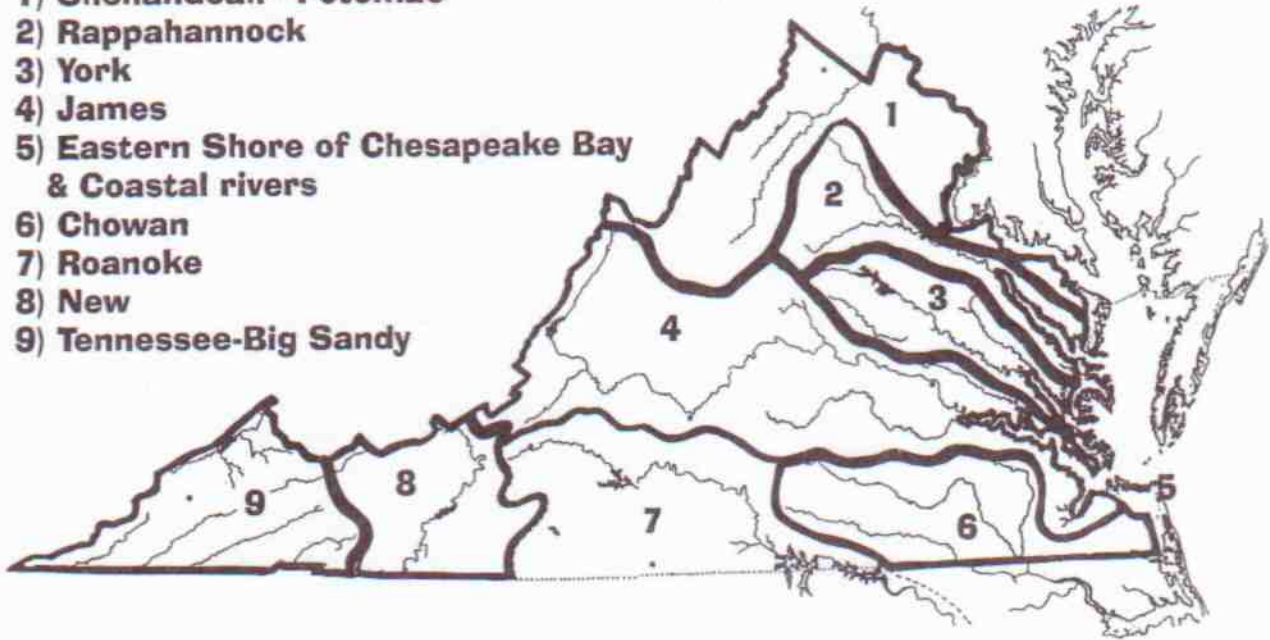


# Virginia's watersheds

There are nine major watersheds in Virginia. Some flow to the Chesapeake Bay. Some go directly into the Atlantic Ocean. Others flow to the Albemarle Sound in North Carolina. Some rivers in Virginia even flow to the Mississippi and then the Gulf of Mexico!

- 1) Shenandoah - Potomac
- 2) Rappahannock
- 3) York
- 4) James
- 5) Eastern Shore of Chesapeake Bay & Coastal rivers
- 6) Chowan
- 7) Roanoke
- 8) New
- 9) Tennessee-Big Sandy



**Color in the watershed where you live.**

Do you have a friend or relative who lives in another watershed?

**Put a check by the rivers that you have visited on the list below.**

## **Tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay**

- Potomac -  Shenandoah River  Occoquan River
- Rappahannock -  Rapidan River  Robinson River
- York-  North Anna River  Pamunkey River  Mattaponi River
- James -  Jackson River  Cowpasture River  Maury River  Appomattox River  
 Rivanna River  Chickahominy River

## **Eastern Shore & Coastal Rivers -**

- Back Bay  Elizabeth River  North Landing River  Lynnhaven River

## **Tributaries of the Albemarle Sound**

- Chowan -  Nottoway River  Meherrin River  Blackwater River
- Roanoke -  Smith River  Dan River  Hycow River  Bannister River  
 Staunton River  John Kerr Reservoir  Lake Gaston  Smith Mountain Lake

## **Tributaries of the - Mississippi River - Gulf of Mexico**

- Tennessee - Big Sandy Rivers-  Holston River  Clinch River  Powell River
- New River -  Claytor Lake

## River facts



**Potomac - Shenandoah** - The Potomac and Shenandoah watershed covers about 5,700 miles. One third of the Potomac River watershed is in Virginia, but none of the river flows through the state. A lot of people live in the Potomac watershed. The Occoquan River is an important source of water for the people who live in the watershed.

