

# the Source



American Rivers  
RIVERS CONNECT US®

SPRING 2020

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## THE SACRED RIVER

American Rivers honors the work of tribes across the country to protect their rights and restore their ancestral rivers.

### PENOBSCOT. TENNESSEE. YAKIMA.

Many present-day river names are mispronunciations of indigenous names passed down over hundreds — sometimes thousands — of years. Penobscot comes from the Algonquin word *Panawahpskek* (“descending ledges”). Tennessee originates from the Cherokee word *Ta na si* (“gathering place”). Yakima may come from the Ichiskiin words *Iksíks wána* (“little river”).

Anyone who cares deeply about rivers has much to learn from the wisdom of Indigenous Peoples. Today, tribes across the country are using their sovereignty, knowledge and expertise to work for a future in which local communities and sacred river ecosystems can thrive. The rest of us should listen closely.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF JOHN BANKS



### Maine

#### PENOBSCOT RIVER

##### John Banks

Tribal member and director of natural resources for the Penobscot Nation

“Archeologists tell us that we’ve inhabited this watershed for about 10,000 years. We talk about how we are the river. It’s us. It flows in our veins. It defines who we are culturally, socially, economically, spiritually.

“Sustenance fishing is central to our culture. But paper mills built along the river were polluting it with dioxins, [a byproduct of the bleaching process]. When I came to work for the tribe in 1980, I found that tribal members were getting sick and dying of cancer simply by carrying out the cultural traditions of our ancestors. We began a campaign to address dioxins.

**“We talk a lot about reciprocity. We have a duty to do what we can to improve the ecological integrity that has provided for us for 10,000 years.”**

— John Banks

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SPRING 2020

**Bob Irvin**

*President and CEO*

**Chris Williams**

*Senior Vice President, Conservation*

**Paula Wolferseder Yabar**

*Senior Vice President, Advancement*

**Katy Neusteter**

*Editor*

## Our Purpose

American Rivers believes all communities should have clean water and a healthy river. We protect wild rivers, restore damaged rivers and conserve clean water for people and nature. Learn about the impact you can have on rivers at [AmericanRivers.org/MyImpact](https://AmericanRivers.org/MyImpact).



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If you have feedback, story ideas or wish to receive "The Source" electronically, please send us an email at [TheSource@AmericanRivers.org](mailto:TheSource@AmericanRivers.org).

**Members:** We are here to help! Contact us at 877-347-7550 to update your address or manage your membership preferences. We occasionally provide our list to other like-minded organizations. Please let us know if you do not want your name shared outside American Rivers.

COVER: PENOBSCOT RIVER, MAINE  
PHOTO: DANITA DELMONT

..... FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK .....



**ALL LIFE ON THIS  
PLANET NEEDS RIVERS.  
AND RIGHT NOW,  
OUR RIVERS NEED YOU.**

## 50 YEARS OF EARTH DAY

**I WAS IN FIFTH GRADE ON APRIL 22, 1970 — THE FIRST EVER EARTH DAY.**

That spring marked the birth of my personal environmental activism. I lived in Tampa, Florida, where a tanker ship had recently run aground and spilled oil in the bay. I drew posters to hang in local businesses, urging people to help local groups rescue and clean oiled birds. Fifty years later, I'm still working to protect our planet.

This month, a billion people in nearly every country on Earth will mark the 50th anniversary of Earth Day. It is the largest secular holiday on Earth. And it still serves the same purpose it once did — to remind us of our fragility and our responsibility to safeguard the essential things that bind humanity and this planet together.

Earth Day, the National Environmental Policy Act, the Clean Water Act and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act were all birthed in those early years of the environmental movement. American Rivers followed in 1973, when a group of river lovers formed what would become the nation's premier river conservation organization.

Claude Terry was one of American Rivers' original founders. Sadly, this passionate champion for wild rivers (and stunt double for Jon Voight in "Deliverance") passed away last November. To the end, he was a tireless advocate for wild rivers. Claude and President Jimmy Carter reminisced about their 1974 canoe descent of Bull Sluice Rapid on Georgia's Wild and Scenic Chattooga River in our film "The Wild President," [AmericanRivers.org/WildPresident](https://AmericanRivers.org/WildPresident).

