

20 THINGS YOU CAN DO FOR RIVERS AND RIGHTS



The Sandy River in Oregon

- 1. Find out the name of your home watershed**, its major creeks and rivers, and threats that could or are degrading water quality. Get involved with local watershed or river groups (or form one!) to monitor watershed or river health. Check out [Waterkeeper Alliance](#) to find your nearest group.
- 2. Calculate your ecological footprint**, then reduce your energy use. Whether your energy supply comes from hydro, coal, oil, natural gas or a mix, electricity production has huge impacts for us all (not the least of which is climate change). Producing electricity also uses lots of water, usually for cooling (in the US, for example, it is one of the largest uses of water). Replace outdated appliances with new energy-savings models; set your thermostat to save energy; wash your clothes in cold water; dry your clothes in the sun; replace light bulbs with compact fluorescents (they use one-quarter the electricity of standard bulbs); install a solar water heater at your home; use fewer electric devices; unplug electronic equipment such as TVs and microwave ovens when not in use, or [get surge protectors that automatically shut off](#) (because they continue to use power when not in use).
- 3. Participate in the March 14 International Day of Action for Rivers.**
- 4. Learn about your water footprint and reduce inside water use.** Install low-flow toilets and showerheads. The US uses 6.8 billion gallons of water to flush toilets every day

(equivalent to 5-1/2 gallons for every person in the world now without a safe water supply). Take shorter showers. Repair dripping faucets promptly. A water faucet leaking one drip per second wastes 200 gallons a year. Research has shown that an average of 8% of all home water use is wasted through leaks.

5. Learn about your water footprint and reduce outside water use. Install a drip irrigation system, a rainwater harvesting system or greywater re-use system to water your garden. Use porous paving materials around your house, to help recharge groundwater.

6. Research the dams in your area. Are there any whose costs outweigh their current benefits? They might be candidates for [decommissioning](#). Interest local environmental groups and the media in the issue.

7. Raise your voice: write letters to the editor and government officials, [join International Rivers' NewStream list](#), speak out at community meetings about the impacts of wasteful water and energy use and the importance of healthy ecosystems.

8. Support efforts to increase sustainable energy in your neighborhood, community, state, country. Urge your political representatives to take up the issue.

9. Help organize a watershed clean-up (and appreciation) day.

10. Support efforts to improve energy efficiency at the local, regional and national levels.

11. Form a citizen's task force to monitor polluting industries in your watershed.

12. Donate to groups building water supply for the world's poorest citizens. Each day almost 10,000 children under the age of 5 in the world's least-developed countries die as a result of illnesses contracted from impure water.

13. Eat lower on the food chain – eating meat requires much greater quantities of water than a plant-based diet (for example, it takes about 6 gallons of water to grow a single serving of lettuce. More than 2,600 gallons is required to produce a single serving of steak).

14. Find out if your city has water policies protecting watershed health and promoting water conservation, caps on groundwater pumping and monitoring for non-point-source pollutants such as agricultural and contaminated urban runoff.

- 15. Start a letter-writing campaign to authorities who regulate large dams** in your area, urging them to operate dams so that flows downstream of dams mimic natural river flows.
- 16. Join (or organize) a local stream restoration effort.** The US Fish and Wildlife Service estimate that 70% of the riparian habitat nationwide has been lost or altered.
- 17. Drive and fly less,** and reduce your contribution to global climate change. Climate change will have an inordinately high impact on those least likely to afford it, and those who have done little to contribute to it – the world's poorest.
- 18. Take action online and offline.** Find current ways you can help support campaigns for healthy rivers and human rights.
- 19. Join the many local and international efforts to stop corporations taking over water supply systems.**
- 20. Join International Rivers!** Make a tax-deductible donation to International Rivers and join the international movement to protect rivers and defend human rights. Online donations help us save postage costs.

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