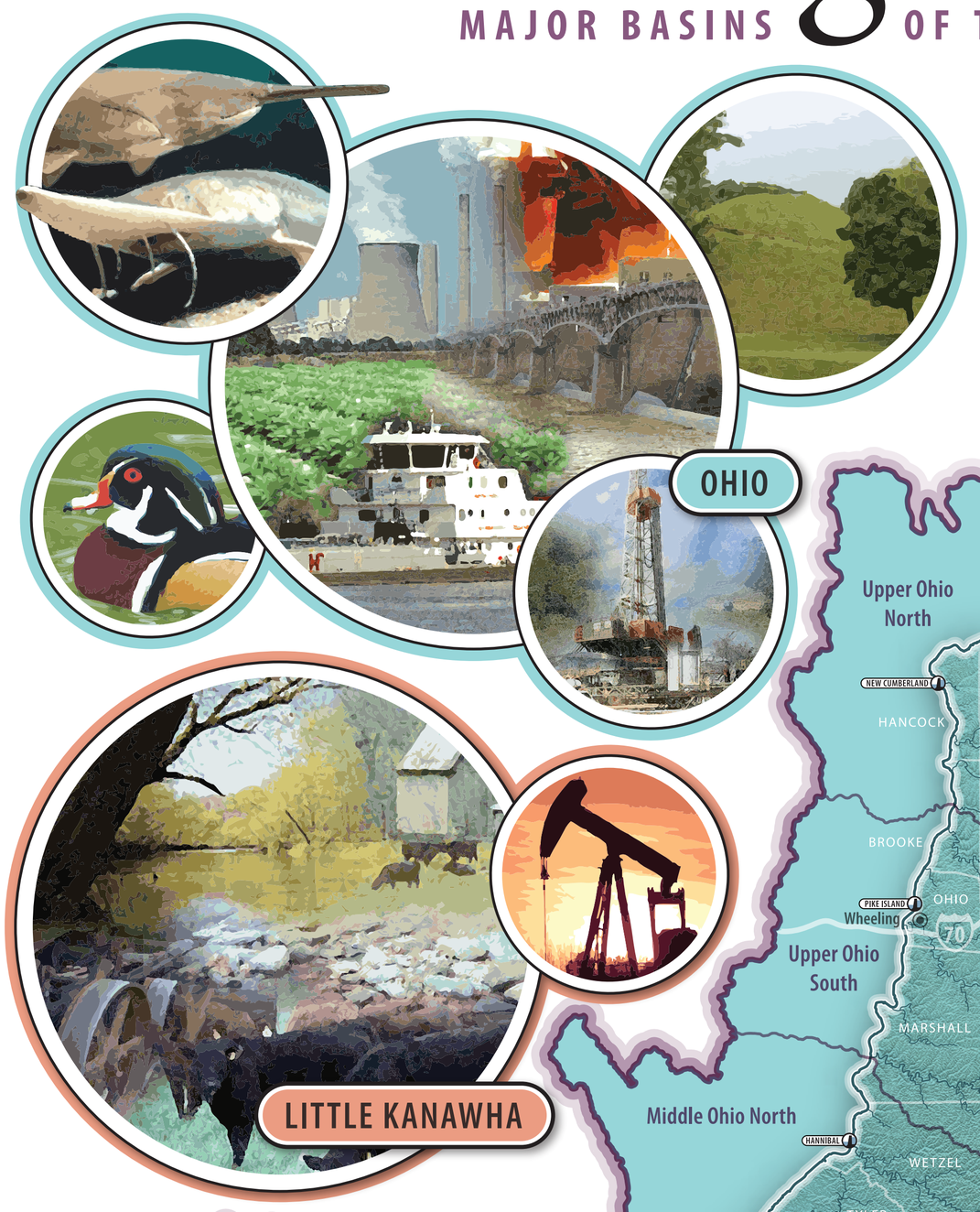
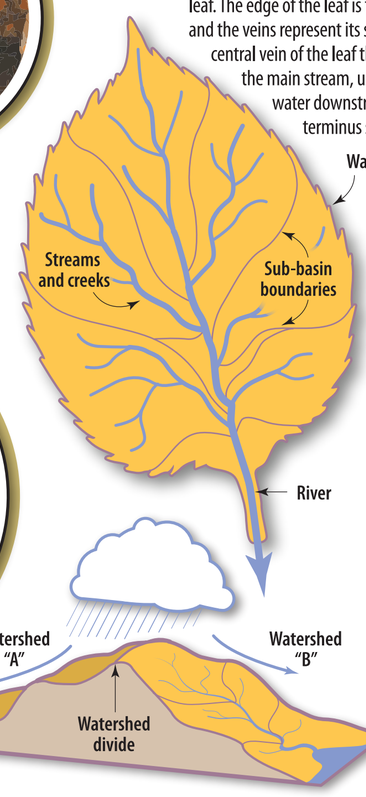
West Virginia Watersheds

