

River Budget: National Priorities for Healthy Rivers and Clean Water (FY23)

Rivers are essential to life. They provide our drinking water, nurture fish and wildlife, power our economy, connect us to the natural world and are vital to healthy, thriving communities. Rivers also flow through the major challenges facing our country. Climate change is an existential threat, fueling record-breaking floods and drought. A long history of racial injustice forces the impacts of climate change, along with pollution, dams and other threats, disproportionately on Black, Indigenous, Latino and other communities of color. And, we're losing nature – the web of life is unraveling as species are going extinct at an alarming rate. These crises impact us all, and rivers are part of the solution.

The River Budget outlines clear priorities for federal spending to improve water infrastructure, restore watersheds, modernize flood management and remove dams to ensure a future of clean water and healthy rivers everywhere, for everyone.

Improve water infrastructure: Clean water is something everyone needs, but currently two million people in the U.S. do not have access to safe, clean, affordable drinking water. Native American households are 19 times as likely as white households to lack indoor plumbing; Black and Latino households are twice as likely. Fortifying our nation's drinking water and wastewater facilities to be resilient and sustainable requires urgent investment, especially in proven solutions like green stormwater infrastructure.

Restore watersheds: Healthy watersheds filter pollution so our communities are healthy, recharge aquifers so we have enough clean water, convey floodwaters to improve public safety, and support natural ecosystems. Healthy rivers and watersheds provide vital connections to culture and heritage. They are crucial migratory routes for fish and wildlife and a recreational haven for hunters and anglers. Conserving and restoring watersheds in a changing climate is essential to slowing and reversing freshwater biodiversity loss. Furthermore, it is the fiscally responsible choice — every \$1 million invested in restoring watersheds generates 16 jobs and up to \$2.5 million for the economy.

Modernize flood management: As floods become more frequent and severe, communities need cost-effective, reliable solutions to protect people and property and safeguard river health. Nature-based solutions protect, restore or mimic natural water systems and provide services like improved water quality and quantity, snowpack/storm flow attenuation, aquifer recharge, and flood control. Nature-based solutions include restoration, conservation, and innovative solutions that lead to the sustainable management of watersheds, floodplains, wetlands and other water sources to improve ecosystem services for all water users and the environment.

Remove and rehabilitate dams: Free-flowing, healthy rivers are some of the most valuable habitats on the planet. However, the construction of dams disrupts the natural balance of these ecosystems by impacting water quality, cutting off migration routes, isolating habitats and destroying fish spawning areas. In addition to posing a risk to fish and wildlife, older dams that have reached their end of life and have not been maintained pose a public safety risk. Removing dams can improve public safety, restore the natural functions of rivers, help endangered fish species, create jobs, protect important environmental and cultural resources, and increase climate resilience.

These priorities are critical. Because healthy, resilient river systems are the first line of defense against potentially devastating impacts of climate change. Because finding equitable solutions to river and water challenges is key to dismantling longstanding environmental injustices. Because rivers are pathways to the outdoors and connect us with nature and each other.

Because everyone has a right to clean, safe water and healthy rivers.

By investing in the programs outlined in the River Budget, Congress can drive smart, equitable solutions that will benefit our nation for generations to come.

Supporting organizations:

American Rivers

[List supporting groups]

For questions, contact:

Matt Young (myoung@americanrivers.org)

Ted Illston (tillston@americanrivers.org)

National Priorities for Healthy Rivers and Clean Water in Fiscal Year 2023 (Oct. 2022 to Sept. 2023)

Improve Water Infrastructure

Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Recommendations

Clean Water & Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (SRF)

AGENCY: U.S. Environmental
Protection Agency

FY23 RECOMMENDATION:

\$2.75 billion for the Clean
Water SRF and \$2.75 billion for
the Drinking Water SRF

Rural Water and Waste Disposal Program

AGENCY: U.S. Department of
Agriculture

FY23 RECOMMENDATION:

\$1.75 billion including \$750
million in grants

Safe Water for Small and Disadvantaged Communities

AGENCY: U.S. Environmental
Protection Agency

FY23 RECOMMENDATION:

\$80 million

Sewer Overflow and Stormwater Reuse Municipal Grant Program

AGENCY: U.S. Environmental
Protection Agency

FY23 RECOMMENDATION:

\$280 million

Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Fund

AGENCY: U.S. Environmental
Protection Agency

FY23 RECOMMENDATION:

\$50 million

Our nation is facing infrastructure challenges throughout every aspect of our water system — drinking water, wastewater and stormwater. The American Society of Civil Engineers has rated the nation's drinking water infrastructure at C- and its stormwater infrastructure at D. Far too many communities — particularly Black, Indigenous, Latino and other people of color — are burdened with aging infrastructure, pollution and unreliable or unaffordable safe drinking water. Congress must build on the investments included in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act to provide resilient and sustainable water infrastructure for all.



