Life Depends on Rivers℠

A campaign to transform the health of America's rivers

AMERICAN RIVERS



Campaign Progress Report

FALL 2026

Thanks to your generous support, American Rivers is making exciting progress in our $125 million campaign to transform America's rivers — restoring damaged rivers and waters, uniting people for clean water, and protecting healthy rivers. Together, we'll help heal the rivers that are essential to all life and our shared future.

PROJECTS

Restore damaged rivers and waters

Droughts, floods, pollution, and development are choking our waterways. Bringing them back means restoring more rivers faster, and starting to plan for the next ones in line.

Since the campaign began in 2023, American Rivers has restored more than 12,000 acres of floodplain and helped reconnect another 25,000 acres to their rivers through coalition and policy work. From Roxhill Bog in Washington to Colorado's Uncompahgre River, we are reducing flood risk, securing water supply, and bringing habitat back to life.

Looking ahead, our team has completed a nationwide assessment that identified more than 250 priority projects spanning 260,000 floodplain acres, a roadmap to our goal of reconnecting 100,000 acres by 2030. Next, we'll work with partners and agencies to fund the work and put shovels in the ground.

Floodplains give rivers room to spread out safely. Removing dams sets them free. In Yarmouth, Maine, we worked with the town and local partners to remove the Bridge Street Dam, reconnecting a stretch of the Royal River blocked for more than two centuries. It's the first of two removals that could reopen up to 135 miles of spawning and nursery habitat for alewives, American shad, American eels, and brook trout. A healthier Royal River means a healthier Casco Bay, and more food for the eagles and ospreys that hunt there.

You helped make this progress possible. As the campaign enters its final year, we're building on that momentum to reach our 2030 goals.

PEOPLE

Unite people for clean, abundant water

Collective action begins with shared knowledge. American Rivers is building that foundation through State of America's Rivers, a groundbreaking assessment of river health that will cover all 50 states.

Until now, no comprehensive nationwide measure of river health existed, making it difficult for leaders to know which conservation work to prioritize. **State of America's Rivers gathers data from state and federal agencies and translates it into clear, accessible scorecards that measure everything from clean water to dam safety to wildlife habitat.** The results give partners, communities, and decision-makers a common picture and a shared goal to organize around.

We are piloting State of America's Rivers in Pennsylvania. Our partnerships, our long track record of on-the-ground work, and the commonwealth's leadership in dam removal and river restoration make Pennsylvania a natural place to launch the campaign.

We have formed an advisory group of state and regional partners, including the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and PennFuture, to help shape how we communicate the state scores to key audiences. Their feedback grounds the data and ensures it reflects the realities facing Pennsylvania's rivers.

The Pennsylvania pilot will shape how American Rivers engages partners and decision-makers nationwide as the State of America's Rivers campaign expands to additional states in 2027.



PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA



ACKERSON MEADOW, CALIFORNIA
MELISSA STELLER

POLICY

Protect healthy rivers and waters

Protecting healthy rivers for the long term takes persistence, strong partnerships, and policy that works for everyone who depends on the water and land. **Since 2023, American Rivers and our partners have protected more than 2,300 miles of rivers, including more than 250 miles across five New Mexico watersheds, from the Rio Grande to the Pecos.** That work continues in places like California's Sierra Nevada.

For more than a decade, American Rivers and our partners have worked at Ackerson Meadow — one of the Sierra Nevada's largest headwater meadows, in the Tuolumne River watershed. Together, we completed a major restoration that is re-establishing 90 acres of historic wetlands, creating habitat for at-risk species like the northwestern pond turtle, increasing groundwater storage, and reducing flood risk downstream.

Now, legislation moving through Congress would help protect that investment. The Ackerson Meadow Land Interchange Act passed the U.S. House of Representatives in September, bringing it one step closer to becoming law. The legislation would transfer land between Yosemite National Park and the Stanislaus National Forest, ending a checkerboard pattern of management across the meadow and reducing fragmentation of this newly restored wildlife corridor. It would also simplify access for the public and management for grazing permittees and agencies.

American Rivers volunteers championed the bill during a fly-in on Capitol Hill in February 2026, helping secure Rep. Tom McClintock, R-Calif., as its sponsor. The bill also has the support of both of California's Democratic senators. It's the kind of common-sense, bipartisan solution your support makes possible.

CAMPAIGN DONOR SPOTLIGHT

Susan McDowell



Life Depends on Rivers® Campaign Donor & American Rivers supporter since the 1970s

Is there a river that holds special meaning for you?
The South Fork of the Snake in Idaho. I fish it a tremendous amount, and there are so many natural events that happen when you're on that river. Just yesterday I saw 10 eagles. You learn the moods of a river through the seasons and the weather.

What's your boldest hope for America's rivers?
That people value the rivers in their own communities before those rivers are threatened. Rivers shape our history and culture, sustain Indigenous communities, support wildlife, and give us clean water.

Why does this feel like the right moment for the Life Depends on Rivers® campaign?
Rivers across the country are in deep trouble. Rivers connect the whole natural world, and our existence as a species.

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HOW YOU CAN HELP

For ideas and tools to inspire others to get involved in the Life Depends on Rivers® campaign, connect with Paula Wolferseder Yabar, Senior Vice President of Advancement.

202-243-7029 I PYabar@AmericanRivers.org

CAMPAIGN PROGRESS SINCE 2023

288 DAMS REMOVED
by American Rivers and our partners

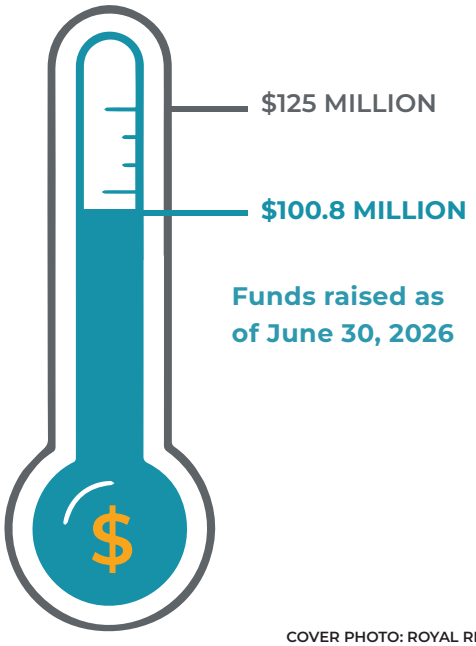
8,581 RIVER MILES RECONNECTED
for communities and wildlife

12,000 ACRES
of floodplain restored

241,415 MESSAGES
sent to decision-makers advocating for healthy rivers and clean water

2,379 RIVER MILES PROTECTED
from harmful development and pollution

465,761 ACRES
of riverside habitat protected



COVER PHOTO: ROYAL RIVER, MAINE
JERRY MONKMAN