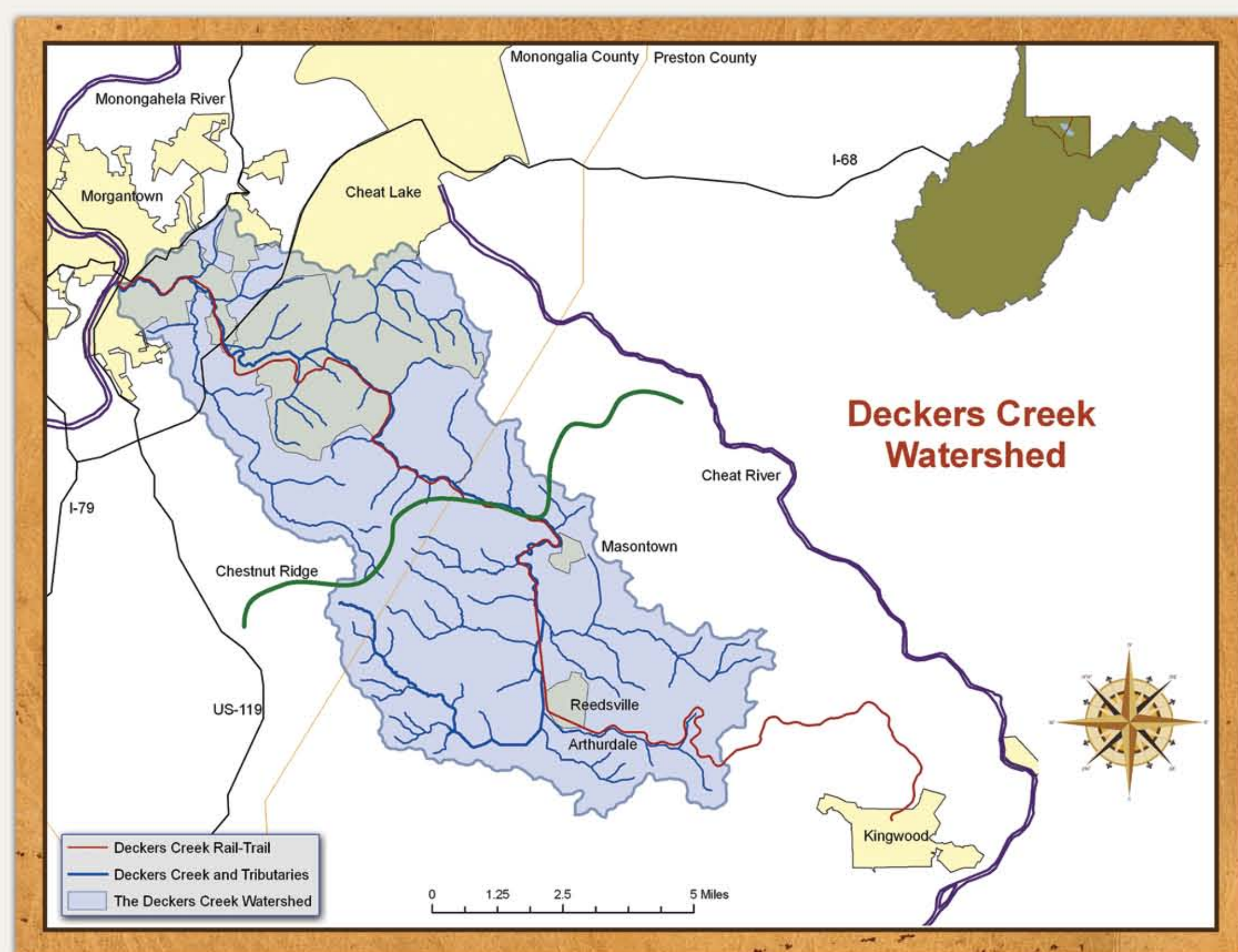




SMALL THINGS ARE BIG CLUES



Aquatic macroinvertebrates, or “stream bugs,” are small creatures that you can see with your naked eye, have no spinal column, and live in water. If a stream supports many different types of aquatic macroinvertebrates in large quantities, this is a reliable indicator that it has good water quality and can support, through the food chain, other types of aquatic life such as fish and amphibians.



Aquatic macroinvertebrates include insects mostly in their larval or nymph forms, clams, crayfish, snails, and worms. Most stream bugs live the majority of their lives underwater as larvae or nymphs that hatch into flying adults to reproduce. Nymphs, worms, and adult flies are a favorite food of fish, so fly fishermen and women often use lures that look like aquatic insects to catch fish.

Historically, coal mining, logging, and agricultural activities have left a mark on the Deckers Creek watershed. Many streams in the watershed that have a red-orange color are barely able to support aquatic life because of acid mine drainage from abandoned coal mines. In the past, portions of Deckers Creek were channelized to reduce flooding and streamside trees were removed to create more farmland, causing parts of the creek to fill in with sediment and become warm and sluggish. In addition to these stressors, litter and untreated sewage are two more common pollutants in the Deckers Creek watershed.

Insect, amphibian, and fish populations are slowly returning to Deckers Creek as communities work together to fix its pollution problems.



▶ Stonefly Nymph



▶ Mayfly Nymph



▶ newly emerged Dragonfly



▶ Adult Mayfly

Learn more about Deckers Creek at the Friends of Deckers Creek website: www.deckerscreek.org

Finding Stream Bugs

Turn over plate-sized rocks along Deckers Creek and look for wriggling aquatic macroinvertebrates or small structures made of mud, stones, leaves, and twigs that some build for their homes.

Crayfish, also known as crawdads and mud bugs, thrive in clean streams.