Flint River, Georgia

PHOTO: KENNY GAMBLIN

Environmental Justice

In 2021, the EPA began implementing its Accelerating Environmental and Economic Justice Initiative, a plan to invest \$936 million into new and existing EPA programs to remedy decades of disinvestment and injustice. Historically, environmental justice was funded through EPA's Enforcement budget line. The EPA elevated Environmental Justice to its own Program Area and established six new grant programs within the State and Tribal Assistance Grant account. There are ample opportunities for supporting environmental justice through these new EPA programs, such as the **EJ Community Grant Program**, **EJ State Grant Program** and **Tribal EJ Grant Program**.

Restore Watersheds

Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Recommendations

Groundwater and Streamflow Information

AGENCY: U.S. Geological Survey

FY23 RECOMMENDATION:

\$150 million

Non-point Source Management Program (Section 319)

AGENCY: U.S. Environmental
Protection Agency

FY23 RECOMMENDATION:

\$200 million

Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife
Service

FY23 RECOMMENDATION:

\$100 million

Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance

AGENCY: National Park Service

FY23 RECOMMENDATION:

\$15 million

WaterSMART

AGENCY: Bureau of
Reclamation

FY23 RECOMMENDATION:

\$400 million including
at least \$100 million for
the Environmental Water
Resources Program and
\$100 million for natural
infrastructure projects

Wild and Scenic Rivers

AGENCY: Bureau of Land
Management; National Park
Service

FY23 RECOMMENDATION:

\$7.5 million for Wild and Scenic
Rivers (BLM) and \$4 million for
Partnership Wild and Scenic
Rivers (NPS)

Water is a precious resource and the foundation of life itself. Healthy watersheds — which include rivers, wetlands, small streams and tributaries, floodplains and estuaries — build resilience to climate change by providing flood protection, aquifer recharge, habitat for wildlife, water supply and water quality benefits. As climate change fuels more frequent and severe floods and droughts, healthy rivers and watersheds are all the more precious to the people, fish and wildlife that depend on them. Congress strengthens communities and ecosystems by protecting and restoring rivers.



Lake Mead, Nevada

PHOTO: COLLEEN MINNIK

Priority Watersheds

Congress has begun to address the needs of rivers by directing investments towards specific watersheds. For example, the Environmental Protection Agency Geographic Programs have provided funding for restoration and protection of water quality and ecological integrity via the **Chesapeake Bay** and **Puget Sound** programs. The Bureau of Reclamation directs funding toward the **Lower Colorado River Operations Program** to address drought and conservation, the **Yakima River Basin Enhancement Project** to meet water needs of both fish species and agriculture, and the **San Joaquin River Restoration Program** to restore and maintain fish populations without impacting water supply.

Modernize Flood Management

As floods become more frequent and severe, we must invest in understanding the increasing flood risk and response efforts of communities. The Association of State Floodplain Managers estimates that FEMA needs a minimum of \$800 million annually (\$3 billion to \$12 billion total) to expand flood maps across the nation and identify the future flood risk that climate change will bring. Congress should prioritize funding nature-based, or natural infrastructure solutions — including wetlands, reconnected floodplains, natural floodways and native vegetation — which work with natural river processes and are generally more cost-effective and reliable than traditional structural approaches.



Alton, Illinois

PHOTO: ANDREW DOBSON

Nature-based Solutions

Nature-based solutions protect, restore or mimic natural water systems and provide services including improved water quality and quantity, snowpack/storm flow attenuation, aquifer recharge, and flood control. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers uses its **Engineering with Nature** program to align natural and engineering processes to implement nature-based solutions. FEMA provides funding through its **Hazard Mitigation Grant Program** and **Flood Mitigation Assistance Program** for flood risk reduction or floodplain and stream restoration. There are also opportunities through the Farm Bill conservation programs, such as the **Agricultural Conservation Easement Program**, the **Conservation Stewardship Program** and the **Regional Conservation Partnership Program**.

Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Recommendations

Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Program

AGENCY: Federal Emergency Management Agency

FY23 RECOMMENDATION:
\$2 billion

Engineering With Nature

AGENCY: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

FY23 RECOMMENDATION:
\$12.5 million

Flood Mitigation Assistance Grant Program

AGENCY: Federal Emergency Management Agency

FY23 RECOMMENDATION:
\$700 million

Flood Hazard Mapping and Risk Analysis Program (RiskMAP)

AGENCY: Federal Emergency Management Agency

FY23 RECOMMENDATION:
\$800 million

Flood Plain Management and Flood Mapping

AGENCY: Federal Emergency Management Agency

FY23 RECOMMENDATION:
\$200 million

National Flood Risk Management Program

AGENCY: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

FY23 RECOMMENDATION:
\$15 million

Remove and Rehabilitate Dams

Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Recommendations

Community-based Restoration Program

AGENCY: National Oceanic and
Atmospheric Administration

FY23 RECOMMENDATION:

\$60 million

High Hazard Potential Dam Safety Grant Program

AGENCY: Federal Emergency
Management Agency

FY23 RECOMMENDATION:

\$200 million

National Dam Safety Program

AGENCY: Federal Emergency
Management Agency

FY23 RECOMMENDATION:

\$92 million

National Fish Passage Program

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife
Service

FY23 RECOMMENDATION:

\$30 million

Watershed Rehabilitation Program

AGENCY: U.S. Department of
Agriculture

FY23 RECOMMENDATION:

\$10 million

Dams harm river health and drastically disrupt the ecosystem, often leading to sharp declines in native fish and wildlife. Dams also reduce or eliminate the carbon sink of natural river systems and release methane into the atmosphere, worsening the climate crises. The United States should accelerate the removal, rehabilitation and retrofit of the nation's more than 90,000 dams to improve public safety, support energy output, and restore the health of our nation's rivers. Nearly 1,800 dams have already been removed nationwide, creating a proven track record for river restoration and delivering significant benefits to communities, local economies, cultural resources and environmental health.



PHOTO: BRETT BAUNTON, WILD NOOKSACK

Middle Fork Nooksack River, Washington

Dam Removal Successes

The NOAA **Community-based Restoration Program** helped fund the removal of a linchpin dam on the Middle Fork Nooksack River near Bellingham, Washington, to restore Chinook salmon. On Maine's Penobscot River, the Fish and Wildlife Service National **Fish Passage Program** funded the removal of the Great Works and Veazie dams to restore migratory fish runs. These funding sources could be applied to remove four federal dams on Washington's Lower Snake River, which is urgently needed to prevent salmon from extinction and to honor treaties and commitments to Native American tribes.



American Rivers believes a future of clean water and healthy rivers everywhere, for everyone is essential. Since 1973, we have protected wild rivers, restored damaged rivers and conserved clean water for people and nature. With headquarters in Washington, D.C. and 300,000 supporters, members and volunteers across the country, we are the most trusted and influential river conservation organization in the United States, delivering solutions for a better future.

For more information contact:

Matt Young, myoung@americanrivers.org; **Ted Illston**, tillston@americanrivers.org

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Agency	Program	FY20	FY21	FY22 (Senate)	FY 23 Recommendation	About the program
<i>(Thousands of Dollars)</i>						
Interior, Environment and Related Agencies						

Bureau of Land Management

Wild and Scenic Rivers	\$6,946	\$6,946	\$6,946	\$7,500	Preserves rivers with outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values
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Environmental Protection Agency

