



AMERICAN WHITEWATER

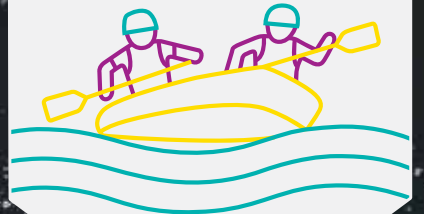
Conservation • Access • Events • Adventure • Safety

BY BOATERS FOR BOATERS
Winter 2020

THE TOP TEN RIVER STEWARDSHIP ISSUES OF 2020

THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE EAST TENNESSEE WHITE WATER CLUB

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AMERICAN WHITEWATER

A VOLUNTEER PUBLICATION PROMOTING RIVER CONSERVATION, ACCESS AND SAFETY

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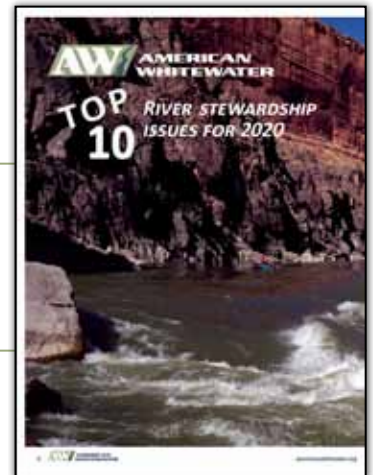
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In 2014, the removal of Elwha Dam and Glines Canyon Dam was completed and the Elwha River now flows freely from the headwaters to the sea. American Whitewater is among the leaders in an effort to designate the Elwha River and others on the Olympic Peninsula Wild and Scenic. Our Wild Olympics campaign would permanently protect 464 miles of river.

Photo by John Gussman

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PURPOSE

RIVER STEWARDSHIP: AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

Our mission: "To conserve and restore America's whitewater resources and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely," is actively pursued through our conservation, access, safety and education efforts under the umbrella of River Stewardship. The only national organization representing the interest of all whitewater paddlers, American Whitewater is the national voice for thousands of individual whitewater enthusiasts, as well as over 100 local paddling club affiliates.

AW's River Stewardship program adheres to the four tenets of our mission statement:

CONSERVATION: AW's professional staff works closely with volunteers and partner organizations to protect the ecological and scenic values of all whitewater rivers. These goals are accomplished through direct participation in public decision-making

processes, grassroots advocacy, coalition building, empowerment of volunteers, public outreach and education, and, when necessary, legal action.

RIVER ACCESS: To assure public access to whitewater rivers pursuant to the guidelines published in its official Access Policy, AW arranges for river access through private lands by negotiation or purchase, seeks to protect the right of public passage on all rivers and streams navigable by kayak or canoe, encourages equitable and responsible management of whitewater rivers on public lands, and works with government agencies and other river users to achieve these goals.

SAFETY: AW promotes paddling safely, publishes reports on whitewater accidents, maintains a uniform national ranking system for whitewater rivers (the International Scale of Whitewater Difficulty) and publishes and disseminates the internationally-recognized American Whitewater Safety Code.

EDUCATION: AW shares information with the general public and the paddling community regarding

whitewater rivers, as well as river recreation, conservation, access, and safety. This is accomplished through our bi-monthly AW Journal, a monthly e-news, americanwhitewater.org, paddling events, educational events, and through direct communication with the press.

Together, AW staff, members, volunteers, and affiliate clubs can achieve our goals of conserving, protecting and restoring America's whitewater resources and enhancing opportunities to safely enjoy these wonderful rivers.

AW was incorporated under Missouri nonprofit corporation laws in 1961 and maintains its principal mailing address at PO Box 1540, Cullowhee, NC 28723; phone 1-866-BOAT-4-AW (1-866-262-8429). AW is tax exempt under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Service.



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Founded in 1954, American Whitewater is a national non-profit organization (Non-profit # 23-7083760) with a mission "to conserve and restore America's whitewater resources and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely." American Whitewater is a membership organization representing a broad diversity of individual whitewater enthusiasts, river conservationists, and more than 100 local paddling club affiliates across America. The organization is the primary advocate for the preservation and protection of whitewater rivers throughout the United States, and connects the interests of human-powered recreational river users with ecological and science-based data to achieve the goals within its mission. All rights to information contained in this publication are reserved.

EDITORIAL DISCLAIMER

The opinions expressed in the features and editorials of American Whitewater are those of the individual authors. They do not necessarily represent those of the Directors of American Whitewater or the editors of this publication. On occasion, American Whitewater publishes official organizational policy statements drafted and approved by the Board of Directors. These policy statements will be clearly identified.

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THE JOURNEY AHEAD

TRUTH IS, I'VE never been a huge fan of short days; I much prefer longer periods of sun. As much as I do enjoy the winter season, I miss the days when I can spend sunny evenings outside. Looking back at 2019, it seemed like a short day. The American Whitewater team packed in a ton of work. Some of that effort translated to new Wild and Scenic River designations for 621 miles of rivers and stream with the passage of the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act. We intend to build on this historic achievement to pass additional legislation that both protects wild rivers and enhances opportunities for the public to enjoy them.

The past year was also one of transition for our staff. In the southern Rockies we have a fresh team of committed river stewards working on issues that affect rivers in Colorado and surrounding states. They have been leaning in to address water supply shortfalls in the region and the way they affect flows in rivers that are important to our community. This team is young, enthusiastic, highly motivated, and thinking big. They are making a difference in the way western states look at water allocation challenges and the processes used in planning for the future.

We are also adding to the national team. Late in 2019 we hired Scott Harding as a Stewardship Assistant to provide additional capacity. Scott lives in northern California, on the banks of the Salmon River, and comes to American Whitewater with a wealth of experience researching, analyzing, and developing substantive responses to state and federal water management projects, regulatory proposals, and other processes.

As we move into the new year, we have real work to do that will fill the time ahead.

L to R: AW staff members Bethany Overfield, Mark Singleton, and Hattie Johnson at Gauley Fest 2019, Masons Branch take-out

In this issue of the *American Whitewater Journal*, staff highlight important initiatives for this year's Top Ten River Stewardship Issues on page 6. And, as the days get longer, staff at American Whitewater will be pushing for opportunities to reconnect rivers with paddlers, habitat, and local economies.

At the core of the American Whitewater River Stewardship Program is the understanding that conservation and healthy human-powered outdoor recreation are mutually dependent. Whitewater paddlers appreciate natural landscapes, and those special places need conservation-oriented paddlers to help preserve and protect these treasured resources.

Take care of your paddling and rivers will take care of you,



Mark Singleton, Executive Director

PS: If you happen to be looking for a way to deepen that connection with wild rivers, join me on the American Whitewater Rogue River trip on June 18-21, 2020. Thanks to support from Northwest Rafting Company, American Whitewater members have the opportunity to join AW staff on an exclusive four-day trip down Oregon's Rogue River. We invite you to come learn more about what we're up to while having a great time enjoying one of our nation's first Wild and Scenic Rivers. The trip is fully outfitted by Northwest Rafting Company with professional guides, exceptional food, transportation to and from the put-in and take-out, and all group equipment. Participants will have the option of bringing their own boat, renting a boat, or joining as a passenger on one of the rafts.





