



Fossil Fuel Resources

Fossil Fuel Resources of the Blue Ridge & Piedmont Region 1

Coal

Bituminous coals occur in small, isolated Triassic-Jurassic rift basins of the North Carolina and Virginia piedmont (Figure 8.4). The rifts formed as the super-continent Pangea broke apart, creating numerous cracks in the crust along the margin of North America, Africa and England. These rifts became basins, which filled with sediment during the *Mesozoic Era*, sometimes becoming swampy lowlands. Peats accumulated in these swamps and were altered to coal when they were buried. None of the coals deposited in the rift basins is currently mined, but they have had historical production.



see *Geologic History*, p. 7 for more on the *Mesozoic Era* rift basins.

The *Deep River* Coalfield of North Carolina was the South's principal coal reserve during the Civil War.

The Richmond Basin of Virginia was the nation's first major coal field, discovered in 1699. The first coal was mined in the United States at this site in 1750 and used to fuel blacksmith forges. Mining was limited mostly to the early 1800's. The only notable coal deposits in the Mesozoic rift basins of the Southeast are those of the *Deep River* rift basin in North Carolina. The coalfield occupies a zone about 35 miles long and 5 to 10 miles wide. Bituminous coal beds range from a few inches to 48 inches thick, and were mined intermittently from 1854 to 1953. Production during 1949 was around 14,000 tons, but the coal seam is deeply buried and badly broken by numerous dissecting faults, and mining ceased in 1953. It is estimated that 110,337,000 tons of steam and coking coal remain.

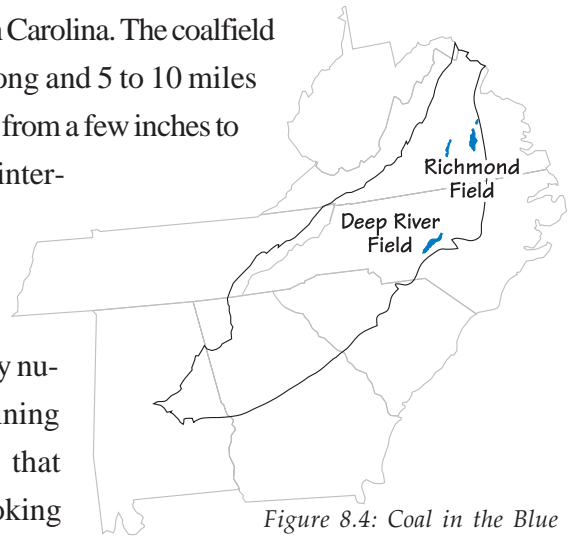
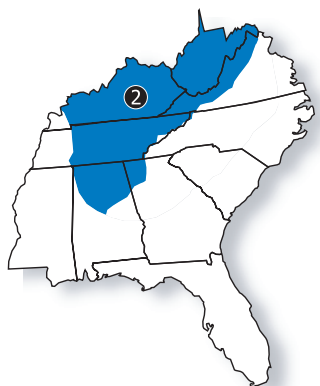


Figure 8.4: Coal in the Blue Ridge & Piedmont Region is found only in the Triassic-Jurassic age rift basins.



see *Rock Chapter* for more on *igneous* and *metamorphic rocks* of the Blue Ridge & Piedmont Region.



Oil & Gas

Oil and gas are not produced in the Blue Ridge and Piedmont region. The area is underlain primarily by *igneous* and *metamorphic rocks*, which do not form under the conditions necessary to produce oil and gas.

