THE 7 PHYSIOGRPAHIC AREAS OF PA

A physiographic region is an area defined by its geology and its landforms (and sometimes its plants and animals). As you travel across the US, you go through areas of mountains, plateaus, forests, deserts, beaches, etc. We easily recognize these big differences. Geologists like to be more specific about defining areas. They use additional information to help them decide on boundary lines—information such as what type of rock is below the surface, or the chemistry of the soil. These are things we can't see as we ride along. You can't look out the window and see whether there is coal or salt deep under the ground.

Pennsylvania has 7 physiographic regions (or "provinces"):

1 The Coastal Plain Province is primarily found in Delaware, Maryland and New Jersey. Pennsylvania has only a tiny strip of this province, running along the bottom right corner of the state. It is very flat but its rocks are interesting. It has historically been one of the best places in PA to collect gemstones.

2 The Piedmont *(PEED-mont)* Province is fairly flat, varying in elevation by only a few hundred feet. There are hills, but they are low, gently rolling hills. It has both the youngest and oldest bedrock in the state, but no coal. This province has the greatest amount of earthquake activity (though fortunately, small ones!). The word "pied" means "foot," and the word "mont" means "mountain or hill" so Piedmont means "foothills."

3 The Blue Ridge Province runs primarily through Maryland and Virginia. Pennsylvania has only a tiny bit of the top of this long, thin strip. It is named after a mountain ridge in Virginia.

4 New England Province is found primarily in Connecticut and Massachusetts, two New England states. The portion of this province that dips into eastern PA is called the Reading *(RED-ing)* Prong. The word "prong" refers to a projection coming out of something like a fork or plug. You can see that the Reading Prong does look like it has two prongs. The rocks of the Reading Prong are high in uranium, which produces radon gas.

5 The Valley and Ridge Province continues down through West Virginia and Virgina. This is where the Appalachian Mountains begin. The section inside PA is divided up into two subsections:

1) The Great Valley section, which is defined by the layers of rock under its surface.

2) Appalachian Mountain section, which is defined by the very visible Appalachian ridges that run diagonally across the state. This type of mountain structure—long, parallel ridges—is not seen anywhere else on earth (at least not to this degree). This region has high-quality coal called anthracite.

6 The Appalachian Plateau Province has many coal and natural gas deposits. (This is where Marcellus Shale is being tapped for gas.) It is also divided into subsections. The largest subsections are:

1) the Allegheny Mountain section, a part of the Appalachians that has lots of scattered hills and mountains. This region has the point of highest elevation in PA: Mt. Davis at 3212 ft (969 km).

2) the Allegheny High Plateau section, an area of generally higher elevation but also very mountainous and covered by forests (the Allegheny National Forest)

