INTRODUCING A WILD AND SCENIC EAST ROSEBUD CREEK (MT)

On August 2, the President's signature marked the exciting finale of nearly a decade of efforts to protect Montana's East Rosebud Creek from hydropower development and other impacts. A 20-mile stretch of this beautiful stream is now designated a Wild and Scenic River. Local residents, paddlers, anglers, hikers, and other visitors treasure East Rosebud.

President Johnson signed the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act into law on October 2, 1968. This year, we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the historic passage of the Act. During the early history of American Whitewater, our founders wrote passionately about the need for a national river protection system and worked with leaders in the conservation community to develop and support what would become the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. What we hold true to our core at American Whitewater is that rivers unite our common heritage as Americans and cut through the petty tribal politics of our current political landscape. Wild and Scenic designation happens when all parties work together for a common interest.

Join us in the celebration of wild rivers and support the work outlined in this update.
SOUTHEAST
Dams keep us busy in the South. We helped steer Ocoee negotiations to a successful resolution in 2018 that will support continued releases in 2019 and beyond. The Ocoee conversations sparked new interest and opportunities to restore water to the Hiwassee Dries, just a stone’s throw from the Ocoee, and we’ll be pursuing those opportunities in 2019. We helped ensure the sale of the dam on the Green Narrows had some guarantees for paddlers but will track that closely next year. We are working hard on getting a new gage on Wilson Creek and on the new paddling channel on the Great Falls of the Catawba. And we are also exploring new Wild and Scenic designation opportunities on the Nolichucky and many other unprotected rivers.

CALIFORNIA
American Whitewater continues to make strides on hydropower projects across California. Recently, on the Don Pedro Hydropower Project, a stakeholder coalition helped the Bureau of Land Management shape a mandatory condition requiring long-needed improvements for Ward’s Ferry Bridge, the take-out for the Wild and Scenic Tuolumne River. On the Upper American River Project, we coordinated a trip with our colleagues at Rafting Magazine to take representatives from the Eldorado National Forest Pacific Ranger District down South Fork Silver Creek. This firsthand experience has given the U.S. Forest Service the perspective needed to help them determine appropriate use numbers that would trigger additional recreational flows on this unique high-country whitewater resource. Finally, on the Kerckhoff Hydropower Project, American Whitewater completed negotiations on a whitewater boating study for runs located on the San Joaquin River below Kerckhoff Reservoir. A proposal to build a downstream water storage facility known as Temperance Flat Dam threatens these reaches. American Whitewater produced a video with our partners at Friends of the River, “You Can’t Dam Your Way to Paradise,” to raise awareness for this issue.

NORTHEAST
Hydropower relicensing continues to be the major focus of our work throughout the northeast. We advocated for better access and flows on beginner and intermediate sections of the Deerfield and Connecticut Rivers in Massachusetts, Vermont, and New Hampshire. In a groundbreaking court decision, the Environmental Division of the Vermont Superior Court recently ruled that whitewater boating is a protected existing use on the Green River and required scheduled boating releases. Looking ahead, we are increasing our focus on New York, working to protect and expand boating opportunities on the Mongaup River and West Canada Creek, and beginning what will be a decade-long effort to do the same on the Black, Beaver, and Moose Rivers.

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**SOUTHERN ROCKIES**

Drought presented significant threats to river health in the Southern Rockies this year and posed a series of challenges for paddlers, outfitters, and water managers across the region. With scant winter snowpack across the Four Corners region and record warm temperatures, rivers had little inflow and unseasonably early peak runoff. By June, the Colorado River had dropped below minimum boating flows, the Dolores was less than 20 cf, and the Animas sat in puddles. For the first time on record, water managers placed the Yampa River on call this year, an administrative action unprecedented for Colorado’s last relatively free-flowing river system. Simply put, there wasn’t enough water to share between farmers, fish, cities, and boaters. Seasons like this underscore the need for comprehensive strategies on water supply and demand management. Especially important are mechanisms that protect river health and the region’s recreational values. In 2019, we’ll work to protect wild rivers, improve public access, and negotiate releases for world-class events like the Gore Canyon Festival. At the same time, we’ll work alongside state leadership and stakeholders to give river enthusiasts a strong voice in developing new programs and funding mechanisms that prioritize rivers, provide reliable flows for river health and recreational use, and create certainty for the communities that drive our outdoor recreation economy.