Many of the bedrock protections established in Claude's heyday are now on the chopping block (page 7). That's why American Rivers is working around the clock — because all life on this planet needs rivers.

Thank you for standing with us now and in the future.

For the rivers,

Bob Irvin



PHOTOS: JOHN GUSSMAN, BARRET HEDGES

**Take action for America's Most Endangered Rivers® of 2020 at [AmericanRivers.org/EndangeredRivers2020](https://AmericanRivers.org/EndangeredRivers2020).**

“We also wanted to address the lack of native migratory fish. About 11 species had been eliminated from the watershed due to dams. To restore native fish, we had to bring the habitat back to what it was. Eventually, we removed two dams and built a fish bypass channel around a third.

“The river is a lot healthier these days. No paper mills discharge into our reservation waters. And the impact of removing the dams has been very good. The real success story has been with alewives and American shad. They’re the keystone species in Northeast watersheds. If you want to restore species like Atlantic salmon, you have to restore these native migratory fish.

“My vision would be that in 50 years there would be no dams. There would be no pollution, and our tribal members would be enjoying this tremendous gift that the Creator has placed here with us in this place.”



Caleb Hickman on Jenkins Creek

PHOTO: STEVEN GNAM



Phil Rigdon on the Yakima River

### North Carolina

#### LITTLE TENNESSEE RIVER BASIN

##### Caleb Hickman

Tribal member of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma and fisheries and wildlife biologist for the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians

“There are three federally recognized Cherokee tribes, and the Eastern Band is the only one still that still exists in the aboriginal homeland. Most people know the Trail of Tears and how my ancestors were removed from this area and pushed out to Oklahoma.

“Water is central to Cherokee culture. When you walk into a body of water, it’s a process that can clean you. It’s called going to water. Some people do it every day. Some people just do it when they need it. It means that you’re going to pray and let all your bad feelings go down the river. You know, let it wash over you.

“In these mountains near the Smokies, these rivers are clean and clear. It’s a biodiversity hotspot — we have 30 salamander species and 40 fish species. That’s a lot! We are restoring animals like hellbender salamanders and a large suckerfish called the sicklefin redhorse that have declined or may not even exist in some areas anymore. I didn’t grow up with these animals, but my ancestors knew them. So it’s a really neat way to connect to something that was lost to my family.”

PHOTO: G. PEEPLES / USFWS

### Washington

#### YAKIMA RIVER

##### Phil Rigdon

Tribal member and deputy director of natural resources for the Yakama Nation

“We’ve spent a lot of time fighting for our right to fish for salmon. We are leading salmon restoration work.

“There are a lot of things that have happened in the Yakima River basin — roads, development, irrigation. The river is managed for different purposes. The Yakima Basin Integrated Plan is a comprehensive approach to restoration, looking at all the different components and trying to find a way forward. Our goal has been to bring salmon restoration into the plan — to make sure there’s habitat restoration, water storage for fish, and efficient irrigation practices.

“There’s been over 100 years of degradation. It’s going to take a long time to get back to what the river was able to provide for our people. We have to be mindful that climate change will play a key role. We’re trying to return the river so we can restore the salmon to what they were, and get them up into those upper areas where the water is cold and they can flourish.”



# FIND YOUR RIVER SOULMATE

OWYHEE RIVER, OREGON

## How well do you know yourself — and your country's rivers?

**Do you prefer to drift with the current or paddle with purpose? Where do you feel most alive: in the din of a city or the silence of the forest? Take this quiz and add up your points to peg which American river best matches your personality.**

### **You prefer:**

1. Relaxing beside the river
2. Wading in the shallows
3. Running the rapids

### **April 22 is:**

1. Earth Day 2020
2. Spring
3. The Lyrid meteor shower

### **Finish this thought: "I love to read..."**

1. "A good book"
2. "Instagram stories"
3. "Fishing reports from my fly shop"

### **Your best day on the river was:**

1. Watching the "Fresh Water" episode of *Our Planet* on Netflix
2. Beating your rafting guide at a campsite game
3. Skinny dipping before catching your dinner on a fly rod

### **You're going on vacation tomorrow. Where are you headed?**

1. To the porch with "Where the Crawdads Sing"
2. To a big city for shopping and dining along a fabulous riverwalk
3. Into the wild

