



American Rivers  
*Thriving By Nature*

2010 EDITION

# AMERICA'S MOST **ENDANGERED** RIVERS™

25  
25 YEARS OF SUCCESS



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# 25 YEARS

## 25 YEARS OF SUCCESS

Through the *Most Endangered Rivers* report, for 25 years American Rivers has been the national watchdog raising the alarm on imperiled rivers and energizing grassroots support to stop threats such as dam proposals, mining operations, coal-fired generators, and massive dumping of raw sewage. Working with local partners, the media, elected officials, and concerned citizens, we have achieved spectacular successes for the nation's rivers — and the people, fish, and wildlife that depend on them.

Here are just a few examples from 25 years of success:

### NORTHWEST

**Elwha River:** Washington (1992, 1995)

**Threats:** Two dams

Two outdated dams have blocked the Elwha River near Olympic National Park for nearly 100 years, decimating the salmon runs. Our advocacy helped spur the decision to remove the dams. Deconstruction is on schedule to begin in 2011 and will restore more than 70 miles of river, from mountains to sea.

Other important victories in the Northwest include the protection of the **Columbia River's Hanford Reach** (listed 1998) as a National Monument and the **Alsek** and **Tatshenshini Rivers** (listed 1990-1993) in Alaska and British Columbia, which prevented potentially devastating copper mining.

### CALIFORNIA


**Klamath River:** (1987-1990; 2002-2003)

**Threats:** Dams, water withdrawal for irrigation, and pollution

In 2010, after years of negotiations, American Rivers signed historic agreements to remove four dams on the Klamath River, in what will result in the world's biggest river restoration project. The agreements will restore access to more than 350 miles of salmon habitat, resolve decades-long disputes over water in the basin, and provide greater economic security for fishing, tribal, and agricultural communities.

Also in California, a proposal for a new road that threatened **San Mateo Creek** (listed 2007) and the famous Trestles surf break was defeated, as was the pipeline that threatened the **Tuolumne River** (listed 2005).

KLAMATH RIVER, CA | Tupper Blake/USFWS



ELWHA RIVER, WA | J. Poth



## NORTHERN ROCKIES

**North Fork of the Flathead River:** Montana (2009)

**Threat:** Proposed mines and oil and gas drilling

Mining and oil and gas drilling proposals in British Columbia endangered the pristine North Fork of the Flathead River, its native fish and wildlife, and recreational opportunities in and around Glacier National Park. In 2010, Montana Senators Baucus and Tester, Governor Schweitzer, American Rivers and our conservation partners convinced the government of British Columbia to save the river by moving to ban mining and oil and gas drilling in the North Fork watershed.

Other victories in the Rockies include saving the **Blackfoot River** (listed 1998) and the **Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone River** (listed 1994-1996) from mining.

## SOUTHWEST

**Neches River:** Texas (2007)

**Threat:** Proposed dam projects

The Neches River was threatened by a proposed reservoir that would have flooded 40 miles of the river and thousands of acres of hardwood forest in a National Wildlife Refuge. Ultimately, the U.S. Supreme Court stopped efforts to build the reservoir, saving the river and its priceless fish and wildlife habitat for future generations.

Elsewhere in the Southwest, the reliability of water flows has begun to improve in New Mexico's **Santa Fe River** (listed 2007) and in the **Guadalupe River** (listed 2002) in Texas. Our advocacy also helped save **McCrystal Creek** (listed 2005) in New Mexico from coalbed methane drilling and other harmful development.

## MIDWEST

**Minnesota River:** South Dakota and Minnesota (2008)

**Threat:** Proposed coal-fired power plant

A coal-fired power plant would have sent more pollution into the air, and endangered the Minnesota River with excessive water withdrawals and mercury pollution. In 2009, the U.S. EPA said the proposal did not meet federal air quality requirements — effectively killing the plant.



FLATHEAD RIVER, MT | Ryan Hagerty/USFWS

## GREAT LAKES

**Wolf River:** Wisconsin (1997-1998)

**Threat:** Proposed zinc/copper sulfide mine

A zinc and copper sulfide mine would have dumped 44 million tons of waste into the Wolf River, threatening fish and wildlife and the sacred lands of four native tribes. In 2003, two tribes bought the site, killing the mine proposal and ensuring the area will be forever protected to support clean water, tourism jobs, and tribal culture.

## NORTHEAST

**Penobscot River:** Maine (1989-1996)

**Threat:** Dams

In 2004, American Rivers helped block the construction of new dams on the **Penobscot** and spur a landmark agreement to remove two dams and improve operations on a third — a project that will restore more than 1,000 miles of river. We also played an instrumental role in securing \$10 million in federal funding for these dam removals.

