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# River Basins of Kentucky

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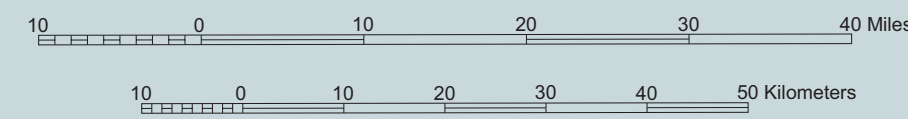
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# River Basins of Kentucky

Daniel I. Carey and Terry D. Hounshell



- EXPLANATION**
- Big Sandy River Basin
  - Cumberland River Basin
  - Green River Basin
  - Kentucky River Basin
  - Licking River Basin
  - Little Sandy River-Tygart Creek Basin
  - Mississippi River Basin
  - Ohio River Basin
  - Salt River Basin
  - Tennessee River Basin
  - Tradewater River Basin
  - Upper Cumberland River Basin
  - State Capital
  - County Seat
  - Incorporated City
  - State Park
  - Kentucky River Lock and Dam
  - Parkway or Interstate Highway
  - U.S. Highway
  - State Primary Highway
  - County Boundary
  - State Boundary

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 Toll free: (877) 778-9227 ext. 126  
 View the KGS World Wide Web site at  
[www.uky.edu/kgs](http://www.uky.edu/kgs)

Ohio River Record Flood



This picture of the 1937 flood in Paducah was taken before the Ohio River created on February 2, 1937. Floodwaters covered more than 90 percent of the city, and flood damage exceeded \$22 million. Photo courtesy of the William Clark Market House Museum.

**KENTUCKY WATER USE**  
 Estimated water use in gallons per day (2001)

Water suppliers	529,360,000
Mining	23,350,000
Industrial (self-supplied)	317,230,000
Commercial (self-supplied)	16,306,000
Aquaculture	27,771,000
Power production	203,000,000
TOTAL	1,117,000,000

Or about 408 billion gallons per year, not including agriculture, household, and other self-supplied uses.

**WHERE THE WATER OCCURS**

State surface area (square miles)	40,409
Major drainage basins	12

**On the surface**

Miles of rivers and streams	89,431
Miles of rivers bordering other states	849
Acres of wetlands	637,000
Number of reservoirs more than 1,000 acres in size	18
Acres of publicly owned lakes and reservoirs	228,385

Source: Kentucky Division of Water, [www.water.ky.gov](http://www.water.ky.gov)

**Underground**

Percentage of rural Kentucky population that is self-supplied who rely on groundwater	90
Approximate number of people who rely on private sources of groundwater (wells or springs) since July 1995	400,000
Number of private domestic water wells installed since July 1995	35,070
Number of public water supplies that depend on groundwater	226
Population served by public systems supplied by groundwater	1.2 million+

**KENTUCKY WATER RESOURCES**

Average annual rainfall	40 - 50 inches
Maximum	winter and spring
Minimum	late summer and fall

Kentucky River Palisades



The Kentucky River Palisades, with steep scenic gorges and limestone outcrops, overlook the river for nearly 100 miles between Franklin and Madison Counties. Photo by Steve Greb, Kentucky Geological Survey.

Cypress Swamp



This cypress swamp, just north of John James Audubon State Park, lies within the Wabash-Ohio Bottomlands ecological region, which covers northern Henderson County along the Ohio River. Photo courtesy of Glynn Beck, Kentucky Geological Survey.

Broke Leg Falls



Broke Leg Falls in the upper Licking River Basin. Photo courtesy of Calvin Lindell.

Cave Run Lake



The Charity Regatta, 2004, courtesy of the Cave Run Sailing Association, [www.caverunsailing.org](http://www.caverunsailing.org).

