Anglers Fund Conservation Update
Fall 2019

As you look back over this past fishing season, I hope you had a chance to enjoy our nation’s wonderful rivers and appreciate what magical places they are. As the steward of our rivers, American Rivers works to improve river health by:

- Removing dams to connect fish habitat and open spawning grounds
- Protecting more rivers with Wild and Scenic River designations
- Securing conservation wins that keep more water in rivers
- Fighting for federal policy and funding to protect rivers, streams, and wetlands

In the following report, you will see great examples of recent successes protecting and restoring our rivers. I hope you will enjoy learning more about these victories, knowing that your interest and support are making a real difference for our rivers.

1,900 miles of wild rivers protected: Despite a difficult political environment, we have worked with communities to protect nearly 1,900 miles of rivers across California, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Montana, Oregon, Utah, and more. An additional 1,200 miles of new Wild and Scenic designations are moving through Congress, 2,500 miles are pending on public lands and over 2,000 miles are in process through community-led campaigns. One of the priority rivers we are seeking to protect as Wild and Scenic in the next year is New Mexico’s Gila, which we named America’s Most Endangered River® of 2019. With all of these protections in the works, we’re hoping to go well past our goal to protect 5,000 miles of rivers and 1,000,000 acres of riverside lands by October 2020. Read more.

Changing minds toward removing Washington’s Lower Snake River dams: Past failed strategies have left Idaho without sustainable runs of salmon for decades. Tired of this, Rep. Mike Simpson (R-Idaho) has encouraged a regional dialogue about the future of salmon, energy and agriculture. His surprising challenge to the status quo has renewed interest in the urgency of this crisis, which affects the entire ecosystem. Building on years of engagement, American Rivers is continuing to lay the groundwork for a comprehensive solution that brings salmon back to the Snake River and its tributaries in Idaho, Oregon and Washington, while addressing a rapidly changing Northwest energy market. Read more.

Step forward for California’s Klamath River: In April, the entity overseeing the largest dam removal in U.S. history, which American Rivers helped found and on whose board we sit, took a major step toward opening 300 miles of river habitat and creating a free-flowing Klamath River by selecting the contractor for the project. The potential benefit to the river, its salmon and steelhead, and nearby communities is tremendous. Read more.
Gearing up for a fight on Montana’s Smith River: Now that the public comment period on the proposed Black Butte copper mine has ended, we expect the Montana Department of Environmental Quality to release its final environmental impact statement sometime this fall, likely giving Sandfire Resources America approval to proceed with the mine. This decision would fly in the face of overwhelming public opposition to the mine. Further, analysis of the draft environmental impact statement by a team of top-notch scientists showed it was woefully incomplete and relied on several faulty assumptions. If needed, American Rivers and our partners will pursue litigation to block this risky mine. Read more.

Restoring trout habitat in Pennsylvania: In September, we completed a five-year, multi-phase river restoration on Dunbar Creek that involved removing four dams and reconnecting 50 miles of high-quality cold-water habitat for trout. While we were completing the last phase, an angler stopped by to tell us that since we began removing the dams, he has caught fish in reaches of the stream where he has never seen them before. Our Pennsylvania dam removal specialist Lisa Hollingsworth-Segedy said, “This is the reason I love the work we do.”

South Carolina’s Congaree Creek Freed: American Rivers freed 16 miles of Congaree Creek and its tributaries near Columbia, South Carolina, last May. The dam was built in the 1950s to provide water for the city of Cayce. But with a new water plant, the city no longer needed water from behind the dam. Removing the dam opens the stream for many native fish and eliminates an unnecessary risk to kayakers and anglers. Check out a video of the dam removal here.

Fish and wildlife will get a boost in Washington: American Rivers has worked for a decade to recover a self-sustaining, harvestable population of fish and aquatic life in the area around the Yakima River. The river — and the communities and wildlife that rely on it — won big when federal legislation that we played a key role in developing authorized the initial phase of the plan to restore the river and ensure farms, fish and people in Washington have ample, clean river water for the future.

