

THE MEMOMONEE RIVER WATERSHED



Friends of Milwaukee's Rivers, July 1997

During periods of heavy rain the Menomonee River can rise quickly and flood its banks.



Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District

Natural areas alongside rivers reduce flooding and minimize property damage.



Photograph: Eddée Daniel. Land use map data: SEWRPC

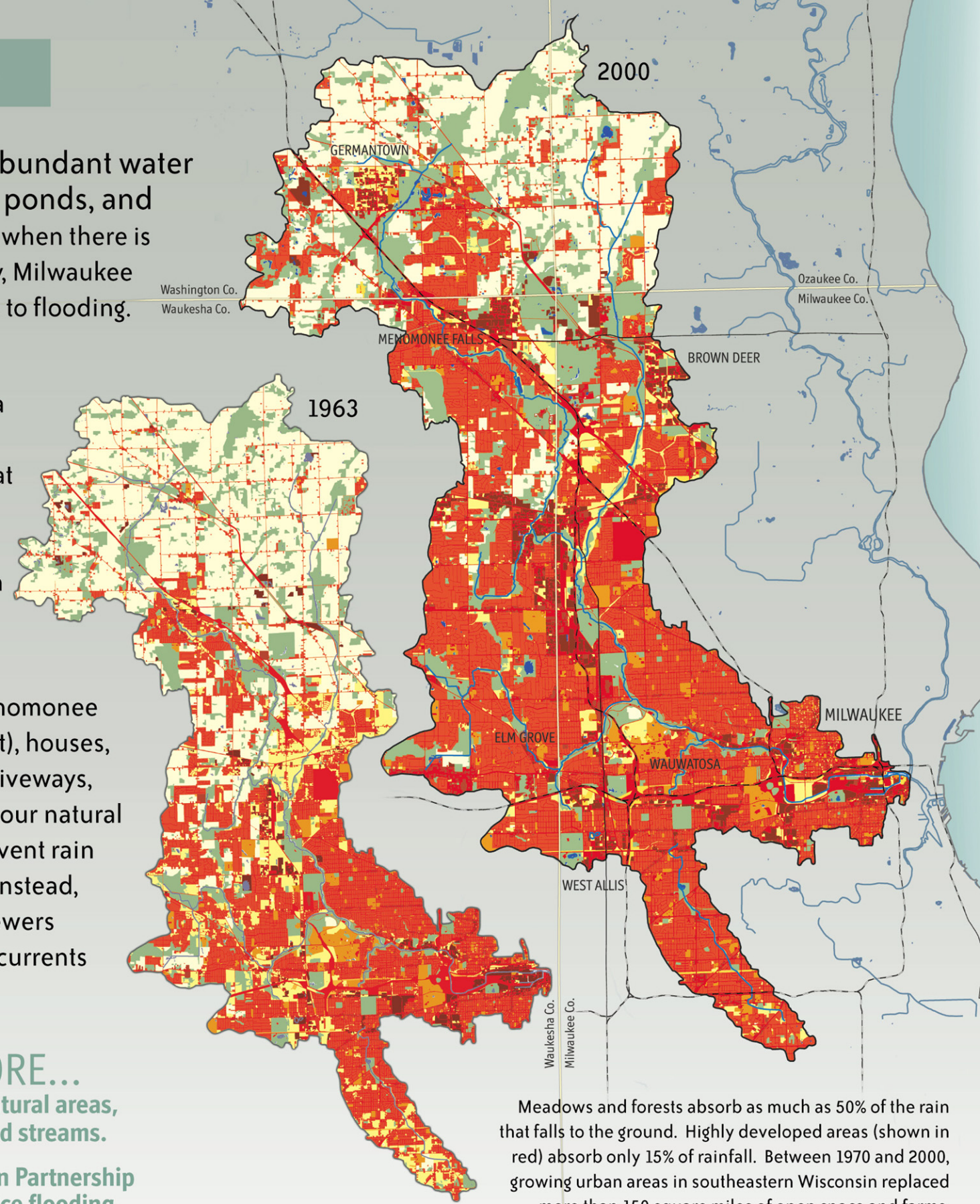
The Milwaukee area has abundant water resources — lakes, rivers, ponds, and wetlands. But what happens when there is too much water? Unfortunately, Milwaukee County is especially vulnerable to flooding. Why?

For 10,000 years, this area had a natural balance of prairies, forests, wetlands, and rivers that absorbed rainfall and slowed water movement. In more recent history, expanding urban and suburban development has upset this balance.

Within the 136 square mile Menomonee River watershed (shown at right), houses, buildings, streets, sidewalks, driveways, and parking lots have replaced our natural areas. These hard surfaces prevent rain from soaking into the ground. Instead, rain flows directly into storm sewers and waterways — causing fast currents and downstream flooding.

LEARN MORE, DO MORE...
Plant native plants and protect natural areas, especially alongside our rivers and streams.

Contact the Milwaukee River Basin Partnership to find out how you can help reduce flooding.



Meadows and forests absorb as much as 50% of the rain that falls to the ground. Highly developed areas (shown in red) absorb only 15% of rainfall. Between 1970 and 2000, growing urban areas in southeastern Wisconsin replaced more than 150 square miles of open space and farms.