

**We, the members of the Association Initiatives for the Future of Great Rivers (IFGR) have given a voice to rivers for five years.** By listening closely to the needs of stakeholders, carrying out collective reflection, stirring awareness and assisting the territories to adopt sustainable and adapted solutions, we have been able to forge links between continents, between expertise and the users of rivers. Because, although every river is unique, they all face the same challenges of climate change, pollution and pressure from human beings who draw evermore water. Because, everywhere in the world, our rivers, ignored here, venerated there, are an integral part of the life of territories and their populations, and partners of daily life.

**Our conclusion is irrevocable: rivers are vulnerable and have all become more fragile. It is urgent to understand them, act to save them, to preserve their future (and our own!).**

## Our convictions

### The river, a vector of identity

Towns are born along and around rivers, forming a regional network through which it creates a path. An element that structures landscapes and permits territorial development, the river keeps alive a common history with populations, punctuated by floods, legends, industrial exploits and human adventures. This collective memory must be saved and people brought together to build projects for sustainable development around rivers, so that they can both be used and respected.

### The river, a territorial project

The river irrigates the territories it crosses by creating value. It brings drinking water to towns, and water for crops and industry. It provides carbon free energy and mobility. It shelters a wealth of fauna and flora. Its unity must be maintained so it continues to render this array of services. Functional, through the integrated management of its uses in order to better harmonise them; geographic when considered on the scale of the watershed, reaching beyond territorial and national borders.

### The river, a living entity that must be understood

The river is a living ecosystem, thus complex and dynamic. It evolves naturally with the sediments it transports, its discharges, and more besides. It is also affected by the upheavals caused by human beings. It is essential to increase pedagogical efforts to spread awareness of their fragility and unite in knowing how to live together around them. And for those rivers most threatened, grant them rights capable of giving them better protection.



## Rivers, links between earth and ocean

the river does not exist alone, it interacts with its source, its tributaries, and the sea into which it flows. A common destiny links the droplets of water from a glacier, that flow onwards to form streams, that mix and carry soil in the river until its mouth and the ocean, and then evaporate in the immense water cycle. The health of seas and oceans depends on that of rivers and it is vital to act with joint responsibility, from the source to the sea.

## The river, an essential ally for tomorrow's world

a mirror of our societies, the river is at the heart of all the transitions needed: energy, health, urban planning, agriculture, the environment. By combining knowledge from different fields to achieve more precise knowhow and by opening dialogue on water sharing, it is possible to find in rivers the solutions for tomorrow's world, to develop innovations in laboratories, and to meet the challenges of adaptation to climate change and the loss of biodiversity.

# We are collectively committed to living rivers

With the Living with Rivers mobilization, we are building a collective account on rivers, where viewpoints intersect and many voices are gathered to sound the alarm and astonish. From this account that weaves the links that have been lost with rivers, we want to give impetus to a movement, so that the cause of rivers is known and defended by as many people as possible.

## Our actions must be guided by eight priorities:

- **Get to know** rivers by combining viewpoints and knowledge, by gathering researchers, professionals, decision-makers and users to deal with the complexity of interwoven challenges and recognise the value they create. We must build multidisciplinary knowledge to cope with urgency and protect rivers.
- **Integrate rivers in global action:** the environment, flora and fauna -including humans - are linked to each other. Rivers are the roots of the sea and they depend on their sources and what human beings do to them. Let us lift the barriers between public policies and strengthen the links between rivers, oceans, the climate, health and biodiversity!

- **Accept their geography:** every river extends over a basin that ignores borders and where reigns authentic solidarity, physical, climatic and biological. Let us support political solidarity, real hydro-diplomacy, that goes beyond private and national interests, and which considers rivers as common goods.
- **Reunite them:** a river is a living organism. Through illusory rationality, we have segmented rivers by utilities: drinking water, irrigation, transport, energy production. Let us find a rationale of unity that gives its share to the environment, so that rivers continue to be in the service of well-being and territorial development.
- **Respect them:** a river is not a trash dump; open and mobile they can be particularly noxious. With the waste received from human beings, rivers not only contaminate the surrounding soil and groundwater, but the whole planet, as can be seen with microplastics. If we think we have rights to water, we must not forget the right of water: first the right to respect, and then the right to benefit, if necessary, from a legal status so it can be defended.
- **Save their deltas:** held in the grip of threats from both the sea and the land, deltas are at the forefront of the climate upheavals underway. Deltas represent less than 1% of the Earth's surface but 8% of the global population: let us blow the whistle and focus our efforts to save deltas. Why not make them laboratories for adapting to climate change?
- **Foresee their scarcity:** the era of temperate climates has come to an end and phenomena in which there is either too much or too little water will become increasingly frequent and intense, whereas the need for water is constantly growing. Peace in the coming years will to a great extent depend on our capacity to save and recycle water.
- **Relearn to love rivers:** a large number of towns and cities have reappropriated their rivers, by developing their banks and by improving the quality of their waters. This reconciliation between rivers and human beings starts as early as school. Let us teach young people to consider water as a precious and common good, to avoid any new irreversible harm against nature.





# I'm signing up!

By signing the manifesto Let Rivers Live, you are ready to engage yourself alongside us to give and make known the voice of rivers. The more we are, the more efficiently we can protect their future.

**Date:**

**Name and Surname:**

**City:**

**Country:**

**Favorite river / River of belonging:**

**Email:**

By signing, you agree that your name will appear in the list of signatories. You will receive an e-mail to confirm your signature.

**Signature:**

**For more information on the manifesto**

[www.living-with-rivers.com](http://www.living-with-rivers.com)

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