

the source

IMPACT REPORT 2026



Turning challenge into opportunity

Think of a river you love. Maybe you've sat at the water's edge on a hot summer afternoon or watched mist rise off its surface at dawn. Maybe it's the source of the water in your glass right now. However rivers have found you, you know the special place they hold in your heart — and why the work to protect and restore them matters more than ever.

This past year brought significant challenges for rivers and clean water. Hard-won policy safeguards faced rollbacks. The Potomac — the Nation's River — suffered one of the largest sewage spills in U.S. history. The West faced historic drought, while elsewhere, communities grappled with devastating flooding and harmful development. Our staff, our partners, and you, our supporters, all rose to meet the moment.

Together with our partners, we worked hard to defend vital river safeguards and secured new protections for 361 miles of rivers. We also celebrated a new record, reconnecting 4,893 miles of rivers by removing 100 dams!

Behind those numbers are rivers like the Deep in North Carolina, where we cleared the first of several aging dams — bringing life back to a stretch of water fragmented for more than a century. And we're championing 16 Wild & Scenic bills in Congress — from Florida's Myakka to New Mexico's Gila and rivers across the country — building bipartisan support for lasting protection.

Your support makes this possible. The pages ahead tell just a few of these stories — your stories.

We are proud of what we've accomplished together and more determined than ever to keep going.

Onward,

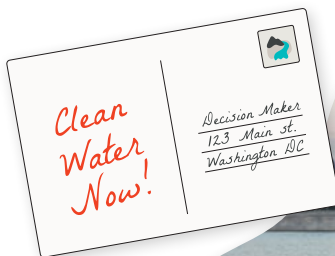
Mark Greatrex
Chair of the Board of Directors

Tom Kiernan
CEO and President

Building momentum

In action

You raised your voice for rivers — and decision makers heard you. Together, supporters sent 143,415 messages calling for clean water protections and healthy rivers.



On Capitol Hill

More than 80 advocates and American Rivers staff traveled to Capitol Hill in February, holding 85 meetings with Members of Congress and their staff across party lines. Volunteers advocated for the Floodplain Enhancement and Recovery Act and regional priorities including protection for the Ohio River Basin and more.

In the news

America's Most Endangered Rivers®, our annual flagship campaign that shines a national spotlight on rivers at risk, generated more than 400 media stories. *The New York Times* also published a major feature on the growing movement to remove outdated dams and restore rivers across the country, with American Rivers at the center of the story.



Alan Lehman, Potomac Riverkeeper Network

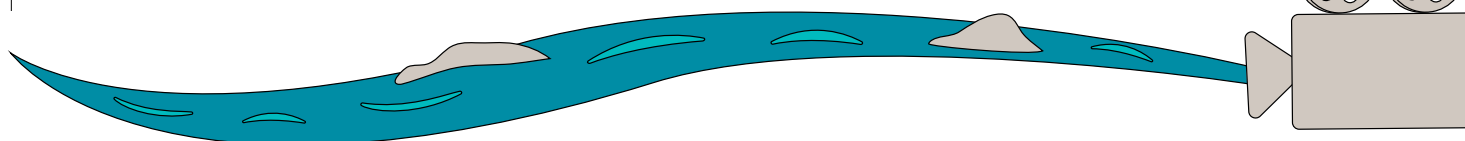


Rivers on the big screen

Two new films touched audiences across the country and inspired people to take action.

The American Southwest — an award-winning documentary about the Colorado River and its legendary landscapes — showed in more than 70 theaters throughout the West and reached more than 10 million people on social media. Millions more have watched it on PBS, Amazon Prime Video, and Apple TV. Learn more at TheAmericanSouthwest.film.

Our newest documentary film, **Second Chance**, examines the past, present, and future of the Teton River in Eastern Idaho. We made this film to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the catastrophic Teton Dam failure and to raise awareness about a renewed push to rebuild the dam at a cost of over \$1 billion. American Rivers is leading the charge to stop the dam from being rebuilt and to permanently protect the iconic Teton River Canyon. Watch the film at AmericanRivers.org/SecondChance.



