

Kentucky River Assessment Report: Introduction

To view the entire Assessment Report, direct your web browser to
<http://www.uky.edu/WaterResources/Watershed/>

What Is This Report?

The Kentucky River, with the network of streams and rivers that flow into it, drains an area of more than 7,000 square miles. The basin drained by the Kentucky includes all or part of 41 counties and is home to more than 700,000 people. All the rain that falls on the land in the basin eventually flows into the Kentucky River. This flow of surface water provides 95% of the public water supply for communities in the basin, but the water can be contaminated as it flows over the land as well as by pollution released directly into creeks and rivers.

Efforts to preserve and improve the health of our waterways can be more effective if they are organized around the units of natural flow. These units are called watersheds because all water that falls on the land within a particular watershed is "shed" to a particular stream. The Kentucky Watershed Management Framework is designed to promote a watershed focus through a five-year cycle of evaluation and action.

This report is the result of the first three years of watershed management activities in the Kentucky River Basin. It presents the results of data gathering and assessment for each watershed in the basin. That includes the state's monitoring efforts during 1998-1999 and information compiled from diverse other sources.

The report thus provides a summary of basin conditions that can guide activities over the next several years. See About This Report for more about the role of the assessment report and ranked watershed list in the watershed management process.

The foundation of this document is a set of reports describing each of the 97 watersheds within the basin through maps, text, and tables. Each watershed report is presented under a section summarizing the subbasin of which it is part. There are five subbasins: the North, Middle, and South Forks of the headwaters region and the Central and Lower subbasins farther downstream. See the Basin Overview section for a map of the subbasins and a summary of conditions in the river basin as a whole.

Ranked and Targeted Watershed Lists

The Targeted Watershed List designates watersheds for development of watershed action plans or other activities. The Ranked Watershed List represents the first stage of this targeting: a preliminary synthesis of a broad spectrum of data. Together with the assessment report, the Ranked Watershed List constitutes the best available summary of impacts and risks across the basin.

The Targeted Watershed List is developed from the Ranked Watershed List by taking into account the level of local interest in each watershed, the local priorities, and the technical, financial, and political feasibility of addressing problems and preserving resources in the watershed. The Targeted Watershed List is a blueprint that incorporates both scientific and social dimensions to establish basinwide priorities.

About This Report

This report was prepared by Erman Caudill, Greg Epp, and Lindell Ormsbee of the Kentucky Water Research Institute (University of Kentucky) under contract to the Kentucky River Authority, as a product of the statewide Kentucky Watershed Management process. Activities

under the Kentucky Watershed Management Framework in the Kentucky River Basin are organized by the Basin Team and the Basin Coordinator (Greg Epp).

The Kentucky Watershed Management Framework is a means to protect human health and the health of the watershed ecosystems on which we depend. Objectives of the framework include enhancing cooperation between government agencies, developing stronger partnerships of state and local governments and other groups, and encouraging citizen participation in watershed management. This report plays a pivotal role in the watershed process.

In brief, state agencies achieve greater efficiency and maximize the effectiveness of limited resources by organizing monitoring activities by river basin and by focusing their work on one basin each year (Assessment). Meanwhile, the Basin Coordinator and Basin Team compile data and obtain input from stakeholders--citizens, local government, companies, and other organizations--to promote local decision-making and long-term planning.

The Basin Team encourages local stakeholder groups to form Watershed Task Forces. Organizing these local planning groups around natural units of flow--the watershed--allows a comprehensive approach so that the solution to one problem does not create other problems. This report is one of the principal way that information compiled at the state and basin levels during is provided to local Watershed Task Forces for use in planning. The Basin Team also provides technical support for plan development and implementation as needed.

Under the watershed framework, state agencies focus data collection, in turn, on the Kentucky River Basin and four other watershed management units over the course of a repeated five-year, five-phase cycle. The timetable for Kentucky River Basin activities runs from July 1 to June 30 each year. Information about the basin gathered in Phase 1 is published in a Basin Status Report and is used to develop a monitoring strategy. During Phase 2, agencies execute the monitoring plan and analyze the data collected. In Phase 3, the Basin Team and the Basin Coordinator compile an Assessment Report from information on individual watersheds. The Basin Team then uses the Assessment Report and input from local stakeholders to designate targeted watersheds. In each targeted watershed, a local Watershed Task Force assembles a Watershed Action Plan to address problems (Phase 4), and then begins to implement the plan in Phase 5.

See the More Information page for technical details about the stream assessment and watershed ranking processes. Reports from previous phases of the process in the Kentucky River Basin include the Kentucky River Basin Status Report and the Kentucky River Basin 1998-1999 Monitoring Strategy. The Kentucky Watershed Management Framework Document outlines the vision for this process in greater detail. (See the Kentucky Watershed Management website for information on other basin management units in the state.)

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