Shenandoah is a native American word meaning "daughter of the stars." The Shenandoah River joins the Potomac at Harper's Ferry, West Virginia. There are lots of farms in the watershed, which is famous for apples, chickens and turkeys. Limestone caves and unusual rock formations like Natural Chimneys and Luray Caverns are special places to visit in the watershed. Famous Americans like George Washington, Patrick Henry and James Monroe lived in the watershed during colonial times.

**Rappahannock** - The Rappahannock River begins in the Blue Ridge Mountains near Chester Gap in Warren County and flows 212 miles to the Chesapeake Bay. The watershed in northeastern Virginia is one of the fastest growing areas of the state. Fishing, farming and tourism are important. Much of the watershed is forest and cropland. More than 25,000 people depend on the river for drinking water.

**York** - The York River is only 34 miles long and is influenced by tides from the Chesapeake Bay. Most of the watershed is forest, cropland and pasture. Paper manufacturing is also important. The Mattaponi and Pamunkey Rivers join at West Point to form the York. Yorktown, at the mouth of the river, was the site of a famous battle during the Revolutionary War. During WWII the American fleet was anchored in the harbor.

**James** - The James River watershed is Virginia's largest and covers about 1/4 of the state, more than 10 thousand square miles. Nearly a third of the population lives in the watershed. From its beginning in Botetourt County, it flows 340 miles to the Chesapeake Bay. Richmond, the state capitol is located on the James River. Newport News is one of the world's largest shipyards and nearby Hampton Roads is one of the nation's busiest ports and the site of the world's largest naval base. The James was important to the settlement of America where the first English colony in the New World was located at Jamestown. The first Thanksgiving in America was celebrated at Berkeley Plantation on the James River in 1619.

**Coastal Rivers** - Many Virginians live in this Tidewater area, which is only a few feet above sea level. Many of the rivers and streams in the watershed are short and bordered by marshes. Commercial shell fishing, fishing, shipping, farming, brick and fertilizer manufacturing and tourism are important industries in the watershed. The counties on the Eastern Shore produce lots of different crops in the sandy soil. There is also lots of poultry raised on the Eastern Shore. Farmers use more groundwater for watering crops on the Eastern Shore than for all of Virginia's other counties combined.



**Chowan** - The Chowan River watershed is mostly rural. Most of the watershed is in Virginia, but the river itself forms on the Virginia - North Carolina border and flows into the Albemarle Sound in North Carolina. The Blackwater River, one of the **tributaries** of the Chowan flows through farmland where tobacco, peanuts and soybeans are raised. Another tributary, the Nottoway River is bordered by wooded swamps where lots of fish and wildlife live. Lake Drummond, one of Virginia's two natural lakes is located in the center of the Great Dismal Swamp in the watershed.



**Roanoke River** - The Roanoke River watershed covers about 15 percent of Virginia's land area. Farming, generating electricity, furniture production and transportation are important in the watershed. There are four man-made reservoirs in the watershed: Smith Mountain Lake, Leesville Lake, Buggs Island Lake and Lake Gaston. These lake were built to control flooding, for power plants and also provide lots of recreation. Between Leesville and Buggs Island, the Roanoke River is called the Staunton River. Fishermen agree that the watershed has lots of great places to fish.

**New River** - It sounds funny, but the New River is one of the world's oldest rivers. It flows north for about 320 miles and finally empties into the Mississippi River. Most of the watershed is mountains, forest, cropland and pasture. The river helps generate power at Claytor Lake Dam. Mountain Lake, one of the two natural lakes in Virginia is found in the watershed. The New River is a great place to go canoeing or rafting.

**Tennessee-Big Sandy River** - Neither the Tennessee nor the Big Sandy flow directly through the state, but its many tributaries are in the southwest corner of the state. Coal, lumber and tourism are the major industries in the mostly rural watershed.

The Clinch, Powell and Holston rivers are important tributaries of the Tennessee-Big Sandy watershed. Pollution has been a serious problem in the watershed for many years. In the early 1970s the North Fork Holston was named one of the most polluted rivers in the United States. Problems go back as far as 1760 when commercial salt mines operated at Saltville. There was a chemical spill in 1924 and a spill of sulfuric acid in the Clinch River in 1970. A lot of work is being done to help clean up the rivers.

**Clinch & Powell Rivers** - The Clinch River and Powell Rivers have more than 100 kinds of freshwater fish and mussels - some of them are on the endangered species list. The Breaks section of Russell Fork is known as the "Grand Canyon of the East" and is part of Breaks Interstate Park on the Kentucky-Virginia border.

**Holston River** - The Holston River has three main branches-the North, Middle and South Forks. The river flows in valleys between steep mountain ridges. Mt. Rogers, the state's highest mountain is in the watershed.