

## **Who owns water? The US landowners putting barbed wire across rivers - 15 March, 2018**

As Scott Carpenter and a few friends paddled down the Pecos River in New Mexico, USA, in May, 2017, the man at the front suddenly shouted and told the others to go to the side of the river. The group stopped just before they hit three strings of barbed wire across the river.

The sign hanging from the wire read "PRIVATE PROPERTY: No trespassing".

One of them got into the water to lift the wire with a paddle for the others to go under.

It's something that is happening more and more in New Mexico. A recent attempt to legally privatize streams has made public river users like Carpenter feel worried.

Now, New Mexico has become a battleground for the future of public waterways. The state government and landowners are on one side of the battle and anglers and boaters are on the other. At the centre of the argument is the question: who owns the water that brings life to the dry west?

**Comprehension questions:**

1. What was Scott Carpenter doing?
2. Where was he kayaking?
3. What did the guy at the front of the group do?
4. How many strings of barbed wire were across the river?
5. What did the sign hanging from the barbed wire say?
6. What did one of them do?
7. Is this happening more often?
8. What has happened about the future of public waterways?
9. Who is on either side of the debate?
10. What is the big question?