

A **watershed** is the land area that catches and drains rainfall or snowmelt into a stream, river, wetland, lake or other water body. The watershed is the place we live; it is an interconnected system of land, water, people, plants and animals.



West Virginia has 28 major watersheds, or 32 if divided according to the **USGS hydrologic unit codes**, that contribute to the **Chesapeake Bay** and the **Gulf of Mexico**. DEP's **Watershed Assessment Branch** provides a list of the **named streams and rivers** within each of West Virginia's 32 watersheds.

Most of the state's surface waters (those west of the **Allegheny Mountains**) flow into the **Ohio River**. The Ohio joins the **Mississippi River** at Cairo, IL. The Mississippi flows into the Gulf of Mexico at New Orleans, LA. The surface waters east of the Allegheny Mountains (**Eastern continental divide**) flow into the **Potomac River**. A few streams in the southeastern corner of the state flow towards the **James River**. The James enters the Chesapeake Bay near Newport News, VA and the Potomac enters the Chesapeake Bay southeast of Washington DC.

The **Cheat River**, **Dunkard Creek**, **Monongahela River**, **Tygart Valley River**, **West Fork River**, the **Youghiogheny River** and the **New River** flow into the Ohio to the north. The **Big Sandy River**, **Coal River**, **Elk River**, **Gauley River**, **Greenbrier River**, **Guyandotte River**, **Kanawha River**, **Little Kanawha River**, several direct drains to the Ohio, which are divided into the Upper Ohio, Middle Ohio and Lower Ohio, **Tug Fork River** and **Twelvopole Creek** flow into the Ohio River in a north and northwest direction. The **Cacapon River**, the **North** and **South Branch** of the Potomac and the **Shenandoah River** flow into the Potomac River to the north; the Shenandoah (Hardy Co) streams flow south. There are also several streams flowing directly into the Potomac. In the southeastern corner of the state (**Monroe County**) is **Potts Creek**, which flows into the **Jackson River** in Virginia, which eventually empties into the **James River**.

Digital watersheds: <http://www.iwr.msu.edu/dw/>