**AMERICAN
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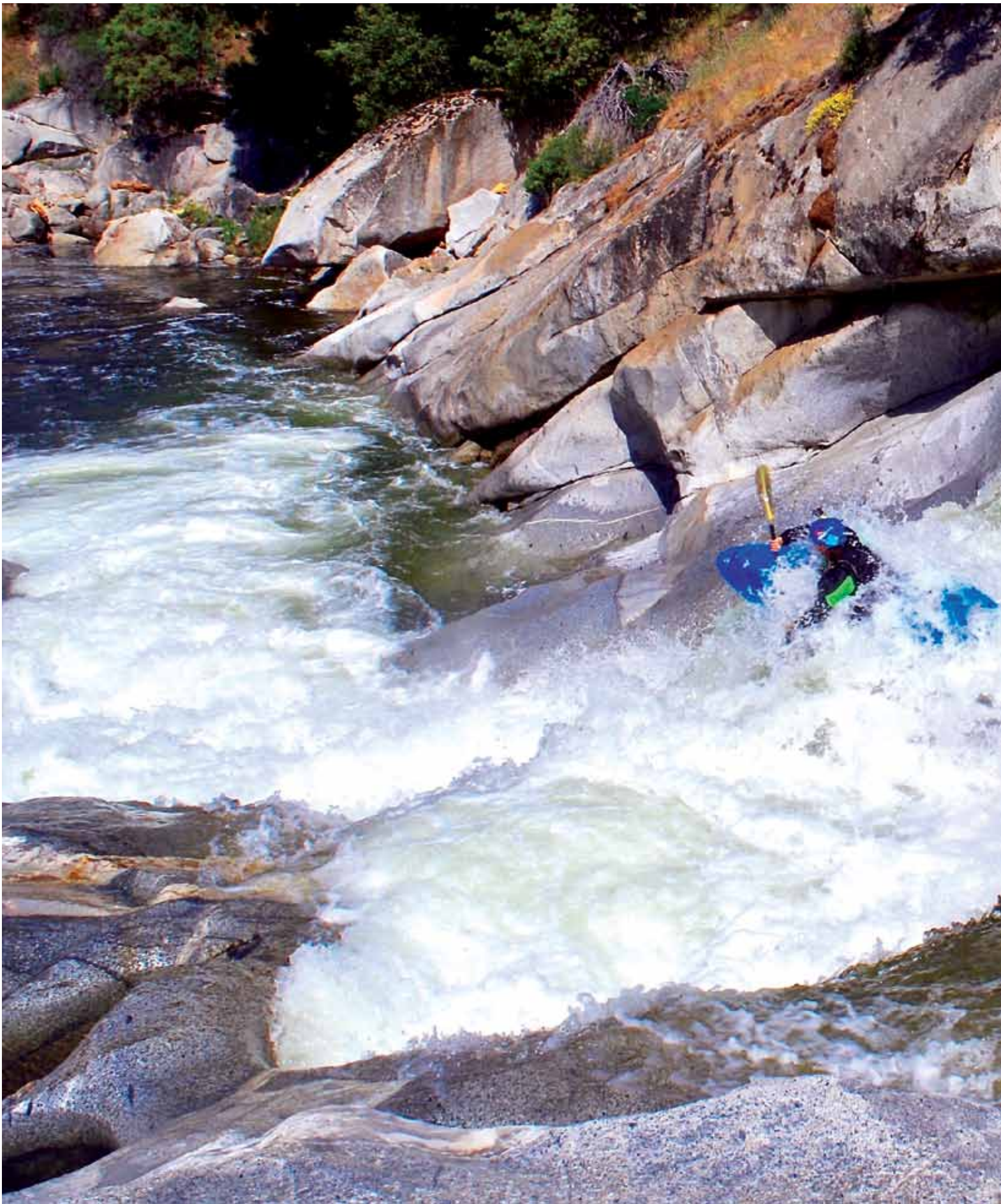
**TOP
10**

***RIVER STEWARDSHIP
ISSUES FOR 2020***

1. Defending the Clean Water Act

For over 40 years, the Clean Water Act has ensured that Americans have clean water to drink and that our rivers are safe for outdoor recreation. Americans recreate in the water—swimming, paddling, surfing, boating, fishing—4 BILLION times each year. Unfortunately, the EPA has taken a number of steps to significantly weaken the Clean Water Act over the past few years. In the fall of 2019, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) repealed the 2015 Clean Water Rule, which clarified which waters were under the jurisdiction of the Act. The rule protected the headwater streams boaters most often find themselves playing in. In 2020, the EPA will introduce a new rule to replace the Clean Water Rule and American Whitewater will engage directly in the process to represent boater interests. The EPA in 2019 also proposed new regulations that would weaken the ability of states to protect clean water below federally-licensed hydropower projects. Under the Clean Water Act, states must certify that these projects comply with state water quality standards. The proposed rules would make it virtually impossible for the states to conduct a meaningful review of the impact of these projects on environmental quality including recreation. In 2020, we'll continue to advocate for the EPA to not adopt this new rule and push back if they do. In addition to directly protecting the Clean Water Act so that we'll still be able to paddle in clean rivers and creeks and continue to secure whitewater releases below hydropower dams, American Whitewater is also partnering with Adventure Scientists starting in 2020 to help paddlers collect water quality data on our Wild and Scenic rivers. This project will lead to better standards and water quality on these special rivers thanks to paddler stewardship and a strong Clean Water Act.

Colorado River (UT) Photo by Evan Stafford





2. Forest Planning

American Whitewater is deeply involved in National Forest planning processes across the country and we have a number of major forest plans that will see significant movement in 2020. Forests in California, Idaho, Utah, Colorado, Wyoming, and North Carolina have planning processes that we'll engage with in 2020. Forest Planning offers a unique opportunity to secure Wild and Scenic protections for thousands of miles of streams through individual Forests' inventories of rivers and creeks for Wild and Scenic designation eligibility. In Colorado, we're working collaboratively with our partners at the Outdoor Alliance and other human powered recreation and conservation groups to ensure better river protections, focusing on Wild and Scenic eligibility, and also pushing for new Recommended Wilderness and recreation management areas on the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forests (GMUG). We're expecting to see a Draft Plan, and Wild and Scenic Eligibility Study for the GMUG, in the summer or fall of 2020. In California, during the assessment period for the Sierra and Sequoia National Forest management plans, American Whitewater identified 16 watersheds containing more than 228 river miles that have potential outstandingly remarkable values. This included the world class whitewater found on Dinkey Creek, the Middle Fork San Joaquin (lower half of the multi-day Devil's Postpile expedition run), and the main San Joaquin River. The final plans for these forests are due in 2020 and we will continue to engage in the objection period of the process to ensure that the plans thoroughly incorporate our public input.

Dinkey Creek (CA) Photo by Tracy Young

3. Hydropower Realignment

Hydropower is the oldest form of electric generation in the United States. Many hydropower projects across the country are well over 100 years old. In addition to the physical problems of aging infrastructure, many older hydropower projects face problematic economics as the increasing availability of wind and solar power reduce their usefulness and value. Many of these projects began as water infrastructure for mining or as consumptive water supply projects that added hydropower to offset costs. But in recent decades, these projects have been operated and maintained largely based on their hydropower value. With changing energy markets, the economics of individual projects have worsened, and many of these projects are no longer economically viable. American Whitewater is working with a wide array of state and federal stakeholders to develop a process to efficiently re-purpose or decommission obsolete projects in a manner that reduces economic uncertainty, protects the public interest, and helps to transition us into a new energy future, while protecting and restoring rivers.

Klamath River (CA) Photo by Thomas O'Keefe





4. Pacific Northwest Wild and Scenic

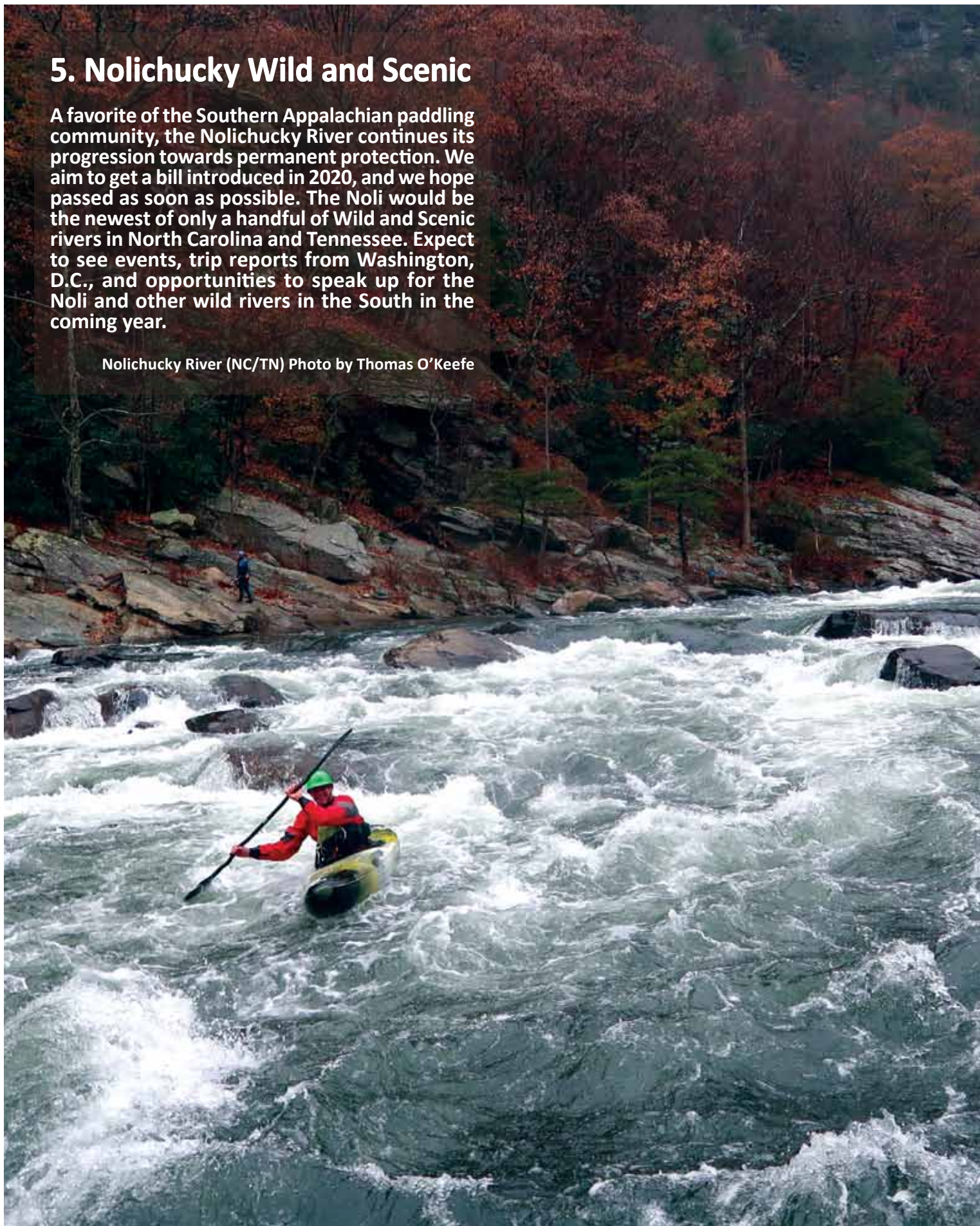
In the coming year, we are committed to making substantial progress on expanding the system of protected Wild and Scenic Rivers in the Pacific Northwest. In Washington State we are as close as we've ever been to permanently protecting the rivers of the Olympic Peninsula through a Wild Olympics bill. Following his successful effort last year to designate 256 miles of river in Oregon, Senator Wyden has called for nominations for the next package of Wild and Scenic rivers in Oregon. We have a goal of identifying more than 1,000 additional miles of river and we are already off to a good start with Senator Wyden's commitment to protect the Owyhee Canyonlands and Senator Merkley's commitment to protect the Smith River Headwaters.

