



AMERICA'S MOST ENDANGERED RIVERS OF 2003

**TEN RIVERS
REACHING
THE CROSSROADS
IN THE NEXT
12 MONTHS**



BRINGING RIVERS TO LIFE



American Rivers
FOUNDED 1979

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**AOL KEYWORD:
AMERICAN RIVERS**

ABOUT AMERICA'S MOST ENDANGERED RIVERS

Each year since 1986, American Rivers has released the America's Most Endangered Rivers report to highlight rivers nationwide reaching crucial crossroads. The report highlights acute threats rather than chronic conditions; it is not a list of the nation's "worst" or most polluted rivers.

American Rivers solicits nominations annually from thousands of river groups, conservation organizations, outdoor clubs, and individual activists. Our staff and scientific advisors review the nominations for the following criteria:

- The magnitude of the threat to the river
- A major decision point in the coming year affecting that threat
- The regional and national significance of the river

This report does more than list problems; it highlights alternatives and solutions, identifies those who will make the crucial decisions, and points out opportunities for the public to take action on behalf of each listed river. America's Most Endangered Rivers has a distinguished track record of improved public policy decisions that benefit listed rivers.

Recognizing that the threats facing the listed rivers are seldom unique, each report includes a special chapter that explores a broader issue suggested by the rivers on the list that year. In recent years, we have examined the consequences to rivers of over-dependence on fossil fuels, the disappearance of our freshwater biodiversity, and ill-conceived water projects built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. This year's report explores why drought is just one of the reasons that rivers are running dry nationwide.

ABOUT AMERICAN RIVERS

American Rivers, founded in 1973, is North America's leading river conservation organization. American Rivers is dedicated to protecting and restoring healthy natural rivers, and the variety of life they sustain, for the benefit of people, fish and wildlife.

ON THE COVER: A dried-up riverbed, Photo: Jack Dykinga, USDA

INSET PHOTOS LEFT TO RIGHT: The pristine headwaters of the Tallapoosa River, threatened by a water supply reservoir, Photo: Beth Maynor Young; The Klamath basin water wars threaten migratory waterfowl along the Pacific Flyway, Photo: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Drip irrigation and other efficient technologies require less water to grow more crops, Photo: Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA

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INTRODUCTION: WHEN RIVERS RUN DRY



JACK DYKINGA, USDA

LACK OF RAIN IS NOT THE
WHOLE STORY BEHIND DRIED-
UP CREEKS NATIONWIDE.

**THE CONTINUING DROUGHT HAS
BEEN MAGNIFIED BY A CENTURY
OF RAPIDLY RISING WATER
CONSUMPTION, COUPLED WITH
WIDESPREAD DESTRUCTION OF
WETLANDS, HEADWATER
STREAMS, AND OTHER HABITATS
THAT ASSURE A RELIABLE
SUPPLY OF CLEAN FRESH WATER.**

America's seemingly insatiable demand for fresh water is nearing nature's limits.

"Water is the biggest environmental issue we face in the 21st century in terms of both quantity and quality," wrote Christine Todd Whitman, head of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, in January 2003.

"I believe, as do many others, that fresh water in this century will be as important as oil in the 20th century," declared Lt. Gen. Robert B. Flowers, chief of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, in March 2002.

"It may be hard to believe that water limits are drawing nearer, for we hold in our minds an image of Earth as a strikingly blue planet—a world of water spinning in space," wrote Sandra Postel, in her book *Last Oasis*:

Facing Water Scarcity. "But this picture creates a false sense of security, because we can tap only a tiny fraction of this water wealth, and

that small share must sustain not only our growing population but millions of other species."

The fact is that Americans waste an appalling amount of water, according to Robert Glennon in *Water Follies: Groundwater Pumping and the Fate of America's Fresh Waters*, with devastating impacts on our rivers, springs, wetlands, and lakes.

Water scarcity is the primary threat to five of the rivers on this 2003 America's Most Endangered Rivers list. Scientists warn that shortages will worsen as we enter a century of increasing demands for fresh water and climatic uncertainty. Left unchecked, these problems will threaten virtually every river in every region of America. However, decisive action by the nation's leaders now can still prevent many future crises.

DROUGHT: A VISION OF AMERICA'S FUTURE?

Abnormally dry conditions affected all or part of 49 states last summer. As early as March 2002, *USA Today* reported that at least 57 rivers had reached record low levels — and as the drought dragged on through the summer, conditions worsened.

Lack of rainfall is only part of the story behind these falling stream flows. The continuing drought has been magnified by a century of rapidly rising water consumption, coupled with widespread destruction of wetlands, headwater streams, and other habitats that assure a reliable supply of clean fresh water.

Two converging trends of greater demand and shrinking supply appear likely to continue, unless we make a concerted national effort to reverse course. Scientists warn of a serious decline in both the quality and quantity of fresh water in the nation's rivers, streams, and lakes, which has direct consequences for people as well as ecosystems. Conservationists across the country now cite concerns over the amount of water in their rivers more frequently than the amount of pollution in them.

With below-average precipitation predicted for much of the United States in 2003 as well, it is time to examine the untold story behind the drought.

IRRIGATION: WASTE MUCH, WANT MUCH

From 1900 to 1980, the population of the United States increased by a factor of four, but water withdrawals increased tenfold. Although per capita fresh water use has since leveled off, it remains the highest in the world at nearly 1,300 gallons per person per day — and the population continues to grow. Only 3 percent of this water is used for drinking, cooking, and bathing. The rest is used in agriculture, businesses and industries, for power production, and to water lawns and wash cars.

Irrigated agriculture is by far the largest consumer, accounting for 85 percent of the fresh water consumed in the country — and wasting much of it. Few states meter agricultural water use, much less require irrigators to use water efficiently. In the arid West, water is still often delivered from rivers to farms in open ditches, with the result that much of the water never reaches a crop. In addition, irrigation techniques that super-saturate the soil return water to the river laden with pesticides and fertilizer.

Federal irrigation water is often so extravagantly subsidized that farmers have little incentive to use it efficiently. For example, the federal Bureau of Reclamation's Central Arizona Project, completed in the early 1990s, charges irrigators just 1 percent of the actual cost of delivering the water. The Bureau's Central Utah Project charges just about 2 percent of the water's real cost, well below what farmers have been willing to pay on the open market.



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DELIVERING IRRIGATION WATER IN OPEN DITCHES IS WASTEFUL AND POLLUTING.

Traditional interpretation and enforcement of western water law further exacerbates this situation. Those who hold senior rights to take water from a stream have little incentive to conserve their allocation. Rather, they feel compelled to use all of it to avoid having to cede it to holders of more junior rights. Tenets of western water law that prohibit waste are seldom enforced.

Two rivers on this year's list illustrate how inefficient irrigation, lavish subsidies, and selective interpretation of water law can inflate water demands to crisis proportions:

- In the **Klamath River** (#2) basin in Oregon and California, more than 30,000 endangered salmon perished last year in the warm trickle remaining after irrigation demands were satisfied for high water-demanding forage crops.
- The **Rio Grande** (#5) dried up in stretches and failed to reach the sea — and faces growing demand for water from the “oasis” cities of the southwestern desert.

LEFT: SUBSIDIZED IRRIGATION HELPED KILL THESE KLAMATH RIVER SALMON.



NORTHCOST ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER

SPRAWL DEVELOPMENT: INCREASING DEMAND WHILE REDUCING SUPPLY

At present, public water systems account for only about 12 percent of the country's water use, but their use is growing faster than any other sector. A chief culprit: low density

sprawl development. One study in Seattle found that new suburban "estate" style homes with large lawns can consume as much as 16 times the water of a home on a more traditional urban grid.

Indeed, one-third of municipal water use on average in this country is dedicated to outdoor purposes, and that figure is much higher in the West.

Between 1982 and 1997, the top 20 land-consuming cities grew their land bases by 25 to 105 percent, frequently outpacing population growth by a factor of two to three. Denuding watersheds by replacing wetlands, forests, and other natural habitats with concrete, asphalt, and turf grass profoundly affects streams and their interrelated aquifers. Water tables fall and springs dry up as less water soaks through the

soil, leading to lower average stream flows. In addition, flash floods increase because roofs, roads, and parking lots channel stormwater into streams in sudden, polluted surges when it rains.

A snapshot of the Charlotte, N.C. area reveals much about the dual impacts of sprawl on watersheds. According to estimates prepared by American Rivers, the Natural Resources Defense Council, and Smart Growth America, 13 to 31 billion gallons of water fail to reach the Charlotte area aquifers each year because of the sprawl development that occurred there from 1982 to 1997. In addition, *The Charlotte Observer* reported in December 2002 that the number of municipal water customers grew by 45 percent since 1990, but water use soared by 71 percent.

Growing municipal use fuels demand for

more damaging water projects. This is illustrated by another river on this year's list:

- The sprawling cities of Virginia's Tidewater region seek to satisfy speculative demand by constructing a reservoir in the **Mattaponi River** (#6) watershed that would inundate a remarkably pristine wetlands complex.

LAW AND POLICY: OVERLOOKING THE SURFACE AND GROUNDWATER CONNECTION

On average, half of the water found in rivers and streams comes from underground sources, and about half comes from rain and melting snow. Sprawl-fueled habitat destruction reveals the connection between surface and groundwater, but our laws, regulations, policies and water plans routinely treat them as separate water sources.

Two rivers on this year's list illustrate groundwater's physical connection to surface water, a hydrological fact almost wholly ignored in law and policy:

- In northeast Massachusetts, consumers pump so much water from the aquifers underlying the **Ipswich River** (#3) that it periodically flows backwards in places before drying up completely.
- In the **Platte River** (#7) basin of Wyoming, Colorado and Nebraska, failing groundwater reserves are the impetus behind proposed new dams and reservoirs that threaten a crucial wetland stopover for migratory birds.

America can take steps today to reverse the dual trends of wasting water and denuding watersheds. It's not too late to avoid many future water shortages, conflicts, and degraded habitats. The drought that is ushering in the 21st century should serve as a wakeup call. For future generations to enjoy abundant clean water and freshwater habitat, the nation must not ignore this warning.

