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# The Coal River Basin: A 2009 Water Budget Study

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# **THE COAL RIVER BASIN, WEST VIRGINIA: A 2009 WATER BUDGET STUDY**

A Thesis submitted to the Graduate College of Marshall University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science



Physical Science by R. Dale Biller

Approved by

Dr. Dewey Sanderson, Ph.D., Committee Chairperson Dr. Ralph Oberly, Ph.D. Dr. James Brumfield, Ph.D.

Marshall University, June 2010

# **Abstract**

The Coal River Watershed covers an area of some 890 square miles in southern West Virginia of which 863 square miles was investigated in this study. Both online and field data were collected over period from January 13, 2009 to January 13, 2010. The basin was studied as a closed system having an input, which was precipitation, and outputs, rainfall interception, evapotranspiration, and stream discharge that was separated into base flow and overland flow.

 The effective rainfall of the watershed was calculated using the Thiessen polygon method to be 42 inches for the year, 48% of that water discharged by the Coal River, 33% intercepted by foliage, and 19% lost due to evapotranspiration.

 The stream flow was separated into overland and base flow both manually and using digital filtering. About 60% of the stream discharge is from groundwater and 40% from overland flow. During months of larger rainfall the base flow is less, and for low rainfall months the base flow higher.

# **Acknowledgements**

Dr. Dewey Sanderson Marshall University Geology Department Chair

Dr. Ralph Oberly Marshall University Physics Department Physical Science

Dr. Wathig Abdul-Razzaq West Virginia University Physics Department Introductory Physics Education

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#### **Background**

#### **Introduction**

A watershed is an area of land that drains down-slope to a lowest point. The Coal River is a tributary system of the greater Kanawha River Watershed that encompasses a large area of southwestern West Virginia, as seen in Figure 1. The Coal River Basin is approximately 891 square miles. The down-slope drainage pathways form a network that may be on the surface or underground. The natural progression of the water is to converge into larger and larger stream systems. Streams, rivers, and tributaries have associated watersheds and small watersheds converge into larger watersheds. The boundaries of a watershed follow major ridgelines around the stream system and end at the lowest elevation or bottom where the water escapes, commonly called the mouth of the stream.

The connectedness of the basin refers to the physical connection between tributaries and rivers and surface water / groundwater discharge at the stream mouth. In the case of the Coal River system, it has developed a dendritic pattern due to the relatively flat lying Pennsylvanian sedimentary strata. This study will focus on the large and small Coal River watershed boundaries and their tributaries. Some issues have emerged as to the quality of the Coal River water drainage basin but are not treated here.



**Figure 1 Location of the Coal River Basin, West Virginia.** 

The shape and condition largely depend on the geology, climate, and human disturbance. The Coal River Basin is a good example of what human inter-environmental disturbance can do to a watershed. The types of soils in the watershed also depend on the geology, climate, and vegetation within the boundaries of the study area (Arnold, J.G., R. Srinivasan, R.S. Muttiah and J.R., Williams, 1998, pgs. 73-89). These variables along with their distribution determine the type and range.

The Coal River, being in the Appalachian region as a channel system was influenced a long time ago. Climatic conditions can vegetation patterns which affect the movement of water as it flows out of the watershed. For example, the type of soil determines the runoff into the stream and then the capacity of the river. The directional positioning or aspect of the watershed determines the amount of solar radiation the area receives. Other variables such as elevation and latitude influence the timing and amount of the solar radiation, this in-turn also influences vegetation pattern and thus intake and discharge at the rivers mouth. In addition to these variables, the pattern and shape of the landscape are prone to disturbance periodically that can influence stream channel conditions. The Coal River does have a propensity to flood, the basin area is too large for the river to handle at times. Natural disturbances like a forest fire can affect runoff conditions. Small scale disturbances like a patch of trees blown over into the river channel can affect measurements downstream, but will be lumped into an overall discharge of the area for the year taking these affects into account. Short periods of change occur daily in the watershed and have been noted during fieldwork measurements. For example, the river floods quite often and large storms have moved sediment into and out of the main channel. The shape of the stream thus influences the discharge, which is ever changing to frequent flooding conditions.

#### Cross-sectional Shape varies with discharge



**Figure 2 Cross sectional shape variability with position in a stream.** 

Large floods change the water pattern and create pools that become fish habitats and then they disappear as the channel changes again. The deepest part of channel (thawig) occurs where the stream velocity is the highest, as seen in Figure 2 (Nelson, Stephan A., *Streams and Drainage Systems,* Tulane University, EENS 111, Physical Geology, Catch:

http://www.tulane.edu/~sanelson/geol111/streams.htm). Both width and depth increase downstream because discharge increases downstream. As discharge increases the cross sectional shape will change, with the stream becoming deeper and wider. In the Coal River Basin, the timing and intensity of natural disturbance can be uniformly modified by human activity. The urbanization and increased roads change the impervious surfaces and change the routing of water channels enough to influence discharge rates and evapotranspiration measurements. Increased flood occurrence and landslide frequency in the Coal River Basin may be attributable to the majority of the basin population living near the river's edge. The population's location solidifies the channel direction and thus disallows the river channel characteristics to change to an adaptable pattern for the rivers natural flood rate. Invariably, channel gravels build up on point bars and change the river channel course over time. The eco-region of the Coal River Basin is divided into patterns and composition of biotic and a-biotic occurrence that reflect the history of the region which in-turn effect the discharge. These occurrences can be identified as the climate, geology, physiography, vegetation, soil composition, land use, wildlife, and hydrology. The pattern characterization however is limited by the location of the population and therefore pre-measured hydrologic and geologic variability will be used in this study outside of ground temperature, soil moisture content, and rainfall interception.

