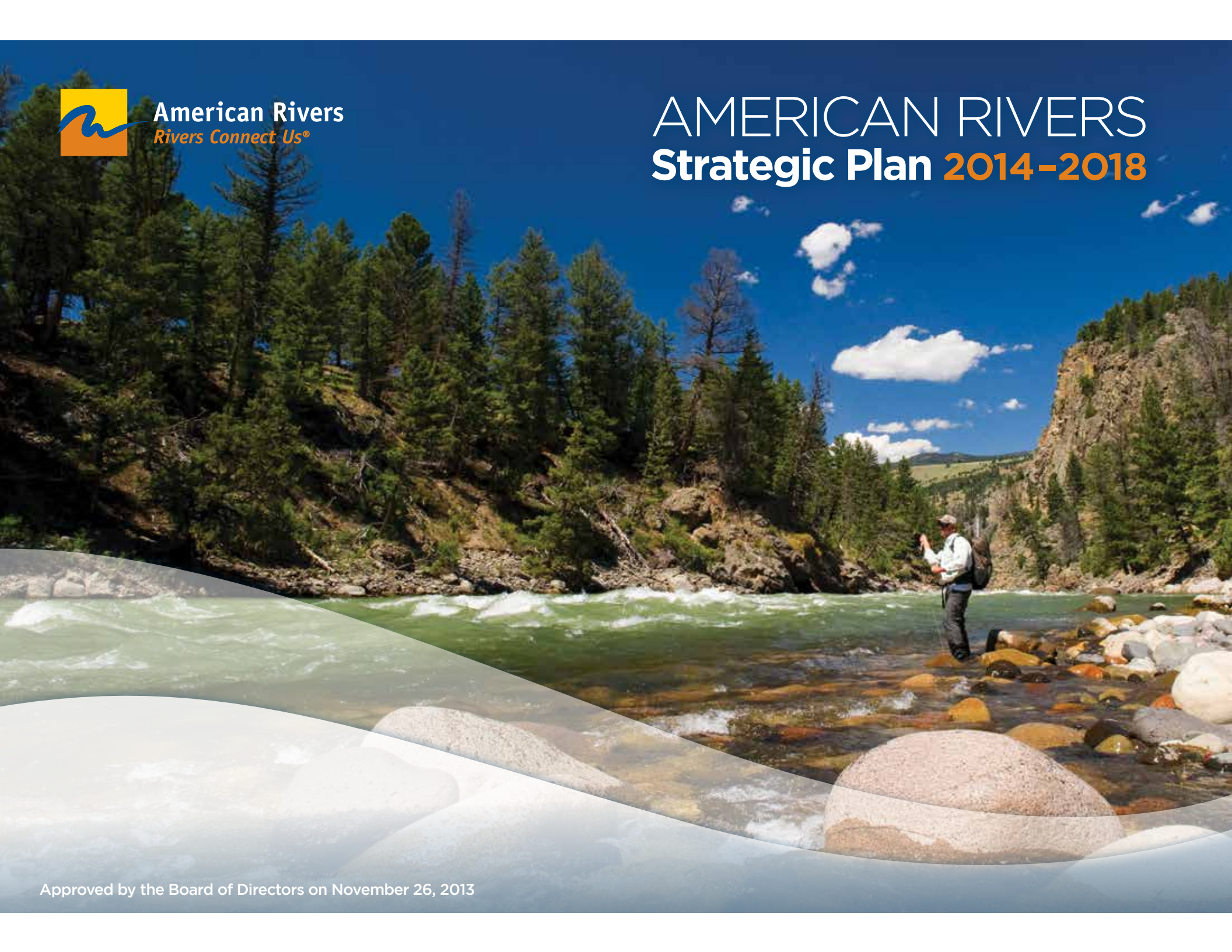




American Rivers
Rivers Connect Us®

AMERICAN RIVERS Strategic Plan **2014-2018**



Approved by the Board of Directors on November 26, 2013

AMERICAN RIVERS

Strategic Plan 2014–2018

Rivers connect us to our past, to nature, and to one another. *Our country has more than 3.5 million miles of rivers.* Rivers are our nation's most important resource. Rivers provide more than half of our clean drinking water, sustaining life itself. Rivers are home to wildlife, providing places for fish, birds, insects, and mammals to grow and thrive. Rivers give us places to fish, paddle, and enjoy nature, and local communities reap the economic benefits these activities bring. Our nation's villages, towns, and cities developed alongside rivers. Before there were passable roads, rivers were the nation's first trade routes, and today rivers continue to be vital transportation and commercial corridors. From the

earliest days of our nation, rivers provided power for mills and other types of industry and were the source of water for agriculture. Today, rivers continue to provide water and power to homes, businesses, ranches, and farms throughout the United States. Yet, despite their critical importance to the American people and nature, rivers have been dammed, diverted, drained, and polluted. Consequently, American Rivers was founded in 1973 to stand up for rivers, give them a voice, restore their vitality, and keep them healthy for future generations.