### **Who would you most like to have dinner with?**

1. John McPhee, Pulitzer Prizewinning author of "Coming Into the Country"
2. Greta Thunberg, Nobel Prize-nominated climate activist
3. Winona LaDuke, Spendlove Prizewinning indigenous rights leader

### **What would you do with a million dollars?**

1. Buy a home
2. Start a foundation
3. Travel

### **Pick an activity:**

1. Relaxing
2. Barbecuing
3. Stand up paddleboarding

### **Who are you spending the day with?**

1. Myself
2. Whoever wants to join me
3. A small group of people I love

### **What quality do you seek in a friend?**

1. Loyalty
2. Sense of humor
3. Adventurousness

**FIND  
YOUR  
SOULMATE**





### SCORE 7-13

#### **YOUR RIVER SOULMATE:** **FLINT RIVER, GEORGIA**

Like the Flint — whose headwaters lie beneath Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport — you don't seek the spotlight. But this is also one of the hardest-working rivers in the country, supplying water to nearly a half million people and thousands of farms. Similarly, you are the bedrock of your family and community, giving selflessly to those you care about.

#### **WAYS TO CONNECT:**

Adventure beneath the surface in our film "Flint" at [AmericanRivers.org/FlintFilm](http://AmericanRivers.org/FlintFilm).

### SCORE 14-20

#### **YOUR RIVER SOULMATE:** **HUDSON RIVER, NEW YORK**

You are a world citizen who wants to be part of something bigger than yourself. You share some distinctive traits with the Hudson, the second largest tidal estuary on the East Coast: You can be mercurial and dynamic, you love hard work, and you don't mind sharing your outdoors time with thousands of your closest friends.

#### **WAYS TO CONNECT:**

Do your part to keep your river beautiful. Find a National River Cleanup® event at [AmericanRivers.org/NRC](http://AmericanRivers.org/NRC).

### SCORE 17-21

#### **YOUR RIVER SOULMATE:** **OWYHEE RIVER, OREGON**

You may be known for your wild streak, but self-reflection centers you as much as adventure does. Like the vast and remote Owyhee Canyonlands, you don't mind being in the middle of nowhere by yourself. After all, you're a passionate individualist at heart.

#### **WAYS TO CONNECT:**

Support legislation to protect more than 1 million acres of Owyhee canyon country at [AmericanRivers.org/OwyheeCanyonlands](http://AmericanRivers.org/OwyheeCanyonlands).



PHOTO: GILBERT ROWLEY

## 5 CAN'T-MISS FISHING TRIPS

OLYMPIC PENINSULA, WASHINGTON

**Cast to a sea-run steelhead or native shoal bass. Ultra-intimate fishing adventures with American Rivers experts are a special chance to wade rivers where your support helps improve habitat for fish and wildlife.**

**APRIL - MAY:** Chase rare shoalies in Georgia's Flint River, where American Rivers has worked for a decade to keep water in this heavily used and often drought-stricken stream.

**MAY:** Net a native brook trout on Vermont's Battenkill River, where we removed a dam to improve fish access to 6 miles of critical spawning habitat.

**JUNE - SEPTEMBER:** Stalk wary brown trout in the gin-clear water of Deep Creek, which we are working to permanently protect as Colorado's second Wild and Scenic River.

**SEPTEMBER:** Fish for cutthroat trout in the Wild and Scenic streams American Rivers helped protect around Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

**FEBRUARY - MARCH:** Go on a rugged search for wild winter steelhead on Washington's Olympic Peninsula, where we are working to permanently protect 19 rivers as Wild and Scenic.

Trips sell out quickly and are open to Anglers Fund members who contribute \$1,000 or more to American Rivers. To learn how you can keep fish healthy by improving the health of rivers, contact Steve White at 919-720-2901 or [SWhite@AmericanRivers.org](mailto:SWhite@AmericanRivers.org).

## Q+A

### MY RIVER STORY



**Virginia Shaller,**  
AMERICAN RIVERS RIVER LEGACY  
SOCIETY MEMBER

#### **What is your best river memory?**

My youngest daughter and I experienced the thrill of whitewater rafting on the Snake River in Wyoming. We especially loved eating dinners of fish, freshly caught from the river.