The Hydrologic Cycle



#### **Figure 3 The Water Cycle of the earth.**

(The movement of water through the earth and the atmosphere as shown by the United States Geological Survey, Catch: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Water\_cycle.png).

The hydrologic cycle refers to the circulation of water in the system. The cycle interacts between the earth's surfaces, the atmosphere, and the ocean. The ocean plays a large role in the movement of water as it covers 70% of the earth. The sun creates solar energy which evaporates the ocean and the moisture is carried by the wind. When precipitation falls it reaches the surface of the earth and moves through three pathways:

- 1. Interception by vegetation and evaporated or transpired back to the atmosphere.
- 2. Moves down-slope on the surface or through soil to a stream system, eventually making its way back to the ocean.
- 3. Stored in snowpack, groundwater, ponds, or wetlands for a variable period of time.

The variability of the distribution and movement of water can cause flooding and conversely drought. The water cycle is highly dependent on human interaction for the amount and quality of water.

#### Water Budgets

"Water Budget" is a term that can have a variety of meanings. The US Geological Survey defines a water budget as an "Estimate of the size of future water resources in an aquifer, catchment area, or geographical region, which involves an evaluation of all the sources of supply or recharge in comparison with all known discharges or extractions." This kind of water budget is sometimes referred as *water balance (Brick, Tim, 2003, et. al.)*.

Water-budget studies include inflows and outflows of a drainage basin. The inflows include such things as precipitation, surface water runoff, and groundwater movement. The outflows of a drainage basin include groundwater seepage, spillway discharge, stream flow, and ground water pumping. The change in storage of the groundwater also must be taken into account. The hydro-geologic equation for inflow/outflow measurement is:

Inflow = Outflow  $+/-$  changes in storage

For this study, it is assumed that the storage of ground water change is zero over the cycle of a year. The seasonal changes can cancel out any major shifts in groundwater storage. The pumping of groundwater aquifers can change storage data, but is not considered an issue in this study.

#### **The Coal River Watershed**

#### The Watershed Budget

The factors included in a watershed budget should be designed to accommodate the climate of the study area. The Coal River Basin will include the variables that are involved in evapotranspiration on precipitation and comparatively studied against the discharge of the river.

Solar energy from the sun evaporates water from the surface. Vegetation surfaces, ground surfaces, and water bodies exposed to the heat of the sun are all susceptible to evaporative processes. Evaporation rates can increase or decrease with air, air temperature, humidity, and wind variability in conjunction with solar radiation. The loss of water to the atmosphere through living plants is called transpiration. So, the measurement of water in the Coal River basin is highly dependent on the combination of evaporation and transpiration to form evapotranspiration and is commonly referred to as the ET of an area of land. The anticipation of precipitation to drainage for the Coal River can be expected to be in the higher percentiles due to the high humidity of the area. The vegetative cover of a watershed controls the amount of evaporation, transpiration, and intercepted rainfall. Human activity generally decreases vegetative cover increasing the water discharge of a region.

The intensity of precipitation is usually less than infiltration into pervious soil layers, so most precipitation is absorbed into the soil rather than forming runoff. The opposite applies to particularly heavy or intense rainstorms. Heavy rainstorms can also decrease rainwater interception measurements. The resistance of runoff conditions can be found in watersheds with steep slopes, thin soils, or even disturbed watersheds with impervious surfaces as stated in the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board's manual (*Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, 1999, pgs. 3-26)*. Land usage does increase infiltration rates due to the exposure of the top surface layer and lack of disintegrated foliage cover. Water infiltrates vertically and percolates downward into groundwater system.

The ground water that enters the river becomes surface water and then becomes a component of the total discharge of the river. Most days a stream is discharging much less than its capacity. The dry season will typically have less discharge. A stream depends on the hydraulic gradient and the transmittance of water from ground storage for recharge or discharge of water into the river channel. A losing reach is a stream losing water to groundwater storage and a gaining reach recharges the stream flow. The groundwater storage change measurement is considered to be zero for West Virginia, meaning we usually have equal parts gaining and losing for the year, not necessarily for a season though (Fetter, C.W., 2001, pgs. 15-28). Soil permeability and hydraulic gradient control the exchange of gaining and reaching streams and are highly dependent on the water table height and flooding occurrence. The storage of water can come from seasonal snowpack, groundwater storage, and surface water bodies such as ponds, lakes, rivers, wetlands, and reservoirs. The spring runoff is from snow packs and summer base-flows are from groundwater discharge into streams during drought conditions.

The goal of any forest is to yield just enough water loss in the environment to sustain the area and help grow the demand for new species precipitation (Department of the Interior, U.S. Geological Survey, 2008, et. al.).

Wetlands counteract this method with the actual evapotranspiration rate equaling. The ability of the soil to hold water ultimately decides when the wetland dries up or maintains its ecosystem.

