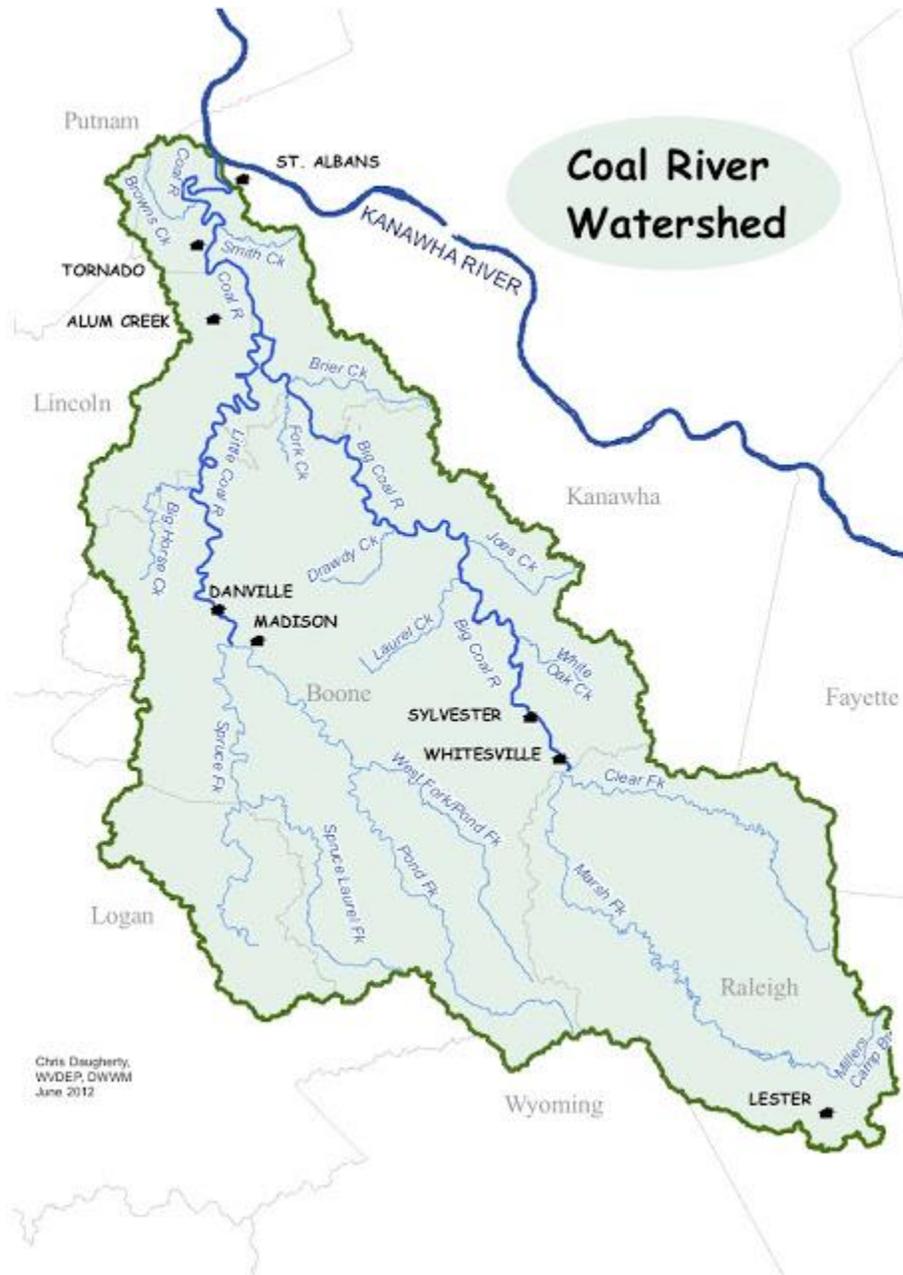


## Creating Jobs from Clean River Recreation The Coal River Group Plan



The ten year watershed restoration efforts by the Coal River Group are beginning to create new job opportunities for youth in the southern coal fields. "Clean water has been our goal from the beginning," says Bill Currey, Chairman of the non-profit CRG. "We began an extensive clean-up effort for the entire Coal River watershed in 2004 and the results have been terrific. But much remains to be done." Currey adds, "the Group's success has come about because of the river recreation opportunities we have created." The fact that clean-up work has helped thousands of local citizens to explore the 88 miles of rivers and learn first-hand how the region's water resources can help to create a new recreational center for tourism.

