

Since 1973, American Rivers has helped protect more than 22,000 miles of outstanding rivers and 5.5 million acres of riverside land.

American Rivers is remarkably effective in protecting our nation's river heritage! Let me give you two heartening examples:

Near the headwaters of the Yellowstone River -- our nation's wildest river outside Alaska -- a foreign mining company planned a gold mine that posed a catastrophic environmental threat. They already had permits to build an acid-generating waste-rock reservoir. If the dam holding the reservoir had failed (not unlikely in this seismologically-active, avalanche-prone valley), it would have sent 5.5 million tons of acid pollution into the Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone, almost certainly destroying its world-famous trout fishery for generations.

American Rivers brought national attention to this imminent catastrophe by naming the Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone the nation's Most Endangered River three years in a row. Finally, in an historic agreement, President Clinton announced that the mine's owner had agreed to abandon its project.

In California, the ecologically and recreationally significant American River was about to fall victim to the most expensive dam ever built in the U.S. The Auburn Dam -- at a cost of \$1 billion to taxpayers like you! -- would have devastated up to 48 miles of prime canoeing and kayaking and 10,000 acres of critical wildlife habitat; it would have destroyed a recreation area used by 500,000 people a year. The proposed dam would have been built on a fault line, where an earthquake was more likely than the flood the dam was designed to prevent!

Again, American Rivers stepped in -- as part of a coalition of national and local conservation groups. We narrowly defeated the Auburn Dam. Now less expensive, more environmentally-sound measures will protect downstream communities from flooding.

I culled these two examples from an American Rivers annual report on North America's Most Endangered Rivers. I assure you there are other stories just as grim, all needing our help and commitment.

All across our country, the healthy, clean rivers we count on for sport, for safe drinking water supplies, and for spiritual renewal are being damaged:

- \* Over-aggressive dam building and operations threaten important wildlife and fisheries.
- \* Poisonous wastewater and sewage discharge load the rivers with debris and cancer-causing contaminants.
- \* Construction of roads and levees destroys streamside vegetation and wildlife habitat.

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