Percolation helps maintain the balance between a saturated wetland and a flooded wetland. The dry ecosystems of the world experience higher evapotranspiration than precipitation. In this case and no other, evapotranspiration can actually be greater than potential evapotranspiration because of the lack of water in the ecosystem and the slow transpiration of the vegetation (Department of the Interior, U.S. Geological Survey, 2008, et. al.).

Foliage provides much surface area for water to evaporate from. Evaporation occurs when the number of molecules transforming to gas exceeds the number of molecules transforming to liquid. This process reacts with the environment when the vapor pressure of the liquid water is proportional the air temperature. When the atmosphere becomes saturated the process will end until more available space in the atmosphere is generated through a change in temperature due to the suns movement, wind variability, or changes in the barometric pressure of the local environment. The wind increases molecular diffusion and keeps the humidity low. The volume of the space taken up in the atmosphere and the quantity of water in that space is called the absolute humidity. The atmosphere can only hold so much water at any given temperature until it reaches saturation. The relative humidity is equal to the percent ratio of the absolute humidity to the saturation humidity. Therefore, when the relative humidity reaches 100 percent the atmosphere is saturated. The all too familiar "dew point" is a function of saturation and causes condensation on our windows in the evening and nighttime hours in the summer.

The proportional nature of the temperature/saturation boundary allows the saturation humidity to drop as the temperature drops (Kohler, M.A., Nordenson, T.J., Fox, W.E., 1955, et. al.). Condensation releases calories of and evaporation absorbs calories of heat. They work in conjunction as the atmosphere and environment changes over a day, a season, and a year.

#### Impact of Development

The chemical and biological pollution of the Coal River has been an ongoing problem since the river watershed has become more populated. This population increase since the end of World War II helped introduce the area to further extensive timber and coal operations that have decimated the watershed through the environmental exposure of chemical and biological pollution. The mining operations are characterized by underground mining, surface mining, and mountaintop removal. The timbering industries activities increase surface runoff of the river basin and carry the rainfall directly into the river, not allowing for subsurface conductivity filtration and the slow regulation of ground water. These variables have affected the microscopic life of the river (Doyle, M. P., and M. C. Erickson. 2006 & Rahman, Farhana Alamgir; A; R; S 2004). The chemical exposure of the watershed brought on by industry has decreased the level of microorganisms that help the ecosystem thrive and perform the natural cycle of life. The biological exposure of the valley has increased the harmful microorganisms of the watershed and has lead to a decrease in human health in the valley (Doyle, M. P., and M. C. Erickson. 2006. *"Closing the door on the fecal coliform assay." Microbe* 1:162-163. ISSN 1558-7460).

. Currently, there is a new sewer system being installed in the lower valley where the concentration of population is highest which should help decrease the levels of coliform bacterium. Unfortunately, work has begun on a new mining operation in the upper tributary range of the watershed. Over time, with ongoing regulation, hopefully the impact on the environment will lessen from these industrial processes and the modification and upgrade of the sewer treatment services will act accordingly.

#### Groundwater Discharge & Recharge

Ground water recharge of the Coal River watershed occurs through infiltration and percolation of rainfall. Surface runoff and subsurface inflow are included in discharge averages for the river. Beyond the scope of this study is the consideration of groundwater that may flow into or out of the basin from adjacent watersheds. Since the strata is relatively flat lying, the loss or gain would not be expected to be significant.

#### **Water Budget Factors**

#### Land Cover & Leaf Cover

The influence on the amount of precipitation that reaches the ground to enter the water table containing depends on the use of the land. The forested areas tend to have more leaf cover which can catch the rain before it reaches the ground and evaporate back into the atmosphere.

 The more development in an area the greater chance of runoff directly into the river, which can increase discharge numbers over a given time period.

#### Geology of the Coal River Basin

The Coal River basin geology is flat lying Pennsylvanian bedrock approximately 300 million years old and is part of the Carboniferous period. The name Carboniferous derives from the fact that most of the important coal producing rocks are of this age. The late Carboniferous period produced most of the coal reserves found in the Coal River basin. The coal deposits were laid down, the coal being formed from compressed layers of rotting vegetation.

 By the Late Carboniferous the continents that make up modern North America and Europe had collided with the southern continents of Gondwana to form the western half of Pangaea. Ice covered much of the southern hemisphere and vast coal swamps formed along the equator. Boone County, which lies within the Coal River Basin, has the highest output coal production in the state. Both surface and underground mining methods are in practice.

#### Effective Rainfall

The Thiessen polygon method in this study is performed using areas of influence for rain gauging stations. The polygon method is used as described by C. W. Fetter in Applied Hydrogeology (Fetter, C.W., Applied Hydrogeology, Fourth Edition, 0-13-088238-9. 2001, Ch. 1-4). The following formula is given by the N.R.E.M. An [arthritic  $\rightarrow$ arithmetic] mean of all rain stations could have been used, along with the contour method, but required more time. The contour method uses rain gauge values to form a isohyetal map. The weighted average of the contour method is more accurate than either of the other methods, but requires each storm to be contoured to measure each weighted average.

#### Rain Gauge Map

In Figure 4, below, rain gauge stations are blue, the Tornado discharge station is green, and polygons are drawn for areas of influence. The polygon north of the discharge station was not used in this study because the water past the station is unaccounted for. The precipitation of each rain gauge within the watershed boundaries are measured by what is called *Effective Rainfall*. A breakdown using polygons following the laws set forth by (Fetter, C.W., Applied Hydrogeology, Fourth Edition,  $0-13-088238-9$ . 2001, Ch. 1-4) was used. A total rainfall for the watershed was calculated using the area of influence and daily precipitation



**Figure 4 A rain gauge map of the Coal River Basin as used in this study** (Compiled and drawn by the author in ArcMap).