Progress has been made to curtail excessive groundwater pumping and

water consumption that threatened the **Ipswich River** (listed 2003) in Massachusetts, and work is being done to minimize PCB contamination in New York's **Hudson River** (listed 2001).

## MID-ATLANTIC

**Susquehanna River:** New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland (2005)

**Threat:** Sewage pollution, dam construction

Within days of our naming the Susquehanna an endangered river, the U.S. EPA dropped its proposal that would have allowed the dumping of partially treated sewage into the Susquehanna and other rivers. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers also denied the permit to construct an inflatable dam on the river.

## SOUTHEAST

**Big Sunflower River:** Mississippi (2002-2004)

**Threat:** Wetlands destruction and river dredging

For almost 70 years, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers tried to push through a plan to drain more than 200,000 acres of wetlands in northwestern Mississippi to enhance production of subsidized crops. American Rivers played a lead role in convincing the U.S. EPA to kill the proposal, ensuring the river and its wetlands will continue to provide natural flood protection benefits and critical wildlife habitat.

Other success stories in the Southeast include saving Georgia's **Altamaha River** (listed 2002) from an unnecessary dam and reservoir, and protecting the **Tennessee River** (listed 2004) from sewage pollution.

While we celebrate these successes, American Rivers continues to monitor these rivers—and all rivers nationwide—to ensure that victories are upheld and to safeguard against new threats. The 2010 list of endangered rivers provides a snapshot of today's most critical threats to rivers throughout the nation, from harmful gas drilling to outdated flood management to construction of new dams. With the help of our activists and supporters across the country, we will continue to protect these endangered rivers.

## Why These 10 Rivers?

Each year, American Rivers reviews nominations for the *America's Most Endangered Rivers™* report from river groups and concerned citizens across the country. Rivers are selected based upon the following criteria:

- A major decision (that the public can help influence) in the coming year on the proposed action
- The significance of the threat to human and natural communities
- The degree to which the proposed action would exacerbate or alleviate stresses caused by climate change

The report is a call-to-action and emphasizes solutions for the rivers and their communities. By shining the spotlight on key decisions that will impact the rivers, and by providing clear actions the public can take on their behalf, the report is a powerful tool for saving these important rivers.





# 2010 AMERICA'S MOST **ENDANGERED** RIVERS™

## Upper Delaware River

Pennsylvania, New York

**Threat:** Natural gas extraction

**1** The Upper Delaware River provides drinking water to 17 million people across Pennsylvania and New York. However, this clean water source is threatened by natural gas extraction activities in the Marcellus Shale, where chemicals injected into the ground create untreatable toxic wastewater. Until a thorough study of the impacts on drinking water is completed, the Delaware River Basin Commission must refrain from issuing permits that will allow gas drilling in this watershed. In addition, Congress must pass the Fracturing Responsibility and Awareness of Chemicals Act of 2009 to help protect all rivers within the Marcellus Shale region.

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## Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta

California

**Threat:** Outdated water and flood management

**2** California's Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta supplies drinking water to 25 million people, irrigates the most productive agricultural land in the country, and provides critical habitat for the Pacific salmon fishery and millions of migratory birds. However, outdated water



supply and flood management systems have decimated the ecosystem and closed the commercial salmon fishery, all while leaving Californians ever more vulnerable to droughts and floods. Now two separate efforts to reengineer the state water supply and flood control system threaten to increase water diversions and preclude floodplain restoration that is essential for salmon recovery and public safety. Decisions by Governor Schwarzenegger in the last months of his term should ensure that restoration measures are included in the plans to restore the ecology of the Delta.

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## Gauley River

West Virginia

**Threat:** Mountaintop removal coal mining

**3** The Gauley River is internationally famous for its whitewater, contributing approximately \$16 million in annual revenue to West Virginia from commercial rafting. The river also supports trout and bass, but is scarred by coal mining impacts and subjected to degradation from on-going mining activity. The process of mountaintop removal mining flattens mountaintops, buries streams under debris, and pollutes water. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and cooperating agencies must stop the permitting of mine activity that harms the clean water and natural areas that

are essential to the health and heritage of Appalachian communities.

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LITTLE RIVER, NC | Restoration Systems LLC

## Little River North Carolina

### Threat: New dam

**4** The Little River, home to an abundance of fish and wildlife, provides drinking water, irrigation, and recreational opportunities to the surrounding communities. A proposed water supply dam would not only cost taxpayers millions, it would severely harm the river's health. American Rivers proposes better, more reliable, and cost-effective solutions to meet the area's water supply needs, including comprehensive water efficiency measures, and expanding existing water supply reservoirs. Raleigh and Wake County should pursue these smarter and cheaper alternatives, and protect the valuable resources of the Little River.