Owyhee River (OR) Photo by Thomas O'Keefe

5. Nolichucky Wild and Scenic

A favorite of the Southern Appalachian paddling community, the Nolichucky River continues its progression towards permanent protection. We aim to get a bill introduced in 2020, and we hope passed as soon as possible. The Noli would be the newest of only a handful of Wild and Scenic rivers in North Carolina and Tennessee. Expect to see events, trip reports from Washington, D.C., and opportunities to speak up for the Noli and other wild rivers in the South in the coming year.

Nolichucky River (NC/TN) Photo by Thomas O'Keefe



6. Gila and San Francisco Wild and Scenic

American Whitewater is working with a coalition of local conservationists, recreationists, business owners, and others to advocate for over 400 new Wild and Scenic river miles on the Gila and San Francisco rivers and their key tributaries. In addition to outstanding ecological, wildlife, geological, and cultural values, the Gila and San Francisco rivers offer unique wilderness paddling opportunities in New Mexico. With the introduction of the bill on the immediate horizon, the focus in 2020 will be on building more regional and national support to set it up for success in both chambers of Congress and see it through into law.

Gila River (NM) Photo by Evan Stafford

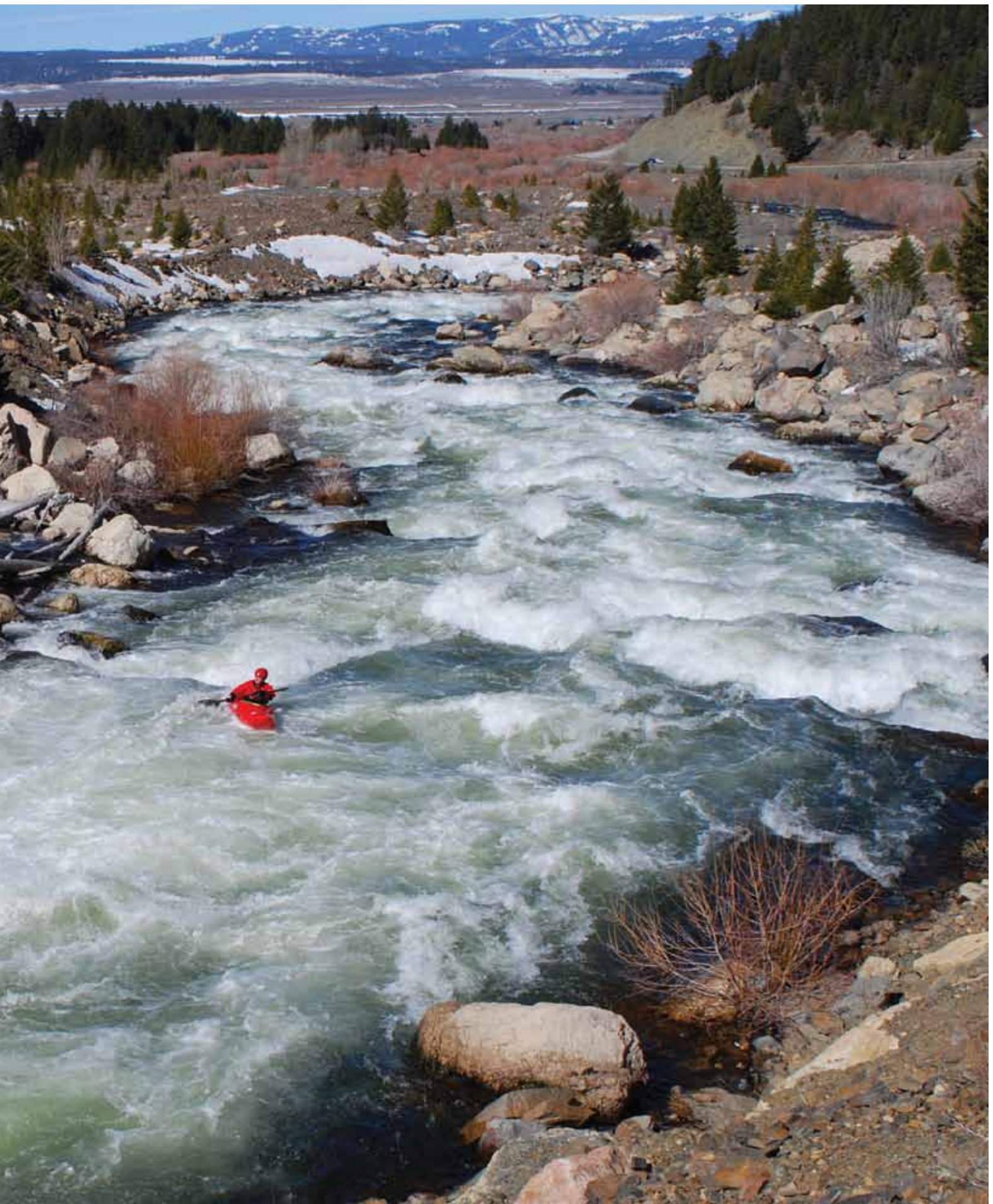


7. Montana Wild and Scenic

We expect our decade-long effort to designate several hundred miles of Wild and Scenic Rivers in Montana to hit the national stage in 2020. As of press-time, we anticipate the introduction of new legislation that will designate several hundred miles of rivers north of Yellowstone National Park. Many are great whitewater runs like the Gallatin, Madison, Smith, and Boulder, just to name a few. While these rivers are likely to move toward designation first, we'll keep advocating for rivers in the Flathead and Missoula areas to follow quickly in subsequent legislation. Getting a bill introduced is largely a task for residents and politicians in the state, but getting it passed through Congress requires river-lovers from across the United States to contact their representatives with messages of support. We'll need all of our community to rally behind the gorgeous rivers of Montana.

Madison River (MT) Photo by John Ward





8. Access to Our Rivers

American Whitewater is working on protecting and restoring river access around the country. In New Mexico we are a part of a coalition of paddlers, anglers, hunters, and concerned citizens interested in defending the right and privilege to enjoy public waters flowing through both public and private lands. With our recent publication of the River Access Planning Guide, developed in partnership with the River Management Society and the National Park Service, we will be providing training opportunities for land managers and sharing our experience in river access design and planning. In California, through the hydropower relicensing process with Southern California Edison, we are working on securing river access points to the Kaweah River and in northern California we're working to ensure recreation access post-dam removals on the Klamath River.