 (Natural Resources and Environment Management*, "Effective Rainfall"*, http://www.fao.org/docrep/x5560e/x5560e03.htm)

- *1. "That part of precipitation that reaches stream channels as direct runoff".*
- *2. "In irrigation, the portion of the precipitation that remains in the soil and is available for consumptive use*" (Glossary of Meteorology. http://amsglossary.allenpress.com/glossary/search?id=effective-precipitation1)

### Transpiration

Transpiration is essentially water being released to the atmosphere through the leaves of plants through the evaporation of the plant's moisture. This water is brought up from the groundwater soil moisture and accounts for about ten percent of the total atmospheric water content on the earth (Cummins, Benjamin, 2007, pg. 215). The other ninety percent of atmospheric water comes from oceans, seas, and other water bodies such as streams, rivers, and lakes. An average transpiration rate will be estimated in this study. These rates will then be given a yearly average based on temperature, humidity, wind and air movement, and soil moisture. The transpiration of water by plants into plastic bags is a good way to estimate transpiration, as seen in Figure 5. Although, the transpiration for this study used unaccounted water leftover after the calculations were finished.



**Figure 5 A method of measuring transpiration (**Cummins, Benjamin, 2007, pg. 215).

#### Evapotranspiration

Evapotranspiration is the total evaporation and transpiration from the ground surface and foliage surface to the atmosphere (Fetter, C.W., 2001, pg. 15-28). When water moves to the atmosphere it travels there from the soil, from the vegetation, and from the water body surfaces. An object or surface that helps this movement is called an evapotransirator.

Potential evapotransiration is the total evaporation and transpiration from the ground surface to the atmosphere if there is sufficient water available. The difference between Potential Evapotranspiration and Actual Evapotranspiration is focused on the ability of the lower atmosphere to transport the evaporated water from the storage area after evaporation and transpiration has occurred. The Potential Evapotranspiration measurement is higher in the warmer months of the year. The solar radiation levels rise in the summer which helps evaporation.

Actual evapotranspiration is the amount of evapotranspiration that happens under field conditions and is commonly found to be lower than the potential evapotranspiration of a given study area (Fetter, C.W., 2001, pg. 15-28). The evapotranspiration of a watershed can measured using a formula of the different measurements involved. A soil-type profile should be made with a measurement of soil moisture content and an overview of the vegetation area using the type, size, and proportionality percent during the growing season. The formula is as follows (Fetter, C.W., 1988, pg. 15-28);

$$
E.T. = S_i + P + I - S_f - D
$$

Where:

 $S_i$  = Volume of the highest soil moisture  $P = Precision$  $I =$ Runoff water  $S_f$  = Volume of final soil moisture  $D = Discharge$ 

If the hydrologic field capacity of the watershed is met throughout the year, the measurements will be the potential evapotranspiration. Otherwise, if the hydrologic field capacity of the valley reached a wilted-soil level in the drier months during summer (a drought) the measurement should be considered the actual evapotranspiration. There is some uncertainty about the potential and wilting point measurements. It is surmised that the potential point of measurement remains until wilting begins. These variables will be taken into account for this study as the process continues, but will be judged actual or potential at the end of the study dependant on the seasonal progression.

The cold months of the year affect the evaporation of the watershed the same way that the discharge rates are affected: the slow melt process. Although, evaporation numbers drop in the winter months, there can be significant evaporation events when the environment warms within the cold season.

The warm and hot months of the year experience evaporation through its many components at high rates. The hot temperatures accelerate the rates of evaporation through temperature and sunlight radiation and have more available surfaces that include the leaves of living foliage.

#### Interception

The canopy of the vegetation can intercept rainfall from reaching the ground and reduce the gross overall rainfall from reaching the ground. This process is called rainfall interception (David, J.S., Valente, F. and Gash, J.H.C., 2005, pg. 627-634).

Rainfall interception allows rain to evaporate directly back into the atmosphere and creates an interception loss of moisture from the ground surface. A canopy storage capacity can be reached above which a large percentage of the rainfall becomes runoff. In months where no canopy exists, much more rainfall reaches the ground.

The conversion of a  $16<sup>th</sup>$  of an inch measurement from the lowest location inside the bottom of a soda can converted to milliliters in a graduated cylinder. The calculation is from field data collected in the Coal River Basin, as seen in Figure 6. The plot is a rainfall calibration curve for the 12 oz. beverage cans measured by  $16<sup>th</sup>$ s of an inch and converted to milliliters.





Interception depends on three main factors: the distribution and intensity of the rainfall including wind speed, vegetation type, and the canopy storage capacity. The aerodynamic roughness of the surface area also affects the evaporation rate. For example, the forest has a much higher interception rate than low lying vegetation. The conductance rate rises when more surface area is exposed to more elemental conditions. The gross rainfall affected by interception can be as high as sixty percent. Frequent small storms cause more overall gross rainfall loss than large storms over a longer time period. Field interception numbers were collected in cans, as seen in figure 7.