**MID-ATLANTIC**

Earlier this year the U.S. Department of the Interior kicked off an initiative to expand sustainable public recreational access on public lands and waters managed by the National Park Service. They asked for ideas and — no surprise — American Whitewater had some. We brought up policies in Harpers Ferry Historical Park and Delaware Water Gap National Park that hamstring paddling access and asked for a hard look at them. In the coming year, we expect to engage directly with those parks to envision improved paddling policies and access. We’re also excited to be working with the dam owner to begin recreational releases on the New River Dries this spring and summer. We hope to see lots of paddlers out there enjoying restored flows on the Dries!

**NORTHERN ROCKIES**

A wealth of wild, free-flowing rivers in the Northern Rockies remains unprotected. As we raise a glass and cheer for East Rosebud Creek, our nation’s newest Wild and Scenic River, we also cast our gaze to the future. East Rosebud is one of approximately 50 rivers in Montana for which we’ve been advocating for new designations. Its designation gives us a huge boost of public enthusiasm and strong momentum to push for additional designations. At the same time, we are pushing hard for new protections for potential Wild and Scenic Rivers in forest plans across the Northern Rockies. The importance of this work is crystal clear as we join local river advocates to fight a proposed mine on the South Fork Salmon, and oppose efforts to roll back forest plan protections across Idaho. The coming year will be pivotal in the region as we face large opportunities and threats.

**PACIFIC NORTHWEST**

We have several conservation initiatives to protect wild rivers in the Pacific Northwest in place in the coming year. Our efforts to permanently protect 19 river systems and their major tributaries on the Olympic Peninsula continue to gain momentum. A successful legislative hearing took place this past summer, and more supporters are signing on to join the campaign. In the North Cascades, we are supporters of the local effort to protect the Methow Headwaters from a new mine, while working toward a broader strategy of permanent river protection on the west slope of the Cascades — we want to ensure that projects like the proposal to dewater Ernie’s Gorge do not emerge again. In Oregon, we will continue efforts to secure stronger protections for the Rogue, Chetco, and Smith River watersheds. We will be working to prevent a new dam on the Chehalis and remove a couple more like those on the Nooksack and Similkameen. While we have had some great successes with river access, we are working on many access improvement projects. Now that the threat of a hydropower project at Sunset Falls has passed, we continue to seek ways to provide public access at the site. We are also researching options for improved access to the Hood River, legal portage of the falls on the Wind River, and the opportunity to run Celestial Falls.
Support American Whitewater Today!

Join or make a donation today! Our stewardship work is possible only through your support, and your financial contribution plays a vital role in protecting and restoring the special rivers that you love. We are a lean and efficient organization – 83% of every dollar we receive goes directly to our river stewardship work. With your support, we will lean forward and meet the challenges ahead.

Please consider making a tax-deductible donation to American Whitewater. Everything you’ll need is included with this letter. Thanks for your support!

Online
We’ve totally revamped our donation page to make online giving more user friendly! Check it out at: https://americanwhitewater.org/donate

Mail
Just fill out the enclosed reply form and return it in the envelope provided.

Phone
Call us at 1-866-262-8429.

American Whitewater recently received our eighth straight 4-star rating (the highest possible) from Charity Navigator for our financial practices and transparency. Only 2% of the charities that Charity Navigator rates have received at least seven consecutive 4-star evaluations, showing that American Whitewater outperforms most other charities in the nation. This “exceptional” designation from Charity Navigator differentiates American Whitewater from our peers and demonstrates our commitment to best management practices. It means you can rest assured that your donation will be put to good use and result in tangible gains for river stewardship!!

NEW TECHNOLOGIES, BETTER BETA, SAFER RIVER TIME

American Whitewater is the premier source for online paddling information through our National Whitewater Inventory (NWI). We’ll be putting the finishing touches on a newly designed NWI and releasing it to the public in early 2019. We also recently released an iOS app — to go along with our Android app — that shares real-time details on the more than 5,500 whitewater runs in our database. The location-enabled app allows paddlers to learn about rivers within a selected distance or state and pick trips that meet their group’s skill level, flow preferences, and time frame. In 2019, we’ll be improving our apps’ capabilities to allow crowdsourced updates, including comments, hazards, flow information, and photos via the mobile device. We’ll also be enhancing our mapping capabilities by utilizing American Whitewater-specific underlying data.

American Whitewater will be actively fighting a mining threat to the South Fork Salmon River (ID) in 2019. | Photo: Evan Stafford