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Susquehanna River

**Pennsylvania's
MAJOR RIVER BASINS
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PENNSYLVANIA'S RIVER BASINS QUIZ

Take this quiz and see how much you know about Pennsylvania's river basins.

(1) The number of watersheds in Pennsylvania is —

- (a) one (b) three (c) seven (d) 106 (e) 386 (f) all of the above

(2) The largest area of Pennsylvania, amounting to nearly half the state, lies in this basin —

- (a) the Delaware (b) the Ohio (c) the Susquehanna (d) the Allegheny

(3) Which of these is NOT a place where Pennsylvania waters reach the ocean?

- (a) the north Atlantic near Newfoundland
(b) Atlantic City, N.J.
(c) the Gulf of Mexico at New Orleans
(d) Norfolk, Va.

(4) Which city does NOT receive water from Pennsylvania streams and lakes?

- (a) Wilmington (b) Quebec (c) Louisville (d) Roanoke

(5) Which Pennsylvania river basin supplies drinking water to both the nation's and Pennsylvania's largest city?

- (a) the Susquehanna (b) the Monongahela (c) the Juniata (d) the Delaware

- (6) Which Pennsylvania County can claim to be one of the sources of the Susquehanna, Mississippi and St. Lawrence rivers?
- (a) Potter County (b) Centre County (c) Fulton County (d) Tioga County
- (7) Which of these Pennsylvania counties is NOT in the headwaters of the Potomac River?
- (a) Franklin County (b) Bedford County (c) York County (d) Adams County
- (8) All but one of these states is both upstream and downstream of Pennsylvania — which one is not?
- (a) New York (b) Delaware (c) Maryland (d) West Virginia
- (9) Which is the oldest of the interstate river basin commissions of which Pennsylvania is a member, founded in 1940?
- | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| (a) the Interstate
Commission on the
Potomac River
(ICPRB) | (b) the Delaware
River
Basin Commission
(DRBC) | (c) the Ohio River
Basin
Commission
(ORBC) | (d) the Susquehanna
River Basin
Commission
(SRBC) |
|---|---|---|--|
- (10) Which of these river basin organizations does not have regulatory authority?
- (a) ICPRB (b) Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission (ORSANCO) (c) DRBC (d) SRBC

Answers appear at the end of this publication.

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT PENNSYLVANIA'S RIVER BASINS?

How many river basins are there in Pennsylvania? Any answer from one to several thousand is correct. At the one extreme, since all Pennsylvania waters eventually reach the Atlantic Ocean, the entire state is part of the Atlantic basin. At the other extreme, each basin can be divided into even smaller sub-basins for each small tributary and headwater creek.

Another good answer to the question of how many basins there are in Pennsylvania is three. While all Pennsylvania waters flow to the Atlantic, they reach the ocean by three very different routes and in three locations thousand of miles from one another. The eastern two-thirds of the state drains to the mid-Atlantic. However, the western one-third of the state drains either north to the St. Lawrence River and to the north Atlantic near Newfoundland, or west and eventually south to reach the Gulf of Mexico at New Orleans. In Potter County, there is a small hill that marks the boundary between these three watersheds.

More commonly, however, Pennsylvania is viewed as spanning portions of five major and two minor river basins. All seven of these basins are shared with one or more eastern or midwestern states. In total, the Commonwealth shares basins with 15 others states, the District of Columbia and Ontario Province.

The largest portion of Pennsylvania (over 46 percent of the total) is drained by the Susquehanna River. To

the surprise of many Pennsylvanians, a sizable portion of south-central Pennsylvania drains to the Potomac River via numerous headwater streams. Even less well known are the two small areas of the state that drain to the Chesapeake Bay through smaller Maryland rivers--a tiny portion of York County via the Gunpowder River and a sizable portion of Chester County via the Elk and Northeast rivers. Together these four basins make-up the Commonwealth's Chesapeake Bay drainage and account for nearly one-half of the state's land area.

The second largest river basin in Pennsylvania is the Ohio basin, draining more than a third of the state and flowing west to the Mississippi. The third largest basin is the Delaware, which drains the eastern 14 percent of the state.

The balance of the state (approximately 1.5 percent of the land area) is in the Great Lakes basin. Our Great Lakes drainage is in two parts — one in Erie and Crawford counties drains to Lake Erie. The other piece is in northern Potter County, where the headwaters of the Genessee River flow to Lake Ontario.

PENNSYLVANIA'S MIGHTY SUSQUEHANNA

Perhaps more than any other, the Susquehanna is considered Pennsylvania's river. The Susquehanna Basin encompasses more of the state's land area than any other basin — 20,960 square miles, or 46 percent of the state. More than three-quarters of the entire basin lies in Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania shares the Susquehanna basin with New York and Maryland. The river begins at Otsego Lake near Cooperstown, New York. Other headwater tributaries in New York include the Unadilla, the Chenango, the Otselic and the Tioughnoiga rivers, all of which flow to Binghamton, the largest New York city in the basin.