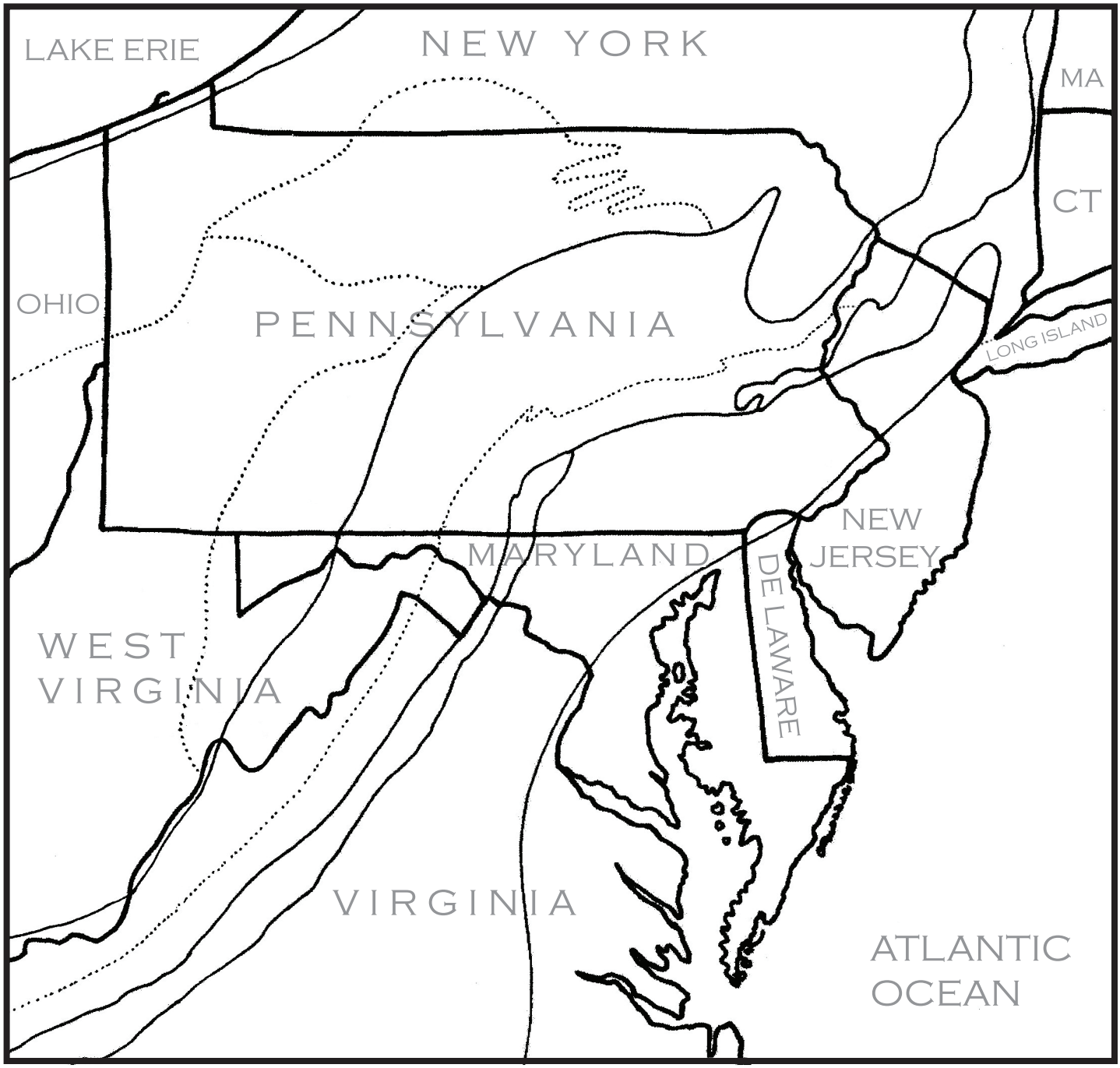
3) the Pittsburgh Low Plateau section, an area of lower elevation that is still very hilly

4) the Glaciated areas, the places where glaciers used to be thousands of years ago

7 The Central Lowland Province is a thin strip along the Erie coastline.

COLORING TIPS: Leave the ocean and lake areas uncolored. Note the suggestion to make all the Appalachian Plateau areas different shades of green, and the Valley and Ridge areas two shades of blue. The Coastal Plain includes eastern VA and MD, almost all of DE, southern NJ, Long Island, and the narrow strip where Philadelphia is. The Piedmont is the long strip that includes the letters RYLAND and VIRGIN (the top of the strip goes up into NJ and NY). The Blue Ridge is the long, skinny strip that includes the A in MARYLAND. The New England Province has the Reading Prong, and continues up through NJ and into CT and MA. The Central Lowland is the strip along Lake Erie. The Great Valley is between the Appalachian Mountain area and the Piedmont and Blue Ridge. The Appalachian Mountain area contains the letters YLVANIA and goes down through MD, WV and VA, as well as the northern tip of NJ and up into NY. The Allegheny Mountain region includes the S in PENNSYLVANIA and goes down into WV. The Pittsburgh Low Plateau includes the letters PENN and goes down into WV. The Allegheny High Plateau is between PENN and NEW. The Glaciated areas are the upper left corner and upper right corner of PA, plus a large region of OHIO and most of NEW YORK.

PHYSIOGRAPHIC REGIONS OF PENNSYLVANIA AND ITS NEIGHBORS



- Coastal Plain
- Piedmont
- Blue Ridge
- New England (Reading Prong)
- Central Lowland
- Valley and Ridge (both blue, but different shades)
- Great Valley
- Appalachian Mtns.
- Appalachian Plateau (all green, but wtih each area a different shade of green)
- Allegheny Mountains
- Allegheny High Plateau
- Pittsburgh Low Plateau
- Glaciated areas

Here is one possible way you can color the regions. You don't have to use this color scheme. You can make your own choices for which areas get which colors. As long as you fill in the boxes in the key below the map, you can make the regions whatever color you wish.

If you have limited colors, notice that you can make a region striped, as I did here with the Blue Ridge region. You can also achieve different shades by laying colors over colors. For example, the Great Valley region in this map is white over blue. The Allegheny Mountain region is a combination of green and yellow.