, the Division of Water Quality (DWQ) also has a system for identifying watershed management units that adds a layer to the national system. This “subbasin” level was established for a variety of reasons that took into account the number of permitted discharges, regional office/state boundaries, and the larger 8-digit hydrologic unit boundaries within a particular basin. The DWQ system identifies basins as the largest drainage areas, subbasins as a secondary level and watersheds (14-digit HUs) as the smallest level. Subbasins are assigned unique 6-digit codes and typically contain several 14-digit HUs. There are 133 subbasins in the state. Water quality