



This is the first issue of the River Network Bulletin. The idea is to circulate ideas for river protection to grass-roots activists around the country.

You're on the mailing list. **This Bulletin is for you.** Is it interesting? Do you want to stay on the list? Is there a topic you'd like us to address next issue? We'd appreciate it if you would tell us, via the enclosed post-card.

This month, we're alerting you to two important tools for protecting rivers: relicensing of hydropower dams, and riverland acquisition.

Relicensing of Hydropower Dams

On most of our favorite rivers, dams are a reality. Whether we can fish or boat depends as much on the air conditioners in Phoenix as the rainfall in the mountains.

Like it or not, dams are the biggest variable today in stream hydrology. The **good news** is, we now have a one-time opportunity to change the management practices of existing hydropower dams.

The watch-dogs at American Rivers have alerted us to this opportunity. Over the next five years, over 200 of these hydropower dams come up for



relicensing by FERC (the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission). The public (that's us) has an opportunity to push for better management of those dams **as a condition for relicensing.**

What could "better management" mean? Some possibilities:

- * Improved minimum flows for fish and wildlife. Dam

operators could be required to release a certain flow in September regardless of irrigation or hydropower demand.

- * Improved spring flows for migratory fish. Or other measures to make fish passage easier.
- * Water releases for recreational boating.
- * Public access to rivers for recreation.
- * Restoration of riparian wildlife habitat.
- * Restoration of fish spawning grounds.
- * Removal of dams that cause more harm than they are worth.

For example: six dams on the North Umpqua (a magnificent fishing stream in Oregon) are up for relicensing in 1997. If conservationists get started today, we can make a strong case that they should be managed to enhance the fishery, and that one or more should be removed entirely. (Or how about pulling Hells Canyon Dam on the Snake, which blocks salmon and steelhead migration into the upper Snake?)

The bottom line, of course, is that decisions on relicensing will be made

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River Network

River Network believes that **effective river protection occurs in the river valley.** We believe that local people are the voice of America's rivers and that without local action, rivers cannot be protected effectively nor permanently.

River Network is committed to building local support for river protection. Established in 1988, River Network opened its first office in the Pacific Northwest. Our Local Training Program is providing on-site assistance to river groups in this area. We focus on four key areas:

- 1) Building a leadership team to share responsibilities;
- 2) Establishing a broad-base coalition to include boaters, landowners, anglers, environmentalists and others;
- 3) Developing a strategic plan with clearly defined goals and objectives; and
- 4) Providing specific skills training such as fund-raising, building a membership and others.

The River Clearinghouse, which this Bulletin is a part of, is being developed to provide assistance to groups throughout the country. We believe that by putting information in your hands, you can do your job better — that of protecting rivers. In addition to the Bulletin, we have begun to establish a Reference Library which upon request, we will make available to you. If you would like to find out more about the Library please return the enclosed card.

Land Acquisition Along Rivers

Something amazing happened recently. American Rivers came out with their new list of the "Ten most endangered rivers in the United States." Among them was the New River in North Carolina — a National Wild and Scenic River!

That was a shock to those of us who have always thought that Wild and Scenic was the ultimate in river protection. The reality on the New River is that the stream corridor (and the river itself) are being steadily degraded by stream-side land development.

Today, changing land-use may be a bigger threat to American rivers than dams. The building of homes and other structures, the clearing of woodlands for agriculture, the clear-cutting of steep slopes — these do not get the publicity that dams do, but they are steadily degrading our rivers. Rivers are losing their values for wildlife, for recreation, for scenic enjoyment, for flood absorption, even for water supply. They are becoming what John Kauffman calls "zombie rivers": they flow, but there's no life in them.

So enough whining — what's to be done?

We need tougher local zoning and floodplain ordinances. We need good river corridor planning, like the Wildcat Brook plan in New Hampshire. We need special federal designations, like the Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area, to motivate state and local governments to control riparian land-use.

And we need to buy special lands. Wildlife habitat and scenic landmarks and recreational access points

along rivers need to be in public ownership. Other sensitive areas need to be protected by conservation easements.

How can this be done? That's our specialty! River Network buys land for the public along outstanding rivers. We work with private landowners, environmental organizations, public agencies and real estate professionals. The end result: special riverlands in public ownership.

EXAMPLE: Cache Creek Ranch, on the Oregon side of Hells Canyon, Snake River. River Network negotiated an agreement to buy a 7,200 acre ranch, to protect outstanding elk habitat and prevent development within Hells Canyon. Now we are working with the U.S. Forest Service and Congress to include the land within Hells Canyon National Recreation Area.

There are a lot of tools that can be used in non-profit land acquisition. Options, easements, life estates, tax planning, estate planning, partial development, corporate liquidations, land exchanges, land trusts, state and municipal bond issues. The list goes on.

If your favorite river is one that desperately needs public land acquisition, PLEASE get in touch with us. We can help, or at least refer you to others. Ultimately, public agencies themselves have to act to acquire critical lands. But often you need a private, non-profit "catalyst" like River Network to get a project started.

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To Be (A Corporation) Or Not To Be...

For a group of people who want to save the Stillaguamish, incorporating can seem like a lot of trouble. What's the point?

Basically, there are three big reasons to incorporate:

(1) **Limited liability.** If you are not incorporated, you may be liable, not only for your own acts and statements, but for those of others acting in the name of the "Friends of the Stillaguamish." Once the Friends is a corporation, your liability will be limited to your own acts and statements.

