provide a smooth transition to rail or truck transport.

As for electric power, the retirement of Snake River generation and payment of construction costs would increase regional electric rates by 4 to 8 percent, according to information provided by the Northwest Power Planning Council. This modest increase would apply to Northwest electric rates, which are about 40 percent below the national average.

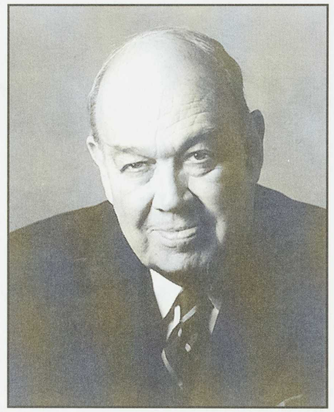
Washington State Supreme Court rules in favor of fish: The Supreme Court of Washington ruled in April that local irrigation districts must actually "reasonably, beneficially" use the water of the Yakima River to maintain their rights to it.

The ruling was the most recent action in the Yakima Water Rights Adjudication, a battle over water rights that has been going on for over 20 years. Last year, American Rivers participated as *amicus curiae* (friend of the court) in an important appeal. Our aim was to upset the legal foundation for awarding excessive amounts of water to the irrigation districts to which the bureau delivers water, because those districts control most of the water in the basin.

In its April ruling, the state supreme court reversed the trial court's award of 114,000 acre-feet of water to a large reclamation district. Confirming our arguments, the court said that neither contracts with the United States, nor a federal court consent decree entered in 1945, controlled the amount of the districts' water rights (they were "irrelevant," the court said). The court also held, as we had contended, that it was possible for a federal reclamation district to relinquish its right to water if it was not beneficially used for a number of years. The court remanded the case to the trial court to recalculate the rights and to determine whether any water was relinquished due to non-use.

Endangered species on the lower Colorado: According to the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Bureau of Reclamation operations from Hoover Dam down to the Mexican border are jeopardizing the existence of three species along the lower Colorado River. Two are fish — the razorback sucker and the bonytail chub — and one is a species of bird, the southwestern willow flycatcher. As part of a five-year Biological Opinion issued in May, FWS prescribed actions to be taken by the bureau while the federal-state-private Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program is under development. American Rivers has praised the two agencies for several of the prescribed steps, but we are concerned whether the actions as a whole will in fact contribute to the recovery of these three critically endangered species.

Charles Kuralt, 1934-1997



On July 4, 1997, American Rivers lost a dear friend, Charles Bishop Kuralt. He was more than a member of our Board of Directors, on which he served for the past three years, and more than a passionate and eloquent spokesman for our nation's rivers; he was a member of our family.

Born on September 10, 1934, in Wilmington, North Carolina, and raised in the tidewater, Charles had rivers in his blood. He told us of the "magic" of rivers and spent a lifetime teaching all of us how to appreciate their special gifts.

Chief among these was flyfishing. In *Charles Kuralt's America*, he wrote, "Often, I've been exhausted on trout streams, uncomfortable, wet, cold, briar-scarred, sunburned, mosquito-bitten, but never, with a fly rod in my hand, have I been unhappy."

As our beloved chronicler of American life who spent many years on the road, Charles once said, "I started out thinking of America as highways and state lines. As I got to know it better, I began to think of it as rivers." His love of our nation's lifelines and of the people along their banks has been a constant source of inspiration to us.

For the past three years, Charles was our spokesman for the American Rivers' Most Endangered Rivers annual report, and how eloquent he was in that role! His ability to help the public understand the value of rivers in our lives and the nature of the threats facing them was unsurpassed.

Charles, as you once said, "America is a great story, and there is a river on every page of it." Thanks for telling us so many wonderful stories, and for sharing with the world your love of rivers.

Farewell to American Rivers Board Members

Three of our directors have recently retired from the American Rivers board. They have given us much over the years, and we thank them for their leadership, inspiration, and generous support.

Robert S. Bennett, a partner in the Washington, D.C., law firm of Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom, has been a dedicated and generous supporter since joining us in 1994. Among his many contributions, Bob and his firm gave us pro bono legal assistance in many of our conservation efforts, including our successful campaign to block the New World Mine. We appreciate his dedication and valuable service.

James E. Coleman, Jr. has been a member of the board since 1988. A prominent Dallas attorney, Jim has served on the Legal, Nominating and Board Governance, Membership, Finance, and Development Committees. His strong interest in river conservation, particularly in the Southeast, was expressed in his work to preserve the Trinity River in Dallas, Texas, and the Glover River in Oklahoma. He has been a generous supporter with a long-standing commitment and dedication to American Rivers.

Ray M. Culter, vice president and director of administration for the Nature Conservancy, has been on the American Rivers board for nearly a decade. His extensive background in river conservation, fundraising, and communications has been a valuable asset to the organization, as have his leadership skills. Ray has held many roles on the board, serving as chairman for three years, and most recently as second vice chair and head of the Nominating and Board Governance Committee.

Southwest Regional Office Receives Challenge Grant

An anonymous donor has stepped forward to challenge members and friends of American Rivers' Southwest Regional Office in Phoenix to raise $25,000 to hire a full-time conservation director. To date, we have raised $18,000 toward this challenge.

Working with Program Director Pam Hyde, the director of the Southwest Regional Office will have four main objectives over the next five years:

1. To change the operation of dams and diversions on the Colorado River to restore the natural processes of the river system that support riparian areas and endangered fish;

2. To permanently protect 13 rivers identified as suitable for Wild and Scenic status by the Bureau of Land Management;

3. To educate the public throughout the Southwest about the importance of rivers in their lives;

4. To block damaging mining operations that harm wild rivers.

Every gift will be matched dollar for dollar, up to a total of $25,000. To respond to the Southwest Regional Office Challenge, send your tax-deductible gift to American Rivers' Southwest Challenge, 3601 North Seventh Street, Suite D, Phoenix, AZ 85013.

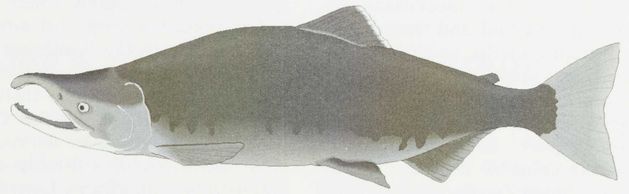


Photo: Rachel Fletcher

The Housatonic River Walk in Great Barrington, MA, is "1,000 Volunteers Long" — and growing. Great Barrington Housatonic River Walk, a project of the Great Barrington Land Conservancy, Great Barrington, MA, is a 1997 National Urban Rivers award winner (gold in grassroots activism category). *See story on page 6.*