

Rockhouse Creek watershed (051002-01-020)

Geography. The Rockhouse Creek watershed covers northeastern Letcher County. The land is in the Eastern Kentucky Coal Field physiographic region, characterized by mountainous terrain, rapid surface runoff, and moderate rates of groundwater drainage. The watershed is underlain by coals, sandstones, and shales: this geology is generally conducive to productive wells, although water quality may be low for wells that draw from coal layers.

Waterways. Rockhouse Creek empties into the North Fork Kentucky River close to Blackey. Among the many creeks that feed it are Razorblade Branch, Stampers Branch, Camp Branch, Doty Creek, and Blair Branch.

Land and water use. Land in the watershed is nearly all rural and wooded. Eight businesses and organizations hold permits for discharges into the creeks. See the 2000 Assessment Report for full details.

Agency data assessment. Of two assessed creek segments in this watershed, one does not support some or all of its designated uses, based on biological and/or water-quality data. The other is threatened. A wide variety of activities contribute to the impairment of the creek by pathogens, siltation, and turbidity. See the 2000 Assessment Report or 2000 305(b) list and the 2002 303(d) list of impaired streams for full details.

Kentucky River Basin Management Plan, 2002. Information is from the first basin cycle (1997-2002), including the 1998-1999 monitoring effort and the 2000 Assessment Report. See kywatersheds.org or www.uky.edu/WaterResources/Watersheds for the complete Assessment Report and Management Plan.

Watershed Restoration Ranking			Watershed Protection Rank	Overall Watershed Rank	Framework Mobilization Category
<i>Observed Impacts</i>	<i>Potential Impacts</i>	<i>Combined Rank</i>			
High	Medium	High	Medium	High	II

Watershed Highlights

Watershed covers 56 square miles.

Part of source water protection zones 1, 2, and 3 for the Blackey water system.

Pathogens make contact recreation unsafe in lower 3.6 miles of Rockhouse Creek (below Letcher County High School; 1st priority TMDL 2002).

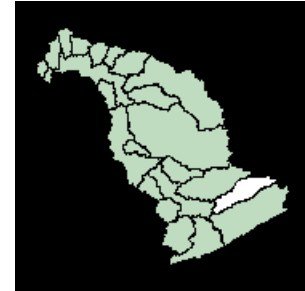
Aquatic life in Rockhouse Creek is classified as threatened by salinity from resource extraction [2000 305(b)].

Watershed Watch focused sampling demonstrated very high bacterial counts at 6 sites in this watershed, and, in 2000, geometric means of 3 samples exceeded 1,000 col/100 ml at 13 of 15 sites and exceeded 500 col/100 ml at the other 2 sites.

Watershed is in PRIDE service region. PRIDE identified 323 straight pipes or failing septic systems in the watershed.



North Fork Region



See the color map of this region on p. 119.

LEGEND

- Area of this watershed
- Sewage plants
- Public water supplies
- Other water withdrawals
- Locks & dams
- Cities and towns
- Rivers and larger streams
- Smaller streams
- County borders

