

GREAT PIECE
MEADOWS

AMERICAN RIVER PRESS KIT

GREAT FALLS

PATERSON



A documentary film by Scott Morris
2021/86 minutes/USA/4K/color/English

WEBSITE AND TRAILER

<https://www.americanriver.film>

CONTACT

Scott Morris, Producer/Director
smorris30@optonline.net
Cell: 201-506-5665

Kelly Sheehan, Producer
c.kelly.sheehan@gmail.com
Cell: 917-701-2899



<http://www.scottmorrisproductions.com>
Chatham, NJ 07928

AMERICAN RIVER

BRIEF SYNOPSIS

Mary Bruno spent her childhood fearing the polluted stretch of the Passaic River near her home. Decades later, she returns to rediscover the river of her youth.

AMERICAN RIVER is a cinematic adventure that follows Ms. Bruno and river guide Carl Alderson on a 4-day, 80-mile kayak journey from the Passaic's pristine headwaters to its toxic mouth in Newark Bay. Along the way, candid conversations with residents, experts and advocates reveal the Passaic's extraordinary history, geology and ecology: How did this powerful and once-celebrated river become one of the most contaminated in America? Can it be saved?



Mary Bruno

ABOUT THE FILM

Three years in the making, **AMERICAN RIVER** was directed by seasoned filmmaker Scott Morris and based on Ms. Bruno's 2012 book, *An American River: From Paradise to Superfund*. Like the book, the film is a unique blend of personal memoir, adventure, history and science. Mary and Carl explore the Passaic's beauty, navigate its many twists and turns, pass through cities including Paterson and Great Falls and visit Mary's hometown as they head towards the industrial disaster that poisoned the Passaic for the past 60 years. The entire journey was captured in both grand and intimate scale from the water, land and air by an experienced crew with ten 4K cameras. Mary and Carl's dynamic personalities bring insight, urgency and humor to every scene. An original score, graphic animation and rare archival images enrich the story. S. Dillard Kirby is Executive Producer; **AMERICAN RIVER** is his second film project with Scott Morris.



Mary Bruno and Carl Alderson kayaking through Great Piece Meadows.

Download high-resolution version at <https://americanriver.film/>

AMERICAN RIVER

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS



Mary Bruno
Aquatic Ecologist / Writer



Carl Alderson
Restoration Ecologist / River Guide

ALSO APPEARING

(see photos on website)

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Julia Alderson | Carl's Daughter and Driver |
| JoAnn and Tom Behr | Residents, Millington |
| Len Fariello | Land Manager, Wildlife Preserves Inc. |
| Nicholas Beattie | Heir of Founder of The Mill at Little Falls |
| Susan Psarros | Manager, Libby's Lunch |
| Scott Yacyniak | Resident, Little Falls |
| Giacomo Destefano | Director, Paterson Museum |
| Robert Veronelli | Lead Visitors Services, City of Paterson |
| Dennis and Judy George | Visitors, Great Falls National Park |
| Christian | Homeless man, Paterson |
| Erik King | Founding Member, Nereid Boat Club |
| Lois Catucci | Resident, North Arlington |
| Tom McCabe | History Professor, Rutgers University |
| Michael Gordon, Esq. | Former Attorney, Ironbound Community |
| Nancy Zak and Arnold Cohen | Residents and Activists, Newark |
| Captain Bill Sheehan | Hackensack Riverkeeper |
| Ana Isabel Baptista, PhD | Associate Director, Tishman Environment and Design Center, The New School |
| Marcy DePina | Newark Riverfront Revival |
| Lenny Thomas | Resident and Activist, Ironbound |

AMERICAN RIVER

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Many people in urban areas are disconnected from nature, and many films about the natural world are filmed in exotic faraway places. I was drawn to the idea of making a film about a subject that was literally in my own backyard. I live a few blocks from the Passaic River, yet knew nothing about it. How could the obscure waterway I'd cross multiple times while driving with my family in different parts of the state be the same river? Depending where I was, I'd catch glimpses of it flowing in different directions through the cluttered landscape of houses, towns and cities. There must be several Passaic Rivers, I thought. And no one seemed to know anything about it...

...Until I read Mary Bruno's 2012 book, *An American River: From Paradise to Superfund*. My vision for **AMERICAN RIVER** would bring together the story of Mary's Bruno's highly personal journey with our mutual love of nature, concern about the environment, and themes of loss and healing I've explored in all my work. She loved the idea of working together on a film and our collaboration grew. I was thrilled to be out on the river during the months of scouting and filming the kayak trip, and delighted when Mary and Carl's friendship and dynamic personalities bloomed as the cameras started rolling. Capturing their can-do attitude, sharp observations and humor adds a wonderful layer to the film's urgent story and gives voice to my optimistic point-of-view. Despite its darker aspects, the film is after all a story of joy, wonder and hope. I invite audiences to discover and celebrate the Passaic River along with me through my experience making this film.