**KGS** KENTUCKY GEOLOGICAL SURVEY  
 James C. Cobb, State Geologist and Director  
 UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY, LEXINGTON

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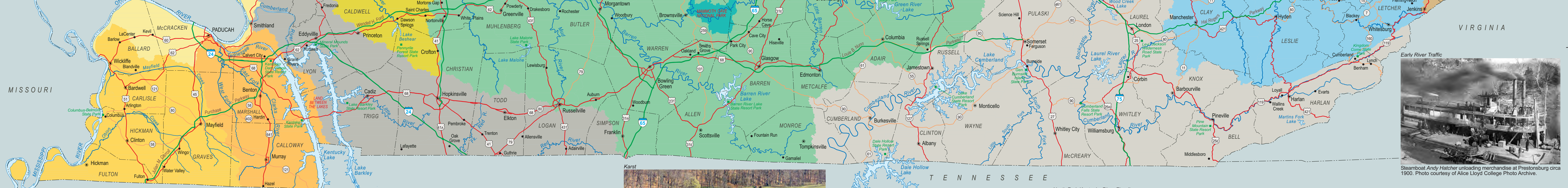


Cave Run Lake offers peaceful scenes for quiet contemplation as well as opportunities for sailing, boating, and fishing. Photo courtesy of John A. Wright.

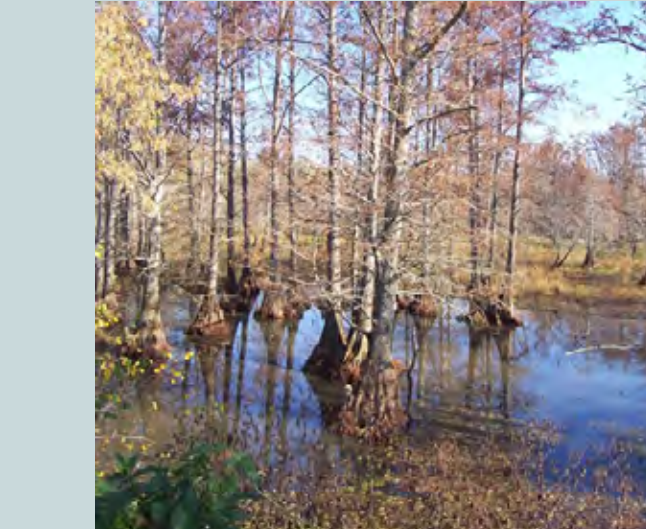
Meeting of Two Great Rivers



The confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. This picture was taken at Fort Defiance State Park, Ill., looking southeast toward the city of Wickliffe in Ballard County. Photo by Glynn Beck, Kentucky Geological Survey.



Cypress Swamp



Typical cypress swamp in the Obion Creek watershed of the Mississippi River Basin. Photo by Glynn Beck, Kentucky Geological Survey.

Kentucky Lake Sunset



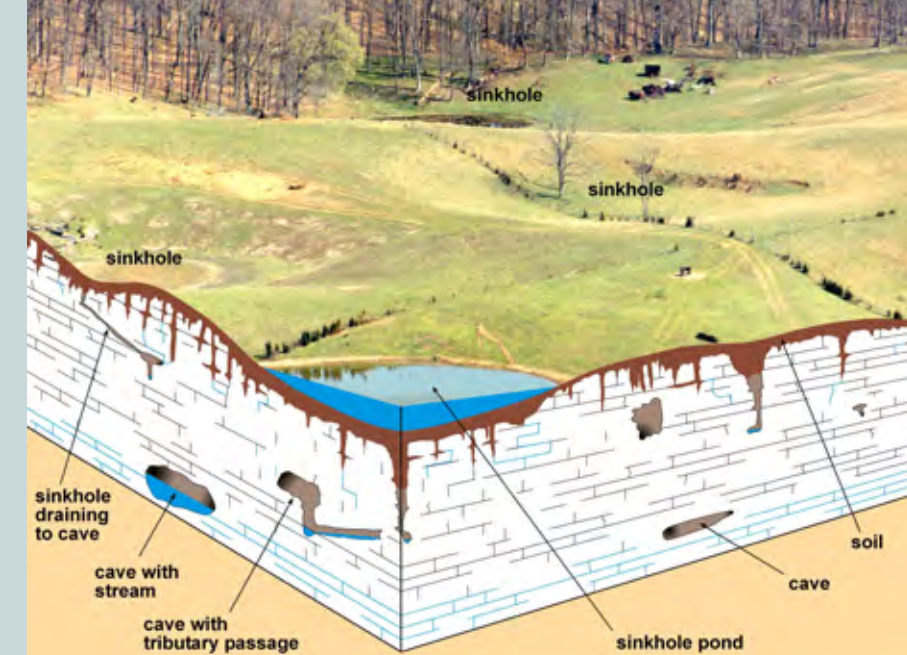
Kentucky Lake is one of the world's largest man-made lakes, with over 2,000 miles of shoreline. Photo by Jim Garrett, courtesy of [www.kentuckylake.com](http://www.kentuckylake.com).