#### **How have rivers changed you?**

Rafting transformed me into a person who dared to take on travel adventures I never imagined possible. I went solo to Katmai National Park in Alaska to photograph brown bears catching salmon at Brooks Falls. What a spectacular sight!

#### **Why do you support American Rivers?**

I believe all rivers should be free flowing and free of pollution. I am a strong advocate for the removal of dams that stop nature from flourishing. A river should be a source of life, a habitat for wildlife and a way for communities along its course to enjoy the benefits of water recreation.

#### **What is your favorite river?**

The Snake will always be my favorite river because it created such a joyful bond with my daughter and a sense of adventure for both of us! I cannot wait to return.

**LEAVING A CLEAN WATER LEGACY** is easier than you may think. All it takes is a quick phone call to your lawyer. For help, contact Corey Christy at 206-712-2707 or [CChristy@AmericanRivers.org](mailto:CChristy@AmericanRivers.org).

# HAPPENINGS

## NEWS ABOUT YOUR FAVORITE RIVERS



### NATIONAL

World Fish Migration Day on May 16 will raise awareness of the importance of free-flowing rivers and the plight of migratory fish like salmon and herring. American Rivers President, Bob Irvin, will speak in Plymouth, Massachusetts, on May 15. Find an event near you at [WorldFishMigrationDay.com](http://WorldFishMigrationDay.com) and post your pics on social media using #happyfish.

### WEST

**CALIFORNIA** – In the Sierra Nevada, we restored about 3 acres of wet meadow in the upper Walker River watershed to improve critical breeding habitat for endangered Yosemite toads, and we restored 500 feet of Peabody Creek to improve habitat for native species, such as the Sierra newt.

#### TAKE ACTION

**IDAHO, OREGON, WASHINGTON** – Federal agencies released a plan for managing hydropower dams on the Columbia and Snake rivers, but it won't meet the region's salmon recovery, clean energy and agriculture needs. Learn about our vision for the Columbia-Snake and take action at [AmericanRivers.org/SnakeRiverVision](http://AmericanRivers.org/SnakeRiverVision).



**MONTANA** – The final environmental impact statement for the Black Butte Copper Mine cleared the way for the mine to be built at the headwaters of Montana's fabled Smith River. We plan to challenge the decision in court.



**NEW MEXICO** – We are closer than ever to securing permanent protection for the Gila River — America's Most Endangered River® of 2019 and New Mexico's last major free-flowing stream. In December, thanks to opposition by New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan-Grisham and Sens. Tom Udall (D-NM) and Martin Heinrich (D-NM), the Department of the Interior declined to extend federal funding for a proposed diversion dam — crippling the project. Upstream, American Rivers and our partners are working to permanently protect the Gila under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. [AmericanRivers.org/GilaProgress](http://AmericanRivers.org/GilaProgress)

**OREGON** – Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR) asked Oregonians for input on which rivers deserve new Wild and Scenic River protections, launching an effort that could lead to major new protections for healthy, free-flowing rivers across the state. Supporting collaborations between American Rivers, ranchers and tribes, Sen. Wyden also introduced legislation to protect more than 1 million acres of Owyhee Canyonlands. [AmericanRivers.org/Wyden](http://AmericanRivers.org/Wyden)

**WASHINGTON** – We are taking steps to improve habitat for chinook salmon — the primary food source of endangered Southern Resident orcas. Deconstruction of the Middle Fork Nooksack Diversion Dam will begin this summer to give salmon access to 16 miles of high-quality cold-water habitat.

### MIDWEST



#### TAKE ACTION

**ILLINOIS, IOWA, MINNESOTA, MISSOURI, WISCONSIN** – As recovery from last year's catastrophic spring flooding on the upper Mississippi continues, we named this important waterway America's Most Endangered River of 2020 because of ongoing risks posed by poor floodplain and watershed management. [AmericanRivers.org/UpperMiss](http://AmericanRivers.org/UpperMiss)



#### TAKE ACTION

**MICHIGAN, WISCONSIN** – A coalition that includes the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin is fighting to stop open-pit sulfide mining on this sacred river. You can help by demanding that the state deny a permit for a potential mine tailings pond. [AmericanRivers.org/Menominee](http://AmericanRivers.org/Menominee)



