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American Rivers Announces America's Most Endangered Rivers® of 2026 in 41st Annual Report

Data Centers, Mining, and Pollution Threaten Our Nation's Water Supply Without Immediate Action

WASHINGTON D.C. — American Rivers is today, announcing America's Most Endangered Rivers® of 2026 in its 41st annual report. With 80 percent of our nation's rivers lacking adequate protection, according to the National Protected Rivers Assessment, and half of rivers in the U.S. containing unsafe levels of pollution, rivers are among the most at risk ecosystems on the planet despite their importance to society.

Millions of Americans depend on rivers to supply their drinking water, drive strong economies, irrigate our food supply and provide recreation and outdoor access. Protection of rivers and clean water enjoys broad support among the public, across demographics and political ideologies. But threats to rivers and water are mounting, demanding bipartisan action from decision makers.

"Polluting and abusing our rivers will impoverish our nation and ourselves. We should not shirk our responsibility to protect our most precious resource—our nation's freshwater," **said Tom Kiernan, president and CEO of American Rivers.** "Rivers are the foundation from which our nation has grown and if we allow vital water supplies to diminish and degrade, our children and the generations still to come will pay the price."

American Rivers reviews nominations for America's Most Endangered Rivers® from individuals and organizations across the country. Each listing is a call to action for the solutions our rivers need. Rivers are selected based upon the following criteria:

- A major decision that the public can help influence in the coming year.
- The significance of the river to people and nature.
- The magnitude of threat to the river and its communities.

America's Most Endangered Rivers® of 2026

- 1) **Potomac River:** The rapid unchecked buildout of data centers along the Potomac River threatens the drinking water for our nation's capital and surrounding areas while a historic sewage spill raises alarms about aging infrastructure.

- 2) **San Joaquin:** A massive gravel mine proposed along the river would jeopardize drinking water supplies for the Fresno region and reverse major salmon restoration progress.
- 3) **Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness:** The Twin Metals mine would bring acid-mine drainage to an iconic wilderness—endangering clean water, wildlife, and a major outdoor recreation economy.
- 4) **Lumber River:** Pollution, “forever chemicals” and animal feed lots is pushing the health of this river to the brink.
- 5) **Rogue River:** Mining pollution and the potential loss of Roadless Rule safeguards threaten this river’s remarkable salmon runs and incredible recreational value.
- 6) **Chilkat River:** The ongoing development of a large-scale copper and zinc mine threatens habitat for fish and wildlife and would irreparably harm Alaskan Native communities.
- 7) **Nissequogue River:** A failed dam that freed a major section of Long Island’s largest river, might be replaced threatening fish and wildlife recovery.
- 8) **Dan River:** Fossil fuel pipeline construction threatens drinking water supplies with pollution and increased flood risk for downstream communities.
- 9) **Amargosa River:** Mining operations threaten drinking water supplies, and the unique fish and wildlife that depend on this desert lifeline.
- 10) **Suwanee River:** Excessive water withdrawals, sewage, and agricultural pollution are testing this river’s limits in the extreme.

Learn more about America’s Most Endangered Rivers® of 2026, the urgent threats they face, and the solutions needed to protect and restore these vital waterways.

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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 3.5 million miles of rivers and streams that are essential to our nation’s clean drinking water, extraordinary wildlife, and 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