MAJOR BASINS OF THE MOUNTAIN STATE



What is a Watershed

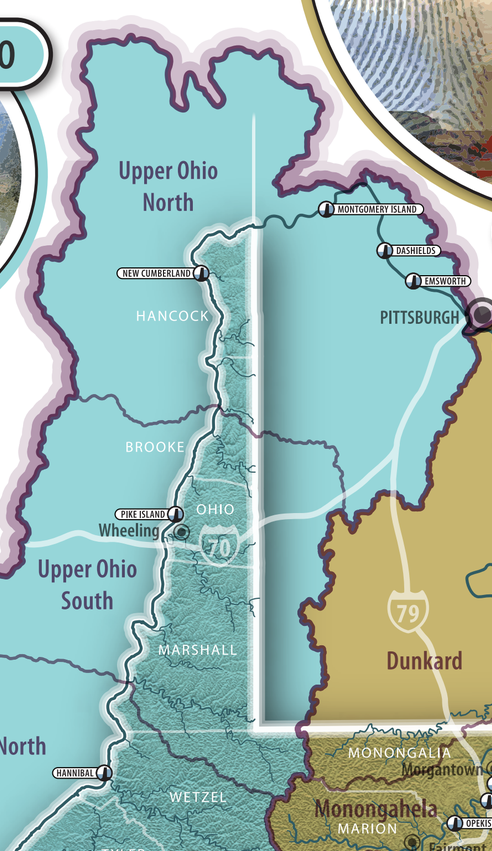
One way to visualize a watershed is to think of it as a leaf. The edge of the leaf is the watershed boundary and the veins represent its streams and creeks. The central vein of the leaf that widens to the stem is the main stream, usually a river, that carries water downstream to a larger river or a terminus such as a lake, bay or ocean.



Watersheds are comprised of a number of of streams and creeks that drain into progressively larger streams to eventually form a river. Each of the streams or creeks have their own watersheds, or sub-basins, that flow from higher elevations to lower elevations.

Watersheds include surface and groundwater – both flow together into the main stream of the watershed.

A ridge of high ground forms the **watershed divide.** Precipitation and snowmelt on one side of the divide will drain into one watershed, while runoff on the other side drains into a different watershed.



