



Rivers for Life: Managing Water For People And Nature

By Sandra Postel, Brian Richter

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The conventional approach to river protection has focused on water quality and maintaining some "minimum" flow that was thought necessary to ensure the viability of a river. In recent years, however, scientific research has underscored the idea that the ecological health of a river system depends not on a minimum amount of water at any one time but on the naturally variable quantity and timing of flows throughout the year.

In *Rivers for Life*, leading water experts Sandra Postel and Brian Richter explain why restoring and preserving more natural river flows are key to sustaining freshwater biodiversity and healthy river systems, and describe innovative policies, scientific approaches, and management reforms for achieving those goals. Sandra Postel and Brian Richter: explain the value of healthy rivers to human and ecosystem health; describe the ecological processes that support river ecosystems and how they have been disrupted by dams, diversions, and other alterations; consider the scientific basis for determining how much water a river needs; examine new management paradigms focused on restoring flow patterns and sustaining ecological health; assess the policy options available for managing rivers and other freshwater systems; explore building blocks for better river governance

Sandra Postel and Brian Richter offer case studies of river management from the United States (the San Pedro, Green, and Missouri), Australia (the Brisbane), and South Africa (the Sabie), along with numerous examples of new and innovative policy approaches that are being implemented in those and other countries.

Rivers for Life presents a global perspective on the challenges of managing water for people and nature, with a concise yet comprehensive overview of the relevant science, policy, and management issues. It presents exciting and inspirational information for anyone concerned with water policy, planning and management, river conservation, freshwater biodiversity, or related topics.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Finally! A book that pays attention to flow, not just pollutants, as central to river restoration. Blending science and readability, *Rivers for Life* offers refreshing insights into allocating limited water to meet the needs of humans and rivers."

(James R. Karr *Professor, University of Washington, Seattle*)

"...a clarion call to society for the need to balance human demands with the needs of our world's rivers, the arterial system of life on this planet. The authors describe the vanguard movement to restore rivers and to reconnect rivers with their flood plains, portraying the under-appreciated life support services our rivers perform, their ecological function, and the threats to riverine ecosystems."

(Mike Dombeck *Chief Emeritus of the U.S. Forest Service*)

About the Author

Sandra Postel is director of the Global Water Policy Project in Amherst, Massachusetts. She is author of the books *Pillar of Sand* and *Last Oasis*, and of the essay "Troubled Waters," selected for the 2001 edition of *Best American Science and Nature Writing*. In 2002, she was named one of the *Scientific American 50*, by *Scientific American* magazine, a new award recognizing contributions to science and technology. Brian Richter is director of the Freshwater Initiative of The Nature Conservancy and is based in Charlottesville, Virginia. In his 16 years with the Conservancy he has provided technical support and strategic advice to more than 80 river conservation projects around the world.

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