USDA/NRCS



STREETS AND ROOFS
CHANNEL WATER INTO
STORM DRAINS INSTEAD OF
AQUIFERS.

FROM 1900 TO 1980, THE
POPULATION OF THE UNITED
STATES INCREASED BY A FACTOR
OF FOUR, BUT WATER WITH-
DRAWALS INCREASED TENFOLD.

RIGHT: THE IPSWICH
RIVER ILLUSTRATES THE
CONNECTION BETWEEN SUR-
FACE AND GROUNDWATER.



IPSWICH RIVER WATERSHED ASSN

Although best known for regulating pollutants from industrial facilities, the Clean Water Act also protects the natural infrastructure that stores, filters, delivers, and otherwise provides freshwater. On Jan. 10, 2003 the Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announced a dramatic reinterpretation of the Clean Water Act that will accelerate destruction of wetlands and small streams nationwide and may worsen the water shortages that fuel many of the crises described in this report.

The agencies effectively withdrew federal Clean Water Act protections from many marshes, swamps, bogs, prairie potholes, and other waters too small to be navigated by boat and not directly connected to streams or rivers. Many of these waters are under constant threat from developers, mining interests, oil companies, and agribusiness.

According to some news reports, as much as 20 percent of the wetlands left in the lower 48 states may no longer be protected by these

agencies. Wetlands and small streams are indispensable natural aquatic infrastructure because they capture rain and snowmelt quickly and release it slowly. Riparian wetlands purify this water and release it

over time into adjacent streams. Even water captured by so-called “isolated wetlands” can reach local streams after an underground detour. Wetlands also recharge the groundwater that supplies roughly one-half of our drinking water, and half of the water in the nation’s rivers and streams.

Draining, filling, or paving over wetlands and small streams sets off a chain reaction that eventually reduces the water available in rivers to meet ecological and human needs. As wetlands are lost, flash floods increase but less rainfall soaks into the ground. As groundwater levels fall, springs dry up and dry-weather stream flows drop. Research shows adverse effects on stream flows and wildlife habitat



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when as little as 10 percent of a given watershed has been developed.

Agency spokespeople argue that the January announcement was in response to a Supreme Court ruling that struck down a legal test for applying federal law to “isolated” waters and wetlands. However, the agencies went considerably further than the court required, abandoning several other legal rationales for protecting these vital habitats. Under the new rules, even waters that are home to endangered species are no longer automatically protected by the Clean Water Act.

The Jan. 10 notice launched a comprehensive review of how far upstream from navigable rivers the Clean Water Act applies, suggesting that even more natural infrastructure is at risk of losing federal protections.

For updates and to take action to protect the Clean Water Act visit www.AmericanRivers.org.

**WETLANDS LOSS
EVENTUALLY LEADS TO
LOWER STREAM FLOWS.**

**RESEARCH SHOWS ADVERSE
EFFECTS ON STREAM FLOWS AND
WILDLIFE HABITAT WHEN AS LITTLE
AS 10 PERCENT OF A GIVEN WATER-
SHED HAS BEEN DEVELOPED.**



NOAA

SOLUTIONS: A VISION FOR

**AMERICA'S
INDUSTRIAL
SECTOR HAS
CUT ITS
WATER USE
ALMOST
40 PERCENT
FROM ITS
HEIGHT IN
1979.**

The policy, scientific, and technological solutions required to solve America's growing water crisis exist today; the missing ingredient has been the will to employ them. In the 21st century, the nation must not only use water much more efficiently, it must commit to returning those savings to its rivers. The reward will be a better quality of life — more fish and wildlife, cleaner water and less flooding, recreational opportunities and the revenue they bring to riverfront communities.

REDUCING WATER WASTE

Improved efficiency can reduce water use without lowering the public's standard of living. The World Water Council recently named the United States the most inefficient water user of 147 countries studied, including European countries that enjoy standards of living comparable to ours. But while inefficient water use landed many rivers on this year's list, it also can be viewed as an opportunity to cut use without cutting standards of living.

Recent history demonstrates that it is possible to break the link between growth and wasteful water consumption. In fact, America's industrial sector has cut its water use

almost 40 percent from its peak in 1979. At the same time, the U.S. has enormously increased its industrial output. America's agricultural sector can also reduce its water use by replacing antiquated irrigation systems with modern technologies such as drip systems and micro-sprinklers. Such systems can increase crop yields while using up to 70 percent less water—and have the added benefit of greatly reducing the pesticide and fertilizer-laden runoff that flows back into streams and rivers.

Although a number of laws and policies currently encourage wasteful water use and fuel destruction of freshwater habitats, relatively modest reforms would allow the nation to meet human needs and prevent the types of freshwater crises illustrated in this report.



USDA/NRCS

CURBING AGRICULTURAL WATER WASTE

Key policy reforms that will help curb water waste in the agricultural sector include:

- Enforcing prohibitions on illegal water use;
- Requiring all water use to be metered, to ensure informed allocation decisions;
- Charging progressively higher rates for water when farmers use more water than would be needed with modern technologies;
- Providing low-interest loans, grants, and other incentives to help farmers acquire modern irrigation equipment;
- Ending subsidies for growing low-value, thirsty crops in arid areas, and for producing (and irrigating) crops chronically in surplus, such as rice, cotton, and corn;



USDA/NRCS

**DRIP IRRIGATION SYSTEMS GROW THE SAME AMOUNT
OF CROPS WITH LESS WATER.**

WATER USE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

- Ending the federal practice of providing price supports and subsidized water for crops in one part of the country, while paying farmers not to grow the same crop elsewhere; and,
- In the West, removing barriers to ecologically-sound water transfers, while taking community effects into account.

CURBING METROPOLITAN WATER WASTE

Many of the reforms necessary to reduce agricultural water waste have counterparts that can be implemented in metropolitan areas:

- Measuring all water use and prohibiting illegal use;
- Pricing water rationally to discourage excessive use, yet providing for basic human needs;
- Encouraging widespread replacement of older toilets and shower heads to meet 1992 federal standards for new construction;
- Creating incentives for homes and businesses to recycle water by capturing roof runoff for yard watering, and reusing “gray” water from washing, bathing, industrial cooling; and,
- Fixing leaking water supply and sewage infrastructure that annually wastes billions of gallons of water.



PEDDIKIMAGES.ORG (DAN BURDEN)

PROTECTING WATERSHEDS FROM SPRAWL

Reducing water waste alone will not ensure healthy stream flows. Land use and stormwater management practices in urban and suburban areas also must be changed so that stormwater is treated as the valuable resource it is instead of as a waste product. Sprawling

OPEN SPACES PROTECT RIVERS WHILE PROVIDING OTHER AMENITIES.



USDA/NRCS

RATIONAL WATER PRICES REMIND USERS TO TURN OFF THE WATER WHEN THEY'RE DONE.

FIRM COMMITMENTS TO MAINTAIN RIVER FLOWS SHOULD GUIDE CONSERVATION EFFORTS.



GEORGE ANDREKO

development not only drives up water consumption but also paves over watershed lands, blocking the replenishment of groundwater. Smart growth policies further water efficiency, and also benefit residents

by reducing traffic congestion and air pollution, ensuring adequate open space for recreation, and reducing taxes for constructing and maintaining infrastructure.

State and local level reforms that can protect watersheds and water supplies include:

- Encouraging new developments to maximize groundwater recharge and reduce polluted stormwater runoff from parking lots and roads, by creating walkable neighborhoods with a mix of residential and business uses;
- Requiring new and redeveloped existing neighborhoods to install “green infrastructure” such as permeable pavement,

green roofs, and rain gardens that capture precipitation and recharge the water table; and,

- Redirecting a significant portion of stormwater infrastructure funding towards preserving land in critical aquatic areas, such as groundwater recharge zones, wetlands, streambanks, floodplains, and small tributary streams.

GUARANTEEING SUFFICIENT RIVER FLOWS

Improving water efficiency is critical to ensuring sufficient supplies into the future. But that alone will not guarantee sufficient water for healthy rivers. Scientists warn that without an ecological water reserve protected in law, improved efficiency will simply be soaked up by excessive human use.

HOW MUCH WATER DO RIVERS NEED?

The first step is to develop scientific standards for healthy river flows, moving beyond outdated standards of “minimum flows” that estab-



ERIC ECKEL

POROUS PAVEMENT AND OTHER “GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE” PROTECT STREAM FLOWS BY INCREASING GROUNDWATER RECHARGE.

lish static water levels designed at best to provide the bare minimum for fish survival. Instead, rivers should receive the quantity, quality and timing of flows needed to support their ecological functions and their services to society.

PROTECTING THE ECOLOGICAL RESERVE IN LAW

The second step is to protect the reserve from withdrawals and other degradation. Current laws and policies provide some level of protection for instream flows through voluntary programs such as water trusts, and regulatory requirements such as federal and state minimum stream flows below regulated dams. But this piecemeal approach has resulted in only incremental improvements to select stretches of rivers, failing to guarantee healthy, variable flows. Instead, the nation must have an integrated national policy to protect ecological water reserves.

A group of internationally recognized freshwater ecologists and public policy experts, writing in a recent issue of the journal *Issues in Ecology*, has called on the nation to establish a permanently protected water reserve in



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CONGRESS SHOULD REFORM POLICIES THAT DRIVE WATER WASTE AND WATERSHED DESTRUCTION.

its rivers, streams, wetlands, and lakes. These experts warn that the nation cannot protect freshwater habitats, and the human and ecological needs they fulfill, without taking this step.

Mustering the political will to create such a water reserve would go a great distance toward solving the nation's freshwater problems and ensuring adequate supplies into the future — for both ecological and human uses. American Rivers supports the call to integrate the nation's water resource laws and policies and to set aside a water reserve to meet the needs of future generations.