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UPPER COLORADO RIVER, CO | Ken Neubecker

## Cedar River Iowa

### Threat: Outdated flood management

**5** The Cedar River provides critical habitat for fish and wildlife and is a popular destination for paddlers and anglers. However, outdated flood management and poor watershed planning are impacting public health and safety by causing pollution and increasing the risk of flood damage. The Iowa legislature must work with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to prioritize lower cost, non-structural flood management solutions on the Cedar River. These natural solutions will help reduce flood damage, improve water quality, and restore fish and wildlife while saving taxpayer dollars.

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CEDAR RIVER, IA

## Upper Colorado River Colorado

### Threat: Water diversions

**6** The Upper Colorado River and its tributaries are home to prized trout fisheries, drawing anglers and paddlers from across the country. However, more than 100 years of diversions have sapped the river of its lifeblood. If two new major proposed diversion projects advance without the right provisions, the river could become a shadow of its former self. Conversely, if the projects move forward with appropriate foresight and consideration for the long-term protection of the river's health, it could usher in a

new era of stewardship and recovery for the Upper Colorado. The regulatory agencies, conservation interests, and people of Colorado must insist that the water projects contain key protections for river health.

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CHETCO RIVER, OR | Barbara Ullian

## Chetco River Oregon

### Threat: Mining

**7** Southern Oregon's Wild and Scenic Chetco River boasts pristine waters and abundant wild salmon and steelhead. However, this natural gem faces an immediate threat from a strip mining proposal that would use a highly damaging method of dredging. Oregon's Senators Wyden and Merkley, Congressman DeFazio, and Governor Kulongoski are calling on the agencies that manage this river (the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Interior) to prohibit mining in or near the Chetco River this summer. This reprieve would allow Congress time to legislate the best possible long-term protection for the Wild and Scenic Chetco River.

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TETON RIVER, ID | Jonathan Long

## Teton River Idaho

**Threat:** New dam

**8** The Teton River is a western treasure, home to abundant wildlife and one of the last strongholds for rare Yellowstone cutthroat trout. The river supports a tremendous recreational fishery and whitewater boating. However, some eastern Idaho water users want to rebuild the Teton Dam — a dam that catastrophically failed 35 years ago. The state of Idaho and U.S. Bureau of Reclamation are now studying the feasibility of rebuilding the dam or pursuing non-structural water supply alternatives that would keep the Teton River in its free-flowing state. Instead of rebuilding an expensive and unnecessary dam, the state and the Bureau of Reclamation should promote more cost-effective, reliable water supply solutions that focus on conservation and smarter water management.

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## Monongahela River

Pennsylvania, West Virginia

**Threat:** Natural gas extraction

**9** The Monongahela River provides drinking water for hundreds of thousands of people, and is home to some of the East Coast's best fishing, whitewater boating, and wildlife. However, the river and its clean water are threatened by pollution created by natural gas extraction activities in the Marcellus Shale. The Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission, and the states of Pennsylvania and West Virginia, must act to prohibit water quality degradation associated with Marcellus Shale drilling to protect the region's clean water for future generations.

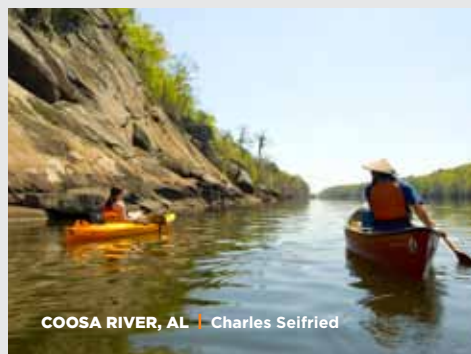
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COOSA RIVER, AL | Charles Seifried

## Coosa River Alabama

**Threat:** Hydropower dams

**10** The Coosa River is a cultural icon of the South and home to an astounding variety of rare and unique fish, snails, and mussels. The construction of seven large hydropower dams in the mid 1900's turned the river into a series of reservoirs and caused the largest mass extinction of aquatic species in U.S. history. But there is still an opportunity to save some of the Coosa's remaining natural heritage for future generations. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service must insist on strong protections for the river's endangered wildlife in the license that will allow Alabama Power to operate these dams for the next 50 years. The Coosa will serve as a test as to whether federal agencies are committed to environmentally sustainable hydropower operations.

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MONONGAHELA RIVER, PA | Ronjamin



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Midwest  
Northeast  
Northwest  
Northern Rockies  
Southeast

**About American Rivers:**

American Rivers is the leading conservation organization fighting for healthy rivers so communities can thrive. American Rivers protects and restores the nation's rivers for the benefit of people, wildlife, and nature. Founded in 1973, American Rivers has more than 65,000 members and supporters, with offices in Washington, DC and nationwide.

TAKE ACTION AT **AmericanRivers.org**

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