- Scott Morris



Mary and Carl kayak along an industrial stretch of the Passaic, Manhattan skyline in the distance.

AMERICAN RIVER

THE PRODUCTION TEAM



SCOTT MORRIS – Producer, Director and Editor

Scott is an accomplished independent filmmaker working in the New York/New Jersey area for 40 years. Recent work includes [Saving The Great Swamp: Battle to Defeat The Jetport](#) currently distributed by American Public Television, and *From The Ashes: The Life and Times of Tick Hall*, distributed by APT and featuring talk-show host Dick Cavett. *American River* is Scott's first feature-length documentary. For more info, visit www.scottmorrisproductions.com.



KELLY SHEEHAN– Producer

Kelly has produced over 80 hours of nonfiction television and independent documentaries including the acclaimed theatrical feature *Four Seasons Lodge* filmed in part by Albert Maysles and Sundance Film Festival favorite *Crossing Arizona*. “Working with Scott and the crew on *American River* has been an honor and true pleasure. I would ride the river with all of them again.” Check out more of her work at www.rainlake.com



ROGER GRANGE – Director of Photography

Roger has served as DP on award winning films for over thirty years. Theatrical and television documentaries include *Saving the Great Swamp*, *A Cantor's Head*, *The Anthropologist* (premiered at the 2015 DOCNYC Festival), *Evocateur: The Morton Downey Jr. Movie*, (premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival), *Moynihan* and *Backpack Full of Cash*. Clients include National Geographic, Discovery, BBC, ITV, The American Museum of Natural History, WNET and PBS, numerous non-profit organizations and corporate clients. www.rogergrangedp.com

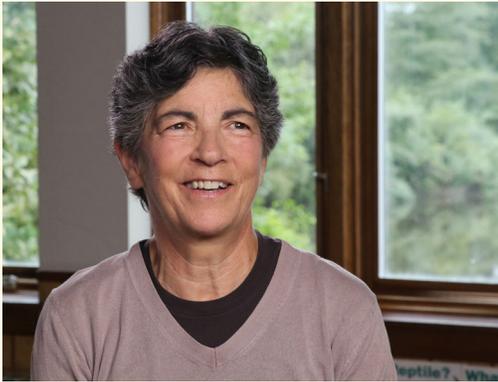


BEN MORRIS – Composer

Ben composes all kinds of music from operas to jazz big band charts. *American River* is his second documentary score after collaborating with Scott on *Saving The Great Swamp: Battle to Defeat the Jetport*. Recently, Ben lived in Norway studying jazz on a Fulbright Scholarship and is currently finishing a doctorate at the University of Colorado. “It’s been a fun creative challenge remotely recording the score for *American River*, working with musicians from around the country and blending unique instrumental sounds including shakuhachi, electric guitar, and mandolin.” www.benmorrismusic.com.

To see the full cast and crew, visit <https://www.americanriver.film/>

AMERICAN RIVER



ABOUT MARY BRUNO

Mary Bruno is an author, aquatic ecologist and a proud New Jersey native. Her 2012 book, *An American River*, (available on Amazon) is an environmental memoir about growing up along the polluted lower stretch of New Jersey's Passaic River. She is currently at work on a book about aquifers from her home on Vashon Island in Washington State.

PRODUCTION STILLS

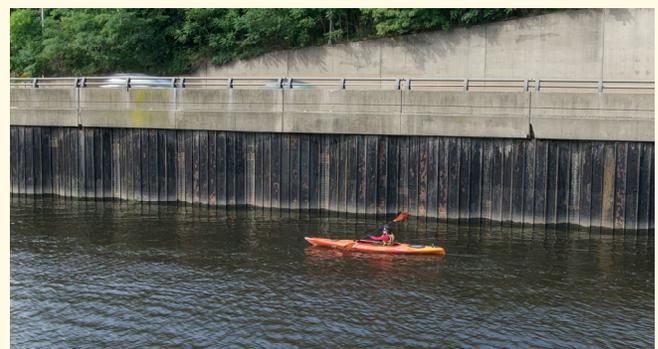
High-resolution downloads available on <https://www.americanriver.film/press/>



Mary Bruno and Carl Alderson portage over Great Falls in Paterson



Kayaking through Kearny, NJ



Mary kayaking near her home town of North Arlington

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