SCENIC HUDSON: AL POELZL

AMERICA'S MOST ENDANGERED RIVERS OF 2003



1. BIG SUNFLOWER RIVER
2. KLAMATH RIVER
3. IPSWICH RIVER
4. GUNNISON RIVER
5. RIO GRANDE
6. MATTAPONI RIVER
7. PLATTE RIVER
8. SNAKE RIVER
9. TALLAPOOSA RIVER
10. TRINITY RIVER

BIG SUNFLOWER RIVER

THREAT: WETLAND DESTRUCTION, RIVER DREDGING

SUMMARY

Mississippi's Big Sunflower River is threatened by a pair of misbegotten flood control projects cooked up by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) and rashly supported by its Congressional patrons. Unless the Bush administration's Environmental Protection

Agency (EPA) vetoes the Yazoo

Pumps, the Corps will drain

seven times more wet-

lands than private devel-

opers damage in a year

nationwide. Without

firm opposition from

the EPA and the U.S.

Fish and Wildlife Ser-

vice (FWS), the Corps

will also scour 100

miles of the Big Sun-

flower's riverbed, destroy-

ing even more wetlands and

stirring up a toxic stew of pesti-

cides that has accumulated at the bottom of the river.

THE RIVER

The Big Sunflower is a lazy, serpentine river that meanders through the ecologically rich and sparsely populated lowlands of northwest Mississippi. Near Vicksburg, the Big Sunflower joins the Yazoo River, which empties into the Mississippi River shortly thereafter. Despite extensive clearing for agriculture, the basin retains vast areas of rich wetlands and bottomland hardwood forests that teem with wildlife and are an important destination for wintering waterfowl and other migratory birds. The Big Sunflower is home to one of the world's most abundant native mussel beds and some 55 species of fish. The endangered pond-berry, one of the world's rarest shrubs, is found on the river's banks.

Agriculture drives the region's economy, but in recent decades farms have consolidated into fewer and fewer hands. Soybeans and cotton are the primary crops, but due to chronic surpluses they are profitable only with generous federal price supports. In just one county along the river, 330 recipients received more than \$64 million in federal farm subsidies

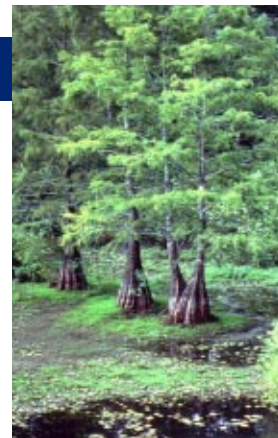
between 1996 and 2001.

Recognizing the area's importance for migratory birds in particular, the public has also made a substantial investment in conserving the area's remaining wetlands and other natural resources. Lands have been acquired for the Panther Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, the Yazoo National Wildlife Refuge, and the Delta National Forest, and some \$30 million has been spent to enroll private lands in voluntary conservation programs.

THE RISK

In February 2003, Congress approved a \$10 million down payment on the \$181 million Yazoo Pumps without bothering to wait for the Corps to complete the necessary environmental and economic studies. The Yazoo Pumps would be the largest hydraulic pumping plant ever built, siphoning up to 6 million gallons of water per minute out of the basin through which the Big Sunflower, three other rivers, and their tributaries flow.

The massive suction of the Pumps would be felt in every creek and stream within a 1,450-square-mile area with catastrophic results. More than 200,000 acres — 300 square miles — of ecologically significant wetlands will be drained and damaged. With this single



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THE YAZOO PUMPS WOULD DRAIN AND DAMAGE 200,000 ACRES OF PRECIOUS WETLANDS TO INCREASE PRODUCTION OF SUBSIDIZED CROPS.



LOUIE MILLER

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE



**SITE OF THE PROPOSED
YAZOO PUMPS.**

project, the Corps will damage more wetlands than private developers harm across the entire nation in seven years.

The economic rationale for this ecological catastrophe defies logic. The Pumps would effectively undo decades of effort and tens of millions of tax dollars spent restoring and protecting habitat in the region, to increase the production of crops that already are heavily subsidized and in surplus.

Among the habitat in harm's way are more than 31,000 acres of private wetlands enrolled in voluntary conservation programs. These property owners have received more than \$30 million from the federal government in return for their commitment to protect the very wetlands that the Corps now proposes to drain. In a stunning reversal of the old adage "you break it, you buy it," the taxpayer-funded pumps also will siphon water out of wetlands that the public acquired to protect as part of the national forest and wildlife refuges.

Although proponents loudly tout residential flood protection as the rationale for the project, the Corps acknowledges that more than 80 percent of the purported economic benefits would come from increased soybean and cotton output. An independent study commissioned by EPA concluded that the Pumps would do nothing more than "help landowners grow crops on land that is farmed

only to earn farm subsidy payments." This same study concluded that the Corps overstated just the agricultural benefits by \$144 million — more than 75 percent of the estimated cost to build the Pumps.

The Yazoo Pumps are not the only Corps boondoggle endangering the Big Sunflower River. The agency plans to spend another

\$62 million to dredge 104 miles of the riverbed to further accelerate drainage in the watershed. This dredging would devastate the river's instream habitat, destroy at least 43 percent of the river's abundant mussel beds, and damage more than 3,600 acres of wetlands that are also in harm's way from the Pumps. It could also potentially increase flooding problems downstream.

The dredging also will stir up a toxic stew of pesticides that has accumulated at the bottom of the river, including DDT and toxaphene, endangering the health of local residents who eat fish caught from the river. Despite these risks, dredging the Big Sunflower River will not spare a single acre from flooding. It will merely reduce the frequency and duration of floods that will continue to occur on 55,000 acres of sparsely populated farmland.

Effective flood damage reduction could be achieved at far less cost to taxpayers and the environment through the purchase of conservation easements and targeted flood protection for the few residences and businesses in the area.



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

**WITH CONGRESS AND THE
CORPS DETERMINED TO PRO-
CEED, IT MAY FALL TO EPA TO
VETO THE YAZOO PUMPS.**



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WHAT CAN BE DONE IN THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

Although Congress and the Corps appear determined to proceed with the Yazoo Pumps, the funding bill passed earlier this year did not exempt the project from environmental law. The Bush administration, which has talked tough about the need for fiscal discipline and says it is committed to protecting wetlands, should fully support the exercise of EPA and FWS authorities that would spare the Big Sunflower River and the nation's taxpayers from this senseless scheme.

EPA should use its authority under the Clean Water Act to veto the Yazoo Pumps. Although EPA has asserted this prerogative only 11 times, the tremendous ecological

damage, the ready availability of alternatives to protect homes, and the misuse of public funds provide ample rationale. The Pumps would affect more than 25 times the total amount of wetlands spared by all previous EPA vetoes.

With endangered species living in the area harmed by both projects, including in two national wildlife refuges, and the incredible diversity of other fish and wildlife at risk, FWS should assert its Endangered Species Act and other authorities to the fullest extent to help ensure that these destructive projects do not proceed.

The state of Mississippi also should deny the necessary Clean Water Act certifications for both the Yazoo Pumps and the dredging of the Big Sunflower River. One certification granted for the Big Sunflower dredging project already has been thrown out by the Mississippi Supreme Court.

During the next 12 months, Corps officials in Vicksburg will accept public comments on both the final Yazoo Pumps proposal and a revised draft proposal for the Big Sunflower dredging project. Members of the public should use these and other opportunities in the coming months to speak out and encour-



LOUIE MILLER

THE CORPS ALSO WANTS TO DREDGE 104 MILES OF RIVER BOTTOM, WHICH WOULD DESTROY ALMOST HALF OF A WORLD-CLASS MUSSEL BED.

age state and federal agencies to protect the Big Sunflower River, and to call on Congress to exercise fiscal restraint with regard to these projects.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO TAKE ACTION:
WWW.AMERICANRIVERS.ORG/MOSTENDANGERED/BIGSUNFLOWER2003.HTM



KLAMATH RIVER

THREAT: IRRIGATION WITHDRAWALS, HYDROPOWER DAMS, POLLUTION

SUMMARY

The federal Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) is irresponsibly maximizing irrigation in the Klamath River basin, depleting the river, wreaking havoc on imperiled wildlife, and imposing tremendous hardships on Native American and fishing communities. Unless Congress and federal agencies bring water commitments back into balance with what nature can sustain, the nation can expect more tragedies like the staggering die-off of more than 33,000 salmon that occurred last September.

THE RIVER

The Klamath River flows from a broad patchwork of lakes and marshes at the foot of the Cascade Mountains straddling the California-Oregon border, and winds southwest into California. After passing through five hydropower dams, the river reaches the Pacific Ocean south of the fishing community of Crescent City. More than 75 percent of birds migrating on the Pacific Flyway feed or rest in the upper basin, and the largest population of bald eagles in the lower 48 states winters in several national wildlife refuges there.

The upper Klamath basin has been called the "Everglades of the West." However, almost 80 percent of the upper basin's wetlands have been converted to grow thirsty crops such as potatoes, alfalfa, and hay, including nearly 23,000 acres on the Tule Lake and Lower Klamath National Wildlife

Refuges. Irrigation withdrawals and polluted farm runoff combine to make portions of the watershed among the most degraded in Oregon. Diversions from three Klamath River tributaries, the Trinity, the Shasta, and the Scott, exacerbate the river's water shortages. Klamath River salmon runs were once the third-largest

in the nation, but have fallen to just 8 percent of their historic numbers. Coho salmon are so diminished that they are protected under the Endangered Species Act.

THE RISK

In 2002, BOR adopted a new 10-year operating plan for its massive Klamath Irrigation Project. The plan signaled a political decision to maximize irrigation deliveries at any cost and abandoned flow targets that had been set to protect endangered fish. Agency leaders have suppressed biologists' calls for more water in the river and studies substantiating those recommendations. A federal economic analysis concluding that water in the river had eight times the value of water on farm fields was released only after a copy was leaked to the media.

The consequences of allowing politics to trump science were immediately apparent. In September 2002, poor river conditions killed more than 33,000 salmon and steelhead returning to spawn, including hundreds of imperiled coho salmon. This was the worst salmon die-off in the basin's history, including tribal oral histories going back more than 1,000 years.

