

LIST: The top 10 most endangered rivers in the United States



FILE – This Tuesday Dec. 25, 2018 file photo shows the Delaware River at Washington Crossing, Pa. On Thursday, Feb. 25, 2021, the Delaware River Basin Commission, a regulatory agency that's responsible for the water supply of more than 13 million people in four states voted to permanently ban natural gas drilling and fracking in the watershed. (AP Photo/Jacqueline Larma)

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AUSTIN (KXAN) — While rising oceans, increasing water temperatures and changing currents have been the focus of a lot of study with respect to climate change, our rivers are also under threat due to a variety of reasons.

The organization, [American Rivers](#), put together their list of top 10 most endangered rivers in America:

1. Snake River in Idaho, Washington and Oregon
2. Lower Missouri River in Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska
3. Boundary Waters in Minnesota

4. South River in Georgia
5. Pecos River in New Mexico
6. Tar Creek in Oklahoma
7. McCloud River in California
8. Ipswich River in Massachusetts
9. Raccoon River in Iowa
10. Turkey Creek in Mississippi

One of the main threats to the health of the many rivers are manmade dams.

The four dams built along the **Snake River** have created four reservoirs that warm up much more quickly than the river did beforehand. The dams have also significantly impacted the salmon population along the Snake River, in turn harming the local Native American tribes who rely on the salmon population for food.

The **Missouri River** has been constricted by levees and therefore isn't as able to withstand flooding, which has become increasingly frequent due to climate change. Widening of the river may be the solution to reducing the flood risk and allowing for a less restrictive river flow.

The threat to the **Boundary Waters** of Minnesota is a future -threat as a proposed sulfide -ore copper mine could pollute the waters with any climate change induced droughts only concentrating the pollutants from this potential mine.

The **South River** in Georgia is paying the price for the rapid growth of nearby Atlanta and DeKalb County as a whole. Stormwater runoff is combining with sewage to introduce pollution to parts of the river.

The concern for the **Pecos River** in New Mexico is another future -threat as a proposed mining project that could mine for gold, copper and zinc may detrimentally harm the river. This isn't the first mining project along the Pecos River as lead and zinc mining had occurred in the 1920s and 1930s before the water was considered "too poisoned" so mining operations moved on.

Tar Creek in Oklahoma has already been negatively affected by mining operations from the 1880s until the 1960s with heavy metals contaminating the creek for

decades. While the EPA has designated the area a “Superfund site” to bring environmental remedies, there is still much work to be done to improve the water quality.

McCloud River in California is under threat from plans to raise the nearby Shasta Dam by 18.5 feet. The dam is due to be raised in order to provide more water for agricultural sites in California’s Central Valley. The problem is, raising the Shasta Dam would permanently or seasonally flood areas along the river and impact nearby native species and several sacred sites belonging to the Winnemem Tribe.

The **Ipswich River** in Massachusetts has too much water being withdrawn from it, especially during the warmer and drier months. Water is being used for watering and drinking, but the restrictions on withdrawal allow for too many exemptions. Climate change bringing more frequent drought to the area means that too much water is being taken out of the river during the drier months when the river is already at its lowest.

The **Raccoon River** in Iowa has become increasingly polluted as farm factories and industries contaminated the water which is used for drinking. Periods of drought further exacerbated the problem as recently as 2020 creating a toxic algae outbreak. The pollution increased the level of nitrates in the water, which is difficult to remove and harmful to certain segments of the population.

Turkey Creek in Mississippi has problems from the past and potential future concerns as well. The reduction of forest and wetlands to allow for more homes and businesses has brought an increased flooding risk to the area. Future roadway plans and “wetland fills” could bring additional harm to the creek which had been undergoing restorative efforts. Harm to Turkey Creek would disproportionately impact historically Black communities as the flooding risk increases.

For more information from this report, visit [AmericanRivers.org](https://www.AmericanRivers.org)

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