Clackamas River (OR) Photo by Thomas O'Keefe

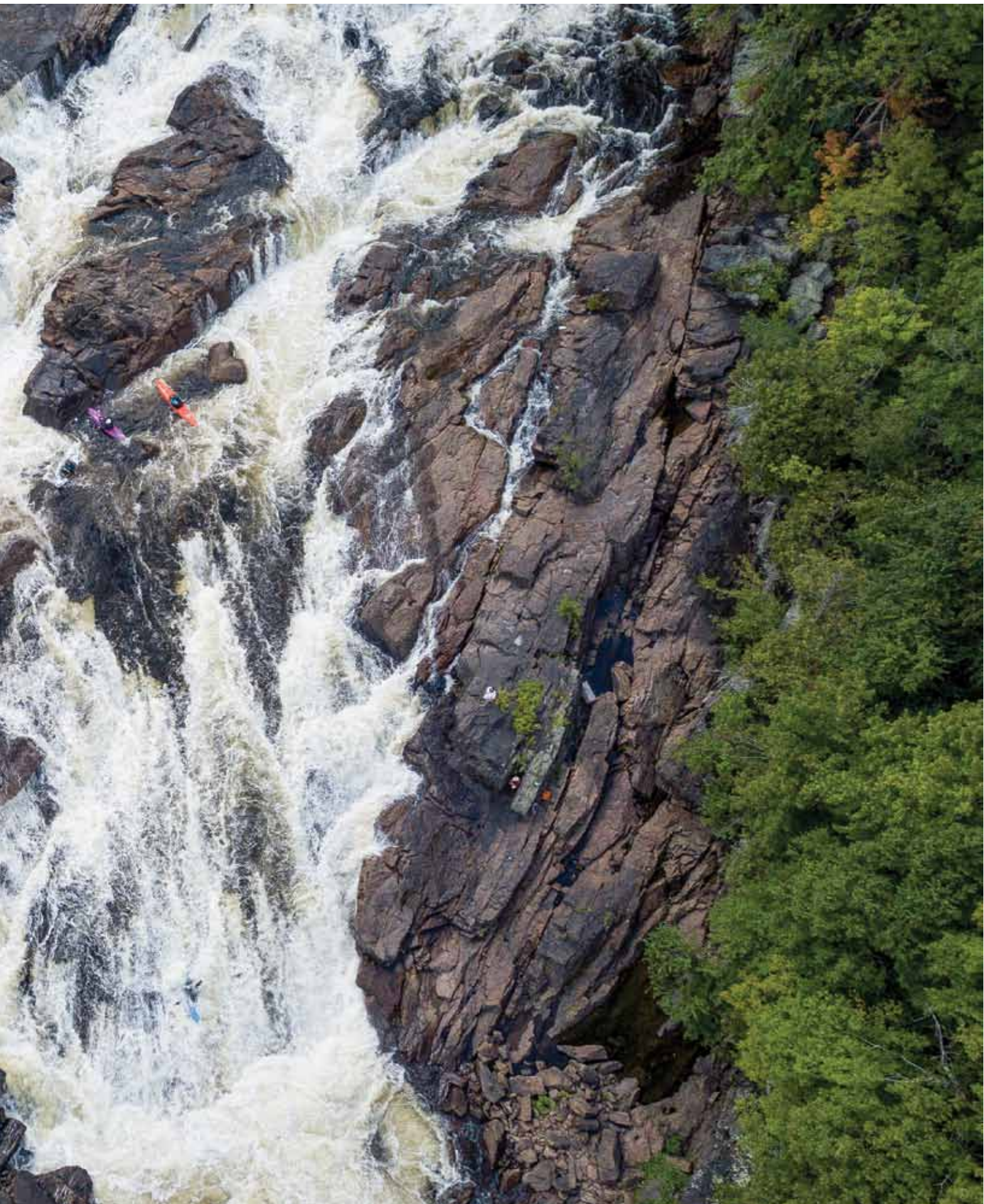




9. Adirondacks Restoration

American Whitewater is launching the Adirondacks River Restoration Campaign to restore and improve river flows for aquatic ecosystems and to improve recreation opportunities across the region. Over the next 10 years, more than 50 hydroelectric dams in New York are scheduled to get new 30-to 50-year federal licenses, creating a once-in-a-generation opportunity to improve river conditions. In the Black River Basin alone, there are more than 20 hydropower dams on the Black, Beaver, and Moose rivers that will begin the relicensing process next year. American Whitewater will need to participate with other partners to mitigate project impacts and achieve river restoration goals. Through these efforts, we will restore flows to dewatered river reaches, improve existing flows, enhance public access, and benefit communities throughout the region.

Beaver River (NY) Photo by Sarah Ruhlen



10. Cache la Poudre River Flows

In 2015, Colorado completed its state water plan, providing a roadmap to solve water issues. To date, American Whitewater has been involved in Stream Management Planning (SMP) processes around the state identifying flow preferences and baseline recreational use. Our assessments are being used to protect existing uses on the river and to also expand recreation in more remote and rural parts of the state. One result of these SMP and other basin-wide planning processes will be a better understanding of the cost of Water Plan implementation. The initial Plan identified a \$100M annual funding gap for water issues. American Whitewater has been working with a diverse group of environmental, conservation, agricultural, and other organizations to fill that gap in funding. We successfully advocated for the passage of Proposition DD, new legislation designed to help fill this funding gap through a tax on sports betting. American Whitewater has used Water Plan funding through a State grant to fill data gaps in streamflow needs for recreation in the Colorado, Gunnison, Yampa, and many other drainages. In 2020, we're excited to focus our flow protection work on the Cache la Poudre River. Despite being Colorado's only designated Wild and Scenic River, the Poudre is not without its threats. With the direction of the Water Plan as well as local support, we'll work to keep the canyon clear of dams and push for healthy recreational flows through the newly completed whitewater park in town.

Poudre River Whitewater Park (CO) Photo by Evan Stafford



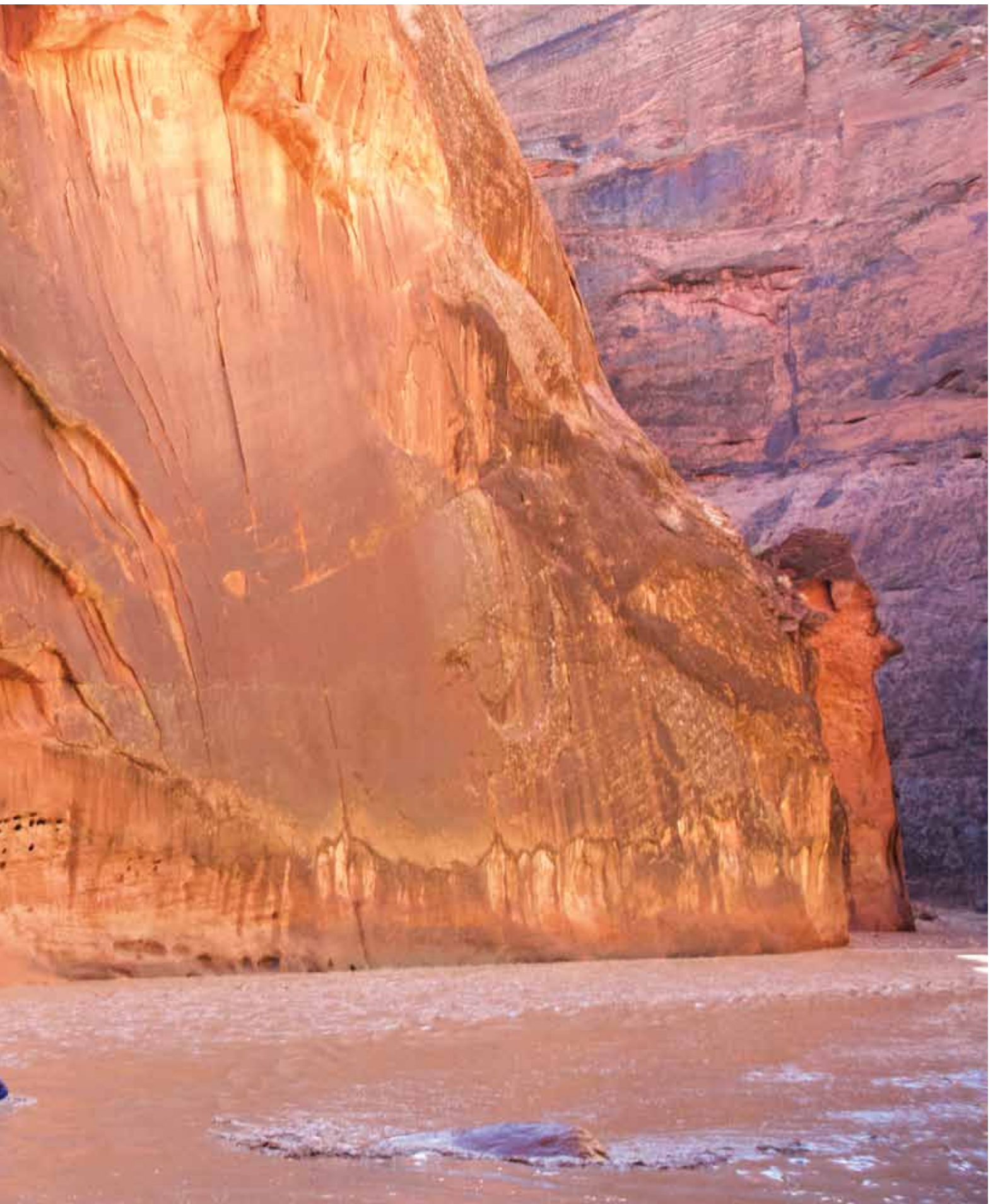
Top Ten 2019 Update

Last March, the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act was signed into law, designating 621 new miles of Wild and Scenic Rivers and 1.3 million acres of Wilderness. This legislation was the culmination of decades of stewardship work by American Whitewater, and it packaged a number of our top ten stewardship issues from 2019 and made them law. The bill protected public lands and rivers important to whitewater paddlers including in the Rogue River region (OR), the San Rafael Swell (UT), and Green River (UT), and also secured permanent reauthorization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