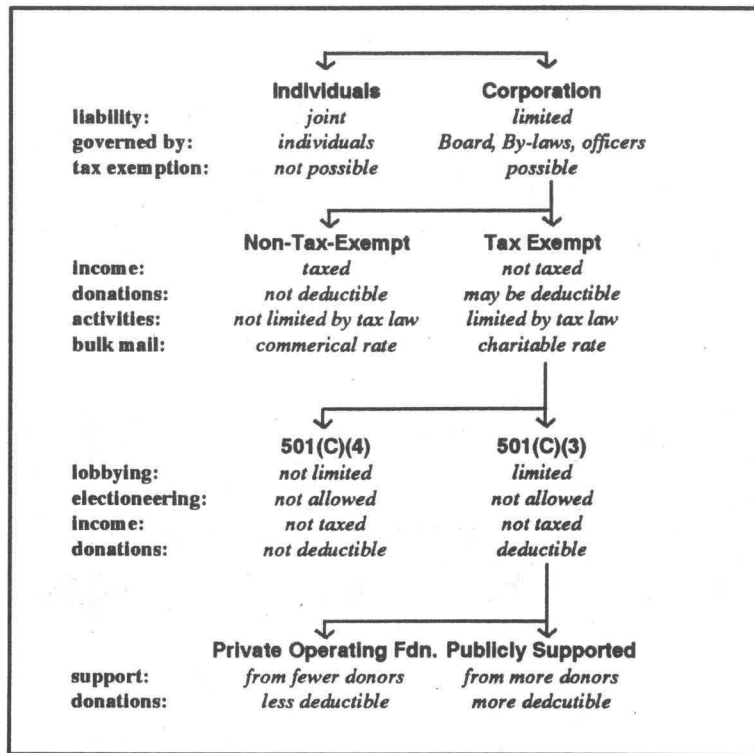
(2) **Structure.** Incorporating can help by forcing you to get organized, with a statement of purpose, By-laws, a Board of Directors and officers. It gives us a structure for getting more people involved in a river protection campaign.

(3) **Tax-exempt status.** Incorporating makes it possible for you to apply to the Internal Revenue Service for tax-exempt status. This in turn can produce some good things: tax-exemption; tax-deductibility for donations; access to charitable foundations; and a reduced postage rate for bulk mailings.

So what's the down-side? Not much to sweat, really. You need to go to your state Corporation Commission (or Secretary of State), file your Articles of Incorporation and By-laws, pay a fee, and file an annual report.

See the "map" of your options for tax status. You work your way from top to bottom by making decisions (for example, between "non-tax-exempt" and "tax-exempt," or between "501(c)(4)" and "501(c)(3).") In the smaller type, we have indicated some of the implications of choosing one status or another. The choices most often made by river protection groups appear on the right side.

This "map" will give you a basic idea of the choices to be made and the general considerations. For



details, get in touch with your local volunteer attorney, us, or the IRS.

One important point: You can hold yourself out to donors as a charitable, Section 501(c)(3) organization without being certified as such by the

IRS if you meet their requirements and if you ordinarily receive \$5,000 or less annually. Falling in this category could relieve you of the need to apply to the IRS for certification and to file an annual Form 990.

Relicensing (Continued from page1)

by FERC, which is not known as a den of preservationists. Still, the 1986 law which governs relicensing (the Electric Consumers Protection Act) gives a lot of weight to environmental considerations. It requires FERC to give "equal consideration" to power generation and "to the purposes of energy conservation, the protection, mitigation of damage to, and enhancement of, fish and wildlife (including related spawning grounds and habitat), the protection of recreational opportunities, and the preservation of other aspects of environmental quality."

If you do your homework, and make a good case, you could fundamentally improve the flow regimen for a managed river. (Talk about bargains

with the devil!)

This is a big opportunity, and a big undertaking. Intervention in a relicensing procedure is likely to be a four-year process. But the pay-offs could last a lot longer — say 50 years. Please get in touch if we can help you with information, contacts, facilitating meetings, fund-raising, etc.

We have some excellent materials, produced by John Echeverria of American Rivers, on the relicensing process. If you're interested, we'd like to send you a copy. We can also give you a list of dams in your state (or region) that are up for relicensing in the next few years. Let us know by returning the enclosed post-card.

Dam Foolishness

Last but not least, this month's "Dam Foolishness Award" goes to the Lower Colorado River Authority of Texas for their exploits on that river (not to be confused with the "other" Colorado River).

According to the July issue of U.S. Water News, a couple of reservoirs on the Colorado (Lakes Buchanan and LBJ) have silted up to the point that they have lost two-thirds of their capacity. "Ski boats, speeding along the recreational waters, have slammed to sudden, unexpected halts on submerged sandbars. Fishermen have begun shunning the lakes, and resort owners have complained of a loss in return business.

"Over the years, various solutions have been forwarded for the siltation problem. Time and time again, the cost of the actual dredging has proved to be prohibitive, besides the additional problem of where to put the tons of sand. One proposal called for transporting the sand to the Texas Coast — which is where it would have wound up without the dams — to build up lost beaches at the mouth of the Colorado River."

Your tax dollars at work!

We're expanding our mailing list. Do you know of other local river protection groups who would like to receive the River Network Bulletin as well as other river protection information? Please send us their name, address and if possible, the name of a contact person. We'll be sure they receive the next issue.

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