**Figure 7 A can used in the field collection of rain water in the Coal River Basin 2009**  (Picture taken by author).

Temperature

Seasonal: Soil & Air

 The seasonal changes in soil and air temperature affect the evapotranspiration and discharge of the Coal River Basin. The basin is located in a four season area, as is all of West Virginia. The temperature ranges in the basin can go as high as one hundred degrees and reach lows of minus 15 degrees or more.

Ambient air temperature plays a large role in the evaporation of the watershed. The tributaries have cooler water than the main channel. The rule of specific heat applies here, with the air temperature higher than the tributary water temperatures. The inflow of groundwater and the cooling process of evaporation follow the daily change in air temperature. Therefore, it can be assumed that the maximum daily water temperature of the basin occurs in the late afternoon and the minimum daily temperature of the water is in the early morning hours. The total heat received in the basin and the amount of water heated creates the warmest water temperature. This would mean the highest water temperatures would be in the low flow region of the summer with the same annual heat received.

#### Influence on Discharge

The most immediate impact on discharge in the valley is snowfall. When snow reaches e ground it may lay there for long time periods of below freezing weather, which holds the precipitation from the river to a minimum until the thaw of the frozen precipitation.

#### Stream Flow

A stream gauging stations is provided  $[to \rightarrow)$  for the Coal River watershed area by the United States Geological Survey (USGS) (**waterdata.usgs.gov**/usa/nwis/uv?site\_no=03200500). They record the discharge of the river and are collected as water resource data. The resource data includes: the mean values for the daily, monthly, and annual flows, annual instantaneous peak flows or the largest annual flow, and the annual minimum flows. Stream flow data can also be found at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Weather Service or NOAA water section. This site provides an abundance of information. The summery of data can be displayed in many ways. One example is a hydrograph, which is a summary of stream flow over time. The measurements are taken as mean monthly flow and discharge values of the region. It is expected that the quantity of water flowing through the river channel will vary by several orders of magnitude from month to month or day to day. The shape of the hydrograph will be a curve and is a type of identification of the watershed

#### Overland Flow

 Overland flow is the water that crosses the terrain down slope to streams and rivers that eventually get discharged by the river system. This water comes from precipitation in the form a rain and snow. It takes roughly a day for the discharge to peak after a rainstorm event.

The snow melt on the Coal River basin could produce short peaks in discharge rates in the snow-melt season, but the basin area wasn't subject to much annual snowfall. Peaks in discharge can occur when a storm passes through the basin area and is measured by the gauging stations. The measurements taken for stream flow at the gauging stations can be measured for this study, but the annual discharge of the watershed through the Coal River to Tornado, WV will be one focus measurement for this study. Because of the thick clay soil of the Coal River basin, the hydrograph for this area should be a smooth curve. Other watersheds with thin soils and limited water retention values would have steep curves illustrating the rapid runoff. In this study, the runoff is delayed and the curve reflects the slow percolation of water into the soil. A comparison to the recent statistical past should have some clues as to what is occurring in the Coal River basin and what to expect in the future. [The statistics of this study should reveal the water availability of the region. OUT]

The hope is that it increases the knowledge of flood and drought probabilities. When a flood passes through the watershed it changes the stream channel shape and can impact the floodplain. When the area experiences a drought, the vegetation and organisms that depend on the watershed for survival suffer from a lack of soil moisture and a supply of water. An analysis of the

evapotranspiration rates can help with the determination of an extreme event in the valley. The occurrence of extreme events can be better predicted in this way.

#### Interflow

Interflow is the lateral movement of water in the unsaturated zone or the vadose zone that directly runs off into a body of water without first being surface runoff as with through-flow. It occurs above the base flow and is therefore is faster to reach streams or rivers than base flow, but slower than through-fall.

#### Base flow

Base flow is the portion of the stream delayed entry of storm water into the stream that comes from the aquifer seepage. That is the portion of the stream flow that is caused by precipitation events.

#### Recession Constant

The base flow recession constant is a hydromorphic characteristic of a watershed area, as seen in Figure 8. The recession of the base flow over time in a dry weather event is a function of topography, drainage pattern, soils, and the geology of the watershed bedrock. The recession constant uses the base flow at the start of recession and determines the rate at which the base flow slows over a given time period. The following formula is used to measure this constant.

 $Q = Q_0(e^{-at})$ 



**Figure 8 A diagram of the base flow recession constant during a peak stream flow event.**  The diagram shows base flow vs. surface runoff (University of Texas, "*Base Flow Recession*" Catch: http://www.crwr.utexas.edu/gis/gishydro03/LibHydro/libhydro/baseflow.htm, Feb. 11, 2010).

