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South Fork Edisto River Among America's Most Endangered Rivers of 2014

Excessive water withdrawals threaten river health, wildlife, recreation

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Washington, D.C.- American Rivers named the South Fork Edisto River among *America's Most Endangered Rivers®* of 2014 today, shining a national spotlight on excessive withdrawals that take too much water out of the river, threatening river health and downstream water users.

"The *America's Most Endangered Rivers* report is a call to action to save rivers that are at a critical tipping point," said Gerrit Jöbssis of American Rivers. "The legislature has a prime opportunity this year to protect the Edisto and other rivers across the state, and correct an unfair water management scheme that favors one group of water users over all others."

The Edisto is threatened by excessive agriculture withdrawals that take up to 35 percent of the river's flow during summer months. These withdrawals impact river health, as well as downstream water users, including other farmers.

"Events in recent months have thrust the Edisto River into the forefront of discussion about South Carolina's threatened river heritage and the absolute necessity to address emerging conflicts between water users. The Edisto is the most cherished river in the state. What we value will be lost if we do not take meaningful action now," said Ben Gregg with South Carolina Wildlife Federation.

"We are confident that everyone who cares about the Edisto River and all of our state's waterways can come together to improve the Surface Water Act," said Ann Timberlake with Conservation Voters of South Carolina.

"The Edisto River quenches our thirst and restores our soul," said Friends of the Edisto (FRED) President Tim Rogers. "Balancing the needs of agriculture and other users is sustainable. Condemning the Edisto for a factory spigot is unacceptable."

American Rivers and its partners called on the legislature to amend the *South Carolina Surface Water Withdrawal, Permitting, Use, and Reporting Act*, which passed in 2010, to protect the health and integrity of the Edisto and all of the state's rivers, and to make the law fair for all drinking water, industrial, and agricultural water users.

The Edisto River is the longest free-flowing blackwater river in the country. It flows more than 250 miles from its headwaters between Columbia and Aiken to the coast, and is characterized by extensive bottomland forests and broad floodplains. The river is home to abundant wildlife and is one of South Carolina's most iconic rivers for paddlers and outdoor enthusiasts.

The annual [*America's Most Endangered Rivers®*](#) report is a list of rivers at a crossroads, where key decisions in the coming months will determine the rivers' fates. Over the years, the report has helped spur many successes including the removal of outdated dams, the protection of rivers with Wild and Scenic designations, and the prevention of harmful development and pollution.

America's Most Endangered Rivers® of 2014

#1 San Joaquin River (California)

Threat: Outdated water management and excessive diversions

#2 Upper Colorado River Basin (Colorado)

Threat: New trans-mountain water diversions

#3 Middle Mississippi River (Missouri, Illinois, Kentucky)

Threat: Outdated flood management

#4 Gila River (New Mexico)

Threat: New water diversions

#5 San Francisquito Creek (California)

Threat: Dam

#6 South Fork Edisto River (South Carolina)

Threat: Excessive water withdrawals

#7 White River (Colorado)

Threat: Oil and gas drilling

#8 White River (Washington)

Threat: Outdated dam and fish passage facilities

#9 Haw River (North Carolina)

Threat: Polluted runoff

#10 Clearwater/Lochsa Rivers (Idaho)

Threat: Industrialization of a Wild and Scenic River corridor

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About American Rivers

American Rivers protects wild rivers, restores damaged rivers, and conserves clean water for people and nature. Since 1973, American Rivers has protected and restored more than 150,000 miles of rivers through advocacy efforts, on-the-ground projects, and an annual America's Most Endangered Rivers® campaign. Headquartered in Washington, DC, American Rivers has offices across the country and more than 200,000 members, supporters, and volunteers.

Rivers connect us to each other, nature, and future generations. Find your connections at AmericanRivers.org, Facebook.com/AmericanRivers, and Twitter.com/AmericanRivers.