Anglers Fund Conservation Update
Spring 2020

As you, your family and community, and the world cope with the effects of the coronavirus, we thought you might appreciate some good news from our work for the rivers. The below report features examples of recent successes removing dams, protecting rivers with Wild and Scenic designation, and fighting for strong river policy – work that your interest and support help make possible. In these ways, you are improving the health of our rivers and the fisheries they support.

And in addition to reading through the report, you might also enjoy watching one of our short films to help pass the time while you are home and remind you what magical, healing places our rivers are. (My personal favorites are The Wild President, Legacy, and The Important Places.) Thank you for being an important part of our work for the rivers, and stay safe.

Record number of states removed dams in 2019: Since launching the dam removal movement in 1999 with the removal of Edwards Dam on Maine’s Kennebec River, we have been instrumental in exponentially increasing dam removals countrywide. Our experts have trained countless state/local agencies and partners, secured funding for other groups to remove dams, provided tools to help partners identify and prioritize projects, and advanced state-wide policies to streamline permitting. Our efforts paid off in 2019: A record number of states took out dams (26), 90 dams were removed and almost 1,000 river miles were reconnected. Read more.

Chinook salmon, steelhead and bull trout will benefit from a free Nooksack River: Sixteen miles of pristine spawning habitat on the Middle Fork of the Nooksack River has been blocked for almost 60 years by a diversion dam with no fish passage. The project is now in the construction phase, with completion of fish passage, dam removal and channel restoration scheduled for later this year. Read more.

Pennsylvania dam removals open rivers and improve fish habitat: Pennsylvania continues to be a leader in removing dams:
• The Krady Mill Dam removal on Chiques Creek in Columbia is now complete. The dam was actually removed in 2018, and additional site restoration was completed in 2019. Providing important habitat for migratory fish, 3 miles of river have been reconnected for the benefit of fish and wildlife.
• The Patton Dam was removed from Chest Creek, a high-value tributary in the Pennsylvania headwaters of the Chesapeake Bay. This is the third of three dams removed in these

(please continue reading)
headwaters, restoring 63 miles of habitat for brook trout, hellbender salamanders, American eel and eastern elliptio mussels. Read more.

- The two Scotland Pond dams were removed from the Conococheague Creek in Greene Township. In addition to their negative ecological impacts and the financial burden of maintaining the dams, the deteriorated dams posed a risk to public safety. Read more.

- The final phase of the Delp Dam removal on Indian Creek in Telford was completed last December. Like so many dams across the country, the dam was no longer serving a useful purpose, and its removal restored natural form and function to a stream that supports resident fish and wildlife.

**House bill protects wild rivers in Washington, California and beyond:** The U.S. House of Representatives voted in February to protect more than 1,000 miles of rivers as Wild and Scenic. The public lands legislation, Protecting America's Wilderness Act, includes Wild and Scenic safeguards for rivers, including the San Gabriel and Trinity River watershed in California, and the Queets, Sol Duc, and Elwha in Washington. We are working to help advance the bill through the Senate.

**Montana rivers set to gain protection:** Two national forests in Montana — the Custer-Gallatin and Helena-Lewis and Clark — are due to release final forest plan revisions later this spring — good news for some of the state’s most iconic rivers. Forest plans guide what activities can take place where for about the next 30 years. Assuming the final forest plans follow the draft plans, 76 Wild and Scenic-eligible streams, totaling 655 stream miles, will be administratively protected from harmful projects, such as dams, mines, and oil and gas drilling. Among the storied waters that will enjoy protections in the new forest plans are the Gallatin, Madison, Yellowstone, Smith and Dearborn rivers.

**Restoring California meadows:** We completed restoration activities at two small meadows in the upper Walker River watershed. This will restore approximately 3 acres of critical breeding habitat for the federally endangered Yosemite toad, and will restore and protect approximately 8 acres of wet meadow. In California, functional wet meadows soak up water during the wet season and release water during the dry season, helping provide adequate flows downstream when fish and people need water most.

