



RIVER OF THE YEAR FOR 2020: THE DELAWARE RIVER

American Rivers announces 2020 River of the Year alongside Most Endangered Rivers of 2020 release.

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The national advocacy group American Rivers has named the Delaware River its “River of the Year” for 2020. American Rivers gave the Delaware this honor to recognize its momentous progress for water quality, river restoration and community revitalization.

“The Delaware River is a national success story,” said Bob Irvin, President and CEO of American Rivers.

“The River of the Year honor recognizes the hard work of many local advocates who understand that a healthy Delaware River is vital to the health of millions of people.”

The Delaware River is an extraordinary example of restoration and a model for equitable and innovative clean water solutions.



This is a river that touches the lives of so many. Fifteen million people get their drinking water from the Delaware River. If you live in New York City, Philadelphia, Trenton or Wilmington – you’re drinking the Delaware. The river is also home to one of the largest freshwater ports in the world, and the river contributes billions of dollars to the economy every year from water supply, recreation, tourism and other benefits.

The river has come a long way. Seventy-five years ago, it was choked with pollution and sewage. Parts of the river were dead zones, unable to support fish or other aquatic life. According to the Delaware River Basin Commission, “The river’s water was so foul that it would turn the paint of ships brown as they traveled through or were docked for any period of time. People were sickened simply by the smell of the river.”

Fast forward to today. The Delaware River is on the mend and thriving. The quality of water in the Delaware has dramatically improved, fish and wildlife

have returned in tremendous numbers, and the mainstem of the Delaware remains the longest free-flowing river in the eastern U.S., with the most extensive National Wild and Scenic River protection of any watershed in the country.

How did the river make such a dramatic comeback? American Rivers identified four key factors responsible for the Delaware River's rebound:

1. Federal, regional and state enforcement of clean water safeguards
2. Innovative local water management, prioritizing natural infrastructure and equity
3. State collaboration to ensure adequate water supplies
4. Federal protections for the free-flowing river

Key to this success are the countless local individuals and groups who have worked for decades on the river's behalf. The progress on the Delaware illustrates the power of partnership and collaboration.

And the good news continues. Just last week, New Jersey finalized new protections for 600 miles of waterways, thanks to advocacy by the many partners of the Delaware River Watershed Initiative and the Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed.

The Delaware River can be an inspiration for other communities across the country.

"The Delaware shows how a healthy river can be an engine for thriving communities," Irvin says.

How can a city protect its river, its greatest natural asset? How can we prioritize equity in river conservation efforts? How does clean water contribute to a strong economy? How can a healthy river be a source of strength and opportunity for all?



Read more about the secret to the Delaware River's success, and learn how we can keep the positive momentum going, [here](#).

"We must use these lessons to ensure healthy rivers, equitable access and clean water in cities nationwide," says Irvin.

Last year's River of the Year honor went to Ohio's Cuyahoga River, recognizing the progress that has been made to clean up the river, and marking the 50th anniversary of the river catching fire that sparked the nation's environmental movement.