#### TAKE ACTION

**SOUTH DAKOTA** – The U.S. Forest Service can save Rapid Creek by denying permits for an open-pit gold mine proposed in the Black Hills National Forest. [AmericanRivers.org/BlackHills](http://AmericanRivers.org/BlackHills)



PHOTO: TOM WILSON

OKEFENOKEE SWAMP, FLORIDA





## EAST

**PENNSYLVANIA** – Hydropower dams on the mainstem Susquehanna River have decimated populations of native American eel and eastern elliptio mussels. By removing three dams from the river's tributaries, we successfully reconnected 63 miles of aquatic habitat and are advocating for efforts to return eel and eastern elliptios to this portion of their historic range.

## SOUTH

**SOUTH CAROLINA** – After eight years of effort, the Waccamaw National Wildlife Refuge was expanded, improving public access to the Waccamaw River Blue Trail, helping protect a drinking water source for 400,000 people, and protecting sensitive riverside forests so they can absorb increasingly frequent and severe floodwaters.

### TAKE ACTION

**FLORIDA, GEORGIA** – The Okefenokee Wilderness is known for its alligators, carnivorous plants and rare birds. All that could be at risk. Demand that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers denies permits to build the Twin Pines titanium mine too close to this uniquely wild place. [AmericanRivers.org/Okefenokee](https://AmericanRivers.org/Okefenokee)



PHOTO: NICHOLAS A. TONELLI

ALLEGHENY RIVER HEADWATERS, PENNSYLVANIA

**“Protection for rivers, streams and wetlands that are the sources of our drinking water must be a top priority to ensure clean water for all. It's time to strengthen, not roll back, our most important environmental safeguards.”**

— Bob Irvin, President and CEO of American Rivers

# RIPPLE EFFECTS FROM WASHINGTON

**AS PRESIDENT TRUMP'S FIRST TERM WINDS DOWN**, the administration's assault on bedrock environmental protections shows no signs of slowing. Here's an update on what's happening in Washington and why it matters to your water, rivers and community. Make your voice heard at [AmericanRivers.org/TakeAction](https://AmericanRivers.org/TakeAction).

### Next up for NEPA?

Before our government permits a new power plant or builds a new road, we, the people, should know how these federal projects will impact our land, air and water — right? The Trump administration's proposals to hamstring the National Environmental Policy Act threaten to weaken environmental assessments, curtail public participation in decision-making and allow federal agencies to completely ignore climate change. American Rivers will tirelessly defend one of our most important environmental safeguards.