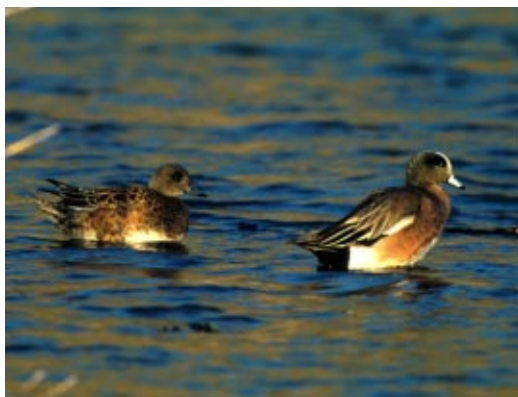
The damage is more than ecological. Thousands of commercial fishing jobs and \$75 million in annual income have already disappeared, and the BOR operations put the remaining jobs at risk. BOR's failure to honor treaty rights that predate the construction of the irrigation project has imposed enormous cultural and economic hardship on the Native American tribes.

Ecologically-abusive irrigation practices in the river's headwaters are compounded by the presence of five hydropower dams between the agricultural basin and the coast. The dam closest to the river mouth lacks fish ladders or other passage devices and blocks access to more than 100 miles of salmon and steelhead spawning habitat.



U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

THE KLAMATH RIVER BASIN
IS A CRITICAL WETLANDS
STOPOVER FOR BIRDS
MIGRATING ALONG THE
PACIFIC FLYWAY.



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE



OREGON NATURAL RESOURCES COUNCIL

WHAT CAN BE DONE IN THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

More fish kills, the river's continued decline, and further hardship for coastal fishing communities and Native American tribes are inevitable unless the nation's leaders make a concerted effort to manage irrigation sensibly and return water back to the Klamath River.

The White House-appointed Klamath River Basin Federal Working Group is due to present proposals for resolving this conflict by September 2003. The group should recommend that the federal government help bring water supply and demand back into balance by offering fair prices for water to willing sellers. The Working Group also should call for the end of commercial farming on the national wildlife refuges. These two measures would free up water for the lower river.

The September fish kill revealed the fundamental flaws in BOR's 10-year water plan. BOR should scrap it and start over, basing new operations on the Hardy and Addley Phase II study. This report, prepared by the Department of the Interior in cooperation with state and tribal biologists, recommends more water for salmon but has thus far been suppressed by the Bush administration.

Congress also should pass Rep. Mike Thompson's (D-CA) Klamath River Basin Restoration and Emergency Assistance Act into law. This bill would authorize funds for water conservation and habitat restoration projects and provide compensation for communities affected by the salmon kill of September 2002. The bill also would establish a Klamath Basin Restoration Task Force of conservationists, fishermen, tribal representatives, and farmers to oversee water conservation and restoration activities.

The future of the dams on the Klamath River rests on the outcome of a relicensing process by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, which is already underway. PacifiCorp, the utility that owns these dams, should commit to installing fish passage or removing dams to open up blocked spawning habitat, and should also implement other measures to improve water quality in the river when it files its formal license application this year.

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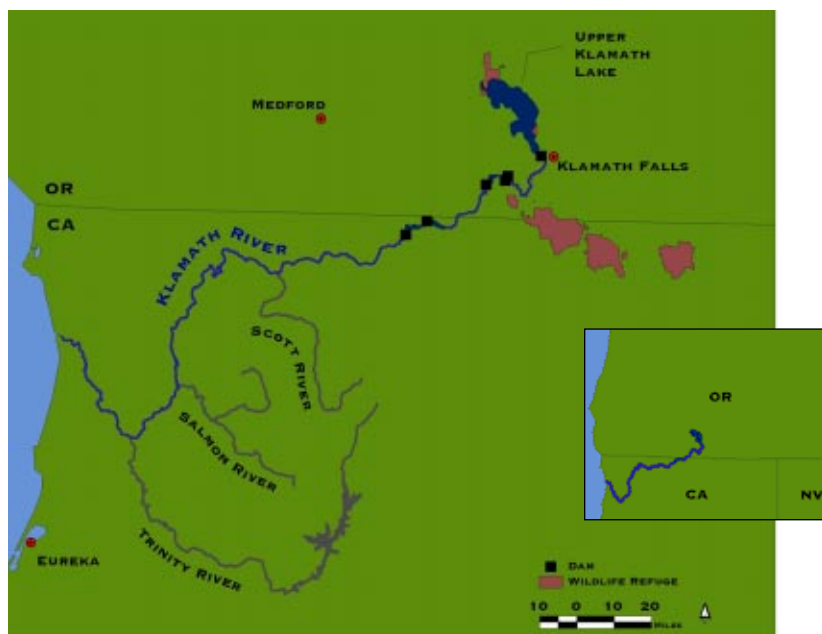
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**EXCESSIVE IRRIGATION
WITHDRAWALS COST THESE
FISH THEIR LIVES, AND COST
FISHING COMMUNITIES THEIR
LIVELIHOODS.**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION OR
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[WWW.AMERICANRIVERS.ORG/
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KLAMATH2003.HTM](http://WWW.AMERICANRIVERS.ORG/MOSTENDANGERED/KLAMATH2003.HTM)**



IPSWICH RIVER

THREAT: GROUNDWATER PUMPING AND EXCESSIVE WATER CONSUMPTION

SUMMARY

Because of excessive groundwater pumping and municipal water consumption, especially in the summer, portions of Massachusetts' Ipswich River run dry every year. If the state of Massachusetts fails to enforce existing regulations and act on opportunities to improve water conservation in the coming months, the Ipswich faces a future in which it will more frequently resemble a dirt road than a river.

THE RIVER

The Ipswich River drains a 155-square-mile watershed on the coastal plain of northeastern Massachusetts. The spring-fed river winds more than 40 miles through maple forests, swamps, and rapidly urbanizing areas from its headwaters to the Atlantic Ocean. Captain John Smith, an early explorer, praised the Ipswich River for its abundant runs of smelt, herring, shad, Atlantic salmon, and other species.

Those fisheries were largely decimated by

three fish species that can tolerate these harsh conditions — redbfin pickerel, American eel, and pumpkinseed.

Despite the river's failing health, several rare and endangered species still call the Ipswich home, including the bridled shiner, least tern, piping plover, and four species of salamanders. Massachusetts' Great Marsh embraces the mouth of the Ipswich, and is an important stopover for migratory birds along the Atlantic Flyway. Shellfish beds in the Ipswich estuary produce the well-known Ipswich clams and other valuable shellfish.

THE RISK

Due to excessive municipal water withdrawals and excessive pumping of nearby groundwater, the Ipswich is widely regarded as the most flow-stressed river in the Northeast. More than 330,000 residents and thousands of businesses withdraw up to 35 million gallons per day from the Ipswich River. Because two-thirds of these consumers live outside of the Ipswich River basin, between 20 and 25 million gallons never return to the Ipswich River watershed, producing a major water deficit.

Municipal withdrawals in the basin dewater the river in two ways: By intercepting groundwater that would otherwise flow into the river, and by sucking water out of the river directly. This causes the river to actually flow backwards in some locations, as water is pulled upstream. Water levels throughout the basin are perpetually low in the summer, and some stretches of the river run dry every single year, resulting in fish kills and other ecological damage.

The Ipswich River and several of its tributaries are listed as "impaired waters" by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), which cites low flows, high nutrient concentrations and counts of disease-causing bacteria. Low levels of dissolved oxygen in the summer make the river unsuitable for most aquatic life, and may contribute to elevated levels of the toxin methyl mercury.

These problems are compounded by the fact that the Massachusetts DEP is not satisfying its responsibility under the Water Management Act to "ensure an appropriate balance



U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

PORTIONS OF THE IPSWICH RIVER RUN DRY EVERY YEAR.



IPSWICH RIVER WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

dam construction in the 1800s. In more recent years, excessive withdrawals of the river's water for municipal consumption regularly leave portions of the river dry, while other reaches are plagued with low water levels, unnaturally high temperatures, and low levels of dissolved oxygen. Brook trout and fallfish have largely disappeared from the upper basin, and the Ipswich is currently dominated by just

among competing water withdrawals and uses, as well as preservation of the water resource itself.” The Department has yet to complete a review of water use permits that was due in 1999, allowing continued water withdrawals without regard to the consequences for the river system.

In September 2002, all-time lows were noted on stream gauges in the river. Flows had fallen to less than 1 percent of the recommended levels. Much of the upper Ipswich River more closely resembled a dirt road than a river. Adding insult to injury, there was documented use of the riverbed as a trail by off-road vehicles, inflicting damage to the riverbed itself.

WHAT CAN BE DONE IN THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

The outlook for the Ipswich is bleak unless the state of Massachusetts takes action now to reduce consumption and leave more water in the river. As a first step, Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney should direct the Massachusetts DEP to complete its overdue review of water withdrawal permits. The agency should ensure that water users meet stringent permit conditions that comply with the state’s Water Management Act and the anti-degradation provisions of Massachusetts’ water quality standards.

The next step toward returning flow to the Ipswich River is for municipalities to act on a proposal from the Ipswich River Watershed Management Council to adopt more effective water conservation measures. These include prohibiting lawn watering and limiting the use of certain wells during extreme low-flow periods, and reducing the amount of water “exported” from the basin via sewers. The Council also recommends capturing roof drainage in cisterns for irrigation use, and altering the region’s storm sewers to increase groundwater recharge. Water conserved through these measures should be left in the river.

The third step is for the Massachusetts legislature to pass S. 2040/H. 2211 — “An Act



LOU WAGNER

Establishing a Water Resources Conservation and Efficiency Program” — in the upcoming session. This legislation would give priority to the Ipswich River in a new statewide program that provides funding, technical assistance, and guidelines to improve water efficiency.

MASSACHUSETTS IS NOT ENFORCING THE TERMS OF ITS PERMITS TO TAKE WATER FROM THE RIVER.