My river why

Julia Askew, monthly supporter

"My name is Julia, and I'm a self-employed hairdresser living in Arizona with my little dog, Paul. I grew up on the East Coast and have always loved being in the water, playing in creeks after school, rafting, and tubing the Potomac during the summer. But it wasn't until I had the privilege of spending a summer guiding on the Arkansas River that I really grasped how fragile and vital these waterways are to so many ecosystems and communities and how desperately we need to protect them."

Here's what your support made possible this year, as we work to make every river clean and healthy



**Protect
healthy
rivers and
waters**

361

river miles protected from
pollution and harmful
development

43

states where we worked
to protect rivers

114,081

acres of riverside lands protected

OVER 350

projects across the country

100

harmful, unsafe dams removed
by American Rivers and partners

4,893

river miles reconnected
for fish and wildlife

**Restore
damaged
rivers and
waters**



Juniata River, Pennsylvania

Matt Otis

U.S. record: more upstream river miles reconnected than in any year before.



**Unite
people
for clean
water**

148

communities and cities
supported to ensure clean water

143,415

messages sent advocating for
clean water and healthy rivers

16

bills championed in
Congress to protect rivers,
backed by 68 lawmakers

Wilson

Lower Salmon River, Idaho

Protect healthy rivers and waters

Momentum, river by river



Upper Verde River, Arizona

The best way to protect a river is to ensure it never needs restoring.

American Rivers is the only organization solely focused on protecting our nation's rivers from being dammed, diverted, drained, or degraded. We prevent damage before it happens by bringing people together, forging practical solutions, and turning influence into lasting protection.

But knowing how well a river is protected has always been hard to measure. With our partners at Conservation Science Partners, we published the first science-backed

assessment of river protection across the United States. Our new online tool lets anyone see the values their local river provides — drinking water, fish and wildlife habitat — and how protected, or unprotected, it is.

At a time when many longstanding river protections are under attack federally, we're using this values-forward approach to educate decision makers on both sides of the aisle about why healthy rivers matter.

American Rivers plays a vital role, connecting local advocates with national decision makers, building broad coalitions, and securing durable protections. Often, our national influence applied at just the right moment is exactly what local leaders need to push their campaigns over the top and win protection for their rivers.



Myakka River, Florida

Your commitment is making a difference across the country

Mobilizing bipartisan support to secure lasting protections for rivers

American Rivers is engaged on 16 Wild & Scenic Rivers bills in Congress right now. From Florida's Myakka to Montana's Madison and Gallatin to New Mexico's Gila, members of both parties are advancing protections for the rivers their communities depend on.

Safeguarding drinking water for 25 million people

Right now we're hard at work defending protections for more than 80,000 miles of rivers — safeguards that also provide clean, reliable drinking water for 25 million people. To see exactly what's at stake and the case we're making to keep these protections in place, visit our new Roadless Rule page at AmericanRivers.org/RoadlessRule.

Protecting the Upper Verde River in Arizona

Advocates are working to protect one of the Southwest's last healthy free-flowing rivers — a vital refuge for wildlife, native fish, and communities in an increasingly arid landscape.

Restore damaged rivers and waters



Chad Hoffman

Deep River, North Carolina

Bringing the Deep River back to life

The Deep River cuts through rural North Carolina between steep, wooded banks, past rock formations and the remnants of old mills. It's home to the Cape Fear shiner, a fish found nowhere else on earth, and it's a historic rearing ground for the American shad. The Deep and its tributaries sustain the region — drinking water for a quarter million people, a place to paddle and fish, and a connection to the region's history.

For more than a century, aging dams have fragmented the river, cutting fish off from habitat they need and choking a waterway that once ran free.

This January, that began to change. American Rivers removed the Ramseur dam in partnership with the town of Ramseur and local partners to help bring a stretch of the Deep back to life.

It's one milestone in a transformational effort, launched in 2023, to reconnect nearly 100 miles of the Deep's main channel and restore the wider Cape Fear River system it feeds. Your support carries this work forward.

Your support is healing rivers

Restoring California meadows benefits rivers downstream

American Rivers' new short film follows the restoration of Ackerson Meadow and Faith Valley Meadow in the Sierra Nevada — showing how collaborative work in the Tuolumne River and West Carson River watersheds creates benefits that ripple downstream for rivers and communities. Watch the film at AmericanRivers.org/MountainMeadows.

