

South Fork Kentucky River mouth watershed (051002-03-060)

Geography. The South Fork Kentucky River mouth watershed covers north-central Owsley County and south-central Lee County. The land is in the plateau area of the Eastern Kentucky Coal Field physiographic region, which is characterized by rolling terrain, medium to rapid surface runoff, and slow to moderate 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. Unconsolidated silts, sands, and gravels occur along the flood plain of the river.

Waterways. This watershed includes the section of the South Fork between the National Forest and Beattyville, where the South Fork empties into the Kentucky River. Among the creeks that feed it are Betty Bowman Creek, Buck Creek, Fish Creek, Jerushia Branch, Caney Fork, Straight Fork, and Pawpaw Creek. Water from the Meadow Creek and South Fork Kentucky River in Boone Forest watersheds also flows into this watershed.

Land and water use. Land in the watershed is about one-fourth agricultural and three-fourths rural and wooded. The surface waters of the watershed supply the drinking water for the municipal system in Booneville. Ten businesses and organizations hold permits for discharges into the creeks. See the 2000 Assessment Report for full details.

Agency data assessment. The assessed creek segments in this watershed include one segment of Lower Buffalo Creek that only partially supports its designated uses, based on biological and/or water-quality data. Siltation contributes to the impairment of the stream. 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>			
Medium	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	IV

Watershed Highlights

- Watershed covers 45 square miles.
- Provides drinking water for Booneville.
- Booneville discharges treated sewage into the watershed.
- Aquatic life partially impaired by sedimentation in Lower Buffalo Creek from its mouth to Caney Fork and Straight Fork (2nd priority TMDL 2002).
- Water supply is an issue.
- The potential for agricultural erosion is substantially higher than the basin average.
- Watershed is in PRIDE service region. PRIDE identified 3 straight pipes or failing septic systems in the watershed.



South Fork Region



See the color map of this region on p. 125.

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