Opening the Tuckasegee Blue Trail in North Carolina: American Rivers’ North Carolina staff celebrated the opening of the Tuck Blue Trail last August. The designation helps protect a pristine 60-mile stretch of stream celebrated for the fishing, boating and recreation it provides. Just as hiking trails are designed to help people explore the land, blue trails like this one help people discover rivers through public access points. You can read one of our staff member’s experience here.
Protecting Washington’s Skagit River: Plans for a quarry adjacent to the Wild and Scenic Skagit River, Illabot Creek and Sauk River have been scrapped thanks to the hard work of local activists. In September, the company seeking to establish the mine withdrew its application to dig out a 79-acre large-rock quarry. American Rivers and local recreation and conservation organizations supplied comment letters to the planning department, opposing the quarry expansion. Read the story here.

American Rivers receives grant to restore salmon habitat in California’s Bay Area: In collaboration with Contra Costa County and others, the Three Creeks Parkway Restoration Project will restore twelve acres and nearly a mile of Marsh Creek. The project will improve water quality, reduce flood risk, and restore native vegetation and salmon habitat along an important ecological corridor linking Mount Diablo to the Delta shoreline in east Contra Costa County. Read EPA’s announcement here.

Cleaning up Arkansas’ Buffalo National River: Thanks to the hard work of local advocates and thousands of our supporters from across the country who responded to our Most Endangered Rivers® action alerts, Arkansas’ Governor Hutchinson has made a deal to close the industrial hog farm that has been impacting water quality, resulting in toxic algae outbreaks stretching 70 miles downstream in the Buffalo National River. The Governor plans to institute a ban on new medium and large-scale hog farms in the watershed, which will help protect this wonderful fishery that hosts smallmouths, perch, spotted bass, and more. Read more.

Supporting Georgia’s Flint River: Our experts in Georgia recently received an award from the Georgia Water Coalition for their work collaborating with water suppliers to balance local water needs with efforts to support the Flint River’s unique ecology, especially during drought. We are now working with fish ecologists at the University of Georgia to learn more about river flows needed to ensure the Flint’s shoal bass fishery stays healthy for years to come. Read more.

Our hearts go out to Abaco Lodge: Abaco Lodge, owned and operated by Anglers Fund member Oliver White and visited by many of our supporters, was devastated this summer by hurricane Dorian. We join the rest of the fishing community in wishing a full recovery to the lodge and all those affected by the storm. You can learn more about what they’re going through at the following Nervous Waters website: click here.
Before/After photos from the Patapsco River’s Bloede Dam removal: What a difference a year makes! Here are two photos of American Rivers’ president Bob Irvin fishing at the site where the Bloede Dam (right) was removed last year, resulting in a flowing, healthy river. Your support helps make restorations like this happen, and you can read the story at this storyboard.

Wonderful toast given to celebrate the 20th anniversary of removing Edwards Dam on Maine’s Kennebec River: We hope you find this toast given by Department of Marine Resources Commissioner Pat Keliher inspiring:

Here is to second chances
Here is to that old saying, “what goes up must come down”
Here is to all the people who had a vision
To the Atlantic salmon that won’t give up
Here is to the river herring who return in numbers that we could only imagine
To the short-nose sturgeon who jump for what I can only think must be for joy
And to the Atlantic sturgeon so big your jaw drops when they jump
Here is to this river – a river whose ability to heal has been nothing short but astounding
To the Kennebec

You can read more about the river’s recovery and see footage from the removal by clicking here.

What a great way to mark the revival of this great river – and here’s to many more! Cheers!

The work highlighted in this report is made possible by the many people who support American Rivers. If you would like to join them in making a difference for our rivers, please join the Anglers Fund for American Rivers, which you can do either at this website or by contacting Steve White at 919-720-2901 or SWhite@AmericanRivers.org.

Thank you for your interest in and support of our work, enjoy your time on the rivers, and good luck with your fishing.