**New Mexico’s Gila River avoids damaging diversion:** We named the Gila River America’s Most Endangered River® of 2019 due to the threat of a major diversion proposed just downstream from where the river flows out of the first wilderness area designated in the United States. With elected officials opposed to the diversion, the U.S. Dept. of the Interior denied a request for an extension, and the deadline for gaining final permission for the diversion expired on December 31, 2019, crippling the project. Read more.
**Fighting against proposed dams in the Grand Canyon:** American Rivers is opposing a Phoenix-based developer’s proposal to build a pumped hydropower storage project, consisting of two dams and a network of related infrastructure, on the Little Colorado River adjacent to Grand Canyon National Park and near the confluence with the Colorado River. Our filing highlights the proposal’s failure to consider both tribal interests and those of endangered fish. We will continue to fight the project and work to keep the Grand Canyon dam free.  
[Read more.](#)

**Public comment period open on removing Washington’s Lower Snake River dams:** As you may have read in the April-May edition of *Fly Fisherman* magazine, American Rivers is working to establish a self-sustaining population of salmon and steelhead by removing the four lower Snake River dams. But despite decades of declining salmon populations, struggling Southern Resident orcas in Puget Sound and worsening economic factors, the recently released environmental impact statement on the fate of the Snake River’s lower four dams is insufficient for salmon recovery. To see our vision for the Snake River [click here](#), and to comment on the draft EIS plan [click here](#).

**Montana permits controversial copper mine in Smith River headwaters:** Despite receiving more than 12,500 public comments opposing the proposed Black Butte Copper Mine, the Montana Department of Environmental Quality [issued a final environmental impact statement](#) on March 13 that gave an Australian mining company the go-ahead to build its controversial project along Sheep Creek — a key tributary to the famed Smith River. Conservation groups, including American Rivers, have vigorously opposed the mine because it would partially dewater vital trout-spawning streams and eventually pollute Sheep Creek and the Smith River with acid mine drainage. We intend to challenge this decision in court.

**Key decision pending for Klamath River dams:** All eyes are on the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, which we hope will give the final green light for the removal of four dams — a project that will be one of the most significant river restoration efforts the world has ever seen. The dams block salmon and steelhead from reaching more than 300 miles of historic habitat and cause toxic algae blooms that harm water quality. Reservoir drawdown and dam removal could begin as early as 2022. [Our new video](#) explores what makes this dam removal effort so important and highlights the lessons the Klamath holds for river restoration in California and nationwide.

**Milestone reached for California’s Bay-Delta:** Gov. Newsom announced a new settlement framework for reaching agreement among California cities, farms and conservation interests to restore fish and wildlife in the Bay-Delta. Key highlights of the framework include a $5 billion investment in the Bay-Delta and tributaries, restoration of more than 60,000 acres of fish habitat and a large increase in river and delta flows. With still a few outstanding issues to work through, we are hoping for a final agreement soon.
Restoring California floodplains for salmon and steelhead: Our California team continues to make progress toward reconnecting the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers with their floodplains to reduce flooding downstream and provide critical rearing habitat for juvenile salmon and steelhead. We submitted permits to breach levees and reconnect over 100 acres of historic floodplain on a highly impacted section of the San Joaquin River, where spring-run chinook salmon are just beginning to return. We have also initiated design and engineering work for three floodplain-reconnection sites on the Sacramento River, which we believe severely limit survival of out-migrating juvenile chinook salmon and steelhead. Read more.

Working to keep more water in the upper Colorado River: Working with conservation organizations, ranchers and local governments, we secured nearly $1 million from public and private sources to implement a demand management project in the upper Colorado River. Demand management is an approach to keeping water in the river in the face of drought and water scarcity. Holders of water rights are compensated for temporarily and voluntarily agreeing to reduce their water use. The goal is to put more water in the upper Colorado River for the health of the river, including resident trout.

Securing funding for Oregon dam removals: American Rivers will move forward removal of two significant dams in Oregon in 2020. The Lower Bridgepoint Dam is on a tributary to the Rogue River, the second largest producer of salmon in Oregon and a major refuge for endangered fish facing climate change impacts. Removing the dam will allow wild salmon and steelhead to access over 30 miles of critical habitat. The Kelley Creek Dam near Portland is on a tributary to the Columbia River, the largest producer of salmon in Oregon. The private dam will be removed in 2020 to provide 2 miles of habitat for chinook salmon and up to 11 miles for other species, including coho salmon and steelhead.

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.