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GUNNISON RIVER

THREAT: UNNATURAL FLOW, WATER EXPORTS

SUMMARY

In drought-plagued Colorado, pressure is growing to use more water from the Gunnison River to fuel sprawling development near Denver on the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains. Unless the Department of the Interior (DOI) asserts the public's right to an adequate flow of water, the roar of the river may soon cease to echo off the walls of the spectacular Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park.

THE RIVER

From its headwaters along the Continental Divide to its confluence with the Colorado River near Grand Junction, the Gunnison River drains nearly 8,000 square miles of rural western Colorado. The Gunnison River's

signature feature is the awe-inspiring Black Canyon. The canyon's whitewater rapids and "gold medal" trout fishery draw visitors from across the country. To protect "the roar of the river," President Herbert Hoover declared the Black Canyon a national monument in 1933. In 1999, it became a national park.

The river, though beautiful and partially protected, is not pristine. Several species of its fish are listed under the Endangered Species Act. Three dams operated by the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) just upstream of the park have severely altered the natural flow of the river. The Aspinall Unit, as the dams are collectively known, inundated more than 40 miles of prime native trout waters to allow more consistent control of the river's water for irrigation and to generate hydropower. Although the Aspinall Unit also is charged with protecting fish and wildlife and providing recreation, the dams seldom have supported the river or its fishery with appropriate flows of water when they are most needed.

THE RISK

The Aspinall Unit's operations already have damaged the Gunnison River, and Colorado's record-breaking drought is prompting state officials and water suppliers to look for new sources of water for the growing Front Range suburbs. Secretary Gale Norton's Interior Department is signaling that it will reverse a Clinton-era effort to protect river flows through the Black Canyon and instead open the door for substantial new withdrawals from the Gunnison River upstream of the park.

The issue has a tangled legal history. In 1978, a Colorado water court ruled that the federal government is entitled to a "federal reserved water right," but did not specify how much water was included in that right. Instead, the court charged the government with determining the flow needed to "conserve and maintain in an unimpaired condition the scenic, aesthetic, natural, and historic objects of the monument, as well as [its] wildlife."

In January 2001, the Clinton administration's DOI opened proceedings to quantify that right, calling for more natural river flows, including year-round minimum flows and periodic higher flows in spring and early summer. These flows would protect the scenic, ecological, and recreational values of the national park, and help preserve four endangered fish species in the Gunnison River and the Colorado River farther downstream.

DOI is continuing these proceedings with



MARK LANCE



A WATER-RIGHTS GIVEAWAY
THREATENS THE FUTURE
OF THE GUNNISON RIVER
AND THE BLACK CANYON
NATIONAL PARK.

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substantially different priorities. Although the park's water right is retroactive to 1933, DOI officials have signaled they will subordinate the claim for the park to irrigators and municipalities with more junior rights, including some rights that have yet to be established. DOI has also indicated that it may not reduce total deliveries from the Aspinall Unit to provide water for the Black Canyon, although the park's rights are more than 20 years senior. This concession is of particular concern because municipalities outside of Denver are hoping to purchase as much as 240,000 acre feet of Aspinall Unit water for delivery across the Continental Divide to fuel sprawl development.

Though legally the park's water right is entitled to precedence over the Aspinall Unit, under the scenario suggested by the Bush administration, the water that is so important to the health of the park could be removed from the Gunnison River before it ever reaches the Black Canyon. The Gunnison River could end up with even less water than it has now. The precedent could be far reaching. There are dozens of national parks, forests, wildlife refuges, and Indian reservations in the West with reserved rights yet to be quantified.

WHAT CAN BE DONE IN THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

In the coming months, DOI will finalize its position in Colorado water court to quantify the Black Canyon National Park's federal reserved water right.

The American people are entitled by law to enough water to fulfill the vision of the Black Canyon as a scenic and rewarding destination. The public should urge the Bush administration to claim enough water now to permanently protect the park, without having to buy or beg for more water later. An insufficient claim from DOI would squander the park's legal rights and clear the path for suburbs outside Denver to grab the river's water.

DOI should base its claim on the same body of science that supported the initial 2001 quantification application. Although this may require a modification of traditional operations at the Aspinall Unit, BOR can do this for two reasons. First, the purposes of the Aspinall Unit specifically include enhancing fish, wildlife, and recreation. Second, the Black Canyon National Monument was estab-



MARK LANCE

lished prior to the construction of the dams, and under Colorado law the park's water right is entitled to priority over the dams.

CONTACTS

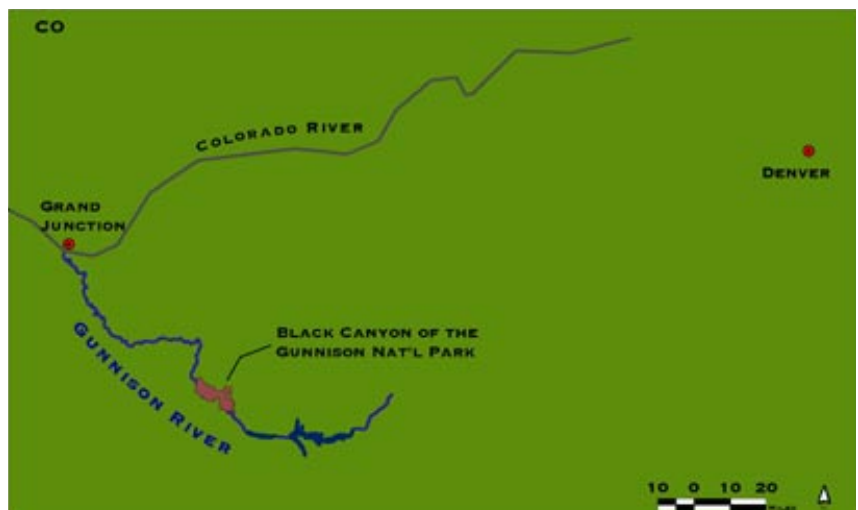
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RIO GRANDE

THREAT: EXCESSIVE DIVERSION AND OVER-CONSUMPTION OF WATER

SUMMARY

Although the Rio Grande has failed to reach the Gulf of Mexico for much of the past two years, this troubled river could take a further turn for the worse in coming months, as Albuquerque, N.M., and Brownsville, Texas, close in on new withdrawals, and federal agencies determine how to manage their dams that control water levels throughout much of the river. If the cities succeed in securing more river water and federal agencies stick with status quo operations, more stretches of the river could run dry and the last of the Rio Grande's small native minnow could disappear forever.

THE RIVER

From its headwaters in the mountains of southern Colorado, the Rio Grande flows through nearly 2,000 miles of the arid Southwest and much of America's national mythology. On its way to the Gulf of Mexico at Brownsville, Texas, the Rio Grande drains 11 percent of the continental United States. Despite its name, the Rio Grande averages only about one-fifth as much water as its neighbor, the Colorado River, and experiences more frequent droughts.

Will Rogers once called the Rio Grande "the only river I know of that is in need of irrigating." Diversions for municipal and agricultural use already claim nearly 95 percent of the Rio Grande's average annual flow. Parts of the

river have run dry in four of the past five years, and the river failed to reach the Gulf of Mexico for the first time in 2001. The river's tragic story is perhaps best told from the perspective of the endangered Rio Grande silvery minnow in New Mexico, the final survivor of a suite of small native minnow species once found throughout the river. Reduced to just 5 percent of its former range, the last minnow may soon be driven from the river by the growing demand for water in the face of drought.

THE RISK

Albuquerque and Brownsville are poised to increase water withdrawals from the Rio Grande to augment their existing municipal supplies. Albuquerque has, until recently, relied entirely on groundwater — and its water use is among the highest in the Rio Grande basin at 209 gallons per person per day. By comparison, El Paso residents consume 159 gallons per day. Albuquerque intends to get up to 75 percent of its water from the Rio Grande and San Juan rivers by 2006, removing up to 100,000 acre-feet of water per year and returning only half to the river as effluent. If necessary, New Mexico's political leaders have vowed a full court press to push the endangered silvery minnow out of the city's way.

Further downstream, the city of Brownsville intends to build a dam that would create a new reservoir near the river's mouth. If completed, the dam would damage commercial fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico by reducing freshwater entering the estuary and would flood habitat for the endangered ocelot and jaguarundi.

Finally, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) are preparing a new joint operations plan for their dams and reservoirs that control water levels throughout the upper Rio Grande basin. Although the law obligates both agencies to protect endangered river species while providing irrigation and flood control services, agricultural interests are lobbying hard against any reductions in irrigation water deliveries. BOR has refused to consider one of the most degraded stretches of the river in some of the restoration proposals now under consideration.

BROWNSVILLE, TEXAS WANTS TO BUILD A DAM THAT WOULD FLOOD HABITAT USED BY THE ENDANGERED OCELOT AND OTHER SPECIES.



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

WHAT CAN BE DONE IN THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

With expectations for Rio Grande water far exceeding the actual supply, conflict and crisis will continue to hang over the river for the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, several key decisions will be made in the coming 12 months that could dramatically improve — or worsen — the outlook for the river. Citizens should take advantage of opportunities to voice their concerns during these procedures.

The city of Albuquerque must obtain permits from BOR, the Corps, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and the New Mexico State Engineer before tapping the Rio Grande for municipal supplies. These agencies should resist arm-twisting from New Mexico's political leaders and strictly enforce the provisions in federal law that set a high bar against further burdening such a degraded resource. The public should urge Congress to reject any effort by the New Mexico delegation to secure an exemption from the Endangered Species Act (ESA) for the city's municipal water withdrawals.

The city of Brownsville will seek a permit from the Corps for its proposed dam this year. In lieu of a cursory Environmental Assessment, the Corps should prepare a detailed Environmental Impact Statement for the per-



RANDY BLANKSHIP, TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE DEPT.

mit that includes a full analysis of alternatives to the dam, such as conservation, water re-use, desalinization, and purchasing irrigation water from willing sellers.