To the west, headwater streams in New York include the Cohocton and Canisteo rivers, and in Pennsylvania (upstream of New York), the Cowanesque and Tioga rivers—all forming the Chemung River flowing through Elmira before joining the Susquehanna in Pennsylvania's northern Bradford County. In total, 6,275 square miles of New York drain to the Susquehanna.

In Pennsylvania, the Susquehanna flows south and east before turning southwest above Wilkes-Barre. At Sunbury, the Susquehanna is joined by its largest tributary, the West Branch Susquehanna. From Sunbury, the river flows south to the state's capital city, Harrisburg, being joined north of Harrisburg by another large tributary, the Juniata. Beyond Harrisburg, the Susquehanna again turns southeast forming the boundary between York and Lancaster counties to the Mason-Dixon line. The river ends at Havre de Grace, Maryland, downstream from the Conowingo Dam, one of four large dams on the lower Susquehanna.

Only a small portion of Maryland, 275 square miles, lies in the Susquehanna River basin. Size alone, however, belies the importance of the Susquehanna to Maryland. The Susquehanna is the largest source of fresh water to the Chesapeake Bay, the nation's largest estuary and an important economic and recreational resource for Maryland. Indeed, during the last ice age, the Susquehanna was nearly 200 miles longer than its current 444-mile length. As the ice sheets retreated and sea level rose, the mouth of the Susquehanna was flooded, eventually forming the Chesapeake.

Today, the Susquehanna remains one of the largest rivers on the eastern coast of the United States. It is one of Pennsylvania's most important resources, providing drinking water, recreation, and hydropower to millions of people.

In 1971, the Susquehanna River Basin Commission (SRBC) was formed. Members of the commission are the states of New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and the federal government. Like most of the interstate commissions, SRBC exists to ensure the wise management and protection of the water resources of the basin and to resolve interstate water resource concerns.

For more information on the Susquehanna River basin or SRBC, contact Susan Obleski, SRBC public information specialist, at (717) 238-0423, or visit the SRBC home page at <http://www.srbc.net>.

END - Susquehanna
River Info

THE OHIO, WHERE THREE RIVERS MEET

Born in Pittsburgh's beautiful Point State Park at the confluence of the Allegheny River flowing southward and the Monongahela River flowing northward, the Ohio River begins its 981-mile journey west to the Mississippi River at Cairo, Ill. The Ohio basin is the second largest of Pennsylvania's river basins, covering 15,614 miles of the state west of the Allegheny Mountains. Unlike the Susquehanna (three-quarters) and Delaware rivers (one-half), only about one-tenth of the Ohio basin lies in Pennsylvania.

Reportedly seen by the French Explorer Robert Cavalier sieur de La Salle in 1669, the Ohio and its tributary, the Allegheny, was called "La Belle Riviere" (the Beautiful River). In the eighteenth century, Pennsylvania's portion of the basin was the scene for intense rivalry between the English and French as well as between the colonies of Pennsylvania and Virginia. Territorial claims and events in the region were largely responsible for the French and Indian war in the mid-1700s. In addition, the conflicts between Pennsylvania and Virginia over boundaries were not settled until three years after the Declaration of Independence was signed. Once the disputes were settled, the Ohio River became the avenue for many settlers seeking a new life in the west in the early 1800s.

Today, the Ohio basin is home to approximately 3.5 million Pennsylvanians and more than 20 million people (about 10 percent of the U.S. population) in the states of New York, Ohio, Kentucky, Virginia, West Virginia, Illinois, Indiana, Tennessee and Pennsylvania as well as portions of North Carolina and Maryland. Much of the population is centered around the areas of Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Columbus, Evansville, Indianapolis, Knoxville, Lexington, Louisville and Nashville.

In Pennsylvania, the Ohio flows about 50 miles westward from Pittsburgh, joined by the Beaver River from the north, through Allegheny and Beaver counties, to the Ohio border. The river and its tributaries, also known as the Forks of the Ohio, have linked the region, making it one of the busiest waterway systems in the country. Barge traffic still flows along the Ohio and its tributaries in Pennsylvania. Along its 981-mile stretch, barge traffic has increased along with the commodities transported. Barge tonnage transported along the Ohio is estimated to be eight times of that which is shipped on the Great Lakes System.

The economic life of the basin is dependent upon its environmental health. The basin supplies drinking water to more than 13 million citizens and the river system receives treated waste water from millions more. Due to increased waste water treatment plants and limits placed on discharges, the water quality of the Ohio River has improved over the past 50 years. With improved water quality, fish are beginning to increase and return to previous ranges.

Pennsylvania is involved with three interstate organizations dedicated to improving the quality of the Ohio River Basin. The Ohio River Basin Commission, the Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission and the Ohio River Basin Consortium for Research and Education—all focused on increasing coordination on issues related to the health and stability of the basin.

The Ohio is different things to different people, but it has had an impact on shaping the history of western Pennsylvania. For those Pennsylvanians who grew up on the banks of the Ohio, the Allegheny, the