The equation given by (Fetter 2001) is as follows;

 $Q = Q_0 e^{-at}$ 

 $Q =$  flow at some time after recession  $Q_0$  = flow at the start of recession  $a = a$  recession constant for the basin  $t =$  time since the start of the recession

#### Web-Based Hydrograph Analysis Tool (WHAT)

"Web-Based Hydrograph Analysis Tool (WHAT), which separates hydrographs into runoff and base flow. This page also provides a way to select USGS gauging stations using an interactive map, and calculate statistics of model simulations" (Purdue University*. "Web-Based Hydrograph Analysis Tool (WHAT)",* Catch: http://www.ces.purdue.edu/waterquality/GIS.htm, Feb. 11, 2010)

### **The Coal River Watershed Budget**

#### Water Balance

 "The water balance is an accounting of the inputs and outputs of water. The water balance of a place, whether it be an agricultural field, watershed, or continent, can be determined by calculating the input, output, and storage changes of water at the Earth's surface. The major input of water is from precipitation and output is evapotranspiration" (The University of Wisconsin Stevens Point, *"Water Balance"*, Catch:

http://www.uwsp.edu/geo/faculty/ritter/geog101/textbook/hydrosphere/waterbalance1.html, Feb 11, 2010)

The Coal River watershed has a discharge station in Tornado, WV and [captures $\rightarrow$  records] the discharged water of 862 square miles. [of territory OUT]. This discharge calculated from January 13 2009 to January 2010 will be compared to the total precipitation of the coverage area minus collected field data percentages for evapotranspiration. These numbers should give a clear indication of the water gained or lost over the stated calendar year.

### **Result Analysis**

#### Monthly Precipitation

The discharge of the Coal River Basin @ Tornado, WV as provided by the United States Geological Survey measured in cubic feet per second, as seen in figure 9 (United States Geological Survey, *USGS 03200500 COAL RIVER AT TORNADO, WV,* Catch: http://waterdata.usgs.gov/usa/nwis/uv?site\_no=03200500, Feb. 22, 2010, et. al.)

```
"LOCATION.--Lat 38°20'20", long 81°50'30", NAD 27, Kanawha County, 
         Hydrologic Unit 05050009, on downstream side of highway bridge 
         at Tornado, 0.2 mi upstream from Falls Creek, and at mile 11.5.". 
"DRAINAGE AREA.--862 mi<sup>2</sup>, includes that of Falls Creek".
```


**Figure 9 Discharge of the Coal River Basin 2009 in cubic feet per second** (As done by author).

#### Monthly Breakdown (Cubic Feet per Day)

The monthly precipitation here will be represented in cubic feet per day. This study began and ends on January 13 of each year, so the precipitation numbers reflect only a portion of January, as seen in Figure 10.



**Figure 10 This is the monthly precipitation in the Coal River Basin 2009.** 

#### Monthly Intercepted Precipitation

The first graph analyzes the rain water interception by season. The role of leaf cover has a large influence on interception numbers, but rainfall intensity, wind, slope, and other factors also play a major role in the amount of water that actually reaches the ground as will be seen in the monthly statistics, as seen in Table 1.

#### **Table 1 Interception % by Month.**





The rainwater interception for January and February are assumed to be equal to winter conditions and therefore were interpolated from the December measurements, but were not collected in the field. The number of total rainfall events affects the average of the monthly totals, as seen in Figure 11.



#### **Figure 11 Rainwater interception by forest covers 2009.**

Land Cover Precipitation Influence

The analysis of land cover by area statistics using 7 and a half minute quadrangles provided by the WVGIS Tech Center was generated by ER Mapper in an Unsupervised Classification for color analysis have given an 69% forested coverage with 31% residential and industrial use which can increase runoff by a lack of interception variables to catch rainwater before reaching the ground. The total precipitation for the year will have 31% unaffected by interception and minus the monthly precipitation totals as given by month interception, as seen in Table 2.

Input Rainfall =  $8.8426 \times 10^{10} \times .31$  $= 2.8 \times 10^{10}$  unaffected

Month	Precipitation	69%	interception	After Int.	Avail.
January	2979029105	2055530083	18.7	0.813	$1.7E + 09$
February	1815336196	1252581975	18.7	0.813	1E+09
March	5900227169	4071156747	59	0.41	$1.7E + 09$
April	6035162489	4164262118	52	0.48	$2E + 09$
May	13060060543	9011441775	63.3	0.367	$3.3E + 09$
June	8504580925	5868160838	65.9	0.341	$2E + 09$
July	12869699326	8880092535	64.7	0.353	$3.1E + 09$
August	11074238295	7641224424	65.6	0.344	$2.6E + 09$
September	7813555886	5391353562	58.5	0.415	$2.2E + 09$
October	4555727479	3143451960	62.6	0.374	$1.2E + 09$
November	1768820012	1220485808	30.6	0.694	$8.5E + 08$
December	8044314188	5550576790	18.7	0.813	$4.5E + 09$
Jan-10	268163441.1	185032774	18.7	0.813	$1.5E + 08$
				Total	$2.8E+10$

**Table 2 This is a calculation of forest coverage and intercepted precipitation in 2009.** 

Total Precipitation Unaffected by Interception + Diminished Rainfall after Interception

 $1.0671 \ge 10^{10} + 3.5 \ge 10^{10}$ Total Precipitation Available =  $4.596E+10$ 

#### Leaf Cover

Leaf cover was determined by sight through observations while collecting intercepted rainwater. A scale of 1 through 10 was used meaning 10 as complete leaf cover to 1 being very little leaf cover. December, January, and February were determined to have no leaf cover, as seen in Figure 12.



**Figure 12 This is leaf cover on a 1-10 scale for the months of 2009.**

#### Ground Temperature

The temperature of the ground was measured using a standard temperature thermometer. The data was collected on trip to retrieve soil for moisture content evaluations, as seen in Table 3.





 The ground temperature reacted just as to be expected. The winter temperature in degrees F averaged about 30 to 32 degrees for the basin and reached a high of about 67 degrees F in mid-summer.