The Corps, BOR, and FWS should resist pressure to preserve water deliveries at the expense of the river and its endangered wildlife. Before finalizing new operations for their Rio Grande basin projects, the agencies should review the forthcoming 10-year plan for silvery minnow recovery from the multi-agency ESA Collaborative Program. This group should provide recommendations that are specific enough for the Corps and BOR to implement immediately.

THE RIO GRANDE FELL SHORT OF THE GULF OF MEXICO FOR THE PAST TWO YEARS, BUT SEVERAL CITIES WANT TO TAKE EVEN MORE OF ITS WATER.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO TAKE ACTION:
WWW.AMERICANRIVERS.ORG/
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RIOGRANDE2003.HTM**



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MATTAPONI RIVER

THREAT: PROPOSED WATER SUPPLY RESERVOIR

SUMMARY

A proposed new water supply reservoir for the sprawling cities in Virginia's Lower Peninsula region threatens the ecological integrity of the Mattaponi River, one of the most pristine coastal river systems on the eastern seaboard. Unless state and federal agencies resist political pressure to rubber-stamp permits for this flawed project, the King William Reservoir will inundate hundreds of acres of wetlands and tribal sites, and up to 75 million gallons of water per day will be siphoned out of the river.

THE RIVER

The Mattaponi River flows 85 miles across Virginia's coastal plain, draining the northernmost portion of the upper York River watershed. The Mattaponi joins the Pamunkey River at the town of West Point to form the York River, which empties into the Chesapeake Bay some 60 miles later. According to The Nature Conservancy, the confluence of

these rivers forms the "heart of the most pristine freshwater complex on the Atlantic coast." The Mattaponi passes numerous lush tidal wetlands on its way to the bay, providing prime spawning and nursery habitat for migratory fish species, such as striped bass, American shad, and blueback herring. The river supports healthy sport, commercial, and subsistence fisheries.

Archeological sites abound in the area, which has been home to American Indian people for thousands of years and was among the first to be settled by the English in the New World. The reservation of the Mattaponi Indian Tribe, one of the original member tribes of the Powhatan Confederation that Pocahontas belonged to, lies along its namesake river and is one of the oldest in the United States. Even today, the Mattaponi Tribe regards the river as the lifeblood of its nation and relies on its waters, its fisheries, and native plants along the shore for its economic, cultural, and religious well-being. The tribe operates a shad hatchery on the river to restore and replenish shad populations.

THE RISK

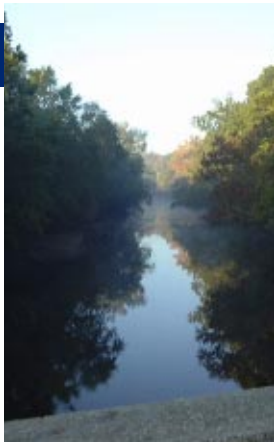
Since the early 1990s, the city of Newport News has been seeking authorization to construct the King William Reservoir on Cohoke Creek between the Mattaponi and Pamunkey rivers. The project would pump up to 75 million gallons of water per day from the Mat-



taponi River, store it in the reservoir, and then pipe it to the cities of Newport News, Hampton, Poquoson and Williamsburg, and the counties of York and James City.

The King William Reservoir would destroy at least 437 acres of sensitive wetlands — the largest permitted wetland loss in Virginia since passage of the 1972 Clean Water Act — along with 21 miles of free-flowing streams and nearly 1,100 acres of upland habitat. More than 100 cultural and historical sites, as well as several traditional tribal hunting, fishing, and gathering areas, would be flooded. The massive water withdrawal could impede shad recovery by raising salinity levels and altering the river's ecology. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) concluded that "the King William Reservoir...will result in substantial and unacceptable impacts to aquatic resources of national importance."

Projections of the region's future water needs are based on estimates and growth predictions prepared in the 1980s. Two independent studies and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers determined that the city of Newport News had significantly overestimated its need for water and the actual needs could be met by groundwater supplies, desalination, conservation, and use restrictions already planned by the city.



U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY



CLAY BERNICK

THE MATTAPONI RIVER IS ONE OF THE HEALTHIEST RIVERS ON THE EAST COAST — FOR NOW.

U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

The Corps' Norfolk District recommended denial of the permit for the reservoir in March 2001, concluding that Newport News "has not demonstrated a sufficient need for the project," and that "other less environmentally damaging practicable alternatives to the proposed King William Reservoir are available." If then-Governor James Gilmore had not intervened and appealed the decision to the top brass at the Corps' North Atlantic Division, this would have been the final permit decision. In October 2002, the North Atlantic Division reversed the Norfolk District's decision to deny the permit. It determined that the permit process should continue, that Newport News should pursue its final state permits, and that the city should submit additional information.

WHAT CAN BE DONE IN THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

The proposed project must clear several hurdles in the next 12 months before construction of the reservoir can begin. The public should take advantage of several upcoming opportunities to provide input to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), FWS, and state agencies.

If the Corps does ultimately issue a permit for the project, EPA should veto the project. The permit is currently under review at the EPA's regional headquarters in Philadelphia.

The Virginia Marine Resources Commission has yet to issue a permit for the project's water intake structure, and should deny the application based on adverse impacts to the fisheries



G. WARREN MOUNTCASTLE, JR.

and alterations in the river ecology. Finally the state's Department of Environmental Quality must still determine whether the project is in compliance with the Coastal Zone Management Act.

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THE KING WILLIAM RESERVOIR WOULD DROWN WETLANDS AND TRIBAL SITES TO PROVIDE WATER FOR CITIES THAT HAVE OTHER OPTIONS.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO TAKE ACTION:
WWW.AMERICANRIVERS.ORG/MOSTENDANGERED/MATTAPONI2003.HTM



PLATTE RIVER

THREAT: IRRIGATION AND WATER SUPPLY DEVELOPMENT

SUMMARY

Across the drought-stricken plains of Wyoming, Colorado, and Nebraska, the quest for more irrigation water is threatening to undermine an agreement to secure adequate flows in the Platte River and to protect its adjacent wetlands. Unless the Interior Department and state governments stick to their commitments and resist pressure for reckless new water development, migratory birds of the Central Flyway may lose their most important stopover, and the Platte River basin could become the scene of water conflicts that rival those along the Klamath or the Rio Grande.

THE RIVER

Originating high in the Rocky Mountains of Wyoming and Colorado, the North and South Platte rivers meet in western Nebraska to form the mainstem of the Platte, which then flows east roughly 300 miles to empty into the Missouri River near Omaha. The Big Bend Reach of the river in Nebraska is the heart of the Central Flyway for migratory birds. Several hundred species of birds use the river and adjacent Rainwater Basin wetlands, including 8 to 10 million ducks and geese, a half million sandhill cranes, and the largest remaining flock of endangered whooping cranes. Two imperiled birds, the piping plover and interior least tern, nest along the Platte's sandy chan-

nels. Flows in the central Platte are also important for the endangered pallid sturgeon, which are believed to spawn in the lower river.

The river flows through farm country and sacrifices much of its water to irrigate corn and soybeans. Three large reservoirs and many other smaller impoundments have reduced river flows to less than half of historic levels, and robbed it of sandy sediment that once built sandbar habitat. The river was once described by pioneers as being "a mile wide and an inch deep," but today the channel is seldom one-fifth of a mile across. Spring pulse flows have been eliminated, and vegetation is taking over many parts of the active channel that once provided ideal migratory habitat for cranes and nesting habitat for terns and plovers.

THE RISK

The severe drought that has gripped the western United States during the last two years has been particularly harsh in the Platte River basin. Municipal water utilities and irrigation interests have responded with a number of short-sighted proposals that would further degrade the Platte River.

Compacts signed by the three states give Wyoming and Colorado the authority to construct new water development projects. Momentum is building towards new surface and groundwater withdrawals that would further deplete river flows. Irrigation agencies have dusted off old plans for new dams and reservoirs.

In addition, the state of Nebraska continues to allow unchecked drilling of irrigation wells in most of the Platte River basin, which has further depleted flows in the river. Despite this, some agricultural interests believe that an additional 1 million acres of farmland could be made more productive by beginning groundwater irrigation. One pro-irrigation group has gone so far as to openly call for the three basin states to scrap ecological flow tar-



BRENT BLACKWELDER

ABOVE: CONFRONTING DROUGHT AND FAILING GROUNDWATER RESERVES, IRRIGATORS ARE SEEKING TO WITHDRAW MORE WATER FROM THE PLATTE RIVER.

BELOW: MILLIONS OF BIRDS, INCLUDING SANDHILL CRANES, MIGRATE THROUGH THE BIG BEND REACH OF THE PLATTE RIVER.



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

gets in the Platte River.

Officials from all three basin states, most notably Colorado, have called for additional water contributions from “forest management.” This is a euphemism for clearcutting large swaths of the national forests along the river’s headwaters to increase the amount of runoff reaching the river. This theory has been widely discredited, as it increases flooding while reducing the amount of water reaching the river through groundwater. Not only would increased clearcutting damage the ecological health of the forest, any extra water reaching the river would carry a heavy sediment load that could smother many of Wyoming and Colorado’s “gold medal” trout streams.

WHAT CAN BE DONE IN THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

This fall, the Department of the Interior (DOI) is expected to release a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) on a \$150 million plan for managing the tri-state Platte River basin. This forthcoming document is an important step towards executing a Cooperative Agreement signed by DOI and the three Platte River basin states in 1997. DOI and the three states should cement their commitment to full implementation of the goals of that agreement before allowing new agricultural water projects to go forward in the Platte River basin.

Some steps called for in the Cooperative Agreement, such as protecting and restoring 10,000 acres of riparian habitat and establishing a research and monitoring program for imperiled river species, are straightforward. However, the persistent drought will test the states’ continued commitment to other steps, such as annually securing up to 150,000 acre-feet of water to better meet instream flows, and offsetting any new water uses in the basin with conservation measures to maintain river flows.

