



Flowing Forward

Our Strategic Guide
2026 - 2029



Vision for the Future

Our vision is led by a core belief that rivers connect us. They provide drinking water, sustain wildlife, support agriculture, power economies and offer outdoor experiences we love.

Our board, staff and partners are united by this shared vision, and draw on their unique skills, expertise and perspectives to create a road map to connect rivers and people in meaningful ways that result in improved health for both.

Collaboration among community members, farmers, ranchers, tribes, local businesses and agencies is essential to creating projects that address multiple priorities. Recognizing that healthy communities depend on healthy rivers, we support innovative solutions that honor local traditions and culture, support local food systems, secure safe drinking water, promote equitable access to outdoor recreation, strengthen climate resiliency and protect wildlife.



"Environmental stewardship has made me think about my actions and their consequences much more. I now think about how my actions affect the globe and others' lives."

- Marcus Normany

Lincoln Hills Cares youth participant





Our Mission

We work to improve the health and vitality of rivers to ensure a future where water and its connected communities thrive.

Forever Our Rivers champions reliable supplies of clean water, protects wildlife habitat and supports farmers and ranchers who grow local food. We work to preserve our unique way of life in the American Southwest. Our work is possible because of a dedicated coalition of individuals, values-aligned businesses and foundations.

Our Vision

We envision a future where rivers and communities provide benefits to each other so that people, plants and animals thrive.

The health of our communities is directly tied to the state of our rivers and streams that flow through them. We work toward a future where thriving communities and healthy rivers go hand in hand. Together, we will navigate the currents of change, channeling our resources, energy and passion into projects that safeguard our rivers and nurture our communities.



Values Driving Our Work



Impact

We collaborate with partners whose projects spring from community input and bring lasting benefits to rivers. We believe the most impactful projects stem from the active involvement and integration of communities and cultures.



Inclusivity

We champion the rich diversity of talent, backgrounds, beliefs and culture that are embodied in the communities we fund, and strive to create more equitable, community-centric river conservation.



Trust

We build trust through creative and strategic collaboration centered around the well-being of the rivers and the communities we serve. We hold ourselves accountable to the highest ethical and professional standards. We are accountable to our mission, our partners and our donors.



Science-Driven

To make a greater impact, we invest in projects that use objective data and validated methods. By establishing a common understanding, science provides us a foundation for collaboration.



Nimble

Our ability to act with urgency allows us the flexibility to capitalize on high-impact opportunities as they arise. It also enables us to respond quickly to unforeseen challenges.

How We Work

We use decades of expertise to research and vet grantees and projects that create the most value. Our donors can be confident their gifts are making a powerful, long-term difference.

Where We Work

From the icy headwaters in the Rocky Mountains, to the fertile valley bottoms and desert streams, we are increasing the depth of our work in Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico and Utah. We serve rural, suburban and urban communities throughout the Four Corners region, because we all benefit from clean and healthy rivers and streams.



"We couldn't have made such an impact without Forever Our Rivers. 100% of the fishing and watershed education students want to take good care of the environment."

- Anita Evans
Friends of Youth and Nature

Strategic Priorities

Connecting Communities to their Rivers

When rivers are cared for by the people who live near them, both the community and the river thrive. We believe that everyone—regardless of their age, gender, race, culture, socio-economic status, physical ability or background—should have access to rivers and opportunity to enjoy and learn about them.

Conservation is strongest when it reflects the people it serves. Communities are actively involved in the design, prioritization and success of conservation projects for their rivers.

Protecting Rivers, Lakes and Streams

We work to restore the dynamic processes of our freshwater ecosystems. When a river is free to chart its own course through natural geomorphic processes, entire ecosystems benefit.

We strive to reconnect rivers with their floodplains, restore wildlife habitat within and along rivers, and enhance water quality and availability, among other approaches. Healthy rivers provide ample clean drinking water, recharge groundwater and provide lush habitat for wildlife. Project selection is supported by the best available science and helps us repeat the success of previous projects.

Safeguarding Our Way of Life

Conservation happens when passionate people come together to create long-term impact. It is collaboration among community members, farmers, ranchers, tribes and agencies that creates projects that benefit multiple priorities. We understand that water connects us all. We advance forward-thinking solutions that acknowledge the needs of local traditions and culture, local food production, drinking water, recreation and wildlife habitat.

Rivers define our quality of life. They are a resource for the entire community today, and for generations to come.





“Rivers shaped every landscape I’ve spent my life photographing. They carved the canyons, fed the meadows, and determined where life was possible in the first place. In the Four Corners region, where I live, the water running through these valleys connects snowpack to farmland to kitchen table. That connection is worth protecting. I partnered with Forever Our Rivers because I believe photographers have an obligation beyond the frame. Making beautiful pictures of a degraded world isn’t enough. The mission matters: healthy rivers, informed communities, collective action.”

- Matt Payne

Professional Nature Photographer & Forever Our Rivers Ambassador

Our Commitment to Equity

Over the next three years, we'll accelerate partnerships and the flow of funds to communities who are working hard to protect their local rivers and streams, lakes and wetlands. We'll need community partnerships as diverse as the landscapes and cultures we seek to protect. The rich diversity of voices, skills, backgrounds and beliefs which embody the communities we fund are incredibly important to us.

We strive to share our

programs and resources equitably, and we acknowledge it takes work and intention to overcome cultural, geographic and economic barriers—as well as historic traumas—that can hinder the progress of our mission. This commitment to collaboration and inclusion is woven throughout our updated strategic plan.

Our strategic plan is not just a document; it is a compass guiding us toward a future where resilient communities are built on the strength of

their waterways. By uniting our efforts, we can meet change head-on—investing our time, energy and resources into meaningful work that restores our rivers and helps communities flourish alongside them.

As we embark on this mission, we invite you to join us. For it is in our collective efforts that we will shape a brighter and more sustainable future for all.



Goals for 2026 - 2029

1

Increase our conservation impact by protecting and restoring **5,000 acres** of wildlife habitat annually.

2

Invest time, knowledge, boots on the ground and funding in **50 projects** that improve watershed health.

3

Empower **5,000 kids and adults** through volunteer and educational opportunities.

4

Launch an ambassador program with a minimum of **6 ambassadors**—50% being from underrepresented communities.

5

Strengthen organizational capacity by welcoming up to **5 additional board members**.

6

Form **20 new business partnerships** that build collaborations with brands and consumers to promote watershed health awareness and unlock financial capital to fund nature-based solutions that protect watersheds.

7

Broaden community education and outreach with **a dedicated staff coordinator**.



Join the Movement

You can make all of this—and more—happen by becoming a River Champion today. We work in close partnership with communities on the ground to determine effective, science-based solutions to ensure your donations support the most pressing projects and create the greatest impact.

Volunteer, sign up for our emails and donate at foreverourrivers.org.

Make a ripple effect today.

[Sign up](#) for our Monthly e-Newsletter

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🌐 www.foreverourrivers.org

📷 [@foreverourrivers](https://www.instagram.com/foreverourrivers)

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Protecting rivers & empowering communities in:
Colorado • Utah • Arizona • New Mexico

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