



**AMERICAN  
RIVERS**

# **Defending Our Water Security**

**A BLUEPRINT TO DELIVER CLEAN WATER, STRONG INFRASTRUCTURE, AND SAFE COMMUNITIES  
2025-2028**

The United States is a nation of rivers, and clean water is one of America's greatest sources of national wealth. Investing in clean water security generates a tremendous return on investment for the country. Clean water is not a luxury. It is vital to our future economic growth and national security. It is also essential to our nation's treasured hunting and fishing traditions and the heritage of our communities.

But our water wealth has never faced greater threats. Dams are failing, infrastructure is crumbling, communities are flooding more frequently, and drinking water costs are increasing as our rivers are impacted by pollution and sewage overflows.

Simply put, America cannot be a world leader if we don't take care of our water. We are less competitive, less healthy, and less safe if we don't get the basics right.

When it comes to the dangers of neglecting national water security, the lessons learned from other countries are instructive. For instance, the Chinese government's failure to secure clean water and healthy rivers is now catching up with them on a massive scale. The widespread pollution and mismanagement of China's rivers and wetlands has turned lush grasslands into barren deserts and robbed farmers of crops. An estimated 300 million people in China drink contaminated water every day. Failure to shore up crumbling water infrastructure has also resulted in more than 3,000 reservoir collapses in China, killing thousands. The United States can and must do better. To avoid weakening our country, we must prioritize and invest in national clean water security. President-elect Trump has a unique opportunity to move America forward by investing in our water systems using the latest technology and advancing our country as the global leader in all aspects of clean water security.

At the end of President Trump's first administration, he demonstrated leadership in establishing a Water Subcabinet to develop a national water strategy to improve management of our nation's water resources. American Rivers calls on President Trump to reestablish and empower the subcabinet with a directive to develop and implement a blueprint that is focused on the following:

- Ensure America has the cleanest water in the world
- Invest in crumbling infrastructure and build smart
- Make America more safe and secure
- Help energy providers lead long-term

American Rivers stands by as a partner to help the Trump administration accomplish these goals, for the benefit of our economy, heritage, and national security. We look forward to continued dialogue and collaboration to achieve mission success for America's rivers.

Below is a detailed plan on the actions the incoming administration can take to position the U.S. as a global clean water leader and ensure our national water security.



# Priority 1

## Ensure America has the cleanest water in the world

At the end of President Trump's first administration, [he established a Water Subcabinet](#) to develop a national water strategy to improve management of our nation's water resources. American Rivers calls on President Trump to reestablish the subcabinet with a directive to ensure America has the cleanest water in the world. Specifically, this subcabinet should:

- Implement a national campaign to eliminate untreated sewage dumping into America's rivers by 2050.
- Increase publicly accessible water quality data tracking so all communities know if the water in their rivers and streams are safe.
- Direct Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and US Geological Survey (USGS) to research the use of Light Detection and Ranging (LIDAR) and machine learning to update the National Hydrography Database, to provide an accurate accounting of the size and locations of the nation's rivers and streams.
- Work with Congress to advance funding for monitoring at the National Science Foundation to determine how to track stormwater quality at the national level.
- Make permanent and fully fund the Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program within Health and Human Services.

# Priority 2

## Invest in crumbling infrastructure and build smart

Studies show that America's infrastructure is crumbling. Water infrastructure, dams, roads, and bridges are falling apart. [The American Civil Engineers gave America's infrastructure a C-](#) in 2021 and rated our stormwater and wastewater systems as Ds in their ranking system. Communities are repeatedly flooded due to extreme storms and aging infrastructure, and all of these challenges are impacting our economy, environment, and competitiveness in the world.

Flooding alone is estimated to cost the United States between [\\$179.8 and \\$496.0 billion](#) each year. The costs of flooding continue to skyrocket due to increasingly frequent and intense storms, and

because we have disconnected and paved over 90% of floodplains in the lower 48 states, which puts people and property at risk. Investments in flood mitigation like relocating flood-prone homes and businesses to higher ground and setting levees back further from rivers saves \$7 for every \$1 invested. Floodplain restoration is a multi-benefit solution that reduces flood losses, saves taxpayers money, boosts local economies, and restores natural areas for recreation and wildlife.