The release of the DEIS will be followed by a series of hearings that will push the Cooperative Agreement plan into the public spotlight and spur substantial debate in all three states over its provisions. With the parties committed to developing a final plan under the Cooperative Agreement in 2004, the public should take advantage of the public comment period to alert the federal and state leaders that they



ALAN BLACK

want strong measures to protect the Platte River enshrined in the final agreement.

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COLORADO, WYOMING, AND NEBRASKA SHOULD CEMENT THEIR CONSERVATION COMMITMENTS ALONG THE PLATTE BEFORE CONTEMPLATING NEW WATER DEVELOPMENTS.



**FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO TAKE ACTION:
WWW.AMERICANRIVERS.ORG/MOSTENDANGERED/PLATTE2003.HTM**

SNAKE RIVER

THREAT: HYDROPOWER DAMS

SUMMARY

The fate of the Snake River and its wild salmon runs is increasingly in doubt as federal efforts to recover the imperiled fish falter and hydropower operators put short-term revenues ahead of salmon protection. Unless federal agencies and Congress step up their commitment to restore the endangered fish and Idaho Power Company improves operation of its Hells Canyon hydroelectric dams, it may soon be too late to save the salmon first documented in Lewis and Clark's journals.

THE RIVER

From its headwaters in the Rocky Mountains of Wyoming, the Snake River arcs through southern Idaho before it turns north into Hells Canyon, the deepest canyon in North America. For 100 miles, the river separates Idaho from Oregon before entering the state of Washington where it flows into the Columbia River. As the Columbia's largest tributary, the Snake once produced more salmon than any other in the basin. Historically, approximately 2 million salmon and steelhead trout returned each year to spawn in the river, traveling up to 900 miles from the ocean.

Today's Snake River bears little resem-

blance to the river explored by Lewis and Clark in 1805. The upper reaches of Hells Canyon have been inundated behind three massive dams owned by Idaho Power Company, and 140 miles of the lower Snake River have been submerged behind four federal dams. The Hells Canyon dams completely block salmon passage to upstream spawning grounds, and each federal dam kills between 5 and 15 percent of the fish attempting to pass. Today, all remaining Snake River salmon runs are listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

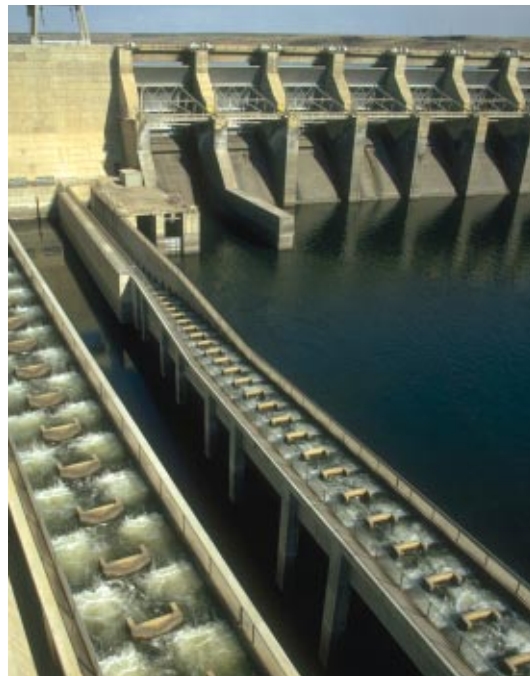
THE RISK

The 2000 Federal Salmon Plan committed federal agencies to hundreds of actions to restore populations of imperiled salmon, but implementation has been stalled by poor coordination and lack of funds. Internal documents obtained from federal agencies reveal that the Bush administration's budget requests and congressional appropriations have been inadequate. A recent analysis by the Save Our Wild Salmon Coalition found that less than 30 percent of the steps have been completed.

Although the Salmon Plan prescribed fish-friendly dam operations, such as higher spring flows that hold down water temperatures and help flush young salmon out to the sea, river conditions in the lower Snake River have actually gotten worse since the plan was released. In 2001, citing drought and the California energy crunch, federal dam operators largely abandoned their salmon commitments and wrung every possible kilowatt out of the river. The survival rate for juvenile salmon fell to the lowest level since salmon were listed under the ESA.

With recovery efforts faltering and river conditions hostile to salmon survival, the federal government continues to pour millions of dollars down the drain on a bizarre and unsuccessful scheme to transport young fish around the dams in trucks and barges. While this approach reduces the number of salmon forced through the dam turbines, fish carried downriver in trucks and

FISH LADDERS AND OTHER TECHNOLOGICAL "FIXES" HAVE FAILED TO REVERSE THE DECLINE OF SNAKE RIVER SALMON.



U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS



TOM QUINN

barges don't return to spawn in sufficient numbers to prevent further population declines.

Federal dams aren't the only ones killing salmon. Idaho Power's Hells Canyon hydropower complex completely blocks hundreds of miles of their historic habitat. The dams also harm fish downstream by altering the Snake's natural flows and changing the temperature of the river.

At this rate, Trout Unlimited forecasts that wild Snake River spring and summer chinook salmon runs will be functionally extinct by 2016. Praying for rain and loading fish onto trucks will not prevent this tragedy, much less recover populations to a level that will support robust commercial, tribal, and recreational fisheries.

WHAT CAN BE DONE IN THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

Time is running out for the Snake River and its wild salmon runs. Several decisions looming in the next year will determine whether recovery efforts get on track.

Congress should provide sufficient funding to the agencies to satisfy their recovery plan obligations, and should hold oversight hearings on their progress when those agencies release their 2003 "check-in" this

September. Congress also should prepare for the likely failure of the current salmon recovery strategy, and pass the Salmon Planning Act to create a "safety net." This bipartisan bill would authorize federal agencies to remove the four Snake River dams if current recovery efforts fail, and commission studies on how to best remove the dams while protecting local communities and economies.

Federal agencies will be tempted to abandon the practice of releasing higher spring and summer flows from the dams to help juvenile salmon migrate out to sea. Instead of rejecting this scientifically-supported salmon recovery practice, the agencies should work harder to satisfy the flow and temperature standards in the Federal Salmon Plan.

Idaho Power Company, which is seeking a new federal license to operate the three-dam



TIM PALMER

Hells Canyon Complex for the next 30 to 50 years, will file its application with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. The utility should commit to building fish passage and temperature control structures, release flows to help fish migrate downstream, and mitigate for habitat inundated by its dams.

CONTACTS

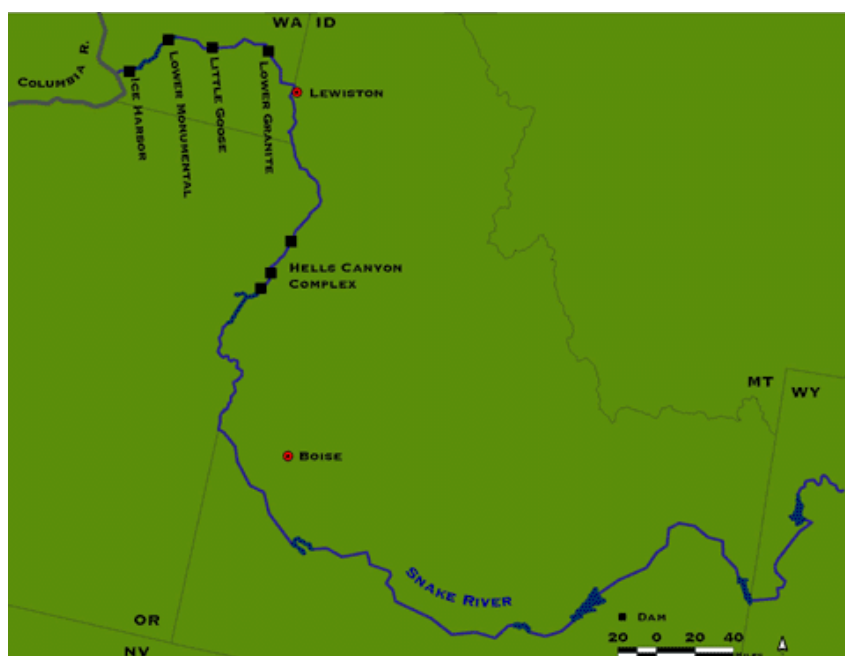
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RIVER CONDITIONS FOR MIGRATING SALMON HAVE ONLY GOTTEN WORSE SINCE A FEDERAL PLEDGE IN 2000 TO IMPROVE DAM OPERATIONS.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO TAKE ACTION:
WWW.AMERICANRIVERS.ORG/MOSTENDANGERED/SNAKE2003.HTM



TIM PALMER



TALLAPOOSA RIVER

THREAT: HYDROPOWER AND WATER SUPPLY DAMS, OVERALLOCATION

SUMMARY

Although Alabama Power Company's R.L. Harris dam already has transformed a section of the Tallapoosa River into an ecological desert, more dams could be on the way as the sprawling Atlanta metro area seeks to develop municipal water supplies in the river's pristine headwaters. Unless Alabama Power reforms abusive hydropower operations and Georgia and Alabama take up the call to use their water more efficiently, the river's unparalleled assortment of aquatic wildlife is at risk.

THE RIVER

The Tallapoosa River has its origins as a collection of streams that drains the southern Appalachian mountains in Georgia before braiding together to form the river's mainstem southwest of Atlanta.

These upper reaches of the Tallapoosa River basin are a true freshwater wonderland and among the most biologically rich in the world. The streams boast a remarkable collection of aquatic wildlife, particularly salamanders, freshwater mussels, and small, colorful fish known as darters.

After crossing the Alabama border, the river winds south and west, passing through a series of hydropower dams before joining with the Coosa River near Montgomery. Here, the river has been subdued, and is now a workhorse for the Alabama Power Company.

THE RISK

R.L. Harris Dam, built and operated by Alabama Power Company (APC), is arguably the most ecologically abusive hydroelectric project in the nation. Since its construction in 1980, this facility has turned a 47-mile stretch of the Tallapoosa River on and off like a faucet, subjecting the river and downstream communities to increases in river flow from as low as zero to as great as 16,000 cubic feet per second — as much water as 24,000 firehoses — in just minutes.

