

# Report Lists NorCal's McCloud River Among Nation's 'Most Endangered'

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The McCloud River in Northern California is included in American Rivers' list of America's Most Endangered Rivers of 2021.

*Tracey Diaz Via American Rivers*

**The McCloud River in Northern California is among the nation's most endangered, according to a new report from the conservation group American Rivers.**

In a report released Tuesday, the McCloud was chosen as a river with significance to local people and wildlife, and because the federal Bureau of Reclamation wants to raise the height of Shasta Dam.

“At this particular moment there has been a proposal to rise that dam another 18.5 feet. That would inundate three quarters of a mile more of the McCloud River,” says Amy Merrill, a California representative of American Rivers.

The McCloud feeds into the Sacramento River, which is blocked by the 600-foot-tall Shasta Dam. It stores 41% of the water for the Central Valley Project, which supplies water for irrigation and for the metro areas of Sacramento and San Francisco.

But upriver, the McCloud supports a series of rare and threatened species including the Shasta snow-wreath, Pacific fisher, Shasta salamander and McCloud River Redband Trout. It’s also the ancestral home of the Winnemem Wintu tribe, whose population is approximately 150 people. The tribe is also opposed to increasing the dam height. If the dam were raised it would further flood more than 40 cultural sites, according to the tribe.

The McCloud and its wild trout fishery are also specifically identified in the [California Wild and Scenic Rivers Act](#), which states “The Legislature further finds and declares that maintaining the McCloud River in its free-flowing condition to protect its fishery is the highest and most beneficial use of the waters of the McCloud River.”

One of California’s largest agricultural water providers, Westlands Water District, was involved in the proposal to increase the dam height in 2019. At the time, former Westlands lobbyist David Bernhardt was serving as the Secretary of the Interior, which would oversee the project through the Bureau of Reclamation. But in the fall of 2019, [Westlands exited its involvement](#) with the proposal to raise the dam, in part because of the effect on the McCloud. Now, American Rivers wants to stop the proposal for good.

Merrill says they’re asking the new Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland to review the most recent environmental impact statement on the proposal to raise Shasta Dam and make a final determination that’s in line with the California Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

“We would like her to publish a record of decision stating that and sort of putting an end to this project,” Merrill says.

Other rivers listed in the report [America's Most Endangered Rivers of 2021](#) include the Snake River in Idaho, Boundary Waters in Minnesota, and Ipswich River in Massachusetts.

*Erik Neumann is a reporter and producer who's worked throughout the West Coast. He earned a Master's degree from the UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism and joined JPR in 2019 after working as a reporter at NPR member station KUER in Salt Lake City.*

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