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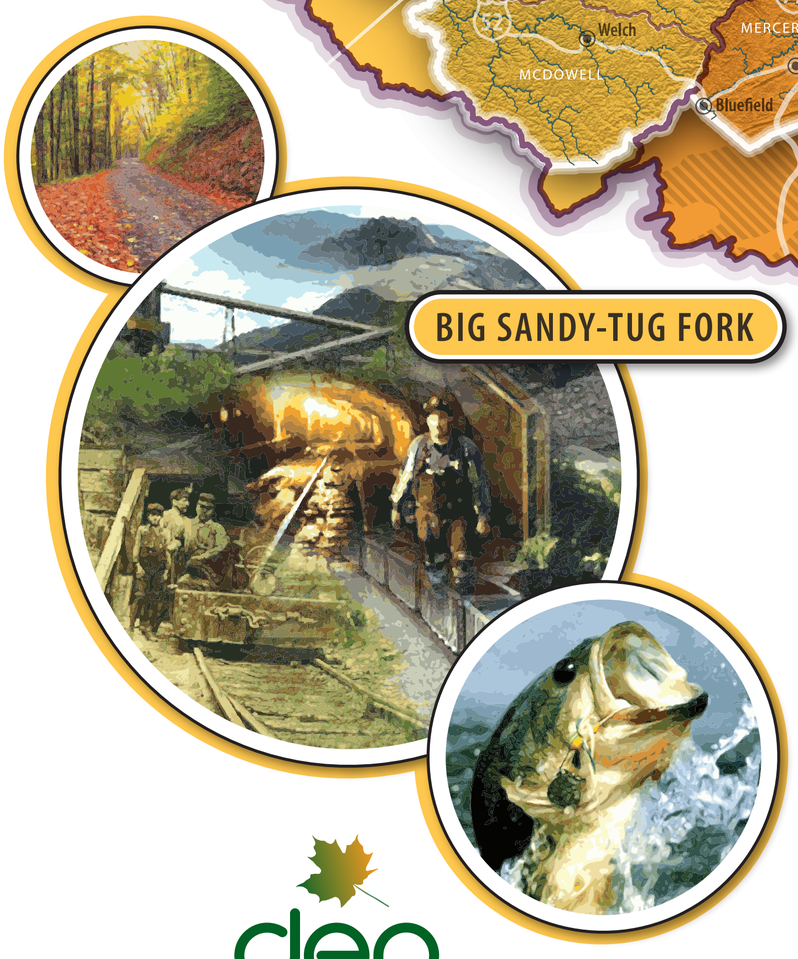
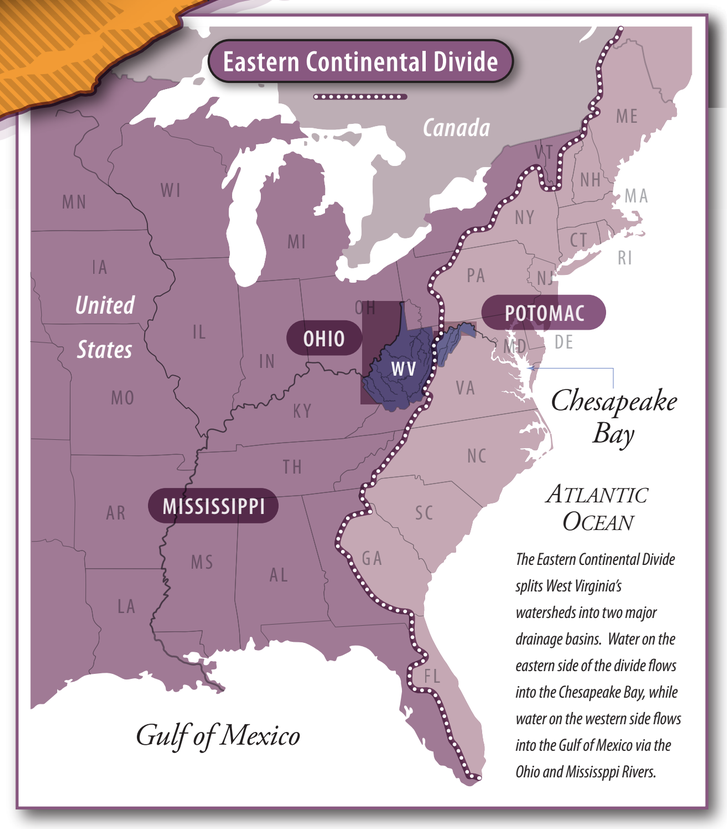
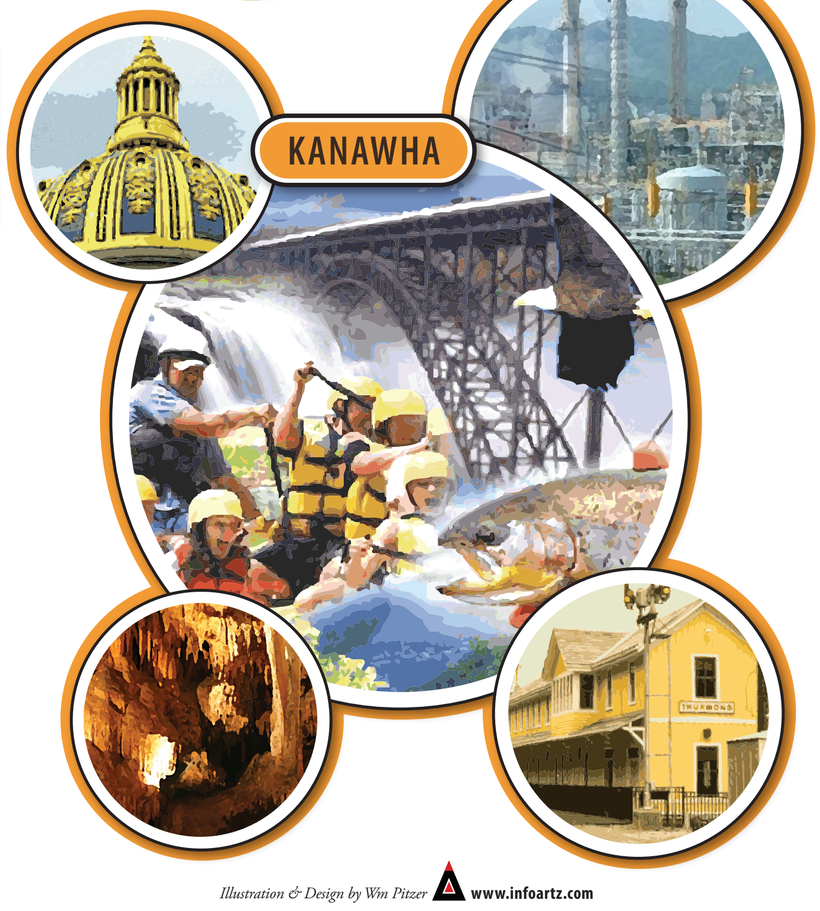
Birthplace of Rivers

Pocahontas County is the birthplace of eight rivers: Cherry, Cranberry, Elk, Gauley, Greenbrier, Shavers Fork, Tygart Valley, and Williams.





The Eastern Continental Divide splits West Virginia's watersheds into two major drainage basins. Water on the eastern side of the divide flows into the Chesapeake Bay, while water on the western side flows into the Gulf of Mexico via the Ohio and Mississppi Rivers.



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