During periods of low consumer demand for electricity, water levels below Harris Dam drop to the point where the river is no more than a collection of rocky pools. Parents are ill-advised to let their children hunt for crayfish in these puddles — when APC can charge top dollar for each kilowatt, it opens the gates and unleashes a torrent. According to local residents, the roar of the approaching river resembles that of an oncoming train, so loud that it can be heard for several minutes before the water actually arrives.

This daily back and forth between flood and drought has devastated the river's populations of fish and wildlife and continues to eat away at landowners' property along the river below the dam. In the dry language of regulation, Alabama state officials designated this reach of the Tallapoosa River as "impaired" in 2000. Others have more bluntly called the river below R.L. Harris an "ecological desert."

Upriver, the Tallapoosa is threatened by a different kind of dam. The Tallapoosa's headwaters are within reach of the sprawling Atlanta metropolitan area, and Georgia officials are now pushing to build a new water supply dam on a small tributary. The West Georgia Project would pump water out of the Tallapoosa River into the tributary reservoir, which could then be piped to Atlanta. Not only would the project flood out a freshwater ecological wonder, it also would badly deplete water levels in the Tallapoosa by channeling return flows into another river basin.



BETH MAYNOR YOUNG



D. DUNN, U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

TOP: ATLANTA WANTS TO DROWN SOME OF THE TALLAPOOSA'S BIOLOGICALLY-RICH HEADWATER STREAMS UNDER A MUNICIPAL RESERVOIR.

D. DUNN, U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE





THREE PHOTOS, AMY LEWIS SIDES

WHAT CAN BE DONE IN THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

The abusive operations of the R.L. Harris Dam violate the terms of the operating license issued to Alabama Power Company by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). Other harmful consequences of the dam's operations were not foreseen when the

license was issued. After four years of negotiation with governmental agencies, lake groups, and river conservation interests, APC has yet to commit to improved opera-

tions. A coalition has set a deadline for the success of these negotiations as July 4, after which time, they will formally petition FERC to enforce the current license requirements and rewrite other license provisions.

By reconsidering the license terms, FERC would provide the public with a formal opportunity to speak up for the river, and enable state and federal resource agencies to require modifications to these drastic operations in the event that negotiations fail. Negotiation or FERC intervention are the only opportunities to restore more natural flows to the river and ensure that the Tallapoosa downstream of R.L. Harris Dam meets state water quality standards until 2030, when APC's current license expires.

The fate of the West Georgia Project is intertwined in the outcome of trilateral negotiations between the states of Georgia, Alabama, and Florida. These states are facing a deadline to propose a new formula for water allocation in two shared river basins, including the Tallapoosa, by June 30, 2003, followed by a 60-day period for public comment. The

states should commit to preserving appropriate flows in their shared river basins, and exhausting opportunities for water conservation and efficiency, before allowing the development of new water supplies such as the West Georgia Reservoir.

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ALABAMA POWER COMPANY'S R.L. HARRIS DAM ON THE MIDDLE TALLAPOOSA IS ONE OF THE MOST ECOLOGICALLY ABUSIVE IN THE NATION, ALTERNATELY FLOODING AND DRYING UP THE RIVER DOWNSTREAM.



BETH MAYNOR YOUNG



FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO TAKE ACTION:
WWW.AMERICANRIVERS.ORG/MOSTENDANGERED/TALLAPOOSA2003.HTM

TRINITY RIVER

THREAT: FLOOD CONTROL AND FLOODPLAIN DEVELOPMENT

SUMMARY

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the city of Dallas are poised to unleash their bulldozers along the Trinity River, intending to knock down 34,000 trees to construct new levees, drainage swales, and toll roads that many ostensible beneficiaries don't want. Unless the public can persuade civil servants and elected officials to revise their vision for the city's riverfront, a remarkable urban oasis will be transformed into just another concrete cacophony.

THE RIVER

The Trinity River gathers together smaller forks from the north and west in the vicinity of Fort Worth and Dallas, then turns south to reach the Gulf of Mexico near Houston. The federal government has built more than a dozen dams on the Trinity and its tributaries upstream of Dallas, but the river is an important source of freshwater for Galveston Bay and drinking water for nearly 10 million residents in the river basin.

The 8,500-acre Great Trinity Forest embraces much of the river as it flows through Dallas. Bur oaks, American elms, pecans, green ash, and cottonwoods reach heights of 100 feet along the riverbank, and much of the area has the illusion of being

unchanged since the Caddo Indians camped, fished, and hunted there 1,000 years ago. Dallas has plans to acquire approximately 2,500 acres of the forest as parkland. Although little money has been spent, the city envisions eventually developing walking footpaths, bike trails, and put-ins for canoes along the river.

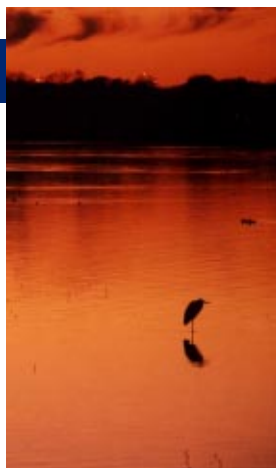
THE RISK

Following high waters in 1989 and 1990, the Corps dusted off a proposal from 1965 to transform Dallas' downtown riverfront. Those plans have since evolved into the \$140 million Dallas Floodway Extension, which proposes rerouting a portion of the riverbed into channels, extending the levees that protect the business district to protect residential neighborhoods, and cutting down 34,000 trees from the riverbank to develop flood drainage swales.

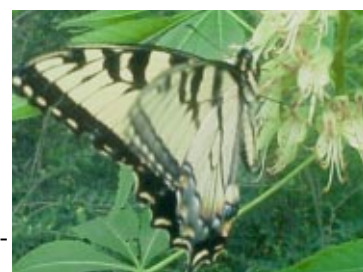
Once the Dallas Floodway Extension is complete, the city of Dallas and the North Texas Tollway Authority intend to construct eight lanes of toll road within the Trinity River's floodplain. Although the Corps justifies the Dallas Floodway Extension in part to protect minority neighborhoods along the river, residents of these neighborhoods have indicated that their preferred solution to periodic flooding is a voluntary buyout rather than new levees and freeways on their doorstep.

The plans have been touted for economic development and traffic relief, but the agencies have yet to make a convincing argument for either. If completed, these two projects would have a number of adverse consequences for the Trinity River and the communities along it.

In addition to destroying 34,000 trees in the Great Trinity Forest, realigning the river channel would damage much of the instream habitat. Further degradation of the forest and river would be caused by water exiting the floodway at high velocities, resulting in increased erosion and siltation. New levees could create



DOUG TAYLOR



DAVID GRAY

THE U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS IS POISED TO UNLEASH ITS BULLDOZERS ON A REMARKABLE URBAN OASIS ALONG THE TRINITY RIVER.



DOUG TAYLOR

a false sense of flood security and lure more residents and businesses into flood-prone areas. The floodway toll roads would transform a large portion of a remarkable urban refuge of peace and quiet into just another congested and polluted transportation artery.

WHAT CAN BE DONE IN THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

An alternative to the Dallas Floodway Extension exists and has been endorsed by conservation organizations, taxpayer watchdog groups, and minority representatives. Key features include raising the current levees that protect the Dallas Central Business District, offering a voluntary buyout to flood-prone residents and businesses, and relocating the planned toll roads out of the floodplain. However, the Corps and the city of Dallas are determined to proceed, and the last remaining opportunities to stop the Dallas Floodway Extension and spare the Trinity River will come during the next 12 months.

The first opportunity will come in the spring when the Corps is expected to finalize a court-ordered review of the project. Although the Corps is not expected to make substantial changes to its previous conclusions, a judge must approve the study before construction can begin. The new document also will provide an opportunity for public comment, and citizens should exercise their right to urge the agency to pursue a more ecologically and economically sensitive approach.

The city of Dallas is assessing the environmental impacts of building the toll road in the floodplain and will submit its conclusions to the city council and the public in 2003. Early signals suggest that the report will recommend construction in the floodway. City residents should let their council members know that they oppose this project and want to see the Great Trinity Forest protected from such development.

The public should alert their representatives in Congress that they do not want to see tax dollars wasted on such an environmentally destructive project. They should urge the Bush administration, which has been critical of the project, to continue to resist efforts by the Texas congressional delegation to secure federal funding for the Dallas Floodway Extension.



U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

MANY RIVERFRONT RESIDENTS PREFER HELP MOVING OUT OF HARM'S WAY TO LEVEES AND TOLLROADS ON THEIR DOORSTEPS.

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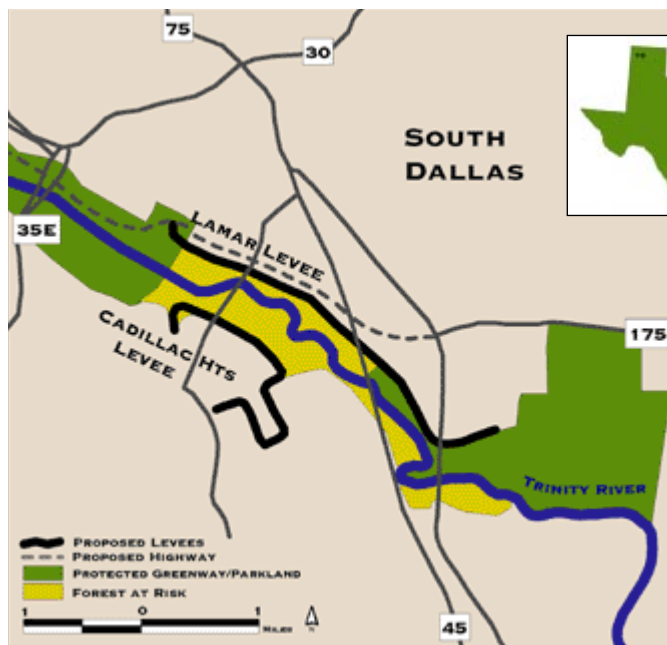
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