American Rivers calls on the Trump administration to invest in smart infrastructure that balances the multifaceted needs of our communities. That starts with:



## Investing in durable infrastructure and solutions

AGENCY	PROPOSAL	DECISION-MAKER
<b>U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE</b>		
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE	» Convert the Emergency Watershed Protection Program-Floodplain Easements from a post-disaster recovery program to a pre-disaster flood resilience program and provide robust funding for flood-prone farmers.	ADMINISTRATION
<b>U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS</b>		
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS	» Evaluate where the nation's levees experience repetitive failures resulting in excessive damages and expensive repairs and invest in floodplain reconnection projects to increase the effectiveness of levee systems.	ADMINISTRATION
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS	» Issue a final rulemaking on the Agency Specific Procedures to implement the Principles, Requirements, and Guidelines for Water Resources Projects to update Army Corps project planning and provide engineering guidance and project planning resources to effectively utilize cost-effective Engineering with Nature approaches.	ADMINISTRATION
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS	» Enhance investments in Engineering with Nature Program, including at least one dedicated staff lead in each district to improve investments in multi-benefit water resources solutions that reduce flood damages, improve local economies, while restoring rivers and floodplains.	ADMINISTRATION
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY</b>		
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY	» Propose in the federal budget more funds for the Sewer Overflow and Stormwater Re-use grant program and making it more flexible to prevent sewage overflows; and increase funding for small town stormwater infrastructure efforts by creating a separate stormwater sub-program within the Section 319 grant program.	CONGRESS, ADMINISTRATION
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY	» Modernize America's pipe infrastructure by updating the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) to provide more technical support to small towns and rural communities, and ensure small communities have parity with larger, richer cities.	ADMINISTRATION
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY	» Build on industry and non-profit support to establish a permanent program to provide dedicated funding for a source control and emerging contaminants program for stormwater pollutants.	ADMINISTRATION
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY	» Proposing Congress pass a National Water Infrastructure Trust Fund bill to permanently provide easily accessible funds to towns and cities for stormwater and flood mitigation projects, and ask Congress to authorize 15% of the State Revolving Fund Green Infrastructure Project Reserve be designated for innovative clean water infrastructure projects.	CONGRESS, ADMINISTRATION
<b>FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY</b>		
FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY	» Overhaul the building and land-use standards to ensure unwise development that floods homes and businesses is restricted and encourage communities to invest in restoring floodplains to natural areas that will enhance local economies and improve hunting, fishing, and recreational opportunities.	ADMINISTRATION
FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY	» Increase investments in flood mapping to utilize the most technologically advanced methodology for determining flood risk accurately, and ensure communities have the most up to date maps to make proactive and safe development decisions.	ADMINISTRATION
FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY, DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR	» Invest in pre-disaster flood mitigation programs to improve the safety and resilience of flood prone communities and property owners.	CONGRESS, ADMINISTRATION
FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY	» Push Congress to pursue long-term reauthorization and reform of the National Flood Insurance Program including strengthening floodplain and floodway development standards to align with future flood risk projections, ensure unwise floodplain development that floods neighboring homes and businesses is restricted, and eliminate barriers to stream and floodplain restoration to support local economies.	CONGRESS, ADMINISTRATION

