



The LEADer

2022 SPECIAL ISSUE

OUR TAR CREEK IS STILL ENDANGERED

Tar Creek remains among America's Most Endangered Rivers

Washington, D.C. – American Rivers named Oklahoma's Tar Creek one of *America's Most Endangered Rivers®* of 2022, highlighting the threat that toxic mining pollution from one of the nation's biggest Superfund sites poses to clean water and public health.

"The America's Most Endangered Rivers report is a call to action to save rivers facing urgent decisions," said Jessie Thomas-Blate with American Rivers. "We're sounding the alarm because toxic wastewater has been threatening this creek and surrounding communities for too long. It is unacceptable. Action must be taken now to address this injustice."

Pollution from 70 years of lead and zinc mining has made Tar Creek a regional, watershed-wide problem that requires a watershed-wide solution. Tar Creek flows eleven miles through a once lush prairie from Kansas into Oklahoma. Forty years of acid mine water flowing from abandoned mines into Tar Creek has led American Rivers to include it on the list of *America's Most Endangered Rivers®* of 2022.

Tar Creek is a tributary to the Neosho River, which in turn enters the Grand Lake o' the Cherokees formed by the Pensacola Dam. The dam is undergoing a relicensing process, which will establish rules dam operators must follow for the next 30 years. Agencies operating the dam and managing the lake frequently ignore the impacts of metals pollution in the lake and watershed, and do not consider the repeated upstream flooding events when making decisions.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is required to compel on-the-record consideration of this watershed-wide metal pollution problem. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), the Grand River Dam Authority (GRDA), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the state of Oklahoma must address historic and ongoing contamination of Tar Creek and the Grand Lake watershed as part of the Pensacola Dam's official license record.

Please join us in demanding that EPA, FERC, GRDA, the Army Corps and the Governor of Oklahoma establish a joint agreement requiring inter-agency analysis and decision-making between dam relicensing and the Tar Creek Superfund Site.

MOST ENDANGERED RIVERS 2022

OUR REFUGEE ~

THE LEADER SPRING

We have our own well known refugee and she is actually connected to 2 World Wars! The lead and zinc mined out just north of us we all are proud to say, "won both wars." But look at what was left behind and the money it is costing for the cleanup. Those metals were essential elements, valued to end all wars. And our Tar Creek who still bleeds, is the last remaining casualty of those wars.

They didn't kill her, but ensured that the damage would be long lasting, staining the bridges she flows under and every sock of every child who has tromped through those waters for the last 43 years come November. The neighborhoods, parks, front and back yards get her sediments loaded with those precious metals deposited on them when her flood waters reach out beyond her banks, putting any child living there at risk. At risk for simply being, playing and walking those cute little feet back into the house where their baby brother crawls.

These legacy mining sites are not rare. The challenge is upon you to find a site like ours that has been cleaned up. The companies know how to make money but they are not committed to the "cleanup after yourself" mentality we instill in kindergarteners. They just can't make any money that way.

Essential elements as the answer to the Climate Crisis is the dream these dirty mining companies have been longing to have announced. Half of our country is at risk for the superfund sites of the future because beneath the ground lie these rare earth metals that will power us out of the fossil fuel phase of the modern world and will take us into the "clean" energy life we hope will save the planet.

But at what risk? We had to learn the riches only make the rich richer and leave the mess for the locals to learn to deal with. For us, we learned to love the mining district for the jobs they produced, with the chat piles a source material used in countless ways, saving our cities and county tax payer money when used as cheap gravel. We valued those mountain of mine waste for the recreation they provided, cheap fun, sand dunes, to climb and slide down. We loved the rugged features on the landscape they became and have regret as OUR chat piles come down, while some loved the bit of money they earned with each ton hauled to the distributors.

We only learned later what the company men probably knew already. They regretted they didn't have the technology to remove the REST of the metals from the chat. They knew it was loaded, but didn't think it cost effective to work those piles again, when they could walk away and hope they got their bankruptcy papers turned in before the poisoning effects were discovered.

What have we earned? Lost I.Q. devalues each individual, but steals also the potential of communities because our people are our collective future. Each of us exposed to our lead carry it in every organ of the body. The other precious metals in bed with lead, are known to attack our bodies in other unique ways. Costing many years of life-expectancy.

But what have we learned? We are the forefront of the push to mine. We can speak up. NO MORE TAR CREEKS. Value the clean water running through your communities and the landscape of rolling hills, plains or valleys. The announcement we received this week that Tar Creek made American Rivers' Most Endangered Rivers Top Ten. Mining did this. It took this vital stream, this valued creek and has no plans to return it to us.

The players with power have failed us. They have failed to protect our lives, our potential, and our property. The connection is clear. What flows down Tar Creek, that load of metals every day for 43 years goes somewhere. It ends up in our Grand Lake in the sediment and in many of our fish species. That lake backs up in flood events and Tar Creek lays her heavy metal load on us flooding our homes and destroying property.

These players need to find a big table, pull up a chair and stay long enough to mesh out the formal Memorandum of Understanding to work together for US. You can help us make this table setting event happen.

Contact EPA, FERC, Army Corps of Engineers and GRDA and demand it.

Our little refugee from the last wars longs to run clean for you again.

Your Tar Creekkeeper ~ Rebecca Jim

LEAD Agency, Inc.