#### Base Flow

 The base flow for the Coal River basin was determined using three methods as given by the Web-Based Hydrographic Analysis Tool program (W.H.A.T.) and a manual method using the runoff equation  $D = A^{0.2}$  which correlates to 4 days of runoff for the Coal River basin before river discharge (Q) is totally base flow (Lim, K. J., Engle, Z., Choi, J., Kim, K., Tripathy, D., *AUTOMATED WEB GIS BASED HYDROGRAPH ANALYSIS TOOL, WHAT,* Catch: http://cobweb.ecn.purdue.edu/~what/faq/Automated\_Web\_GIS\_based\_Hydrograph\_Anal ysis\_Tool\_WHAT\_JAWRA\_Dec\_2005.pdf, Feb 21. 2010, et. al. and Fetter, C.W., Applied Hydrogeology, Fourth Edition, 0-13-088238-9. 2001, Ch. 1-4).

The base flow as measured by the WHAT program is given by three examples in graph form below. These methods were used for environments dissimilar to the conditions in the Coal River basin but are good comparisons to the manual method for determining base flow discharge. The models use formulas that are unique to the environments for which they were meant to be measured and most likely depend on unique geological variables in their given area of use. The following formulas were used in Excel to calculate base flow for each method, as seen in Table 4. Figure 15 is a comparison of the Lyne Filter and the manual method and the other filters in comparison to overland flow and base flow can be found in figures 14, 15, and 16.

#### Formulas: W.H.A.T. program

Each given formula below was used for each base flow digital filtration method from the "W.H.A.T. "program.

#### Lyne & Hollick 1979

$$
q_t = \alpha \times q_{t-1} + \frac{(1+\alpha)}{2} \times (Q_t - Q_{t-1})
$$

*qt* is the filtered direct runoff at the t time step (m3/s)

*qt*-1 is the filtered direct runoff at the t-1 time step (m3/s)

 $\alpha$  is the filter parameter

*Qt* is the total stream flow at the t time step (m3/s)

*Qt*-1 is the total stream flow at the t-1 time step (m3/s)

# Chapman & Maxwell, 1996

$$
b_t = \frac{\alpha}{2-\alpha} \times b_{t-1} + \frac{1-\alpha}{2-\alpha} \times Q_t
$$

*bt* is the filtered base flow at the t time step

*bt*-1 is the filtered base flow at the t-1 time step

 $\alpha$  is the filter parameter

*Qt* is the total stream flow at the t time step (m3/s)

#### Eckhardt 2005

$$
b_t = \frac{(1 - BFI_{\text{max}}) \times \alpha + b_{t-1} + (1 - \alpha) \times BFI_{\text{max}} \times Q_t}{1 - \alpha \times BFI_{\text{max}}}
$$

*bt* is the filtered base flow at the t time step

*bt*-1 is the filtered base flow at the t-1 time step

*BFI*max is the maximum value of long term ratio of base flow to total stream flow

 $\alpha$  is the filter parameter

*Qt* is the total streamflow at the t time step

#### **Table 4 This is the Base Flow Index of the three digital filtering methods of the W.H.A.T.**

**program.** The Lyne and Hollick method was able to produce a matching BFI to the manual method with an alpha numarical of .98.







**Figure 13 The manual method for determining base flow and a comparison to the Lyne and Hollick filters here displays little difference in the Base Flow Index in the Coal River basin.** 



**Figure 14 The Lyne and Hollick digital filter here shows how base flow, overland flow, and the total flow compare on the chart.** 



**Figure 15 The Chapman and Maxwell digital filter here shows how base flow, overland flow, and the total flow compare.** 



#### **Figures 16 The Eckhardt digital filter here shows base flow, overland flow, and the total flow comparison.**

 The following manual methodology was used to determine base flow discharge and seems to best represent the ideals of the geological environment of the Coal River basin. The manual runoff equation was used as stated above to determine base flow separate from continued base flow as a percentage, as seen in Figure 19.



**Figure 17 This is a manual separation of the base flow, the overland flow, and the total flow, the base flow and overland flow equal the total flow.** 

Base Flow Recession

The base flow recession will be determined by Excel using rain events that are separate from other events or that stand alone. A best fit line will be applied to those events and a given formula for the exponential curve. The base flow events will be measured after 4 days as given by the runoff formula  $D = A^{0.2}$  (Fetter, C.W., Applied Hydrogeology, Fourth Edition, 0-13-088238-9. 2001, Ch. 1-4).

### Base Flow Events 2009

The following graphs represent one of four rainfall events that [will be  $\rightarrow$  were] used to [measure  $\rightarrow$  calculate] base flow recession using Excel on the fifth day after peak flow in following the rule given by (Fetter 2001) for runoff time, as seen in Figures 18, 19, 20, and 21. This average of the events has given 0.1 as the recession constant.



**Figure 18 Calculations 1 of Base Flow Recession.** 



**Figure 19 Calculations 2 of Base Flow Recession.** 



**Figure 20 Calculations 3 of Base Flow Recession.** 



**Figure 21 Calculations 4 of Base Flow Recession.** 

The Coal River Basin: Base Flow Recession Average, The average base flow was found to be 0.10 on an exponential curve as given by Excel over a period of 4 rain events 4 days after the peak discharge, as seen in Table 6.

