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*Whitewater*

**PROTECTING OUR PUBLIC LANDS AND WATERS**  
*SINCE 1954*

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**Big Access Improvements (CA):** We continue to advocate for restoration of access to the Tuolumne River at Ward's Ferry and can celebrate the reopening of Lumsden Road this spring. Access improvements are being constructed on the North Fork American River at Yankee Jims Bridge thanks to our advocacy, and a project on the South Fork Smith River at Craigs Beach is in its planning phase. In 2026, we'll continue to expand our policy and coalition-building work in California, laying the foundation for future access wins.  
Image: Looking down from Yankee Jims Bridge, North Fork American River. Photo by Jeff Venturino.

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MEMBERSHIP-DRIVEN RIVER STEWARDSHIP

## **PUBLIC LANDS AND WATERS UNDER THREAT**

Right now the headwinds facing rivers on public lands are fierce and varied. American Whitewater is pushing back on federal efforts to remove the Roadless Rule protections for backcountry rivers in National Forests, to undermine the Clean Water Act that ensures our rivers aren't dangerously dirty or dewatered, and to shift the balance of public land management away from public input and toward logging and mining interests. Over the remainder of 2026, we'll meet with key members of Congress, agency leadership, and administration officials, alongside waging public pressure campaigns to make sure our community is aware of opportunities to provide feedback on these attacks on public lands and waters.



**Boatable Flows on the Montreal (WI):** Our efforts to bring more certainty for whitewater opportunities on the Montreal River with the relicensing of three hydropower projects underway also include opportunities to improve flows and information on operations.  
Image: Montreal River below Saxon Falls. Photo by Jake Ring.

**Spring Update 2026**



**1. Expanding Whitewater Opportunities on West Branch Penobscot (ME):** The West Branch of the Penobscot River in Millinocket, Maine, is one of the premier whitewater runs in the Northeast. With different runs ranging from the challenging Ripogonus Gorge and Cribworks Rapid to the dewatered "Dryway" and Stone Dam sections to Millinocket Stream that hosts the annual Millinocket X-Stream Canoe Race; the West Branch offers paddling opportunities for boaters of all abilities. American Whitewater is working to expand whitewater boating opportunities on the West Branch through the ongoing hydropower dam relicensing.  
**Image:** Mount Katahdin from the West Branch Penobscot River. Photo by Bob Nasdor.

**2. Restoring Flows to the Dan River (NC/VA):** Will the Pinnacles of the Dan River be the next southeastern gem that boaters help bring back to life? We sure hope so! American Whitewater is diving into the five-year-long hydropower dam relicensing process this year, with a goal of restoring flows to this long-dewatered river.  
**Image:** The Dan River: A spectacular-looking place, imagine it with boatable flows! Photo by Jonathan Rugh.

**3. More Releases and Higher Baseflows for the New River Dries (WV):** Boaters are getting a rare second chance to have flows restored to the beautiful Class III+ New River Dries! American Whitewater will be working hard this year to lock in the 32 annual recreational releases and higher baseflows that we helped negotiate in response to major changes at the hydropower project.  
**Image:** New River Dries kayak fun train. Photo by Kevin Colburn.

**4. Taylor River Access and Safe and Legal River Passage (CO):** The Taylor River Canyon in Colorado is a beautiful and classic run in the state. For over a decade, one of the most popular river access points has been left unfinished. American Whitewater

is partnering with the Forest Service and the National Forest Foundation to stabilize the river bank and install a staircase with raft slides at Todd's Slot. We anticipate that construction could start this fall. Portions of the Taylor River have also long been ground zero of some of the most contentious battles over stream access in a state with some of the worst laws for public use of rivers. American Whitewater is working to protect this and other river infrastructure investments by passing state legislation to ensure safe and legal river passage on all the rivers you can float in Colorado.  
**Image:** Todd's Slot river access in the Taylor River Canyon. Photo by Matt Quinn, United States Forest Service.

**5. Wild and Scenic Rivers Legislation (MT):** Looking for good news for rivers on the national policy front? American Whitewater and our partners are working with members of the Montana congressional delegation to pass a Wild and Scenic River bill for several of the state's great rivers, including the Gallatin and Madison.  
**Image:** Gallatin River whitewater packraft crew. Photo by Kevin Colburn

**6. Protecting Clean Water with State Level Designations in the Pacific Northwest:** With growing threats to public lands and waters at the federal level, state-based protections have emerged as an increasingly important strategy for safeguarding rivers. In the coming year, we will advance efforts to secure Outstanding Resource Waters designations for Ruby Creek, Granite Creek, and the headwaters of the Methow in the North Cascades, as well as the headwaters of the North Fork Lewis and the Sultan River. This powerful designation, administered by states under the Clean Water Act, provides one of the strongest tools available to protect high-quality waters for future generations.  
**Image:** North Fork Lewis River, WA. Photo by Thomas O'Keefe.

*\*Animal illustrations by Drew Madden Art*



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