

the source



AMERICAN
RIVERS



IMPACT REPORT 2025

The power of your support

The sound of water rushing over rocks, the silhouette of a heron wading in a marsh, a cool glass of ice water. Whether you live in a bustling city or a rural community, we all share connections to rivers and depend on clean, safe water.

We are deeply grateful for our many supporters, partners, and staff who show up every day to protect and restore our rivers from coast to coast. The threats our rivers face are unprecedented — from pollution and habitat loss to devastating floods and droughts. The importance of championing rivers and clean water has never been greater.

This past year, despite federal funding uncertainty and environmental rollbacks, we found hope in the strength of our support. Like tributaries joining a mighty river, we built momentum from our shared love of these waters. Here's what we accomplished together.

Together with Tribal Nations and local partners, we protected over 1,165 river miles from pollution and harmful development, reconnected over 2,500 river miles through dam removal, and helped Pacific

Northwest salmon return to spawning grounds for the first time in over a century.

That's how our collaborative approach delivers results. Our focus on common-sense solutions and building a coalition of members, decision-makers, community leaders, Tribes, and people across the political spectrum allows us to make meaningful progress.

The successes in the pages ahead highlight the impact of your support across three areas fundamentally important to our shared future — clean water (page 5), abundant wildlife (page 6), and safe, healthy communities (page 7).

Thank you for your unwavering commitment to our rivers. Life Depends on Rivers® — and rivers depend on all of us working together.

Onward!


Jo-Ellen Darcy
chair of the board of directors


Tom Kiernan
CEO and president

My river why

"I donate in memory of my late husband, Dennis, who fished the Kinnickinnic River in Wisconsin and many other local rivers his whole life."

– CAROLYN J.
River Guardian

"Rivers are a lifeline connecting habitats — from mountains to estuaries — and they are a key indicator of the health of our ecosystems. The complexity and importance of their existence is mesmerizing."

– AMY W.
member

"I support American Rivers because our precious waterways deserve lasting protection and a strong voice to advocate for them. American Rivers provides that voice."

– TAYLOR M.
monthly donor

Chattahoochee River, Georgia



McDonald Creek, Montana

Building momentum

On screen

Our work to spotlight threats to rivers and ensure clean water gained national recognition.

► Watch **"An American River"** as CBS News travels the Delaware River, exploring decades of environmental damage and the comprehensive efforts to restore one of America's most vital water resources.



► Watch **"The American Southwest."** This tribute to the Colorado River's legendary landscapes and most charming characters — elk, condors, beavers, and more — is a call to action to conserve a river with an uncertain future. Learn more at TheAmericanSouthwest.film.



In the news

Our America's Most Endangered Rivers® campaign garnered nationwide attention, with 250+ stories in news media across the country.

Around the world

American Rivers staff shared learnings and expertise in dam removal, river protection, and more with conservation leaders in Sweden, England, Canada, Macedonia, and Croatia.

In action

We amplified supporters' voices. Together, you sent more than 30,000 messages to decision-makers calling on them to take action for healthier rivers and cleaner water.

Rivers need champions now more than ever. Whether that means supporting efforts to restore your local creek, using your voice for clean water protections, or joining American Rivers to protect 1 million river miles countrywide, you can make a difference.



Marcus Jones

Your impact in numbers

Here's a snapshot of how we're making every river clean and healthy for people and wildlife — thanks to your support!

200+

collaborative projects in progress with hundreds of partners nationwide

148 cities and counties supported to ensure clean water and community safety

108 dams removed by American Rivers and our partners*

2,528

river miles reconnected for fish and wildlife thanks to dam removal

1,165

river miles protected from pollution and harmful development

212,800

acres of riverside habitat protected

137+ wildlife species sustained by healthy salmon populations in restored rivers

**Latest data, 2024*

Three ways rivers transform lives

American Rivers works to safeguard the 4.4 million miles of rivers and streams essential to our nation's clean drinking water, extraordinary wildlife, and the strength of our communities. Our evidence-based, collaborative approach delivers results across three areas:

1

Clean water

Every living thing depends on clean water for survival. And much of our water comes from rivers. That's why American Rivers protects rivers that are the sources of our drinking water and helps cities use natural approaches to manage pollution — ensuring every person has clean, safe, reliable water.

