



Potomac River Watershed

I. Location

- Pennsylvania, Maryland, Washington D.C. and Virginia
- Empties into the Chesapeake Bay

II. Main Waterways in Pennsylvania

- Potomac River: Total length= 383 miles
- Raystown Lake
- Important, but not in PA: Monocacy River and Shenandoah River

III. History

- Discovered in 1608 by Captain John Smith
- In the 18th century, fights over oyster fishing rights between Maryland and Virginia.

IV. Watershed Area and Size

- Total Watershed Area= 14,670 square miles total, including 1,584 square miles in PA
- 4th largest watershed in PA
- Covers 3.5% of PA's land area

V. Surrounding Environment

1. Land Use and Land Cover

- Mainly crop and pasture land with mixed to deciduous forests
- Few industrial and residential areas
- Forests (approx 57.6% land area): Northern Hardwood Forest, Oak/Pine/Hickory Forests and Appalachian Oak Forests including trees such as beech, hemlock, ash, pine, hickory, oak, maple and birch
- Agriculture
- Developed Land
- Wetlands (approx. 5% of land area)
- Industrial use: coal mining, pulp and paper production, chemical research, and military training areas

VI. Population

- 5,250,000 people reside in the watershed, 130,000 of which are in PA.



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VII. Bedrock and Soil Types

- Shale, clay, limestone, sandstone
- Partially located in the Appalachian Mountain Plateau, partially located in alternating ridge/ valley areas

VIII. Emissions into Water

- Soils from agricultural runoff and soil loss
- Metals
- Nutrients from fertilizers

IX. Regulations Concerning Watershed

- No watershed specific regulations at this time.

X. Water Usage

- Public, commercial, domestic, industrial, thermoelectric, mining, livestock, irrigation, wastewater treatment
- Supplies a large area both inside and outside of PA with drinking water.

XI. Threats

- pH affected by acid mine drainage
- Erosion of soil and runoff from agricultural lands
- Pollution from industries and areas of high population
- Acid deposition

XII. Action in the Watershed

- Bureau of Land Management research branch, Lower Potomac Field Station- www.es.blm.gov/lands/lowerpotomac
- Federal American Heritage River Program- www.epa.gov/rivers
- Potomac Conservancy- www.potomac.org
- Potomac River Association- www.p-r-a.org