### Tribal rights at risk

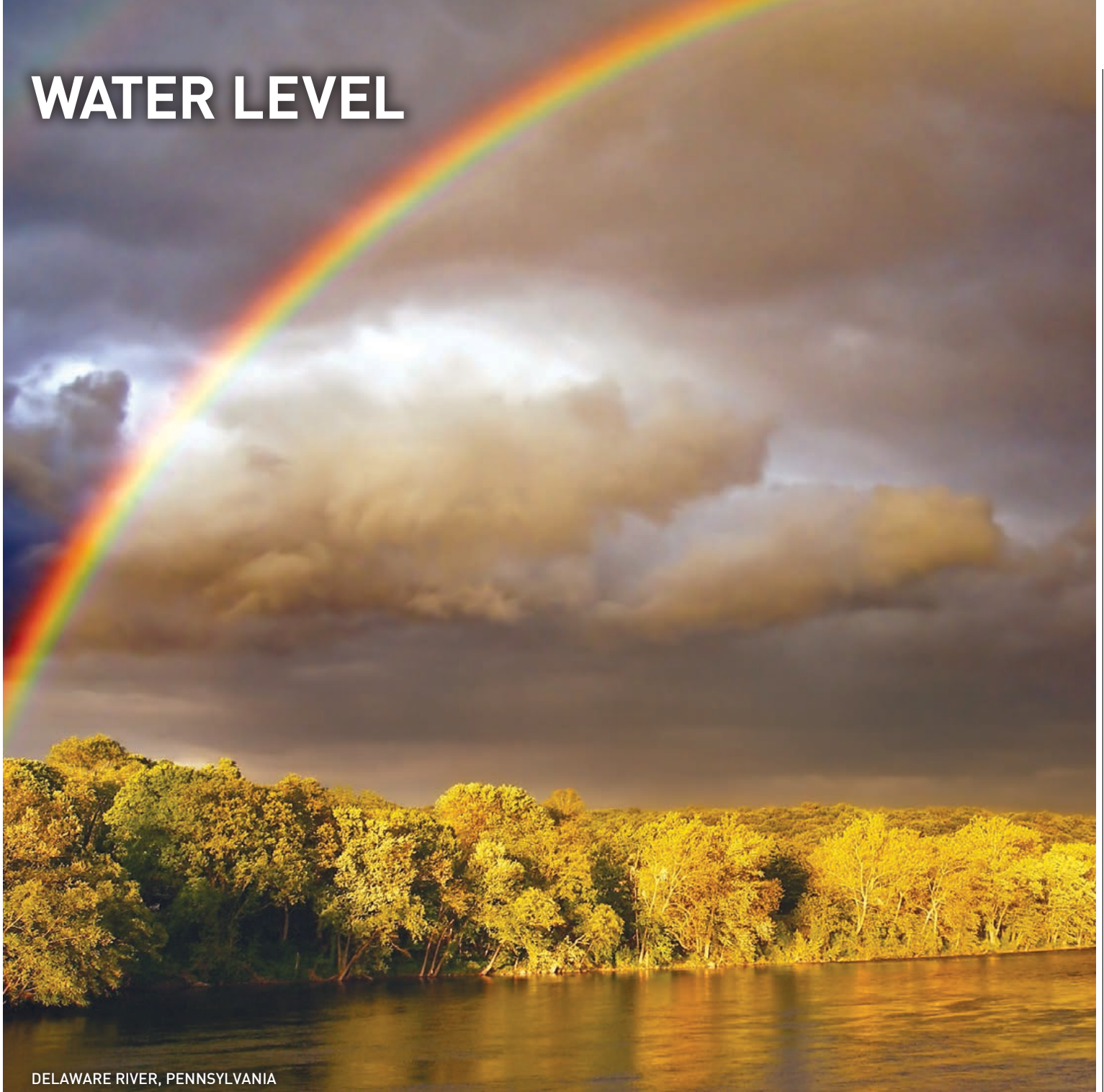
The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency wants to significantly restrict section 401 of the Clean Water Act, which gives states and tribes a say in infrastructure planning. American Rivers has used this provision in critically important ways, including to advocate for better dam operations and protections for fish and wildlife. In the past, we have gone all the way to the Supreme Court to protect section 401. We will continue to fight any erosion of this critical tool for protecting rivers and water quality.

### Trump's "Dirty Water Rule"

By repealing the Clean Water Rule and replacing it with its own Dirty Water Rule, the Trump administration is stripping federal protection from streams and wetlands that are critical source waters for rivers that provide drinking water for 200 million people in the United States and vital habitat for fish and wildlife. American Rivers and other conservation groups are challenging the Dirty Water Rule in federal court.



# WATER LEVEL



DELAWARE RIVER, PENNSYLVANIA

**F**LOWING 419 MILES THROUGH FIVE STATES, THE DELAWARE RIVER HAS BEEN HOME TO THE LENAPE PEOPLE FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS. But thanks to mining, logging and industrial activity, by the middle of the 20th century, the Delaware was choked with pollution and swathes of the river were dead zones. Enter visionary local leaders, who used the Clean Water Act to clean up pollution. They are removing outdated dams and driving cutting-edge green infrastructure programs. Today, the Delaware supplies drinking water to two of the country's biggest cities — New York and Philadelphia — and hosts the largest freshwater port in the world. Keystone species like shad have rebounded, and beaver, otter, black bear and osprey are thriving. The Delaware is a national example of what a vibrant, healthy river can be — which is why it is our River of the Year. [AmericanRivers.org/RiveroftheYear](https://AmericanRivers.org/RiveroftheYear)

**THANK  
YOU!**

Go to [AmericanRivers.org/MyImpact](https://AmericanRivers.org/MyImpact) to keep hardworking rivers like the Delaware clean, safe and free for people and wildlife.