2

Abundant wildlife

Free-flowing rivers are vital lifelines for fish, wildlife, and entire ecosystems. Without healthy rivers, there's no water, no wildlife, no life. We protect rivers from pollution and harmful development and restore freshwater habitats so the species that live there can thrive.

3

Safe, healthy communities

Keeping rivers healthy helps reduce the risk of catastrophic floods, droughts, and fires. American Rivers restores damaged rivers so they can better withstand the pressures of a changing climate. And we remove dangerous, outdated dams that pose safety hazards to people.

We all deserve clean water



Pecos River, New Mexico



UP TO 80% of plants and animals in the Southwest depend on rivers for survival.

Safeguarding New Mexico's waterways

New Mexico's rivers and streams flow through some of the nation's most breathtaking — and arid — landscapes.

Every drop of water in the desert matters: A significant portion of the state's population relies on rivers and streams for drinking water, and up to 80% of plants and animals in the Southwest depend on rivers for survival.

From its multibillion-dollar recreation economy to the centuries-old farming traditions that define New Mexico's cultural identity, the state's future depends on clean, healthy rivers and streams.



After naming the rivers of New Mexico America's Most Endangered River in 2024 due to rollbacks of clean water protections, your support helped us celebrate outstanding wins across the state. Together with local partners, we secured protection for over 250 miles of rivers in the Rio Grande, Rio Chama, Cimarron, Pecos, and Jemez watersheds.

In the Pecos watershed, we helped secure a pause on new mining claims across 165,000 acres, safeguarding the clean water that downstream communities, local farmers, and wildlife need to thrive.

Your investment in clean water is creating wins:

Protecting sources of drinking water:

We advocated for bipartisan legislation to protect and restore the Ohio River, which supports 25 million people across 14 states and countless wildlife species.

Stopping toxic pollution:

Alongside our local partners, we helped build momentum for a landmark agreement to stop millions of gallons of toxic waste that flows daily from California's Tijuana River into the Pacific Ocean.

Empowering nationwide river protection:

We launched a groundbreaking data hub to identify and guide protection of our nation's most valuable rivers.

AmericanRivers.org/RiverDataHub



Fish and wildlife on the rebound

Some wildlife comebacks take decades. Others happen in weeks. Less than a month after the world's largest dam removal project was completed, Chinook salmon returned to the upper Klamath basin for the first time in over a century — showing us that dam removal is the fastest, most effective way to bring rivers back to life.

The Klamath River winds from Oregon's Cascade Mountains through northern California to the Pacific Ocean. Once home to the nation's third-largest salmon runs, the river sustains Tribal communities who have depended on its salmon for thousands of years and continue to care for the ecosystem today. Four massive dams blocked migration and created stagnant reservoirs with lethally hot temperatures and toxic algae, contributing to the rapid decline of salmon in the watershed.

This historic dam removal and restoration project demonstrates the power of collaborative action. The decades-long effort was led by Tribal Nations — including the Yurok, Karuk, Klamath, Hoopa, and Shasta Tribes — with American Rivers as a key partner alongside farmers, anglers, and conservationists.

Thanks to supporters like you who made this work possible, thousands of salmon have already returned, with hundreds now spawning in the river and its tributaries.

While the watershed's full recovery will take decades, these promising results remind us that nature is always ready to rebound — we just need to give it the chance.

Your generosity is helping wildlife recover:

Creating sanctuary for endangered birds: Your contributions helped advance the largest wetland restoration in the history of Yosemite National Park, creating essential habitat for great grey owls and little willow flycatchers.



Reviving North America's largest salamanders: Your support helped remove another dam on North Carolina's Watauga River. This opened 36 miles of habitat for eastern hellbenders, which had been proposed for listing as an endangered species.

Bringing river herring back: After American Rivers helped remove three major dams on Maryland's Patapsco River, scientists made an exciting discovery. They found river herring eggs upstream for the first time — a hopeful sign that this keystone Chesapeake Bay species is recovering.

"We constantly underestimate the power of a living river to heal itself."

- Dr. Ann Willis, American Rivers California regional director

Ensuring strong, healthy communities

Spotlight: Pike River, Wisconsin

The Root Pike Watershed spans southeastern Wisconsin, flowing through urban and agricultural landscapes before reaching Lake Michigan.

For decades, development and agricultural runoff have left the South Branch of the Pike River severely damaged and polluted, impacting thousands of people across multiple communities. This watershed's restoration is essential for the health and safety of not only residents, but also the Great Lakes ecosystem.