We also enjoyed the first-ever scheduled whitewater releases on the New River Dries, engaged in the restoration of flows for rivers in New York, and moved bills forward for Wild and Scenic designations on the Olympic Peninsula (WA), North Cascades (WA), Montana Headwaters, and the Nolichucky River (NC/TN). We analyzed flows in numerous drainages for state stream management plans in Colorado to ensure recreation is fairly and fully represented. We submitted comments, and continued to battle for access on the Slab Creek segment of the South Fork American River (CA) and chaired the 80-member Upper Colorado Wild and Scenic Alternative Management Plan Stakeholder Group, where we continue working to preserve and enhance the paddling and angling experiences from Gore Canyon to Glenwood Springs (CO). Overall we made significant progress on our Top Ten issues from 2019—but, as usual, we continue to play the long game at American Whitewater, as years, and sometimes decades, of work go into river stewardship success. In light of this, you'll notice that a few of these issues remain in our Top Ten for 2020 and will continue to need your support and engagement in the coming year.

Photo by Mike Curiak







PROTECTING WHITEWATER BOATING UNDER THE CLEAN WATER ACT

BY BOB NASDOR

Green River (VT)
Photo by Scott Gilbert

IN MANY PARTS of the country, scheduled releases from hydropower dams provide some of the best opportunities to enjoy the rivers we love. Last November, the Vermont Supreme Court issued a first-of-its-kind decision, *In re Morrisville Hydroelectric Project Water Quality*, in our appeal of the state's elimination of all scheduled whitewater boating opportunities on the Green River. The Court recognized that whitewater boating on the Green is protected under state water quality standards and upheld the right of whitewater boaters to enjoy scheduled releases under a future federal hydropower license.

While the Vermont decision is great news for whitewater boaters, recent efforts to roll back Clean Water Act protections threaten to strip states of their ability to protect water quality from harm by hydropower dams. Taken together, these efforts highlight our two-pronged strategy

to defend the authority of states to protect clean water while simultaneously working to ensure that states use their authority to protect access to and enjoyment of recreation.

Hydropower Relicensing

For the past three decades, American Whitewater has advocated for scheduled releases from hydropower dams licensed by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). FERC licenses hydropower projects every 30-50 years under the Federal Power Act, and we have successfully advocated for scheduled releases at scores of hydropower projects throughout the country, including rivers like the Deerfield (MA), Cheoah (NC), Bear (ID), Feather (CA), Chelan (WA), and Beaver (NY).

Securing scheduled releases for whitewater boating through the FERC relicensing process is usually a 5- to 10-year process involving controlled-flow studies to

determine minimum acceptable and optimal boating flows, an environmental assessment of project impacts under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and a state certification that the project complies with water quality standards under the Clean Water Act. Hydropower licenses contain articles or conditions requiring that projects operate in a manner that protects, mitigates, and enhances the environment, including aquatic and terrestrial habitat, recreation, and cultural and historical resources.

Early efforts to secure scheduled releases often resulted from settlement agreements such as those on the Deerfield River in Massachusetts and the Moose, Beaver, and Raquette River in New York. Settlement agreements have become less common in recent years as the energy industry increasingly regards the FERC and the EPA as more industry friendly. This shift presents a challenge for advocates seeking to protect

STEWARDSHIP

rivers below and around hydropower dams from harmful environmental impacts.

River advocates increasingly look to the states for the protection of water quality under a provision of the Clean Water Act requiring state certification that projects comply with water quality standards before FERC can issue licenses. These standards include the requirement that the project protect designated and existing uses including recreation, a use specifically protected under the Clean Water Act.

Significance of Vermont Supreme Court Decision

The *In re Morrisville* decision represents a ground-breaking decision by a state Supreme Court to recognize that whitewater boating is a protected use under state water quality standards. The Court also made clear the state agency responsible for issuing a water quality certification failed to meet its burden to show that scheduled releases would harm water quality. The Court upheld the lower court decision requiring the project to provide three annual scheduled whitewater boating releases.

The decision is precedent-setting in Vermont and will help us advocate for scheduled releases on current and future FERC hydropower licenses in Vermont, such as those on the Connecticut and Misisquoi rivers. Neighboring states like Massachusetts, New York and others have multiple projects with hydropower re-licensing on the near horizon and will similarly issue water quality certifications over the coming years. Our hope is that this precedent-setting decision in Vermont will lead them to carefully consider measures to protect whitewater boating. This ruling provides a road map for American Whitewater to present a similar legal challenge if and when states fail to protect whitewater recreation. We're committed to

ensuring that states recognize and protect recreational use requirements in their water quality standards.

Efforts to Weaken the Clean Water Act

Recent developments in Washington present a threat to the ability of states to protect water quality under the Clean Water Act. Last year, the D.C. Circuit of the Court of Appeals ruled in *Hoopa Valley Tribe v. FERC* that states waive their ability under §401 of the Clean Water Act to require that a federally-licensed energy project comply with state water quality standards when they delay issuing a water quality certificate for more than one year. This decision, and its broad interpretation by FERC, threatens the ability of states to protect their water quality at dozens of other pending federally-permitted hydropower and pipeline projects.

Simultaneously, the EPA has recently proposed new regulations that would fundamentally weaken the ability of the states to assure that energy projects comply with water quality standards. If adopted, these rules would limit the ability of the states to obtain necessary information, limit the time for the states to review a project's environmental impact, and limit the ability of the states to require

that projects comply with the water quality standards that protect environmental quality from the negative impacts of project operations.

Future of Hydropower Advocacy

American Whitewater and many of its partners are working hard to protect the Clean Water Act from ongoing efforts to weaken its vital protections. We have filed legal briefs asking courts to uphold the ability of states to protect clean water and recreation opportunities. We have walked the halls of Congress to meet with our representatives to educate them on this threat to the Clean Water Act. We have met with FERC commissioners and staff to urge them to support rather than undermine the vital role that the states play in protecting water quality in hydropower relicensing. We have adopted a climate change policy and are advocating for a strategy to realign hydropower to meet 21st century energy demands. Our hope is that these efforts, combined with voices rising up from our community will turn back this assault on the Clean Water Act and the states' crucial role in protecting our rivers from the impacts of hydropower development, including impacts to whitewater recreation.

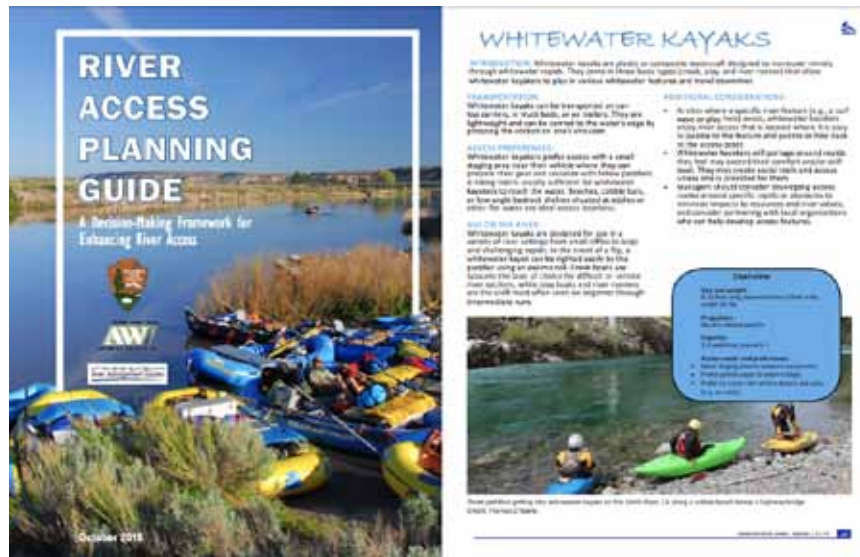
AW's Bob Nasdor at Congressional Briefing on Proposed EPA Clean Water Act Rules.



