



Continental U.S. Ecoregions

- 1—West Cascades and Coastal Forests
- 2—Puget Trough and Willamette Valley
- 3—North Cascades
- 4—Modoc Plateau and East Cascades
- 5—Klamath Mountains
- 6—Columbia Plateau**
- 7—Canadian Rocky Mountains
- 8—Idaho Batholith
- 9—Utah/Wyoming Rocky Mountains
- 10—Wyoming Basin
- 11—Great Basin
- 12—Sierra Nevada
- 13—Great Central Valley
- 14—California North Coast
- 15—California Central Coast
- 16—California South Coast
- 17—Mojave Desert
- 18—Utah High Plateaus
- 19—Colorado Plateau
- 20—Colorado Rocky Mountains
- 21—Arizona-New Mexico Mountains
- 22—Apache Highlands
- 23—Sonoran Desert
- 24—Chihuahuan Desert
- 25—Black Hills
- 26—Northern Great Plains Steppe
- 27—Central Shortgrass Prairie
- 28—Southern Shortgrass Prairie
- 29—Edwards Plateau
- 30—Texas-Louisiana Thornscrub
- 31—Gulf Coast Prairies and Marshes
- 32—Cassiaris/Southern Tallgrass Prairie
- 33—Central Mixed-Grass Prairie
- 34—Northern Mixed-Grass Prairie
- 35—Northern Tallgrass Prairie
- 36—Central Tallgrass Prairie
- 37—Osage Plains/Rim Hills Prairie
- 38—Oaks
- 39—Ouachita Mountains
- 40—Upper West Gulf Coastal Plain
- 41—Pussy Woods
- 42—Mississippi River Alluvial Plain
- 43—Upper East Gulf Coastal Plain
- 44—Interior Low Plateau
- 45—North Central Tillplain
- 46—Prairie-Forest Border
- 47—Superior Mixed Forest
- 48—Great Lakes
- 49—Western Allegheny Plateau
- 50—Cumberland, Southern Ridge and Valley
- 51—Southern Blue Ridge
- 52—Piedmont
- 53—Ian Gulf Coastal Plain
- 54—Tropical Florida
- 55—Florida Peninsula
- 56—South Atlantic Coastal Plain
- 57—Mid-Atlantic Coastal Plain
- 58—Chesapeake Bay Lowlands
- 59—Central Appalachian Forest
- 60—High Allegheny Plateau
- 61—Lower New England/Northern Piedmont
- 62—North Atlantic Coast
- 63—Northern Appalachian/Boreal Forest

Map Illustration © Matt Kania

What is an ecoregion?

Ecological regions are defined by living (biotic) and nonliving (abiotic) things. Abiotic characteristics include topography, geology, climate, and soils. Biotic characteristics are flora and fauna. William Stolzenburg, writing in *Nature Conservancy* magazine, says, "...ecological regions transcend single mountains; they encompass entire ranges of mountains. They circumscribe whole plains, plateaus, prairies, deserts, basins, foothills and coastlines, each with a correspondingly distinct covering of plants and wildlife. Across the country, as the Earth's active crust pushes up mountain ranges or spreads into basins, as latitude alters average temperatures from sweater to frostbound, as airstreams dictate realms of monsoon or drought, ecological regions grade from one to the next, conspicuously. Interrelated, they are nonetheless individuals... Within each are specialized conditions for life...." The Nature Conservancy (TNC) has outlined 63 ecological regions in the continental U.S. The map above shows these regions. Region 6, which TNC calls the Columbia Plateau, contains most of what we have defined here as the Columbia Basin Ecoregion. As you can see, the TNC's boundaries of the Columbia Basin ecoregion differ from those shown in Figure 1.1. This is because the boundaries can change depending on what abiotic and biotic features are used to define an ecoregion. The boundaries of the Columbia Basin Ecoregion described in this handbook (and shown in Figure 1.1) emphasize the commonalities of vegetation, climate, soil, physiography, and land use.

Excerpted with permission from *Nature Conservancy* magazine,
May/June 1998. © The Nature Conservancy