AGENCY	PROPOSAL	DECISION-MAKER
<b>U.S. DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR</b>		
<b>U.S. DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR, U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY, U.S. HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT AGENCY, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Launch an interagency Flood-Safe Rivers Initiative focused on improving infrastructure to eliminate repetitive and expensive flood losses through advanced mapping, modeling and programs that make room for rivers.</li> </ul>	<b>ADMINISTRATION</b>
<b>U.S. DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Develop a Riverscape Restoration Collaborative to elevate the importance of riverscape and headwater restoration as an important drought, fire and flood resilience strategy. This collaborative would improve agency coordination, elevate funding needs and support the increased pace and scale of riverscape restoration work.</li> </ul>	<b>ADMINISTRATION</b>
<b>U.S. DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Undertake a department-wide assessment of opportunities to utilize public lands to improve the flood safety and resilience of the nation and invest in capital projects that reconnect floodplains and utilize federal lands to safely convey flood waters.</li> </ul>	<b>ADMINISTRATION</b>
<b>U.S. DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Authorize and provide robust funding for National Refuge System expansions with a focus on flood-prone areas and adapting NRS infrastructure to reconnect floodplains to rivers.</li> </ul>	<b>CONGRESS, ADMINISTRATION</b>

## Priority 3

# Make America more safe and secure

Advanced technologies create opportunities for smarter infrastructure that balances the needs of communities, business, and the environment – and not a moment too soon. Our country’s infrastructure, largely built in the 1950s and ‘60s, is falling apart and violent storms are putting people and places at risk more often. The Trump administration should pay special attention to the growing crisis around failing dams on our rivers, which puts countless communities in danger. According to the Association of State Dam Safety Officials, 1,323 dams have failed in the U.S. or require emergency intervention to prevent failure. For those dams that are no longer serving a critical purpose, the most effective way to protect communities from failing river infrastructure is to remove dams that have become obsolete, uneconomical, or unsafe.

Infrastructure isn’t the only answer to a safer future. Purposeful, balanced management of our existing water sources can make our country more secure for the long-term. As one of the largest owners of public

lands in the country, the U.S. government can make progress quickly because it has direct management over the headwaters of rivers that are often located on public lands. Watershed management on forest lands is especially vital to America’s national security and economic prosperity since the U.S. Forest Service manages water sources that supply more than half of the drinking water in the United States. Failure to secure this supply stifles economic growth and prosperity of communities from coast to coast. It can drain the federal disaster relief budget, strain our healthcare system, hurt industry, and cause loss of life and property. Access to clean water is simply a prerequisite for our way of life. Even the perception of water insecurity has enough force to hinder economic development. No companies want to relocate or expand into municipalities where the water supply is in doubt.

The Trump administration can help protect our economy and environment, and prepare communities and business for the future by:

AGENCY	PROPOSAL	DECISION-MAKER
<b>U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE</b>		
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE	» Support policy and funding initiatives to reduce risk for agriculture to transition to forage crops that use less water, are more resilient to prolonged periods of drought, and provide a similar return to traditional forage.	ADMINISTRATION
U.S. FOREST SERVICE	» Highlight National Forests that have already adopted use of the Watershed Condition Framework (WCF) to maintain sourcewaters and expand adoption into other regions to protect water security.	ADMINISTRATION
U.S. FOREST SERVICE	» Establish a Watershed Protection focus for the Forest Legacy Program by increasing state grants for water source protection.	ADMINISTRATION
U.S. FOREST SERVICE	» Adopt Water and River Smart wildfire strategies as an addendum to the USFS' <a href="#">Chief's Wildfire Crisis Implementation Plan</a> which explicitly calls out additional work needed related to water.	ADMINISTRATION
<b>U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS</b>		
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS	» Support more input during the nationwide permitting process from rural communities near infrastructure that that could endanger their water supply due to natural disaster or mismanagement.	ADMINISTRATION
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS WITH U.S. FOREST SERVICE, U.S. BUREAU OF RECLAMATION, U.S. BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT, U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICES, U.S. BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS, NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION	» Develop an interagency working group to comprehensively review federal dams to identify safety concerns and remove those dams that are no longer providing a net benefit to taxpayers, and enact better guidance for dam removal practices to ensure that removal projects are responsibly undertaken and meet appropriate public safety and environmental restoration standards.	ADMINISTRATION
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS WITH NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION, U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE, FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY	» Increase funding sources in existing programs for dam removal and dam safety to levels for high hazard dams that endanger communities and businesses.	CONGRESS, ADMINISTRATION
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS	» Advance with Congress the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) to incorporate improved disposition study guidelines, dam removal projects, and improved environmental operations at water infrastructure projects.	CONGRESS, ADMINISTRATION
<b>FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY</b>		
FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY WITH U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS	» Improve and simplify federal dam decommissioning procedures and permitting so we don't leave obsolete dams in place that could endanger public safety due to complexity or resources.	ADMINISTRATION
FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY	» Improve the National Dam Safety Program's grant allocation and delivery process, including increasing funding for state programs and increasing state support.	CONGRESS, ADMINISTRATION
FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY WITH U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY	» Call on Congress to enact a comprehensive policy and funding legislation package to address all aspects of dam infrastructure and safety such as an updated Twenty-First Century Dams Act (introduced in the 117th Congress, HR 4375).	CONGRESS, ADMINISTRATION

