



Natural Resources

Topography

Topography is important to help understand how much and how fast water runs off the land surface, and what it may be able to carry with it.

In Rice County, the altitude ranges from 888 to 1,250 feet (271 to 381 meters) above mean sea level. The direction of decreasing altitude is generally from south to north. The topography, or surface features, ranges from a hummocky or hilly appearance with shallow lakes in the west to steep valleys along the rivers and streams to a more level surface in the eastern portion of the county. The largest topographic feature is the Cannon River which flows southwest to northeast across the county.

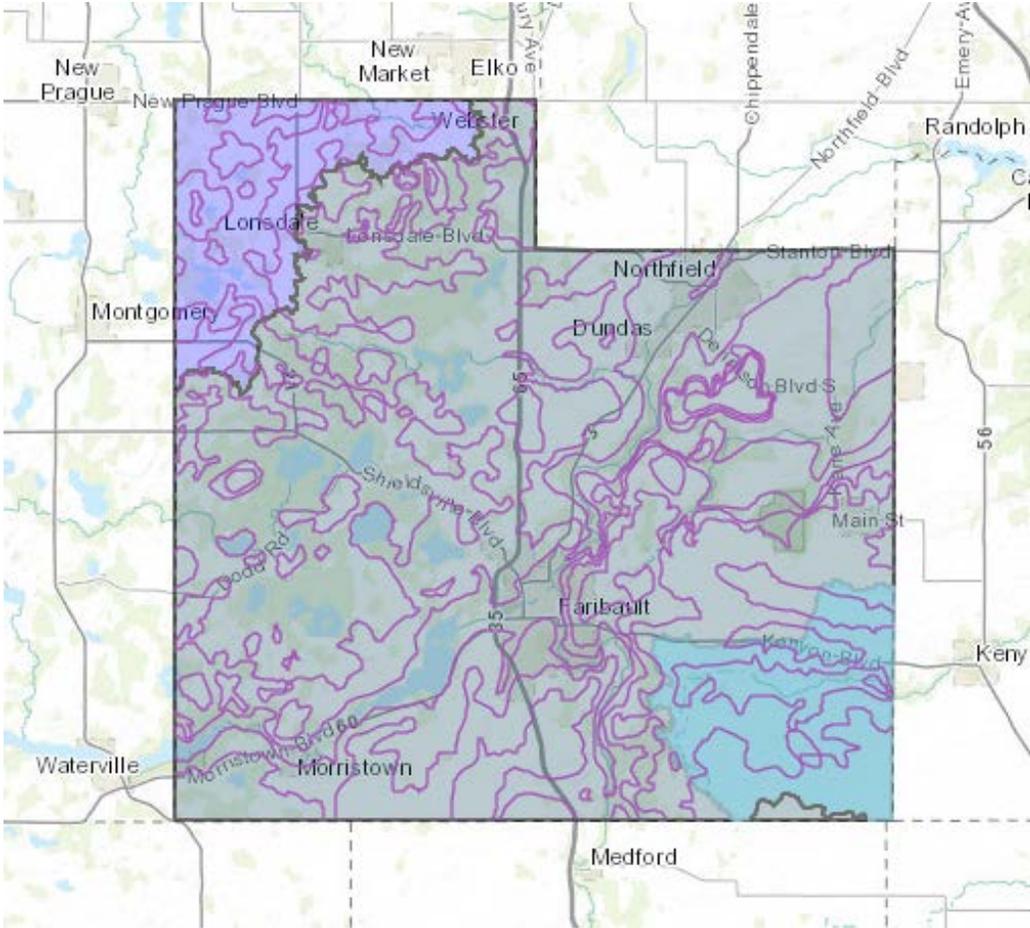
Topographic relief varies in Rice County depending on the associated watershed. Rice County is situated primarily within the Cannon River Watershed, which encompasses 406 square miles. The Zumbro River Watershed is located within the southeast corner of the county and encompasses 45 square miles. While the Lower Minnesota River Watershed is located in the northwest corner, encompassing 44 square miles.

The generally level upland relief of Rice County is broken by the valley of the Cannon River and its tributaries, and by the headwaters of the Zumbro River. The highest area is the undissected highlands or upland, in the southeast corner of the county, which has an elevation of about 1,250 feet and is mainly in the Zumbro River Watershed. The lowest area is the point where the Cannon River leaves the county near Northfield at an elevation of about 888 feet.

In the eastern part of the county, a moraine ridge forms an interrupted belt of irregular hills extending north and south a short distance from Faribault. The moraine marks the eastern border of the Late Wisconsin glacier. Beyond this border, eroded older glacial sediments dominate the landscape. In the northeast part of the county, there are a few flat-topped mesas of sandstone capped by thin beds of limestone. An area of stagnant ice deposits, that is much broader and extends westward into Le Sueur County, covers the western third of the county.

Rice County has two drainage characteristics. In the western part of the county, poor drainage results from the more recent glaciation (Quaternary) of the area. Many shallow lakes and swamps are found in this area. In the eastern part of the county, a dendritic (tree-like) drainage pattern dominates.

Rice County Contour Map



Click on the following map to access:

<http://www.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=8cfd6b22db5f4405bfdfd3ce50df9ee2>