Decades of Success

Since its founding, American Rivers has protected more than 12,000 miles of Wild and Scenic Rivers,

taken down more than 200 obsolete and unsafe dams, and, with tens of thousands of volunteers working through our National River Cleanup® each year, removed more than 16 million pounds of trash from rivers and streams. Our annual America's Most Endangered Rivers® campaign has focused attention on the most imminent threats to rivers across the nation, spurring action at the federal, state, and local levels to protect and restore those rivers. We have worked with communities to establish blue trails on their local rivers; promote green roofs, rain gardens, permeable pavement, and other green infrastructure; restore floodplains; and adopt water conservation and efficiency measures to reduce the demand for expensive new dams



and reservoirs. We have worked with the hydropower industry to improve the environmental performance of hydropower dams. We have engaged with a variety of stakeholders to develop sustainable approaches to water management in river basins.

Challenges Ahead

After 40 years, our work to protect and restore rivers and conserve clean water is more important than ever. There are serious threats, both ongoing and new, that face our rivers and the human and natural communities that depend on them. Climate change is resulting in reduced stream flows in many areas and increased flooding in others. Demand for water exceeds supply in some river basins due to unsustainable and inefficient water use. Pressure is increasing to develop new reservoirs for water storage and as sources of hydropower, leading to calls for the construction of new dams that destroy free-flowing rivers. Polluted runoff from urban and suburban streets and roofs, together with sewage overflow from outdated sewer systems, foul our rivers and streams. Oil and gas extraction, mining, logging, and harmful agricultural practices pose new challenges to the health of our rivers.

With these many and diverse threats to rivers, it is more important than ever for American Rivers to bring to bear our leadership, expertise, and commitment to achieve our vision of: A nation of clean, healthy rivers that sustain and connect us.

We will achieve this vision by carrying out our mission: American Rivers protects wild rivers, restores damaged rivers, and conserves clean water for people and nature.

Future Focus

In order to carry out our mission and achieve our vision, American Rivers has developed this new Strategic Plan to make us a more focused and effective conservation organization. Over the next five years, our work will concentrate on protecting the rivers and basins in the United States that we identify as the highest priorities for conservation. In selecting the places where we will work, we will develop and

use criteria to assess the importance of the rivers and basins to people and nature, the threats to those rivers and basins, and the opportunities that exist to employ most effectively our problem-solving skills, technical and policy expertise, and local presence around the country. Recognizing that we cannot work on every river and basin, we will select those rivers and basins where we can achieve the greatest conservation benefits and which will serve as models for river conservation efforts by other organizations and agencies.

For each priority river and basin, we will establish clear conservation objectives and metrics to assess our progress toward those objectives and, based on those assessments, make adjustments as necessary to ensure that we are delivering the results we project. We will maximize our effectiveness by deploying our

national technical and policy experts to work closely in teams with our regional staff to achieve measurable conservation success in the priority rivers and basins. We will also work in close partnership with other local, regional, and national conservation organizations, as well as individuals, communities, and government agencies, in priority rivers and basins.

Accordingly, we have identified three Strategic Goals to guide our work over the next five years:

Strategic Goal #1:

American Rivers will improve the health of rivers across the nation by protecting and restoring flows, connectivity, water quality, and habitats in priority rivers and basins.

Strategic Goal #2:

American Rivers will be recognized as the leading advocate for river conservation in national policy discussions and debates.



Strategic Goal #3:

American Rivers will be a financially sound and sustainable organization with a growing base of unrestricted financial support and dedicated support for priority programs.

Each of these goals is described in greater detail in the pages that follow, with objectives, benchmarks, and timelines for each goal.

STRATEGIC GOALS

Strategic Goal #1: American Rivers will improve the health of rivers across the nation by protecting and restoring flows, connectivity, water quality, and habitats in priority rivers and basins.