STEWARDSHIP

AMERICAN WHITEWATER RELEASES NEW “RIVER ACCESS PLANNING GUIDE”

BY EVAN STAFFORD



IN A JOINT project with the River Management Society, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), US Forest Service (USFS), and National Park Service (NPS), American Whitewater has published the “River Access Planning Guide.” American Whitewater is regularly called upon to assist with river access projects. Some are a spectacular success, while others are a disappointment. Over the past three years, American Whitewater has been working with NPS Conservation and Outdoor Recreation Programs to better understand how success comes about when a river access project is developed and provide guidance for a step-by-step process that leads to projects that meet user needs and are sustainable both ecologically and financially.

The “River Access Planning Guide” is a resource for planners, river managers, and users as they design new river access sites, improve existing access, or integrate river access into larger infrastructure projects. The information provided in the guide is intended to provide advice and direction for those involved in river access development

and can help facilitate related conversations among agency staff, nonprofits, decision makers, contractors, volunteers, and the public at large. These guidelines have now been published as both a printed book and an online document that can be referenced during all phases of river access planning, design, and management. Over the past few years the National Park Service and partners have supported a number of projects that address design and planning for waterway access. The “River Access Planning Guide” is a new component in this suite of resources.

Access points along rivers are the gateways to experiencing them. The “River Access Planning Guide” outlines a process to provide for a variety of high-quality recreational experiences while also protecting resources. It represents an approach to site selection and design to best meet the needs of visitors seeking to enjoy recreation on and in the water. The Special Report on Paddlesports found that paddlesports continue to grow, with over 21.7 million Americans (about 7.4 percent of the population) participating in

2014. This represents an increase of more than 3 million participants compared to 2010. Increasing access to river recreation opportunities on public lands is a top priority for American Whitewater, and the “River Access Planning Guide” aligns closely with the NPS and the US Department of the Interior’s goal to enhance access to recreation by supporting infrastructure that creates recreation opportunities on public lands and waterways, making this a great and fitting collaboration.

Having published the “River Access Planning Guide,” American Whitewater is now working with the National Park Service and River Management Society to provide training opportunities. We recently completed our first successful training on the Ozark National Scenic Riverways and look forward to a number of other trainings in 2020. The River Access Planning Guide and additional resources for river access planning can be found on the River Management Society website: <https://rms.memberclicks.net/recreation-management>.

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THE GREAT CHETCO ROCK RACE OF 2019

BY ELLIE FRIEDMANN

The Chetco's unreal clarity on display
Photo by Zachary Collier

HAVE YOU EVER participated in a River Rock Race? All you need are friends, a heavy rock (each), and a designated referee. Setting is key: make sure you pick a river section without too much current but deep enough that your head is covered. At your referee's nod, start lugging your rock toward the finish line. With the rock weighing you down, run as fast as you can on the river bottom. First finisher is first to drop the rock and breathe. Bonus points for goggles.

Except, on the Chetco River, you don't need goggles. In Southwestern Oregon, the mountainous land between the Rogue River and the border with California contains some of the most pristine and clear water in the state. Known as the Kalmiopsis, the area serves as headwaters for three amazing National Wild and Scenic Rivers and their tributaries: the Illinois, the Chetco, and the North Fork Smith. Formed

from the ocean's crust, rock's mineral imbalances discourage thick vegetation, creating clean runoff and a desert feel even though the area can get 160 inches of rain a year.

In and among the Kalmiopsis, I can speak best for The Chetco River. The Chetco begins in the Kalmiopsis Wilderness and makes its way to the ocean South of the Rogue River. It is not for the faint of heart. Besides the 10-mile hike in, the Upper Chetco requires a healthy mix of shoving, pushing, portaging, scooting, and squeezing through narrow spots. On the flip side, the rapids also hold fun drops, technical moves, unique features, and about 15 miles of near-continuous whitewater. The water is pristine; photos of the Chetco make boats look like they are floating in midair. This area is a great candidate to host the International Rock Race finals, if such a great day ever comes.

In fact, the Kalmiopsis is full of rivers just like this. From the challenging whitewater on the Illinois to the gorges on the North Fork Smith, multiple Kalmiopsis rivers are considered jewels. Fortunately, the Chetco and its related rivers are protected through the Wilderness Area and a mining withdrawal that includes some areas not within wilderness. Unfortunately, a few of the main tributaries to the Illinois and North Fork Smith are not protected and as a result are subject to new mining claims. We call this area the South Kalmiopsis

While lesser known, the South Kalmiopsis tributary headwaters are also incredibly special as well as boatable. The banks of Rough and Ready Creek (tributary

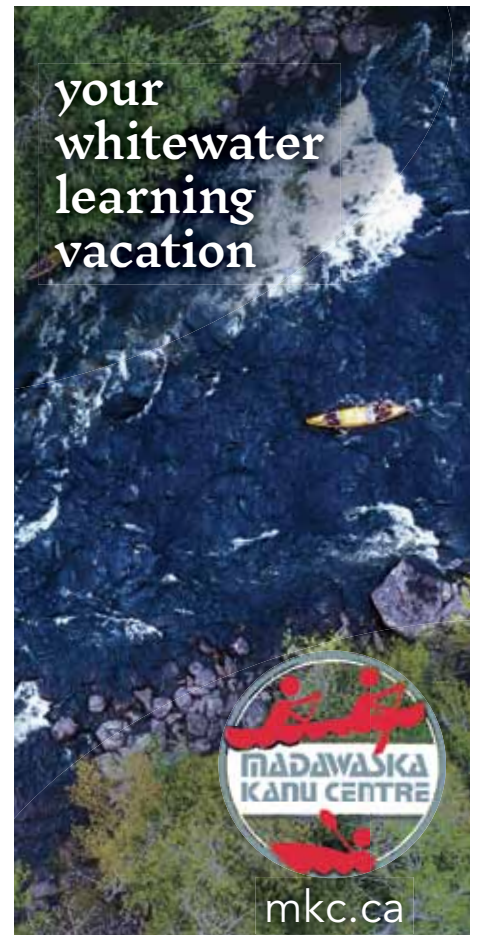
Opposite: More of the Chetco's fabled beauty.

Photos by Zachary Collier

WILDERNESS WHITEWATER



In the midst of appreciating the scenery, don't forget about the whitewater!
Photo by Zachary Collier



WILDERNESS WHITEWATER



WYDEN WILD AND SCENIC NOMINATION PROCESS

THE CHETCO, ILLINOIS, and North Fork Smith Rivers are designated Wild and Scenic Rivers but many of their tributaries that form the Kalmiopsis Headwaters are not yet protected. Recently Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR) stepped up with the Smith River National Recreation Area Expansion Act (S. 2875) that would protect Baldface Creek and other key tributaries of the North Fork Smith that originate in Oregon. Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR) made his own commitment to a statewide river protection bill and opened a nomination process to designate new Wild and Scenic Rivers in Oregon. We believe many of the headwater streams in the Kalmiopsis would make worthy candidates. We encourage the paddling community to consider nominating tributaries of the Illinois River like Rough and Ready Creek, Josephine/Canyon Creeks, Silver Creek, and Indigo Creek. These tributaries have outstandingly remarkable values for recreation as destinations for backcountry exploration by whitewater kayaks, as well as unique botanical resources endemic to the Kalmiopsis region. We have made it easy with an online form available at <http://bit.ly/OregonWildandScenic19>.

Racers, judge, rocks...go!
Photo by Zachary Collier

to the Illinois River) contain the largest concentration of rare plants in Oregon. Baldface Creek (tributary to the North Fork Smith) is so clean it is considered the water quality standard. Canyon Creek/Josephine Creek (tributary to the Illinois River) provides 17% of the Illinois flow and is a salmon haven. Because they are considered headwaters reaches, any mining effects on these streams will cascade through the entire watershed, no matter if the downstream reaches were previously protected.

As these mining claims develop, consider asking your congressman—especially if you live in Oregon—for a permanent mining withdrawal. Keep yourself up to date on what is going on by visiting kalmiopsiswild.org. As the climate changes we need to reserve what clear and cold water we have left. We also need to preserve pristine habitat for our salmon, who perform the truly heroic annual Rock Race in the Kalmiopsis.

