



At American Whitewater, we put rivers first and use a science-based approach to protect what we love—whitewater rivers that represent our nation's headwaters.

When we spend more time on rivers, we become better stewards and better advocates for their protection.

Our Mission

As a national river conservation nonprofit, our mission is to protect and restore America's whitewater rivers and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely.

Our Vision

Our vision is that our nation's remaining wild and free-flowing rivers stay that way, our developed rivers are restored to function and flourish, that the public has access to rivers for recreation, and that river enthusiasts are active and effective river advocates.

What We Seek To Achieve

Whitewater rivers face a range of threats from dams to water withdrawals to access closures. In pursuing our river stewardship goals, we aim to create the greatest possible benefits for whitewater rivers and enthusiasts. Our conservation and restoration work is infused with recreational knowledge and enthusiasm, and our recreation work is driven by a deep conservation ethic. We call this integrated approach to our mission *river stewardship* and pursue it in three tracks: Protect, Restore, and Enjoy.

In just a five year period American Whitewater has negotiated 6 dam removals and stopped 14 proposed new dams. Sullivan Creek (WA) now flows free thanks to the removal of the Mill Pond Dam in 2018. | Photo Thomas O'Keefe

The projects we select align with our mission and vision, have tangible and lasting beneficial outcomes, create good policy and have local support, and benefit the rivers our communities love for current and future generations.



PROTECT

To protect rivers, we celebrate public lands, champion Wild and Scenic and other designations, defend rivers from dams and diversions, and advocate for clean water. We treasure wild rivers and celebrate the wildness inherent in all rivers. We believe that free-flowing rivers should stay that way.



RESTORE

To restore rivers, we negotiate new and improved flows at dams and diversions, and work toward dam removals where appropriate. We've proven that rivers are resilient and restoration works: often, just add water.




ENJOY

To help the public enjoy rivers, we defend the right to paddle rivers, secure areas for public access to rivers, share information on rivers, host events, and encourage sustainable use and safety on the water through education. We've found that sustainable access to rivers benefits individuals, communities, and rivers.

How We Achieve Success

We achieve success by employing the following strategies that reflect American Whitewater's core competencies as an organization:

- Keep our actions focused on results for whitewater rivers and people's ability to enjoy them.
- Work across agencies and communities to achieve tangible results.
- Raise awareness of our organization and our stewardship goals through effective communication across all available mediums and by engaging our nonprofit, corporate and government partners.
- Engage local communities and affiliate clubs to tell their stories nationally through our powerful regional model for river stewardship.
- Further leverage our work leading like-minded coalitions for collective action at both the regional and national levels.
- Engage a diverse group of stakeholders from all backgrounds and ages in our river stewardship activities.
- Strengthen long-term viability and efficiency by maintaining a diverse revenue stream, a transparent business, and a lean and flexible operating model.

A photograph of two people in a blue inflatable raft on a river. The person in the foreground is wearing a black shirt and a white cap, while the person behind them is wearing an orange shirt and a green cap. They are both holding paddles. The river is surrounded by steep, rocky cliffs. In the background, another blue raft is visible. A text box is overlaid on the top right of the image.

American Whitewater has spent years developing quantitative metrics that help public land agencies evaluate impacts to recreational stream-flows across the Colorado River basin, including for the San Juan River (UT). | Photo Evan Stafford



American Whitewater Stewardship Efforts

In a recent five year period, our stewardship efforts have:



Protect

- Successfully advocated for 50 new Wild and Scenic Rivers
- Stopped 15 proposed new dams
- Secured agency protections for 100 eligible streams under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act
- Negotiated instream flow protections on over 300 miles of rivers
- Protected recreation flows through 15 water supply and demand management plans



Restore

- Successfully restored flows to 15 rivers
- Celebrated 6 dam removals we negotiated
- Worked to improve flows from over 100 dams



Enjoy

- Negotiated over 60 new river access areas
- Secured 9 new stream gages
- Provided river information for over 5,500 river segments
- Maintained an accident database with incidents dating back to 1956 to help inform better decision-making on the river
- Hosted 4 river festivals each year
- Maintained 6 designated river access areas, either through ownership or lease

*America's whitewater rivers belong to all of us.
We hope you'll join us in our efforts to protect and restore them.*



In 2018, American Whitewater received our ninth straight 4-star rating (the highest possible) from Charity Navigator for our financial practices and transparency. Only 2% of the charities that Charity Navigator rates have received at least nine consecutive 4-star evaluations, showing that American Whitewater outperforms most other charities in the nation. This "exceptional" designation from Charity Navigator differentiates American Whitewater from our peers and demonstrates our commitment to best management practices.