We will concentrate our efforts on strategically selected priority rivers and basins, working to achieve measurable conservation goals in these places to ensure the protec-

tion and restoration of flows, connectivity, water quality, and habitat necessary for healthy, climate resilient rivers for people and nature. Our progress in conserving these priority rivers and basins will serve as a model to be replicated by American Rivers and other organizations in advancing river conservation and management across the country. We will maximize our effectiveness to achieve our conservation goals in priority rivers and basins by deploying staff experts from our national programs in teams with our regional staff, and by partnering with other organizations, agencies, and individuals.

Objectives, Benchmarks, Timeline

Objective	Benchmarks	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
1. Identify priority rivers and basins	• Form working group from staff across the organization to identify priority rivers and basins.	●				
	• Develop method for nomination and evaluation of potential priority rivers and basins.	●				
	• Complete nomination and evaluation of rivers and basins.	●				
	• Produce list of priority rivers and basins.	●				
	• Complete situation analysis, assessment of funding potential, and action plans for each priority river and basin.	●	●			
	• Develop partnerships with other conservation groups, agencies, businesses, and individuals in priority rivers and basins.	●	●			
	• Initiate and maintain outreach to communities and stakeholders in priority rivers and basins.	●	●			

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Objectives, Benchmarks, Timeline

Objective	Benchmarks	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
2. Establish pilot priority rivers and basins	• Organize and implement up to three pilot priority rivers and basins.	●				
	• Establish action plans with measurable deliverables for each pilot priority river and basin.	●				
3. Reconfigure Conservation Program for maximum impact	• Reorganize Conservation Program into priority river and basin programs and thematic programs.	●	●			
	• Identify the tools that are needed to achieve the conservation goals for priority rivers and basins and reorganize thematic programs as appropriate to provide those tools.	●	●			
	• Consult and coordinate with other river conservation groups through a national rivers meeting or other mechanisms to maximize conservation impact in priority rivers and basins.	●	●			
4. Focus Conservation Program resources primarily on geographic priorities	• Establish criteria for taking on projects not within priority rivers and basins.	●				
	• Complete or phase out most non-priority projects.		●	●		
5. Complete transition to priority rivers and basins approach	• Ensure that basin and thematic programs are planned, integrated, funded, and fully operational.	●	●	●		
6. Achieve conservation benchmarks for pilot priority rivers and basins; achieve measurable conservation progress in all priority rivers and basins	• Achieve five-year goals for flow, quality, connectivity, and habitat in pilot priority rivers and basins.	●	●	●	●	●
	• Achieve conservation “wins” (dam removals, Wild and Scenic designations, policy advances, etc.) in all priority rivers and basins.	●	●	●	●	●

Strategic Goal #2: American Rivers will be recognized as the leading advocate for river conservation in national policy discussions and debates.

In order to most effectively protect and restore rivers and conserve clean water, and enhance our ability to craft practical river conservation and management solutions in the field, we will focus our advocacy, communications, and analytical resources on key proactive and defensive policy initiatives at the national, regional, and state levels.

We will carry out our work in a manner that defines us as reasonable and practical problem-solvers and strong advocates for rivers. To be successful, we must develop greater capacity for policy and scientific analysis, advocacy, and communications. We will enhance our visibility with policymakers and existing and potential supporters by expanding our media relations efforts to make American Rivers the first organization media outlets contact for information about rivers.

Objectives, Benchmarks, Timeline

Objective	Benchmarks	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
7. Refine policy goals; maintain and enhance leadership role in key national river policy advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify proactive policy goals, including focusing on particular issues of national significance and policies that support conservation in priority rivers and basins (e.g. federal and state budgets, federal and state infrastructure policy, climate adaptation, federal, state, and local land and water management policies and regulations, etc.). 	●	●	●	●	●
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop strategies for focusing our resources to defend key existing federal and state laws and policies essential to conserving rivers, particularly in the priority rivers and basins (e.g. Clean Water Act, Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, federal and state laws and policies regarding water infrastructure, etc.). 	●	●	●	●	●

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Objectives, Benchmarks, Timeline

Objective	Benchmarks	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
8. Refine our approach to advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Position American Rivers as a constructive problem-solver in all of our work. 	●	●	●	●	●
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure coordinated and consistent messages and tone across all platforms. 	●	●	●	●	●
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement a coordinated litigation strategy to achieve our conservation goals in priority rivers and basins. 	●	●	●	●	●
9. Enhance policy advocacy capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add staff in Government Relations to provide greater capacity to advocate our priorities with Congress and the Executive Branch. 	●	●			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train Conservation staff in policy advocacy to provide greater capacity to advocate our priorities with federal, state, and local governments. 	●	●			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with local, regional, and national conservation organizations and non-traditional partners. 	●	●	●	●	●
10. Develop capacity for policy and scientific analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish greater scientific capacity by adding staff scientists, creating a River Conservation Science Program, and better utilizing existing staff experts and the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC). 	●	●	●	●	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish greater capacity for in-depth policy and economic analysis to pioneer new approaches to conserving flow, water quality, connectivity and habitat by adding expert staff and partnering with outside experts and organizations. 	●	●	●	●	

