

Why Do We Need Healthy Rivers?



Gunpowder Falls, Baltimore County, MD

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Clean, healthy rivers are the lifeblood of our communities and are vital to our health, safety, and quality of life. Most Americans live within a mile of a river or stream, and all of our drinking water comes directly or indirectly from rivers and streams.

By protecting and restoring rivers, we are protecting clean drinking water, creating jobs and recreation opportunities that benefit our economy, and revitalizing our natural heritage for future generations.

Healthy rivers give us clean drinking water

More than 60 percent of Americans' drinking water comes from rivers and streams. A healthy river and surrounding forests can act as a natural water filter, reducing the need to treat the water with chemicals or expensive filtration systems.

Healthy rivers are good for the economy

Going fishing may feel like taking the day off, but its overall economic impact in the U.S. is estimated at \$116 billion. And consider the fact that more people fish in the United States than go to Disneyworld. When Americans participate in outdoor activities, they aren't just having fun and staying fit, they're also pumping billions of dollars into the

economy-- in industries including manufacturing, leisure and hospitality, transportation, and wholesale and retail trade.

Healthy rivers are home to fish and wildlife

America's rivers support a wide variety of wildlife and fish, and are especially important during times of breeding and migration. In dry areas, particularly in the western U.S., rivers and streams are crucial to the well-being of wildlife. From kingfishers to crawdads, otters to black bears, eagles to trout, whatever creature you're looking for, chances are you'll find it along the river.

Healthy rivers are fun!

Beyond all the other services and benefits healthy rivers can provide, they are just plain fun. Rivers and streams offer endless recreation opportunities, including swimming, fishing, boating, hiking, and wildlife-watching. Whether you need exhilaration, solitude, a much-needed break from the daily grind, or just a pleasant place for a family float or picnic, there's a river out there, beckoning you to come out and play.

Heritage

From the homelands of native Americans to our earliest settlements, explorer routes, and battlefields, to the evolution of music, literature, and art – our nation's culture and heritage is written in the currents of our rivers. Think of Mark Twain on the Mississippi, or Lewis and Clark following the Missouri and Columbia rivers as they traveled west. Our rivers connect us to the past, and the future.