Your support enables American Rivers to provide free technical expertise to our watershed partners. Working with the Root-Pike Watershed Initiative Network and other partners, we helped secure municipal leaders' support to restore 215 floodplain acres along the Pike River.



Neighborhood flooding on the South Branch of the Pike River in Wisconsin.

The project will restore the stream channel and nearly 200 acres of wetlands and create new public parkland and multi-use trails connecting neighborhoods to the lakefront. It will also prevent an estimated 1,000 tons of sediment from reaching Lake Michigan annually.

For years, we've partnered with cities and towns to prioritize natural infrastructure solutions that meet community needs while protecting families from flooding.

Your commitment to community health and safety is making a difference:

Protecting communities from flooding:

We secured a transformational \$1.2 million grant to support our National Floodplain Restoration Program — helping communities across the country manage flooding naturally while restoring vital habitat for wildlife.

From polluted to swimmable: American Rivers helped amplify Portland's progress as a "Swimmable City," shining a spotlight on the Willamette River as part of our commitment to making every river clean, safe, and fun for everyone.



Willamette River, Oregon

Your impact in action

Your support makes all the difference. When we protect our rivers, we protect our health, our communities, and the delicate web of life that makes our world extraordinary.



Watch our 2025 Impact Report video and view complete financials at AmericanRivers.org/Impact2025



Matt Otis

Juniata River, Pennsylvania

DID YOU KNOW?

There are even more ways to support healthy rivers and clean water.

- ▶ **IRA qualified distributions:** If you're 70½ or older, you can donate directly from your IRA to American Rivers tax-free.
- ▶ **Planned giving:** Create a lasting legacy for rivers through your will or trust.
- ▶ **Learn more at AmericanRivers.org/PlannedGiving**

OUR PURPOSE

American Rivers is a national conservation organization working to make every river clean and healthy for people and wildlife. We combine evidence-based solutions with enduring partnerships to safeguard the 4.4 million miles of rivers and streams that are essential to our nation's clean drinking water, extraordinary wildlife, and the strength of our communities. For more than 50 years, our staff, supporters, and partners have been driven by a common belief: Life Depends on Rivers®. AmericanRivers.org

American Rivers acknowledges, works, and seeks to amplify Indigenous leadership in river protection and honors the traditional ecological knowledge and perspectives held by Indigenous People and Tribal Nations.

AmericanRivers.org/Land-Acknowledgments



AMERICAN RIVERS



A recurring monthly gift allows more of your contribution to go toward saving rivers!

AmericanRivers.org/Monthly



Members: We are here to help!

Contact us at 877-347-7550 to update your address or manage your membership preferences.

Cover: Horseshoe Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area, Illinois
Credit: Mitch Paine Photography



The only organization building political power for rivers

Rivers make life possible — but across our country, many rivers are at a breaking point. The problems facing our rivers are urgent, but not inevitable.

What's missing is political power. In too many places, elected officials have failed to protect the waters we rely on.

That's where the American Rivers Action Fund, an affiliate of American Rivers, comes in.

We are building the political muscle to protect rivers and clean water — not just to block harmful policies, but also to create bold, proactive change.

Our goal: To organize a durable, bipartisan coalition of voters, elected officials, and public champions — the River Majority — who view clean water not as a special interest, but as a shared value and political priority.



- ADVERTISEMENT -

The American Rivers Action Fund focuses on four high-impact strategies:



Public ballot measures:

We back locally led initiatives that deliver wins for clean water and local economies.



State and local advocacy:

We advance forward-looking water policy.



Messaging and narrative change:

We invest in research-backed communications and storytelling that connects healthy rivers to healthy communities, strong economies, and shared stewardship of our outdoor heritage.



Building champions:

We support elected leaders who champion river priorities — from local officials to members of Congress.



Winning for water

We recently helped pass Colorado's Proposition JJ with 76% support, working with partners such as the Colorado Cattlemen's Association to secure funding for river health and infrastructure. The measure had broad bipartisan backing.

We also launched a research project to equip partners and policymakers with messaging strategies proven to bridge divides.

Looking forward, our aim is to make river protection a political norm, from statehouses to the national stage.

Turning river values into river victories

The mission of the American Rivers Action Fund is to build a bipartisan River Majority and advance wins for clean, safe water and healthy rivers for people and wildlife.



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Learn more at www.AmericanRiversActionFund.org