

Catawba River ^[1]

Catawba River

by Elizabeth Bayley, 2006

Catawba River rises in the Blue Ridge Mountains of [McDowell County](#) ^[2], approximately 20 miles east of [Asheville](#) ^[3], flowing east-northeast above Hickory until turning southward into the massive Lake Norman Reservoir. It then continues south, flowing west of [Charlotte](#) ^[4] and following the North Carolina–South Carolina border for about 10 miles before entering South Carolina. The river flows east of Rock Hill, through the Fishing Creek Reservoir; once it reaches the Lake Wateree Reservoir (about 30 miles northeast of Columbia, S.C.), the Catawba River becomes the Wateree River. In all, the river is 224 miles long, and its watershed of 3,279 square miles contains nearly 40 municipalities, both large and small.

The flow of the modern Catawba River is blocked by 11 dams, 7 of which are in North Carolina. Its water is used for drinking, electrical power, and recreation. The river also is home to a variety of fish, including smallmouth and largemouth bass, catfish, and carp. Industrialization is the key threat to the health of the Catawba, as some areas are polluted with waste from nearby cities and towns, farms, and manufacturing plants. Private and governmental efforts to protect the [Catawba River Basin](#) ^[5] from further environmental strain are ongoing.

Reference:

Tim Mead, "River of Change," *Wildlife in North Carolina* 63 (November 1999).

Subjects:

[Rivers](#) ^[6]

Authors:

[Bayley, Elizabeth](#) ^[7]

Origin - location:

[McDowell County](#) ^[8]

From:

[Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.](#)^[9]

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