

# Healthy Rivers for All

## Empowering stakeholders to drive change

The world's waters are threatened by a host of problems. Impacts from human activities like development and overuse are exacerbated by changes in climate, and increased competition by different societal interests, putting vulnerable communities and ecosystems at risk. Virtually all of the United Nation's 17 Sustainable Development Goals are directly or indirectly impacted by water. Creating a sustainable balance of water needs for both nature and people is challenging. It will require people that are competing for water resources to work together in new collaborations and partnerships. Forming these partnerships and empowering them to make change is essential.

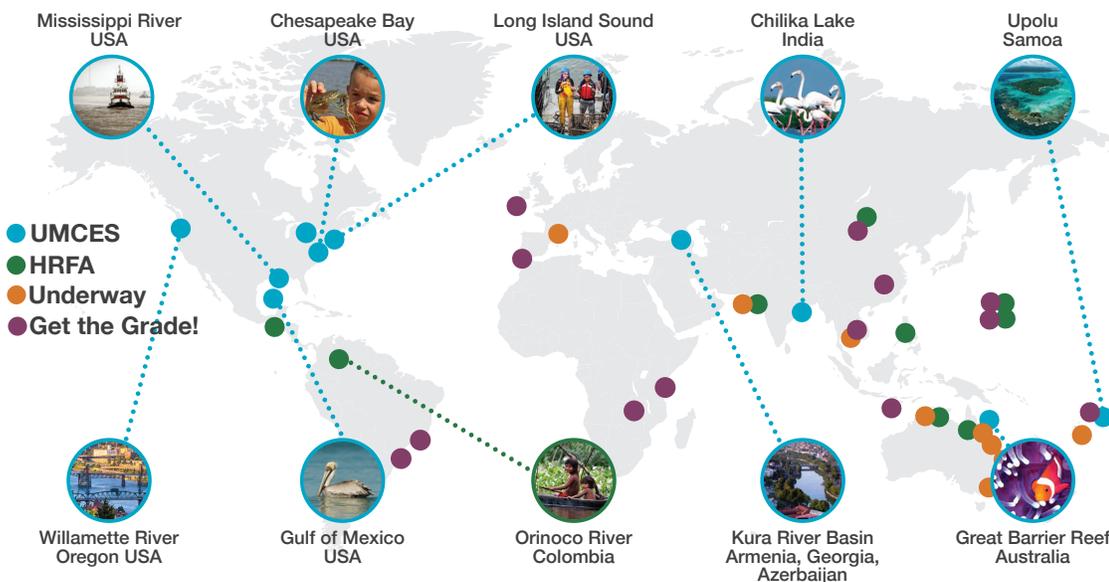
Healthy Rivers for All has refined a process to help form these collaborations in river basins around the world. The facilitated approach helps communities create a common understanding of the basin's health, foster a shared vision, and track progress in achieving goals. The catalyst for this process is co-creation of an ecosystem health report card that engages stakeholders to create a holistic understanding of the status of the basin and a vision for its future. The report card format is an easily accessible communication tool. Empowered with clear information, communities can advocate for their freshwater resources. The inclusive process, centered around creation of the report card, provides the platform for the new relationships and collaborations that achieve common goals.

Past report cards had powerful impacts including investments in sewage treatment upgrades (Moreton Bay, AU), nutrient reduction programs (Chesapeake Bay, USA), expansion of protected areas (Orinoco River, Colombia), and \$350 million raised for restoration (Long Island Sound, USA).

*The Healthy Rivers for All is a partnership of the World Wildlife Fund and the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science.*



## Where we've worked



**87%** said report cards raised awareness of issues impacting basin health

**58%** agreed that report cards resulted in changed behavior of stakeholders

**44%** responded the report cards had improved the health of their basin

**97%** responded they would recommend using report cards to their peers

### Get the Grade!

A report card game designed to engage a wide range of people on natural resources and water management.



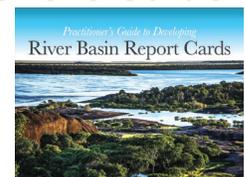
### 5 countries

Represented in the 2018 "Healthy Rivers for All: Setting the course for sustainability with river basin health report cards" course.



### The Practitioner's Guide

A reference and resource that provides an overview of basin report cards, and how to leverage the process and results to drive change.



# A Potential River Basin Report Card Process

The report card process normally includes several regional workshops that allow stakeholders in different locations to discuss the issues that are relevant to local issues. Results are then aggregated to create a report card for the entire basin. Report card development takes place in 3 phases, and, depending on the size, complexity, and capacity within the basin, can take anywhere from 12-24 months.

## PHASE I: PLANNING

## PHASE II: THE REPORT CARD PROCESS

## PHASE III: RAISE THE GRADE



**Phase I** involves comprehensive planning and stakeholder assessment to identify the appropriate actors that need to be included in the process in order to achieve the relevance, legitimacy, and credibility of the results.

**Phase II** is the process to create the report card itself, and is where the collaborations needed for future collective action are formed. This process includes 5 Steps:

1. What is the big picture? What are the things that we value most in this system from environmental, social, cultural, and economic perspectives? What will affect the future condition of those values?
2. What do we measure? How can we measure the condition of those values and threats? Do we have the data and information that we need?
3. What is healthy? A suite of short and long term targets for indicators can be seen as a long term, comprehensive vision for a healthy ecosystem.
4. How does it add up? How can we use available data to score against their targets? How should we integrate results into a regional grade?
5. What is the story? How can we tell the story of the watershed? What is our communication plan?

**Phase III** leverages the report card results to improve conditions. This recognizes that the report card should be relevant to existing planning activities, and designed to inform management decision-making.

## Scoping a River Basin Report Card

UMCES has pioneered report cards and completed 40 around the world during the last 15 years. Each report card, along with the stakeholder-based process, are unique with their own challenges and opportunities. The report card process is not easy: A single, one-size-fits-all approach to assessing the health of river ecosystems is unlikely to succeed. Issues, perspectives, and stakeholder needs vary between regions and landscapes and process must be sensitive to these differences to stay relevant. Because the development process is locally driven with diverse stakeholders, this regionally specific assessment is relevant to local issues, is legitimate in the eyes of the community, and is credible in its recommendations.



## Contact us today!

For more information please visit:

<https://www.worldwildlife.org/initiatives/healthy-rivers-for-all>

[http://ian.umces.edu/projects/project/130/wwf\\_umces\\_partnership/](http://ian.umces.edu/projects/project/130/wwf_umces_partnership/)

Or contact us: [WWF.UMCES.Partnership@umces.edu](mailto:WWF.UMCES.Partnership@umces.edu)



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