The Coal River Group's newly completed five year plan focuses the Group's future efforts on creating entrepreneurial opportunities which, in turn, can create job opportunities for the youth

in the region. Currey points out that the CRG has created a demonstration project which exploits the river recreational opportunities in the unlikely location of Tornado, WV. The CRG River Center, which has become a significant destination center for visitors from throughout the U.S., has been built with help from a broad array of funding sources that include the WV Legislature, private corporate funding and other Federal and state grants along with private citizen donations.

The River Center has become a hub for river-based river recreation job opportunities and offers kayak and canoe rentals, cross-country running and hiking trails, fishing and in the future a camping and RV center is planned for the Kanawha County Parks and Recreation owned Meadowood Park. The new hub of activity utilizes volunteer help to provide job training for college interns to help with the many entrepreneurial-based ventures run by the CRG.

Creating Jobs from Clean River Recreation  
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The new plan proposes that a series of similar HUBS be created in four separate locations in the Coal River Watershed. Currey notes, "The purpose of each hub would be to focus all available local resources on establishing recreational amenities which will in turn provide youth in the area with job opportunities as river guides, fishing guides, sales associates, boat rental staff, food service providers and small business operators.

The region has the natural river-based assets. The CRG has established the infrastructure to develop these assets with its 88 mile Coal River Walhonde Water Trail and the four county governments in the Watershed are ready and able to help expand the growth to serve tourists to the region.



CRG's River Center

### CRG's Plan Specifics

The next five years can be a period which creates many new opportunities for the young people in the region. The opportunities in recreation-based business ventures offer outdoor jobs which are suitable for training students and others in the basics of business management, customer services and food service skills. New businesses for each HUB could include kayak rentals, tubing rentals, restaurants and camping. The CRG plans to use the HUB concept, based on the success of the present river center at Upper Falls of the Coal River in Tornado, WV, to help other areas in southern West Virginia to develop their river-based assets for job and business creation. HUB centers identified by the CRG include:

- Little Coal River: Boone County based Water Park region served by Corridor G offers major tourist-based opportunities, i.e., Water Park, river-front walking trails, new amphitheater, Hatfield & McCoy Trail Center and a newly restored River Loop water trail for beginning paddlers. Madison/Danville region offers opportunities for short paddling trips, existing river access facilities, and Corridor G access.
- Big Coal River: Whitesville/Marsh Fork offers seasonal whitewater paddling opportunities, river front developments with river-based launch facilities. Racine/Ashford offers an excellent river front park with river front walking trails, great 10 mile paddling trip through the canyon to Dartmont Park at Ashford.
- Lower Coal: Alum Creek/ Tornado offers existing seven-mile river trip with great river launches, CRG River Center located on 90-acre public park offers, 1,700 sq. ft. Coal River Science and Education Center, Outdoor Classroom, kayak and canoe rentals, 3 miles of cross country walking and hiking trails, future camping and RV center properties, a large 400-acre potential wilderness trail property and access from I-64 and US RT 60.
- Lower Falls to Kanawha River: This section offers existing Barnette Conservation Preserve at Lower Falls, great 7 mile paddle trip to the Kanawha River, potential walking and biking trail from Indian Head to downtown St. Albans, restaurants, shops and easy access for tourists.

The CRG plan details how these HUBS can become economic engines for growth and job development for youth in the four county Coal River Watersheds. To learn more about CRG's efforts, visit their website at:

<http://coalrivergroup.com/>

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