AGENCY	PROPOSAL	DECISION-MAKER
<b>FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION</b>		
FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION	» Work with Congress to simplify the decommissioning process for dam owners who choose to remove federally regulated hydropower dams that are no longer economical.	CONGRESS, ADMINISTRATION
<b>INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE</b>		
INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE	» Call for a Sourcewaters Credit, a federal tax credit to match existing state conservation tax credits for river and water source specific easements.	ADMINISTRATION
<b>U.S. DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR</b>		
U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE WITH NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION, FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY, U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS	» Remove federal funding match requirements for historically marginalized communities seeking to remove dams, including Tribes.	ADMINISTRATION
U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE	» Provide resources and support for the <a href="#">Interagency Fish Passage Task Force</a> to implement and provide funding for fish passage, and their role that includes increasing communication, guidance, and efficiency to remove dams to protect species, commercial fishing, and tourism.	ADMINISTRATION
U.S. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE	» Increase access to urban rivers by increasing funding for the National Park Service's Rivers of Opportunity initiative in conjunction with NPS' River, Trail, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program.	CONGRESS, ADMINISTRATION
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR	» Establish a Secretarial Order that clarifies that riverscape and headwater restoration is a wildfire risk reduction and mitigation strategy, allowing for riverscape protection and restoration funds to utilize wildfire funds.	ADMINISTRATION
U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY	» Develop the National Protected Rivers Database for the United States to measure freshwater resources.	ADMINISTRATION

## Priority 4

### Help energy providers lead long-term

The demand on our energy systems is growing. Hydropower accounts for nearly 6% of the energy generated in the United States and its impact on rivers is significant. The Trump administration can support improved hydropower operations and development by:

- Encouraging retrofits and rehabilitation of existing dam infrastructure to grow renewable energy capacity without developing new stream reaches.
- Requesting the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission submit a report to Congress that identifies any project that has been continually out-of-service for 5 years or more, explains the reason why each project or development has been out-of-service, and identifies any plans for the rehabilitation or other disposition of the project or development.
- Assessing the existing hydropower fleet to determine which facilities are able to meet the needs of an updated, diverse energy grid. As we transition to more forms of energy, an assessment of the benefits and impacts of the existing fleet would allow for strategic decision making about which projects should be compensated for their ability to integrate diverse forms of energy, and which projects are candidates for removal and restoration.
- In carrying out responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act in hydropower licensing proceedings, directing federal agencies to cite to the specific parts of documents and other evidence that are the basis for the findings on issues of material fact for which the record contains inconsistent or conflicting information.





COVER: MISSISSIPPI RIVER, MISSISSIPPI, JUSTIN WILKINS, UNSPLASH  
BACK COVER: MIAMI RIVER, FLORIDA, THEPALMER



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## ABOUT AMERICAN RIVERS

American Rivers is championing a national effort to protect and restore all rivers, from remote mountain streams to urban waterways. Healthy rivers provide people and nature with clean, abundant water and natural habitat. For 50 years, American Rivers staff, supporters, and partners have shared a common belief: **Life Depends on Rivers.**