Green River Lake



Green River Lake, Campbellsville, is a haven for fishing and water sports. Photo courtesy of [www.greenriverlake.net](http://www.greenriverlake.net).

Karst



In karst regions of Kentucky, such as the Green River Basin, streams commonly disappear beneath the surface. The flow then moves through caves and conduits and may re-emerge in a different watershed. Illustration courtesy of Jim Currans, Kentucky Geological Survey.

Cumberland Falls



Known as the "Niagara of the South," Cumberland Falls is 125 feet wide and almost 60 feet high. When a full moon is visible, visitors can see a "moonbow" (rainbow) in the mist created by the falls. Photo from Kentucky Geological Survey archive.

North Fork Kentucky River Flooding



During the flood of March 1963, the North Fork of the Kentucky River created at 37 feet above flood stage at Hazard. Photo courtesy of Shane Sparkman, [www.hazardkentucky.com](http://www.hazardkentucky.com).

Martins Fork Lake Dam

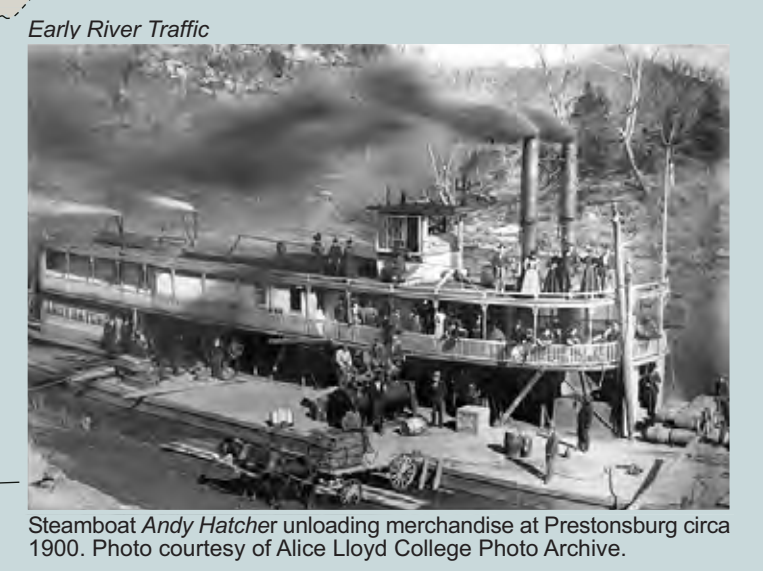


Photo courtesy of the Nashville District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, [www.in.usace.army.mil/cp/marfed/](http://www.in.usace.army.mil/cp/marfed/).

Fishtrap Lake Dam



Photo courtesy of the Huntington District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, [www.in.usace.army.mil/projects/lakes/fif/](http://www.in.usace.army.mil/projects/lakes/fif/).



Steamboat Andy Hatcher unloading merchandise at Prestonsburg circa 1900. Photo courtesy of Alice Lloyd College Photo Archive.