Addressing drought in Colorado's San Luis Valley

Can winter ice help fight drought? American Rivers' innovative "Frozen Assets" pilot is testing whether flooding fields in winter to form sheet ice can recharge aquifers and promote native plants — a promising model for drought resilience.

Urban wetland restoration in Seattle

After years of planning and partnership, water is finally returning to Seattle's last remaining peat wetland. American Rivers is managing the project — a model for improving urban water for people, fish, and wildlife nationwide.

Reconnecting rivers across Pennsylvania

In Bedford, American Rivers and local partners removed two obsolete dams from the Juniata River, reconnecting more than 156 river miles. Looking ahead, more than \$6 million secured this year will accelerate dam removals and improve river access across Pennsylvania.



Unite people for clean water



We sat down with **Leda Huta, American Rivers' Vice President of Government Affairs**, to talk about why building bipartisan support for rivers matters more than ever.

What does “bipartisan” mean to American Rivers?

We want a healthy majority of members of Congress — from both parties — to genuinely care about rivers and water and to champion them. Voters in both parties care deeply about these issues. Our job is to make sure that's reflected in how Congress acts.

Why does bipartisan support matter so much right now?

The country is deeply divided, and control of government shifts constantly. We don't want to be waiting for a perfect political moment to secure much-needed protections for rivers and clean water, and we don't want to spend all our time playing defense. We need policy solutions that are durable enough to withstand changes in leadership. That's the model we're building toward.

How do you build momentum across all levels of government?

All politics are local. At the local and state levels, people are already working together to solve the water problems they see every day. The pace of change can be faster there. But federal investment is still where big funding comes from — so we work at every level. And we can't do any of it without our partners on the ground, like businesses, utilities, community groups, nonprofits. Thousands of them. Because our goals are ambitious — **protecting 1 million miles of rivers, removing 30,000 dams, and uniting people for clean water** — and we won't get there without everyone working together.



Advocates and American Rivers staff on Capitol Hill in February for bipartisan meetings with Congress.

Watching every move

Right now, American Rivers is actively tracking 45 bills that affect rivers and clean water — all to ensure that every river in our country is clean and healthy for people and wildlife.



Did you know?

A single large data center can consume up to 5 million gallons of water per day — the same daily water use as more than 15,000 homes.

See what's at stake at AmericanRivers.org/DataCenters

◀ Potomac River, Virginia

A RIVER IS...



Remembering Rafe Pomerance

American Rivers honors the life of American Rivers' co-founder Rafe Pomerance, one of the great champions of American conservation. A tireless advocate, Rafe devoted himself to rivers throughout his life, especially his beloved Blackwater River in West Virginia. His vision shaped American Rivers' mission, and his legacy endures in every river we protect.



Rafe canoeing with his wife, Lenore, on the Potomac River.



Patapsco River, Maryland

Two smart ways to give more to rivers

Donor-Advised Fund

Have a DAF? Recommend a grant to American Rivers in just a few clicks — or give in seconds with DAF Direct. Your gift can be put to work right away.

AmericanRivers.org/DAF

Qualified Charitable Distribution

Age 70½ or older with an IRA? Give directly from your IRA to lower your taxable income and satisfy your required minimum distribution — up to \$11,000 per individual in 2026. Gifts must be made by Dec. 31.

AmericanRivers.org/QCD

Recognized for how we work

We hold ourselves to a high standard — and so do the independent groups that evaluate nonprofits. Each year, these seals recognize American Rivers for transparency, accountability, and environmental impact. Give knowing your support is in trusted hands.



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

OUR CORE VALUES

At American Rivers, our mission is guided by four core values: Lead with Collaboration and Trust, Infuse Equity and Justice, Deliver Results, and Ensure Staff and Volunteers Thrive. Learn more about these values at the heart of our work:

AmericanRivers.org/OurValues.

Cover: Madison River, Montana

Photo: Adobe Stock



AMERICAN RIVERS



@AmericanRivers



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

AmericanRivers.org/Monthly



Your support makes all the difference.

Watch our 2026 Impact Report video and view complete financials at AmericanRivers.org/Impact2026