

Kanawha River Watershed

New River, Greenbrier River, Elk River, Gauley River, Coal River, and Kanawha River Mainstem.

The bigger picture: via the Ohio River, the river systems in the Kanawha River Watershed are part of the Mississippi River drainage basin.

Kanawha River Mainstem

The Kanawha River begins near the town of Gauley Bridge in northwestern Fayette County, above Kanawha Falls. The River is formed by the confluence of the New and the Gauley rivers and flows north and west to join the Ohio River at Point Pleasant, in Mason County.

Fast facts:

Drainage area 8,450 square miles

Length: 96.5 miles.

The Kanawha River is the fourth largest tributary of the Ohio River and is West Virginia's largest inland waterway.

Name origin: Kanawha is a Native-American word for "white rocks." Native American tribes identified the New River and the Kanawha River as being one river, as did many early white explorers.

Landmarks to show on the map:

Locks and Dams: Three locks and dams on the Kanawha River located at London, Marmet, and Winfield provide approximately 90 miles of transportation from Deepwater, a community 20 miles north of Charleston, to Point Pleasant and the Ohio River.

Inset graphics or text:

- ❑ One hundred eighteen fish species are reported from the Kanawha River system downstream from Kanawha Fall.
- ❑ The Sheepnose is a mussel that can be found in the Kanawha River. The mussel is proposed for listing as endangered



Coal River Watershed

The Coal River is formed near the community of Alum Creek by the confluence of the Big Coal River and Little Coal Rivers and flows into the Kanawha River at St. Albans.

Fast facts: Drainage area 900 square miles

Length: 19 miles

Inset graphics:

- ❑ Mining. The drainage basin has been mined since the 1800's and continues to be mined today.
- ❑ The Walkhonde Water Trail is an 88 mile water trail on the Big, Little, and Coal rivers that offers canoeing and kayaking opportunities.

(Little Coal is 27.6 miles from mouth to confluence of Spruce and Pond Forks; and

Big Coal is 39.7 miles from mouth to confluence of Marsh and Clear Forks.)

The Elk River Watershed

The Elk River is formed in Pocahontas County by the confluence of Big Spring and Old Field Forks near the community of Slatyfork. The river flows through rugged and remote terrain, before finally joining the Kanawha River at Charleston.

Fast facts:

Drainage area: 1,532 square miles. Length: 175.5 miles

The Elk River is the longest river in West Virginia that flows entirely within the state's boundaries.

Inset graphics or text:

The Dries. The Elk river flows above ground for several miles before it disappears into a network of caverns and sinks underground for more than five miles. The old riverbed is on solid bedrock and is known in this section as "The Dries." The Elk River resurfaces at Cowger Mill Spring.

Timbering

Landmarks to show on the map:

Sutton Lake



The Gauley River Watershed

The Gauley River merges with the New River to form the Kanawha River at Gauley Bridge. The headwaters are known for high-quality trout streams and outstanding fishing.

Fast facts: Drainage area: 1,350 square miles. Length: 105 miles

Landmarks to show on the map:

Summersville Lake

Inset graphics:

Whitewater rafting

The Greenbrier River Watershed

From its headwaters in Pocahontas County to its confluence with the New River at Hinton, the Greenbrier is considered the longest free-flowing river in the eastern United States.

Fast facts: Drainage area: 1,646 square miles. Length: 154 miles

[Please check my numbers.. the West Virginia encyclopedia differs from our basin plan.](#)

Inset graphics or text:

Caves. There are 1,375 documented caves of all sizes in Greenbrier County, including 412 caves that are over 33 feet in length.

The Greenbrier River Trail closely mirrors the Greenbrier River for most of its length, offering trail users countless opportunities for bicycling, backpacking, swimming, and fishing. The 78-mile long rail trail is operated by the West Virginia state park system.



New River Watershed

The New River watershed gathers water from river systems in North Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia. From its source in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina, the New River flows northwest for about 250 miles (wikipedia say more check). The River merges with the Gauley River to form the Kanawha River at Gauley Bridge.

Fast facts:

Drainage area in West Virginia: 1,100 square miles.

Length in West Virginia: 87 miles

Inset graphics or text:

The Bluestone River is a National Wild and Scenic River.

The Bluestone Dam at Hinton forms Bluestone Lake, the third largest lake in West Virginia.