223 A. St. SE.

Miami, OK 74354

Phone: 918 542-9399

918-256-5269

leadagency@att.net

www.leadagency.org

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**JUSTICE WILL NOT BE SERVED UNTIL THOSE WHO ARE UNAFFECTED
ARE AS OUTRAGED AS THOSE WHO ARE. Ben Franklin**

AMERICA'S 10 MOST ENDANGERED RIVERS 2022

#1 Colorado River

State: CO, UT, AZ, NV, CA, WY, NM, Mexico

Threat: Climate change, outdated water management

#2 Snake River

State: ID, WA, OR

Threat: Four federal dams

#3 Mobile River

State: AL

Threat: Coal ash contamination

#4 Maine's Atlantic Salmon Rivers

State: ME

Threat: Dams

#5 Coosa River

State: TN, GA, AL

Threat: Agricultural pollution

#6 Mississippi River

State: MN, WI, IL, IA, MO, KY, TN, AR, MS, LA

Threat: Pollution, habitat loss

#7 Lower Kern River

State: CA

Threat: Excessive water withdrawals

#8 San Pedro River

State: AZ

Threat: Excessive water pumping; loss of Clean Water Act protections

#9 Los Angeles River

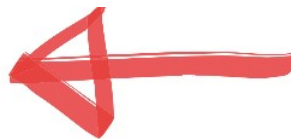
State: CA

Threat: Development, pollution

#10 Tar Creek

State: OK

Threat: Pollution



THOUSANDS HAVE LIVED WITHOUT LOVE,
NOT ONE WITHOUT WATER. WH AUDEN



America's Most Endangered Rivers of 2022

America's Most Endangered Rivers® of 2022 sounds the alarm that our nation's rivers and clean water are in crisis — and it shines a light on urgent solutions. This is not simply a report, it is a loud and clear call to action.

If we are to meet this moment and confront the challenges facing our clean water, environment and communities, we must come together as a powerful movement, speaking up for the rivers that give us life — for these 10 endangered rivers, and all of the rivers essential to our shared future.

Rivers are selected based upon the following criteria:

- * A major decision that the public can help influence in the coming year on the proposed action.
- * The significance of the river to people and nature.
- * The magnitude of threat to the river and its communities, especially in light of a changing climate and/or environmental justice.

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Please join us in demanding that EPA, FERC, GRDA, and the Army Corps establish a joint agreement requiring inter-agency analysis and decision-making between dam relicensing and the Tar Creek Superfund Site.

WHISKEY IS FOR DRINKIN' WATER IS FOR *FIGHTIN'*
— MARK TWAIN

Take Ten Minutes to Help Tar Creek

Tar Creek needs your help! She needs everyone to tell EPA, FERC, and You can find an electronic version of this sample letter on our website www.leadagency.org.

Please send a letter to all of the officials listed below.

If you prefer to send these letters electronically, we have included a web address for each.

COL Scott Preston

Tulsa District Commander

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Office: (918) 669-7201

Cell: (918) 313-2368

swt-pao@usace.army.mil.

Commissioner Richard Glick

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

888 First Street, NE

Washington, DC 20426

<https://bit.ly/2S511M1> (using this link once will automatically send to Commissioner Glick and Administrator Regan)

Administrator Michael Regan

Environmental Protection Agency

Mailing Code 1101A

1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.

Washington, DC 20460

<https://bit.ly/2S511M1> using this link once will automatically send to Commissioner Glick and Administrator Regan

Dan Sullivan, CEO


Grand River Dam Authority

DSullivan@grda.com

William E. Smiley, Emergency Management
Office Chief,

Tulsa District U.S. Army Corps of Engineers,

William.E.Smiley@usace.army.mil



Subject: Commit to collaborative cleanup for endangered Tar Creek

Dear _____,

I am writing to request that you enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), the Grand River Dam Authority (GRDA), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the state of Oklahoma and any other applicable state, federal, tribal and/or local entities to require inter-agency analysis and decision-making between the Grand Lake Dam relicensing and the Tar Creek Superfund Site, which is included in the official relicensing record for the Grand Lake Dam.

Contamination from the Tri-State Mining District impacts much of the Grand River watershed. Protecting human and environmental health throughout the watershed demands that agencies consider how their actions affect the distribution of contaminants across the watershed. Isolated decision-making is harmful to human health and will not solve our problems. An MOU is required to compel joint landscape-scale decision-making. Including metals contamination within a new Grand Lake Dam license centralizes and spotlights public accountability over the many agencies that must engage to protect public health.

Heavy metals from Tar Creek are in Grand Lake fish. We know eating too many of these fish is dangerous to human health. High levels of toxic heavy metals (specifically lead, cadmium, arsenic and manganese) in water and fish cause irreversible neurocognitive impairments on humans, especially children. How can we make our fish safe to eat, or water clean to drink or recreate in, if GRDA, Army Corps, and FERC continue to ignore Tar Creek metals when making decisions about the Grand Lake Dam? These issues cannot be considered in isolation. I am concerned about human exposure to these metals in Grand Lake. I am also concerned that flood events distribute Tar Creek metals throughout the watershed, depositing them on the land as floodwaters recede. This situation creates a real risk of children becoming lead poisoned by playing in areas that flood.

Concern for these issues facing Tar Creek has led American Rivers to include it as one of *America's Most Endangered Rivers*® of 2022.

No single agency can solve this problem. Everyone must work together on the record to come up with a comprehensive landscape-scale solution to address pollution throughout the watershed before more people, fish and wildlife are impacted. An MOU compelling joint decision-making is essential to this task, and I urge you to develop and implement this MOU as soon as possible.

Sincerely,



Sample letter

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