Chesapeake Bay Program	\$85,000	\$87,500	\$90,500	\$95,000	Restores and protects water quality and ecological integrity in the Chesapeake Bay
Clean Water SRF	\$1,638,826	\$1,638,826	\$1,688,826	\$2,750,000	Provides federal financial assistance to states to protect the nation's water resources
Drinking Water SRF	\$1,126,088	\$1,126,088	\$1,176,088	\$2,750,000	Provides federal financial assistance to states to protect the nation's water resources
Environmental Justice Programs	\$9,554	\$11,838	\$205,841	\$150,000	Advances environmental justices initiatives for states, localities and tribes.
Great Lakes Restoration Initiative	\$320,000	\$330,000	\$350,000	\$400,000	Restores and protects water quality and ecological integrity in the Great Lakes
Indian Reservation Drinking Water Program	-	-	-	\$50,000	Connect, expands, or repairs existing public water systems on Indian reservations
National Non-Point Source Management Program	\$170,915	\$172,348	\$180,000	\$200,000	Implements nonpoint source management programs and projects as selected by the state
Puget Sound Program	\$33,000	\$33,750	\$38,750	\$50,000	Restores and protects water quality and ecological integrity in the Puget Sound
Reducing Lead in Drinking Water	\$19,511	\$21,511	\$72,000	\$100,000	Reduces the concentration of lead in drinking water
Sewer Overflow and Stormwater Reuse Municipal Grants Program	\$28,000	\$40,000	\$56,000	\$280,000	Manages combined sewer overflows, sanitary sewer overflows, and stormwater flows
Assistance for Small & Disadvantaged Communities Drinking Water	\$25,408	\$26,408	\$38,930	\$80,000	Provides water infrastructure assistance to underserved communities
Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Fund	\$60,000	\$65,000	\$80,108	\$50,000	Provides supplemental credit assistance to significant water infrastructure projects
Wetlands Program Development Grants	\$14,183	\$14,192	\$14,476	\$20,000	Supports development of state and tribal wetland programs

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<i>(Thousands of Dollars)</i>						

Interior, Environment and Related Agencies (Continued)

Fish and Wildlife Service

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation	\$7,022	\$7,022	\$7,022	\$10,000	Increases resources for the conservation of the nation's fish, wildlife, plants and habitats
National Fish Habitat Action Plan	\$4,300	\$4,000	-	\$7,500	Conserves freshwater, estuarine and marine waterways and fisheries
National Fish Passage Program	\$18,598	\$18,598	\$19,000	\$30,000	Restores rivers and conserves aquatic resources by removing or bypassing barriers
National Wetlands Inventory	\$3,471	\$3,471	\$7,471	\$8,000	Provides detailed information and data on US wetlands
National Wildlife Refuge System	\$502,404	\$503,853	\$555,305	\$600,000	Conserves public lands and waters set aside to conserve America's fish, wildlife, and plants
North American Wetlands Conservation Fund	\$46,000	\$46,500	\$50,000	\$50,000	Protects wetland habitats for fish and wildlife
Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program	\$56,951	\$56,859	\$68,083	\$100,000	Assists landowners interested in restoring and enhancing wildlife habitat on their land

Indian Health Service

Sanitation Facilities Construction	\$193,577	\$196,577	\$260,904	\$250,000	Provides American Indian and Alaska Natives with essential water and sewer infrastructure
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National Park Service

Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers Program	\$3,576	\$3,925	\$3,927	\$4,000	Protects outstanding rivers and river-related resources through a collaborative approach
Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance	\$10,513	\$10,699	\$11,971	\$15,000	Assits communities with conservation and outdoor recreation

U.S. Geological Survey

Groundwater and Streamflow Information Program	\$84,173	\$100,673	\$118,151	\$150,000	A national network of streamgages, wells and other monitoring sites
National Water Quality Program	\$92,460	\$93,460	\$95,242	\$100,000	Provides an understanding of water-quality conditions and what affects those conditions

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Energy & Water Development						

Bureau of Reclamation

Central Valley Project Restoration Fund	\$54,849	\$55,875	\$56,499	\$60,000	Funds habitat restoration, improvement and acquisition, and other fish and wildlife restoration activities
Columbia and Snake River Salmon Recovery Project	\$16,000	\$16,000	\$18,000	\$20,000	Delivers habitat projects for salmon recovery supported by science and local communities
Dam Safety Program	\$92,771	\$111,884	\$208,000	\$200,000	Ensures Reclamation dams do not present unreasonable risk to people, property, and the environment
Klamath Project	\$16,119	\$19,419	\$24,770	\$25,000	Provides funding to improve water supplies in the Klamath River Basin
Lower Colorado River Operations Program	\$31,299	\$37,639	\$45,218	\$45,000	Implements the Drought Contingency Plan and the Lower Colorado Multi-species Conservation Program
San Joaquin River Restoration	-	\$28,300	-	\$30,000	Restores and maintain fish populations in "good condition" in the main stem of the San Joaquin River
WaterSMART Grants	\$55,000	\$55,000	\$48,000	\$100,000	Supports environmental benefits to increase the reliability of water resources
Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Project	\$10,760	\$14,410	\$26,450	\$30,000	Enhances streamflows and fish passage for anadromous fish in the Yakima River Basin