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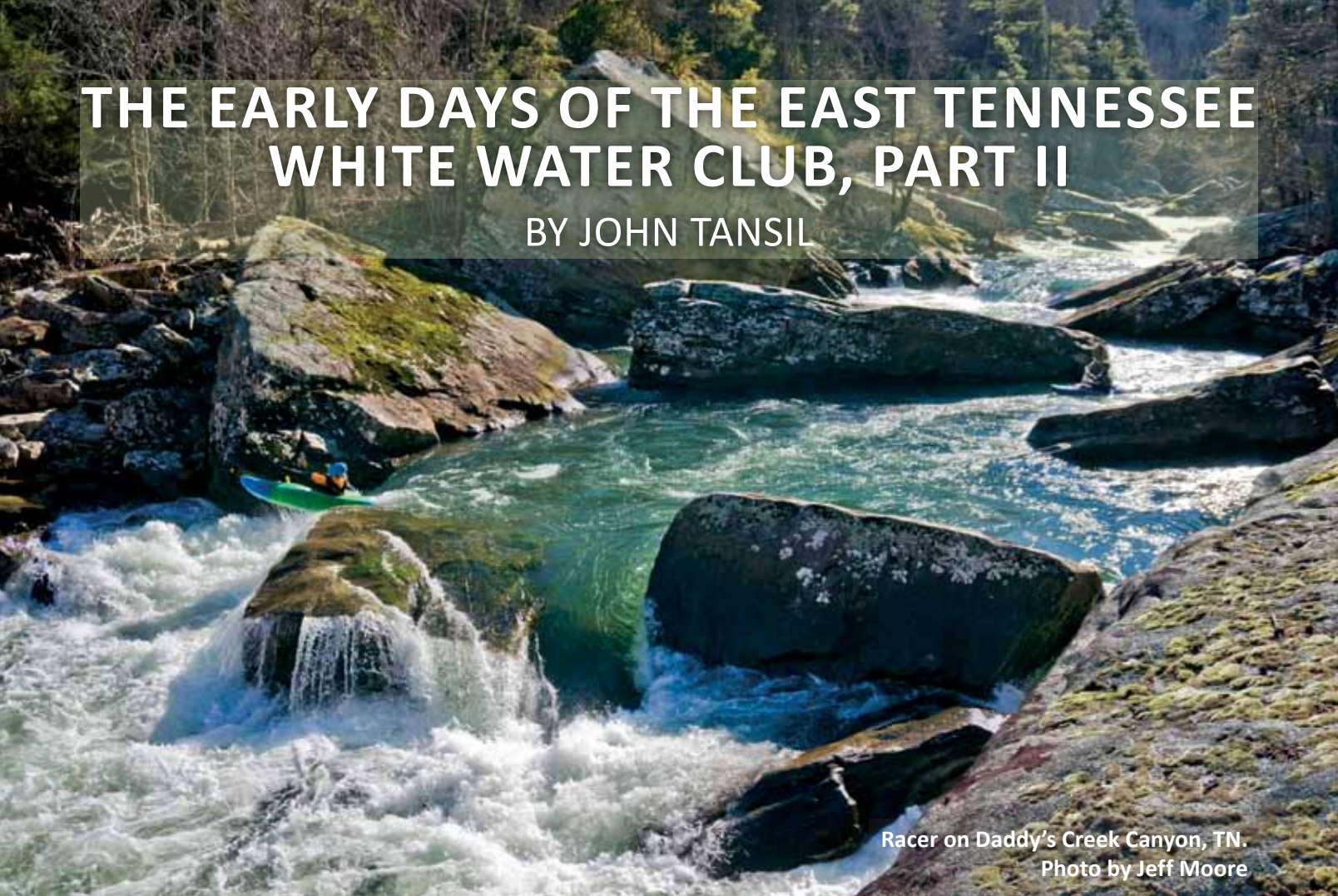
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THE EARLY DAYS OF THE EAST TENNESSEE WHITE WATER CLUB, PART II

BY JOHN TANSIL



Racer on Daddy's Creek Canyon, TN.
Photo by Jeff Moore

THIS IS A story about early history of paddling on the Cumberland Plateau with the East Tennessee White Water Club, the first whitewater club in the state of Tennessee. ETWWC was formed in 1962 in Oak Ridge, TN and it immediately became an American Whitewater (AW) affiliate club with listing in the 1962-2 *AW Journal*. This article has been split in half to better fit our formatting. If you missed the first part of the story, please check out the September/October 2019 issue of *American Whitewater*.

"Let's go run Potter's Falls!" (first waterfall descent in *American Whitewater Journal*)

Potter's Falls on Crooked Fork Creek (TN) was first run in January 1973 by Mark Hall, Monte Meals, and Ken Cooper. I know because I was there screaming and whooping at them as they made multiple runs. The day had started off with a benign Class II-III run on the beautiful Emory River Canyon (TN). It was a nice day and the

four of us were enjoying the river and the company. I was having a good day... for me that translated to "no pins, no swims."

On the shuttle someone casually said "Let's go run Potter's Falls!" I said "What's that?" and they responded "It's a waterfall not far from Wartburg. Our club members have been thinking about running it for some time." I said "Do I have to run it?" and they said "Only if you want to." It became clear that Potter's was, in modern language, a Park 'n Huck.

Our two cars got to the Potter's Falls parking area and immediately Mark got his C-1 down and disappeared. As Kenny and Monte were getting ready, a primal scream came from the river out-of-sight and we knew that Mark was releasing pent-up energy after his successful run. It irritated Kenny that Mark hadn't waited for them and he grumbled "He's always doing stuff like that." Soon enough Monte and Kenny followed suit and then they were all basking

in the glory of going over a waterfall in their boats, something which their other whitewater friends had rarely done!

News of the run traveled fast, and before long multiple paddlers in decked boats had launched from the brink. One of these paddlers was Martin Begun who brought along his brother, a photographer. Begun sent pictures of his run to *American Whitewater* and they were published in the Summer 1973 *Journal* issue. After being chastised by the AW Safety Chairman as a "daredevil," Begun defended his actions in the May/June 1974 issue and published some more pictures.

The publication of whitewater boats running a waterfall had an impact on boaters in the East and the Midwest. Dan Demaree and

Opposite: Martin Begun on the Nantahala NC above Nantahala Falls (Lesser Wesser) in 1973.

Photo by Fred Young

HISTORY OF WHITEWATER

Jim Snyder, two young raft guides on the Upper Yough, were influenced by Begun's pictures and planned to run the Yough's Ohiopyle Falls in 1973 (see the video: <https://vimeo.com/238817658>). Their run had to be aborted after Dan got stuck in a hole in the lead-in rapid. It was left to Rob Lesser from Idaho and Jon Reagan from Maryland to get the first descent of Ohiopyle Falls later in 1973.

Mark Hall added to his waterfall first descents in 1975 at the nearby Stinging Fork Falls. He was also the first to run Abram's Falls in the Smokies, where he was joined by Fred Young. Fred must have gotten addicted to waterfalls from paddling with ETWWC since back in his home Midwest, he got the first descent of Illgen Falls on the Baptism River (MN).

It might be argued that the race to run steep waterfalls began with the 1973 pictures of Potter's Falls in *American Whitewater*. Who knows? All that can be said for sure is that adventuresome paddlers from other



The author paddling in the St Francis (MO) race about 50 years after his future wife paddled in the first race.

Photo by Ellen Wentz



HISTORY OF WHITEWATER

parts of the country wanted to emulate what ETWWC paddlers first did on the Cumberland Plateau.

“When the water reaches the trash can, we’re moving to higher ground!” (Obed/Emory Flood of Memorial Day 1973)

On Monday, 28 May 1973 (Memorial Day) the USGS gage for the Emory River at Oakdale peaked at 170,000 cfs. Since the rain had come mostly at night, potential paddlers were unaware of just how flooded the rivers were.

Blissfully ignorant, I pulled into the boater parking lot in Oak Ridge. There was only one other car there! Well, I thought, it was a holiday and a lot of people were with their families. The lone paddler was Robert Humphries, who had taken over the job as

President of ETWWC from Reid Gryder. We discussed options for paddling and decided to drive into Catoosa since we knew that Reid was camping with his family at Devil’s Breakfast Table on Daddy’s Creek. Robert had a family also but he wanted to get in at least one day of paddling.

On the road from Oak Ridge to Wartburg, we both observed flooded fields and creeks from our cars. However, the magnitude of the flood didn’t hit home until we crossed the Obed/Emory at Nemo Bridge and noticed drift wood on the bridge. The river had peaked in the night at some level over the truss bridge but was now a few feet below the bridge!

As we were driving into Catoosa, we met Reid and his family coming out. Reid’s voice was deep and animated and he was at his

best telling river stories. He said “It rained and rained and Daddy’s Creek starting coming up.” He finally told the family “When the water reaches the trash can, we’re moving to higher ground!” Reid said they had a sleepless night and had packed up early to go back home in Oak Ridge.

After the Gryders left, Robert and I discussed boating options and finally decided to paddle from Lavender Bridge on White Creek to Jett Bridge on Clear Creek. This usually benign run at flood level was scary to me and I told Robert that. He simply said “Follow me and you’ll be OK.” We got to the confluence of White Creek with Clear Creek only to discover that Waltman Ford Bridge (aka Barnett Bridge) had been washed away by the flood!



