

2.—Drainage Basins

Drainage Basin	Area Drained ¹	Drainage Basin	Area Drained ¹
	sq. miles		sq. miles
Atlantic Basin	691,880	Arctic Basin (mainland)	944,280
Ontario.....	116,000	Saskatchewan.....	46,650
Quebec.....	372,780	Alberta.....	158,110
Newfoundland.....	153,720	British Columbia.....	105,020
New Brunswick.....	28,300	Yukon.....	53,970
Nova Scotia.....	21,830	Northwest Territories.....	580,530
Prince Edward Island.....	2,250		
Hudson Bay Basin	1,160,420	Pacific Basin	387,210
Quebec.....	199,230	British Columbia.....	251,990
Ontario.....	259,810	Yukon.....	135,220
Manitoba.....	243,780		
Saskatchewan.....	189,620	Gulf of Mexico Basin	8,600
Alberta.....	86,530	Alberta.....	2,540
Northwest Territories.....	181,450	Saskatchewan.....	6,060

¹ Areas are approximate and are exclusive of those portions of the basins of all rivers that lie in United States territory.

During the early period of exploration and development the waterways of Canada were the sole means of access to and travel in the interior. This function is still of importance to much of the country particularly in the north where most traffic moves by water or by air. In the settled areas however the construction of roads and railways has reduced the role of the waterways as transportation routes but they have assumed other functions. Some, particularly in the Canadian Shield area and the Cordilleran region, have been harnessed for the production of electric power. Others, mainly in southern Alberta and Saskatchewan, have been dammed to provide water for irrigation purposes. In Eastern Canada many of the rivers have been controlled in an over-all program of flood prevention and conservation of renewable resources or to provide dependable supplies of water for industrial and domestic purposes.

In Eastern Canada the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence drainage basin dominates all others and forms an unequalled system of navigable inland waterways through a region rich in natural and industrial resources. From Duluth, Minn. at the head of Lake Superior to Belle Isle at the entrance to the Gulf of St. Lawrence the distance is 2,280 miles. The St. Lawrence waterway and its tributaries, most of which have lakes available for reservoiring, have very large developed and potential power resources.

The greater part of Canada drains into Hudson Bay and the Arctic Ocean; the Nelson River drainage is exceptional in running *through* the most arable and the most settled part of Western Canada but otherwise the rivers of the West, east of the Rockies, run *away* from the settled areas towards the cold northern salt waters and this adversely affects their industrial utility. The Mackenzie River, which drains Great Slave Lake, is, with its headwaters, the longest river in Canada (2,635 miles) and its valley constitutes the natural transportation route through the Northwest Territories to the Arctic Ocean. From Fort Smith on the Slave River large river boats run without any obstruction to Aklavik on the delta of the Mackenzie, a distance of 1,292 miles. Table 3 gives the lengths of the principal rivers with their tributaries classified according to the four major drainage basins.