



CHANGING PLANET Returns to Explore the Tale of Two Recovering Rivers: The Sacred Klamath in Northern California and the Iconic Seine in Paris

CHANGING PLANET: RIVER RESTORATION
Premieres Wednesday, April 23, on PBS and PBS.org

Global Conservation Scientist M. Sanjayan Returns to Witness the
Removal of the Klamath's Dams, While Journalist and Paralympian
Ade Adepitan Investigates the Cleanup of the Seine



*M. Sanjayan in the Klamath River Valley.
Credit: John Harrington*

ARLINGTON, VA – **CHANGING PLANET** returns for a fourth year to explore how ongoing restoration projects are bringing life back to two rivers: Northern California's Klamath and the Seine in Paris. **CHANGING PLANET: RIVER RESTORATION** premieres Wednesday, April 23, 2025, 10:00-11:00 p.m. ET ([check local listings](#)) on PBS, [PBS.org](#) and the [PBS App](#).

Rivers are essential for both humans and nature. Two billion people rely on rivers for drinking water, and a quarter of the food we eat depends on them. But rivers are in deep trouble: pollution, excessive water extraction, and huge dams blocking their flow have taken a toll on freshwater species.

In **CHANGING PLANET: RIVER RESTORATION**, Dr. M. Sanjayan returns to Northern California, where the largest dam removal project in U.S. history aims to resuscitate the Klamath River. The Klamath had one of the most significant salmon runs on the West Coast until the early 1900s when massive dams were constructed to generate hydroelectric power. But dams don't just hold back water; they block salmon from returning to their spawning grounds, prevent nutrients from flowing downstream, and create favorable conditions for toxic blue-green algae to flourish in reservoirs. As a result, the Klamath ecosystem was damaged, leading to a more than 90% decline in Chinook salmon.

During Sanjayan's visit three years ago, he met members of the Yurok tribe, who had started to restore the river. However, progress was slow, with each mile of restoration

taking a year's work, meaning it could take centuries to repair the 254 miles of the Klamath. The most effective way to heal the river would be to demolish the dams, allowing it to flow freely again. Finally, after decades of campaigning, the dams were dismantled in 2024, reveals Frankie Myers, Vice Chair of the Yurok tribe. This past fall, salmon returned and could swim upriver unimpeded for the first time in a century.

Sanjayan joins Mark Bransom, CEO of the Klamath River Renewal Corporation, to witness one of the enormous dams being blasted with dynamite. He also helps the Yurok Tribal Fisheries team catch and assess the health of salmon populations and plants native species with the revegetation crew, who are transforming 2,200 acres of land now available from drained reservoirs into wildlife habitat.

Sanjayan takes to the air with engineer Felicity Cross to map and monitor the project's progress and get a better view of the landscape's transformation. The undamming of the river helps fish and all the species that survive in and around the Klamath. Sanjayan travels to a top-secret location where California Condors, who traditionally fed on salmon, are evaluated and released. These giant scavengers nearly went extinct, but now the Yurok tribe is re-introducing them to the area, rebuilding the link between the river and the surrounding ecosystem.

Wild rivers aren't the only ones that need help. Many cities have been built around rivers, including the Seine in Paris. Journalist and Paralympian Ade Adepitan investigates the cleanup of the Seine, where it's been illegal to swim for over 100 years. For decades, raw sewage flowed into the river, killing off aquatic wildlife. But a \$1.5 billion mega-engineering project — key to Paris winning its 2024 Summer Olympic Games bid — has made the river safe for swimming. Wildlife benefits from a more pristine river, too. Adepitan tracks down bats feeding on insects that start life in the water and joins local anglers to catch a giant Wels catfish, a good indication of a healthy river. Following World War II, only three fish species were left in the Seine; today, there are more than 40.

Sanjayan's return trip to Northern California has given him hope for the Klamath, other rivers, and the planet. "When I started on this journey of documenting a changing planet, I expected to be documenting an obituary," he said. "Then you come here and meet these communities and see what these people are doing. We're talking about something truly epic. And what blows you away is when everyone comes together, you have a planet that is changing for the better and it can change fast."

CHANGING PLANET: RIVER RESTORATION will stream simultaneously with broadcast and be available on all station-branded PBS platforms, including [PBS.org](https://www.pbs.org) and the [PBS app](#), available on iOS, Android, Roku, Apple TV, Amazon Fire TV, Android TV, Samsung Smart TV, Chromecast and VIZIO.

CHANGING PLANET: RIVER RESTORATION is a BBC Studios Natural History Unit production for PBS and BBC. Rosemary Edwards is executive producer, Caroline El-

Marazki is senior producer and director, and Joanne Stevens is series producer. Diana El-Osta is Executive in Charge for PBS. BBC Studios is handling global distribution.

About Dr. M. Sanjayan

Dr. M. Sanjayan is a conservation scientist and the CEO of Conservation International, an organization working primarily in the Global South to secure nature for all people. Born in Sri Lanka and raised in West Africa, he brings a unique perspective to his work, forging influential partnerships for environmental protection and restoration. He was named to the inaugural *TIME 100* list of climate leaders, recognized for his ability to unite business, government, and communities in pursuit of conservation solutions. His work has been featured in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *CNN*, and *Outside Magazine*.

A prolific science communicator, Sanjayan has hosted more than a dozen award-winning documentaries for PBS, BBC, National Geographic, Discovery, Showtime, and Vox Media, and has appeared on *The Today Show*, *The Late Show with David Letterman*, *CBS This Morning*, and *Fareed Zakaria GPS*.

Sanjayan holds a master's degree from the University of Oregon and a Ph.D. in conservation biology from the University of California, Santa Cruz. His peer-reviewed research has been published in *Science*, *Nature*, and *Conservation Biology*. He has served as a visiting researcher at UCLA, distinguished professor of practice at Arizona State University, and a fellow at the Aspen Institute and the Council on Foreign Relations. He is also a Trustee for Prince William's Earthshot Prize and a Climate Advisor for the Clinton Global Initiative.

Sanjayan lives in Arlington, Virginia, with his wife and daughter. An avid outdoorsman, he enjoys fly fishing in Montana, birding, cycling, and diving in some of the world's most incredible natural places.

About Ade Adepitan

Ade Adepitan, MBE, is a journalist and Paralympic medalist. Born in Nigeria and raised in London, Adepitan survived polio as a child and went on to succeed as an international wheelchair basketball player. Since then, his work has included sports commentating at the Paralympics, reporting on international affairs, and exploring how scientists are working with Kenyan farmers to keep elephants out of conflict with humans for a previous **CHANGING PLANET** episode in 2023.

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