



American Rivers announces America's Most Endangered Rivers of 2015

Colorado River in the Grand Canyon named #1 Most Endangered River in the nation

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Washington -- American Rivers today announced its annual list of *America's Most Endangered Rivers*®, naming the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon the #1 Most Endangered River in the nation. One of our country's most iconic stretches of river and an irreplaceable national treasure, the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon faces a battery of threats that could forever harm its health and unique experience that belongs to every American.

The canyon faces three serious threats, each with a key decision this year: the massive Escalade construction project in the heart of the canyon, pollution from uranium mining on the north and south rims, and expansion of the town of Tusayan that could deplete vital groundwater supplies. These threats would cause irreparable harm to the river's unique wild character, clean water, and cultural values. American Rivers called on Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell and the Obama Administration to use every authority to prevent damage to the river and preserve the Grand Canyon for all Americans to enjoy.

"The Grand Canyon is facing the biggest threats in a generation," said Bob Irvin, President of American Rivers. "The Colorado River in the Grand Canyon is an irreplaceable national treasure that should be preserved for all of us, for all time. The Grand Canyon is not for sale."

One of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World, the Grand Canyon is the traditional homeland of native tribes including the Navajo, Hopi, Havasupai, Hualapai, and Zuni and draws nearly five million visitors every year. Dozens of creeks, springs, and tributaries connect with the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon, including the Little Colorado River, Kanab Creek, Havasu Creek, and Bright Angel Creek. "The Grand Canyon is the cultural homeland of many traditional people and this project would be a sacrilege to them," said Roger Clark, Grand Canyon program director at the Grand Canyon Trust. "We're honored to support Navajo community members opposed to this project as part of the Save the Confluence coalition."

The proposed Grand Canyon Escalade project includes a two million square foot development on the canyon rim, a tram delivering up to 10,000 visitors a day to the bottom of the canyon at the confluence of the Colorado and Little Colorado rivers, and riverside walkways, restrooms, a gift shop, and restaurant. The massive amount of construction, noise, and pollution would irreversibly harm the fragile heart of the canyon. The confluence, the site of the project, is a sacred area for native tribes.

"This billion dollar scheme would be a travesty, destroying the very qualities that make the Grand Canyon such a spectacular life-changing experience, and an economic engine for the region," said Irvin.

In addition to the urgent threat of the Escalade project, existing and proposed uranium mining operations threaten the clean water of tributary streams in the Grand Canyon and the Colorado

River. And, a major expansion of the town of Tusayan, which lies less than five miles from the south entrance to Grand Canyon National Park, threatens sensitive groundwater supplies. Depleting already-stressed groundwater could impact the seeps and springs that feed the Grand Canyon, threatening the fragile desert environment.

The annual *America's Most Endangered Rivers*® report is a list of rivers at a crossroads, where key decisions in the coming months will determine the rivers' fates. Over the years, the report has helped spur many successes including the removal of outdated dams, the protection of rivers with Wild and Scenic designations, and the prevention of harmful development and pollution.

"This year's report underscores the importance of healthy rivers to each and every American," said Irvin. "Whether it's for clean drinking water, ample water supplies for farms and cities, abundant fish and wildlife, or iconic places vital to our heritage, we all have a stake in protecting our nation's rivers."

Orvis, sponsor of the America's Most Endangered Rivers campaign, connects people with the outdoors, and is renowned for investing its time and money in outdoor causes. "God isn't making any new rivers and it's our obligation to repair and renew the ones we have," said Perk Perkins, CEO of Orvis. "They are nature's bloodstream. What American Rivers does to focus constituencies on the most valuable and most beleaguered rivers is worthy of media headlines. Orvis is proud to support the vital conservation efforts of American Rivers and I urge everyone to take action to save America's Most Endangered Rivers."

America's Most Endangered Rivers® of 2015:

#1: Colorado River in the Grand Canyon, Arizona

Threat: Massive construction project, mining pollution, groundwater depletion

At Risk: An irreplaceable national treasure

Millions of Americans recognize the Grand Canyon as one of the most iconic landscapes on the planet. But this natural masterpiece of the Colorado River faces a battery of threats. A proposed industrial-scale construction project in the wild heart of the canyon, radioactive pollution from uranium mining, and a proposed expansion of groundwater pumping at Tusayan, all threaten the Grand Canyon's wild nature and unique experience that belongs to every American. Unless the Department of the Interior acts to stop these threats, one of our nation's greatest natural treasures will be scarred forever.

#2: Columbia River, Washington/Oregon

Threat: Outdated dam operations

At Risk: Healthy runs of salmon and other fisheries

The Columbia River is the lifeblood of the Pacific Northwest's economy and environment. The river's dams provide more than half the region's electricity as well as flood control and irrigation, but they have also decimated the basin's salmon and steelhead runs. As the Columbia River Treaty is renegotiated, the U.S. Department of State must put the importance of a healthy ecosystem on an equal footing with the benefits of hydropower and flood control. We can achieve this balance by releasing more water for salmon when they need it and providing fish passage beyond currently impassable dams. Since the last Treaty was negotiated a little over 50 years ago, this is an once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to do right by one of the nation's most important rivers.