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Objectives, Benchmarks, Timeline

Objective	Benchmarks	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
11. Enhance communications and outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Add communications capacity, through additional staff, contractors, and technology, to educate the public, policymakers, and donors on the importance of rivers and supporting our work in priority rivers and basins and at the national level. 	●	●	●		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Media-train all senior conservation staff. 		●			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Establish stronger working relationships with print and online journalists in targeted media markets. 	●	●	●	●	●
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase number of media impressions mentioning American Rivers each year. 	●	●	●	●	●
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase the number of e-activists, Facebook and Twitter followers and the online actions they take by a target number each year. 	●	●	●	●	●
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Meet or exceed industry standards for open rates, actions, and contributions. 	●	●	●	●	●

Strategic Goal #3: American Rivers will be a financially sound and sustainable organization with a growing base of unrestricted financial support and dedicated support for priority programs.

Financial stability and revenue growth, particularly funding that is flexible to meet our needs and address urgent opportunities, will be vital to accomplishing our

conservation objectives. We will move from a largely grant-funded organization subject to the interests of foundation and government funders to an organization that attracts a diversity of resources to underwrite our identified priorities. This will require testing new funding avenues and recruiting volunteer leadership and additional staff with expertise in these arenas. To be successful, we must develop greater capacity in development and communications.

Objectives, Benchmarks, Timeline

Objective	Benchmarks	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
12. Raise more unrestricted contributions	• Complete case statement for support of the new direction embodied in the Strategic Plan.	●				
	• Complete business plan with specific revenue benchmarks.	●				
	— Increase number and average size of gifts from major donors by a target number each year.		●	●	●	●
	— Increase unrestricted support from corporations and foundations by a target number each year.		●	●	●	●
	— Increase number of dues-paying members by a target number each year.		●	●	●	●
	— Increase combined Board giving to a specified minimum annual amount.	●	●	●	●	●
	— Train all senior directors and directors in major donor development.			●		

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Objectives, Benchmarks, Timeline

Objective	Benchmarks	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
13. Strengthen the Board	• Add new Board members with substantial giving capacity.			●	●	●
	• Ensure that all Board members give a specified minimum amount each year, on a scale adjusted for giving capacity.			●	●	●
	• Provide specific fundraising training to Board members every other year.	●		●		●
	• Revise Board orientation materials and update each year.	●	●	●	●	●
	• Develop annual individual goals for each Board member, including goals that employ the policy, technical, and other unique expertise Board members provide.	●	●	●	●	●
	• Conduct annual Board self-evaluations.	●	●	●	●	●
14. Increase dedicated support for priority rivers and basins	• Add 30 individual, foundation or corporate prospects for priority rivers and basins each year.		●	●	●	●
	• Increase total foundation funding in proportion to unrestricted revenue growth.		●	●	●	●
	• Ensure that all proposals are congruent with strategic plan priorities.	●	●	●	●	●
	• Increase corporate support for priority rivers and basins.	●	●	●	●	●
	• Ensure that funding to cover overhead and all other indirect costs is identified before a government or foundation grant is accepted.	●	●	●	●	●

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Objectives, Benchmarks, Timeline

Objective	Benchmarks	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
15. Grow reserves and endowment through planned gifts	● Increase number of River Legacy Society members each year.		●	●	●	●
	● Increase annual planned gifts revenue.	●	●	●	●	●
16. Explore fee for service and other revenue models	● Develop, test, and refine National River Cleanup® corporate engagement packages.		●			
	● Develop, test, and implement other fee for service models, e.g. River Restoration consulting, Training Academy or other advocacy training, license plates, other models as they arise.	●	●	●	●	●



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Rivers Connect Us®

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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.

PHOTO CREDITS:

COVER: Fly fishing in Yellowstone National Park, WY | Jim Klug

PAGE 3: Kodiak Brown Bear in Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge, AK | Per Bergsbo

PAGE 4: Paddling on the Waccamaw River Blue Trail, SC | Charles Slate

BACK COVER: Merced River, CA | Dhilung Kirat