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Engineering with Nature	-	\$12,500	\$12,500	\$12,500	Aligns natural and engineering processes to deliver economic, environmental, and social benefits
Flood Plain Management Services	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,400	\$16,000	Provides general technical assistance and data for flood plain management efforts
National Flood Risk Management Program	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$6,500	\$15,000	Focuses the policies, programs and expertise of USACE toward reducing overall flood risk
Section 1135—Project Modification for Improvement of the Environment	\$8,000	\$10,000	\$11,000	\$50,000	Allows the USACE to take on projects that improve the environment in the public interest
Section 206-Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration	\$10,000	\$11,000	\$15,000	\$39,500	Allows the USACE to take on small-scale projects to restore aquatic habitat
Sustainable Rivers Program	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$500	\$5,000	Reduces negative environmental consequences of downstream flows at USACE reservoirs
Upper Mississippi River Restoration, IL, IA, MN, MO, WI	\$33,170	\$33,170	\$33,170	\$33,170	Ensures the viability and vitality of Upper Mississippi River fish and wildlife

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<i>(Thousands of Dollars)</i>						
Commerce, Justice, Science						

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Community Based Restoration Program ¹	\$12,000	\$30,000	-	\$60,000	Assists the implementation of community-driven habitat restoration
National Oceans and Coastal Security Fund	\$34,000	\$33,000	\$36,000	\$40,000	Enhances the resilience of coastal communities using natural ecosystems
Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund	\$67,000	\$65,000	\$65,000	\$65,000	Protects, restores, and conserves Pacific salmon and steelhead

1. The Community Based Restoration Program is funded through 'Fisheries Habitat Restoration'

Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration

U.S. Department of Agriculture

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program	\$450,000	\$450,000	-	\$450,000	Protects, restores, and enhances wetlands, grasslands, and working farms and ranches
Conservation Stewardship Program	\$725,000	\$750,000	-	\$1,000,000	Provides incentives for conservation performance
Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$1,750,000	\$1,800,000	-	\$2,025,000	Assists agricultural producers to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits
Regional Conservation Partnership Program	\$300,000	\$300,000	-	\$300,000	Provides assistance to producers through partnership conservation program contracts
Rural Water and Waste Disposal Program - Subsidies and Grants	\$659,480	\$621,567	\$665,702	\$750,000	Improves water and waste treatment facilities for distressed rural communities
Watershed And Flood Prevention Operations Program	\$175,000	\$175,000	\$198,275	\$200,000	Provides expenses to carry out the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act
Watershed Rehabilitation Program	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	Addresses public health, safety concerns, and environmental impacts of aging dams

Homeland Security

Federal Emergency Management Agency

Building Resilient Infrastructure Communities	\$700,000	\$1,000,000	\$75,000	\$2,000,000	Implements climate resilience projects that reduce future risks from natural disasters
Flood Hazard Mapping and Risk Analysis Program (RiskMAP)	\$263,000	\$263,000	\$275,000	\$800,000	Allows FEMA to continue ongoing RiskMAP projects and expand coverage of flood hazard information
Flood Mitigation Assistance	\$175,000	\$175,000	\$175,000	\$700,000	Provides grants to reduce the risk of flood damage to existing buildings and infrastructure
Floodplain Management and Mapping	\$192,777	\$190,506	\$199,000	\$200,000	Improves floodplain management, develops flood hazard zone maps, and educates on the risk of floods
Hazard Mitigation Revolving Loan Fund	-	-	\$100,000	\$100,000	Provides needed and sustainable funding for hazard mitigation projects
High Hazard Potential Dam Safety Grants	\$10,000	\$12,000	\$12,000	\$20,000	Provides grants for rehabilitation of eligible high hazard potential dams
National Dam Safety Program	\$8,707	\$9,249	\$9,657	\$92,000	Reduces the risks to human life, property, and the environment from dam related hazards