#3: Holston River, Tennessee

Threat: Toxic chemical pollution

At Risk: Drinking water supply, fish and wildlife, and recreational uses

The Holston River is rich in history and heritage, and today provides drinking water for tens of thousands of Tennessee residents, as well as water for industry, livestock, and recreation. However, the river and its communities are threatened by an army ammunition plant that has been contaminating water supplies with toxic chemical pollution for years. The U.S. Army and its Holston Army Ammunition Plant must immediately stop polluting the Holston River with harmful explosive chemicals.

#4: Smith River, Montana

Threat: Copper mining

At Risk: Water quality, nationally renowned wild trout fishery

The Smith River is one of the most cherished floating and fishing destinations in Montana. The river is home to a nationally-renowned wild trout fishery, and provides prime habitat for dozens of fish and wildlife species. The river is threatened by a huge proposed copper mine in its headwaters that could seriously degrade water quality with acid mine drainage and toxic heavy metals. The State of Montana should not permit the copper mine unless it can be designed in a way that eliminates any risk to the river's water quality and habitat.

#5: Edisto River, South Carolina

Threat: Excessive water withdrawals

At Risk: Water supply, water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, recreation

The Edisto River is one of South Carolina's most popular rivers for paddling, fishing, and outdoor fun. It's also the state's most heavily used river for irrigation, and excessive agricultural water withdrawals are threatening water quality and the water supplies of other users. While the state's permitting process requires industrial and municipal water users to meet requirements to safeguard river health and clean water, large agribusinesses get a pass. The South Carolina House of Representatives must pass H.3564 this year to end this unfair exemption so that the Edisto, and all of the state's rivers, can continue to provide sustainable water supplies for all, while supporting river health and recreation.

#6: Chuitna River, Alaska

Threat: Coal mining

At Risk: Native culture, wild salmon, and clean water

The Chuitna River supports Alaskan Native communities, wild salmon, abundant wildlife including moose, bear, and wolf, and excellent opportunities for hunting, fishing, and other recreation. PacRim Coal's proposal to develop what would be Alaska's largest open-pit coal strip mine at the Chuitna River's headwaters poses an unacceptable threat to the economy and communities that rely on clean water and healthy salmon runs. Unless the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers denies the mine's permit, this pristine wild river and its communities will be irreparably damaged.

#7: Rogue/Smith Rivers, Oregon/California

Threat: Strip mining

At Risk: Clean water, drinking water, wild salmon and steelhead runs, Wild and Scenic Rivers
The Wild and Scenic Illinois Rogue (OR) and Smith (OR and CA) rivers are known for their healthy salmon runs, world-renowned plant biodiversity, and outstanding recreation. However, proposed nickel mining in these rivers' headwaters threatens their unique values. Immediate closure of the area to mining is the most effective way to help prevent the development of nickel strip mines from turning the pristine headwaters of the highest concentration of wild rivers in the country into an industrial mining zone. The U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Department of Interior must withdraw this area from mining immediately to protect this wild treasure.

#8: St. Louis River, Minnesota

Threat: Copper-nickel sulfide mining

At Risk: Clean water and wildlife habitat

Minnesota's Arrowhead region is known for its pure and abundant waters, deep forests, expansive wetlands, and recreational opportunities. However, a proposed copper-nickel sulfide mine at the headwaters of the St. Louis River, the region's main artery, threatens drinking water, wildlife, and the treaty-protected hunting, fishing, and gathering rights of the Ojibwe people. It is critical that state and federal regulators deny permits for the mine plan because it does not sufficiently protect the St. Louis River and its communities.

#9: Harpeth River, Tennessee

Threat: Sewage pollution and water withdrawals

At Risk: Clean water, fish and wildlife, recreation

The Harpeth River is one of the few free-flowing rivers in Tennessee. It flows through one of the fastest growing regions in the country, but remains an oasis for local families, anglers, and paddlers. The river's waters, fish and wildlife, and recreation values are threatened by sewage and water treatment plant expansions. Unless state officials require state-of-the-art technology to improve sewage treatment, the river will be overwhelmed by treated sewage pollution and public health could be compromised.

#10: Pearl River, Louisiana/Mississippi

Threat: New dam

At Risk: Healthy wetlands and wildlife habitat

The Pearl River runs through Central Mississippi and supports vital oyster reefs and marsh habitat in the Mississippi Sound. Coastal wetlands and commercial fisheries depend on the Pearl River's flows. However, the river's health has been compromised by the Barnett Dam north of Jackson, Mississippi. Now, a new dam has been proposed for the Pearl that would cause additional harm to river health, wetlands, and fish and wildlife habitat. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers must reject this unnecessary and ecologically harmful new dam.

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About American Rivers

American Rivers protects wild rivers, restores damaged rivers, and conserves clean water for people and nature. Since 1973, American Rivers has protected and restored more than 150,000 miles of rivers through advocacy efforts, on-the-ground projects, and an annual America's Most Endangered Rivers® campaign. Headquartered in Washington, DC, American Rivers has offices across the country and more than 200,000 members, supporters, and volunteers.

Rivers connect us to each other, nature, and future generations. Find your connections at AmericanRivers.org, [Facebook.com/AmericanRivers](https://www.facebook.com/AmericanRivers), and [Twitter.com/AmericanRivers](https://twitter.com/AmericanRivers). For more information about the Grand Canyon Trust, navigate to <http://www.grandcanyontrust.org/keep-the-canyon-grand>.