**Table 5 This is a calculation of the mean of the four events measured for the year 2009 after 4 days runoff time.** On average, the stream flow decreases by 10 percent of the previous day.



#### Water Budget

The water budget of this study measures the output discharge (Q) of the Coal River at Tornado, WV and compares the total precipitation minus intercepted rainfall by vegetation over that spans 69% of the land cover of the river basin. The remaining 31% of rainfall is unaffected by interception and is allowed to become part of the water table or become overland flow. The following analysis has been surmised taking into account the difference as left over evaporate moisture or evapotranspiration which isn't measured in this study.

#### **Jan. 13 2009 to Jan. 13 2010**

**Input = 8.468 x**  $10^{10}$  **cubic feet**  $\dot{\text{Output}} = 4.007 \times 10^{10}$  cubic feet

 **Total Precipitation – Intercepted Rainfall 8.468** x  $10^{10}$  cubic feet – 2.8 x  $10^{10}$  cubic feet = 5.648 x  $10^{10}$  cubic feet

**Available Rainfall - Output**  5.648 x  $10^{10}$  cubic feet – 4.007 x  $10^{10}$  cubic feet = 1.61 x  $10^{10}$  cubic feet

**Evapotranspiration =**  $1.61 \times 10^{10}$  **cubic feet** 

**Precipitation breakdown [from**  $\rightarrow$  **into] 100%** 

**Interception 33% Base flow 29% Overland flow 19% Evapotranspiration 19%**
### *Conclusion*

The Coal River basin had 33% of its rainfall for the year intercepted by vegetation, 29% of the discharge of the Coal River was base flow, 19% of the river discharge was overland flow, and roughly 19% of the water that entered the watershed as precipitation evaporated or transpired back into the atmosphere, for a total of 100% of the water that entered the watershed basin. The watershed flooded many times in the spring months and had several dry events in the fall of 2009. A study was performed by the United States Department of Agriculture on the evapotranspiration of plants in the summer months in southern West Virginia, it is to be expected that the evapotranspiration rate covering a year in comparison done in the evaporative summer season and would be lower and that is represented in this study (United States Department of Agriculture, *Forage evapotranspiration and photosynthetically active radiation interception in proximity to deciduous trees, Catch:* 

*http://ddr.nal.usda.gov/dspace/bitstream/10113/30313/1/IND44198605.pdf, March 18, 2010, et. al.).* Evapotranspiration slows in the winter months without leaf cover and ice freezing water traps the process from occurrence, this study found a 5% drop over the span of year from the USDA study done in the summer.

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# **Data Appendix**

### 1. Land Use Base Map

The Coal River basin base map here shows vegetation and an outline of the basin boundaries which are ridgelines that close the basin to the influence of precipitation into one river system. The ER Mapper analysis of 7.5 minute quadrangles used Alum Creek, Arnett, Clothier, Dorthy, Eccles, Williams Mt., Julian, Wharton, Madison, Whitesville, Sylvester, and Racine Quads for color analysis after a 4 class (for number of available colors) Unsupervised Classification method.



No scale for hectaracres was used in the map creation so the representation of numbers will vary from the actual acreage on the ground of the watershed basin; the goal in this exercise was to establish a good methodology for determining % forest cover using the green areas set in these quadrangles as forest when they were created. The change in land use is thought to equalout over time where used land in the past is now forest and some forest is now used for other purposes.



## 2. Drainage Network

The stream order map displays the river system from tributary at the head of the watershed to the mouth of the Coal River @ St. Albens, WV. The Coal River is considered a level 4 dendritic stream in order classification along with the Big Coal River, all other tributaries of the system are considered higher order streams.



## 3. Leaf Cover

Leaf coverage calculations were done on a 1-10 scale by sight taking into account any remnant of coverage that existed on the measurement date. These measurements will be used as a factor for interception and play a large role in evapotranspiration.









12/7/97

Mean Annual Precipitation – WV: The Coal River basin has an average annual precipitation of approximately 42 inches per year with higher rainfalls concentrated in the southern edge of the watershed (Catch: http://www.wrcc.dri.edu/pcpn/wv.gif*, "Mean Annual Precipitation",* Western Regional Climate Center, Feb. 12, 2010).

# 5. 24 Hour Precipitation Data

http://www.afws.net/, The Automatic Flood Warning System site provided by the (NOAA) National Weather Service was used to gather daily precipitation data that was compiled from rain gauging stations that had an area of influence on the Coal River watershed boundaries and interior, in inches.





















# 6. Soil Temperature





#### 7. Base flow

Web-Based Hydrographic Analysis Tool (WHAT) Program

Three methods were used from the WHAT program and a manual interpretation of the base flow of the coal river basin have been performed. The lyne & hollick digital filter can be used in other studies of the Coal River Basin with an alpha number of .97 to match the calculated manual base flow index of 57% (Lim, K. J., Engle, Z., Choi, J., Kim, K., Tripathy, D., AUTOMATED WEB GIS BASED HYDROGRAPH ANALYSIS TOOL, WHAT, Catch: http://cobweb.ecn.purdue.edu/~what/faq/Automated\_Web\_GIS\_based\_Hydrograph\_Analysi s\_Tool\_WHAT\_JAWRA\_Dec\_2005.pdf, Feb 21. 2010, et. al.)

















## 8. Base Flow

### Manual













# Discharge (Tornado, WV)


















