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**California's Bear River Among *America's Most Endangered Rivers*® of 2017**

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[www.AmericanRivers.org/BearRiver](http://www.AmericanRivers.org/BearRiver)

Washington, D.C. - American Rivers today named California's Bear River among *America's Most Endangered Rivers*®, shining a national spotlight on a proposed dam that would irreparably harm the river's fish and wildlife, recreation and Native American heritage.

"The *America's Most Endangered Rivers* report is a call to action to save rivers that face a critical decision point in the next year," said Max Odland, Associate Director of California Headwaters Conservation for American Rivers in Nevada City. "The new dam proposed on the Bear River is expensive, damaging and unnecessary. Everyone who loves this river needs to speak up against the dam and demand alternative water supply solutions."

The Nevada Irrigation District is proposing to build the 275-foot tall Centennial Dam that would flood six miles of Bear River, including the most popular recreation sites and numerous native Nisenan village sites and burial grounds. The dam would also flood 2,200 acres of mature riparian and oak woodland, destroy habitat for many sensitive species, and pose a serious threat to vulnerable fish populations by reducing flows downstream. In addition, the project will appreciably reduce seasonal flows critical to the Feather and Sacramento rivers, the Delta and San Francisco Bay.

American Rivers and its partners are calling on the Nevada Irrigation District and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to deny the permit for Centennial Dam and consider other more cost-effective water supply alternatives, such as such as repairing or modifying aging facilities, incentivizing water conservation, improving canal efficiency, stopping leaks and metering water.

"Meeting future water demand is a complex challenge, and the community deserves to be heavily involved in the decisions that will impact them for generations," said Traci Sheehan, Coordinator of the Foothills Water Network. "Instead what we have seen is a water supplier pushing for a very costly dam at the expense of the community, ecosystems and maintaining its existing infrastructure."

"This is the first new big dam in California being justified based on climate change, and that sets a bad precedent," said Caleb Dardick, Executive Director of the South Yuba River Citizens League. "Especially when better alternatives to meet future water needs in this area, like water conservation and efficiency, are available and haven't been seriously explored. New dams should be the last alternative considered, not the first."

"The Bear River is an important piece of Nisenan culture both today and in our long, rich history. The Gold Rush era completely changed our waterways and we cherish this last wild and free-flowing stretch of water," said Shelly Covert, spokesperson of the Nevada City Rancheria Tribal Council. "To flood this landscape is to further erase the Nisenan culture from the land; we can't face that again."

The Bear River flows 73 miles from the Sierra Nevada through the oak woodlands, open grasslands, pastures and fields of the Central Valley in Northern California. The lower reaches of the river support numerous iconic species, including chinook salmon, Central Valley steelhead, and green and white sturgeon.

Locals and visitors to the Bear River enjoy hiking, birdwatching, camping, angling, gold panning, rafting and kayaking on the Bear's four-mile class II whitewater run. The river is home to numerous historic sites, including Nisenan village and burial sites. Today, the mature mixed conifer and oak woodlands along the river are used by Nisenan for plant collection and ceremonial purposes.

The annual *America's Most Endangered Rivers* report is a list of rivers at a crossroads, where key decisions in the coming months will determine the rivers' fates. Over the years, the report has helped spur many successes including the removal of outdated dams, the protection of rivers with Wild and Scenic designations, and the prevention of harmful development and pollution.

California rivers listed in past years include the San Joaquin River (#1 in 2014, #2 in 2016 and also listed in 1997), Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta (2010), Smith (2015), San Francisquito Creek (2014), Yuba (2011), Klamath (1987-1990 and 2002-2003), Pajaro (2006), Tuolumne (2005) and others.

### ***America's Most Endangered Rivers® of 2017:***

**#1: Lower Colorado River** (Arizona, California, Nevada)

Threat: Outdated water management and excessive diversions

**#2: Bear River** (California)

Threat: New Dam

**#3: South Fork Skykomish** (Washington)

Threat: New hydropower project

**#4: Mobile Bay Rivers** (Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi)

Threat: Poor water management

**#5: Rappahannock River** (Virginia)

Threat: Fracking

**#6: Green-Toutle River** (Washington)

Threat: New mine

**#7: Neuse and Cape Fear Rivers** (North Carolina)

Threat: Pollution from hog and chicken farms

**#8: Middle Fork Flathead River** (Montana)

Threat: Oil transport by rail

**#9: Buffalo National River** (Arkansas)

Threat: Pollution from massive hog farm

**#10: Menominee River** (Michigan, Wisconsin)

Threat: Open pit sulfide mining

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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 250,000 members, supporters, and volunteers.

Rivers connect us to each other, nature, and future generations. Find your connections at [AmericanRivers.org](http://AmericanRivers.org), [Facebook.com/AmericanRivers](https://www.facebook.com/AmericanRivers), and [Twitter.com/AmericanRivers](https://twitter.com/AmericanRivers).