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Colorado River, Grand Canyon. | Photo: Evan Stafford

For the rest of the run on Clear Creek, I fully expected to look downstream and see remnants of Barnett Bridge spanning the river. By the time we reached our takeout at Jett Bridge, I was exhausted. In truth we hadn't paddled that much but the nervous anticipation of "what's around the corner" just physically drained me.

"It's the Watauga and you need a roll"

Late in the Spring of 1973, the ETWWC planned a trip to the Nolichucky and Watauga Rivers. I loved the Nolichucky but the Watauga was an unknown to me. When I probed my friend Monte Meals for information about the Watauga, his response was "It's the Watauga and you need a roll." Monte was always polite to me and this was his way of saying "The Watauga is serious whitewater and you need a combat roll when you flip and you will flip!" I had been practicing my roll in a pool and could successfully roll if I opened my eyes underwater to see the angle of the active blade...like that was really going to happen in whitewater!

We had a group of seven on the trip: Reid Gryder, Robert Humphries, Martin Begun, Monte Meals, Ken Cooper, Mark Hall, and me. Everyone else was good at reading water and had a combat roll. We were almost evenly divided between C-1s and K-1s. I always liked paddling with C-1ers. They're the SUVs of whitewater since they sit higher in the water and can see features before kayakers.

Top: David Bachor on Piney River TN.

Photo by Jeff Moore

Middle: Whitewater racing is a significant part of the sport. On the left are C-2 paddlers Charlie Seaman and daughter Linda Seaman at the first St Francis (MO) race in 1968.

Photo by John Niebling &

Linda Seaman Tansil

Bottom: Steve Krajewski on the Caney Fork (TN).

Photo by Jeff Moore



HISTORY OF WHITEWATER

We ran the Nolichucky the first day and I managed to low-brace my way down the whole run. I don't think my paddle was ever vertical since I was yet to learn the Duffek stroke. "Playing the river" at that point in my boating career was unthinkable. My successful Nolichucky run gave me false confidence for the Watauga.

We camped in the area, and the next day did a shuttle and launched at the bridge on Guy Ford Road. None of the group had done the run before. Someone said "The river looks low," but we were there to boat. And just like my disaster the previous year on Daddy's Creek, the low water was probably the reason I wasn't seriously injured.

I soon learned the Watauga was continuous whitewater with one drop after another and little time to recover. I was trying to

emulate the other paddlers but they had skills beyond mine, which were only Class II-III. When we got to Hydro, most of the group had already run it, leaving the rest of us in an eddy at the top to figure out the route. Characteristically, Mark charged out of the eddy, over the lip of the drop and Kenny said "He's over!" then said, "He rolled up!"

I'm not sure how, or even if, I ran Hydro. What I am sure about is the next few miles of the river seemed like an endless rock jumble with some routes unrunnable. By the time we got to Stateline Falls, I had one successful roll, several swims, and was very tired from dumping my boat and dragging it over wet rocks. Our group had collected in an eddy close to the lip of the falls. I'm not really sure what happened next but suddenly I was upside down, then I was

swimming, and then I was in the current headed for the brink of the falls. Just as my boat disappeared over the falls, I grabbed onto a rock sticking out of the water. My boating buddies were hollering at me the whole time but that rock was my friend and I was wrapped around it like a folded aluminum canoe!

For the next several minutes, I was prostrate on the rock while coming to my senses. Finally, I pried myself loose from the savior rock and carefully made my way over to river left shore. All the time my friends were hollering instructions, but I was on a mission to (a) get to shore and (b) not lose my footing and get washed over Stateline Falls. After completing my mission, I retrieved my boat from the base of the falls but I was in no hurry to return to the river. I had to be "talked back into my

Kemper Begley on the Caney Fork (TN)
Photo by Jeff Moore





Jamie Smith on the Piney River (TN).
Photo by Jeff Moore

boat" because I'd had enough whitewater for the day and they told me we had to run a couple of other drops still.

At the take-out, I asked the group not to tell my girlfriend (at the time) about my "Watauga experience." Reid, with a twinkle in his eye, said "Tell your girlfriend? I'm telling EVERYBODY!" And he did.

It turned out that I couldn't hide the Watauga experience. As I was flailing around trying to not go over Stateline Falls, I kicked an underwater rock and broke my big toe. The MD at Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) gave me a wooden shoe to wear and people could hear me coming before they ever saw me. For the rest of my (short) time at ORNL, I had to explain to people, "I kicked a rock trying to rescue myself from going over a waterfall."

Goodbye Tennessee, Hello Missouri

After living in east Tennessee for ten years, I moved to southeast Missouri in summer 1973 to take a teaching job. I didn't realize it at the time, but Missouri has a wonderful whitewater river called the Saint Francis.

We had a lot of rain on Thanksgiving weekend and I loaded my boat and headed to the Saint hoping to meet new people. The river was flooded and the take-out was inaccessible, so I headed up the hill to Silvermines Campground and discovered a group of Missouri paddlers. We probed each other for a while: "What's your name, where are you from, what rivers have you paddled?"—the usual questions that are asked when paddlers meet.

When they heard I had moved to Missouri from East Tennessee, they assumed I was a good paddler and invited me to join them down the flooded St. Francis. At the end of the day after watching me swim twice, they realized I was still low on the "whitewater learning curve." The second time I swam, I was rescued by a young woman named Linda Seaman, who was a good paddler. Hmmmm...that had never happened in East Tennessee! After paddling with Linda for a while, we dated and eventually married in 1975.

A sad event shocked members of ETWWC in 1974. Martin Begun, an outstanding young C-1 paddler from Oak Ridge, took

his own life in the spring of that year. Charlie Walbridge wrote an obituary in the 1974-5 *AW Journal* describing Martin as "a boater of unusual courage and skill." Charlie also wrote a very touching remembrance of Martin in *A Canoeing & Kayaking Guide to West Virginia* (Menasha Ridge Press, 2003, page 150-151). Martin had special friendships with Fred Young, Robert Humphries, and Harry Lewis (TVA river recreation chief). His persona will be forever imprinted on our memories.

The legacy of John Bombay

John Bombay was a founding member of the East Tennessee White Water Club. He and other ETWWC members made early descents of the Big South Fork of the Cumberland and the Obed/Emory. Bombay first paddled whitewater in Europe and then later in California. He moved to Oak Ridge

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HISTORY OF WHITEWATER



2006, Lee Russell wrote a tribute in a TCWP newsletter (NL 267, 5/21/2006, p. 11):

“John Bombay, who inspired the founders of TCWP, has died (a personal memory by Lee Russell). In the early 1960s, John Bombay, who had come to Oak Ridge National Lab from the Netherlands, fell in love with the Cumberlands during his solo kayak explorations of the Plateau’s rivers. And thus he ‘discovered’ the Obed. But he shared his discovery with only a very few friends whom he trusted to feel as he did about this special treasure. In June of 1965, soon before he was to move to California, he and his wife Barbara guided Bill and me down to Canoe Hole, from where we paddled to Nemo—a trip that was to change our lives forever.



Top: Steve Sanborn on the Big South Fork (TN).

Bottom: Paddler at Rattlesnake Rapid, Daddy’s Creek Canyon (TN).

Photos by Jeff Moore

In sharing his love of the Obed with us, John started the chain of events that led to saving the Obed from a dam and protecting it as a Wild & Scenic River. It led to the formation of TCWP, which, in turn, led to saving the Big South Fork and so many other areas.

In February (2006), John Bombay died of lung cancer. The family has asked that donations in his memory be sent to TCWP.”

Guidebooks for paddling on the Cumberland Plateau

The best guidebook for paddling on the Plateau is: Eddlemon, Kirk. *Whitewater of the Southern Appalachians – Volume 1: The Plateau*. New Castle CO: Wolverine Publishing, 2014.

A very good guidebook for paddling on the Obed/Emory system is: Smith, Monte. *A Paddler’s Guide to the Obed/Emory Watershed*. Birmingham AL: Menasha Ridge Press, 1990 (2nd edition).

to temporarily work at ORNL from 1962-1965 and became an active whitewater leader both locally with ETWWC and nationally with American Whitewater. He left a “leadership void” in ETWWC when he moved back to California in late 1965.

John Bombay also left a lasting legacy on river conservation in the Cumberland Mountains of East Tennessee by inspiring Liane (Lee) and Bill Russell to found Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning (TCWP). When Bombay passed away in

It’s out of print but copies are available for ordering online. This guidebook, first published in 1980, is dedicated to the Tennessee Scenic Rivers Association (TSRA) founded in 1966.



Chuck Ochiltree and Robert Humphries (l to r) in 2019. Chuck and Robert started paddling the Obed (TN) in 1963 when they were UTK students. Chuck named Rock Garden rapid, Robert named Ninety Right-Ninety Left and Tom Berg named Oh-My- God.

Photos by Robert Humphries

A big “Thank you!” to everyone who helped me write this article

This article couldn’t have been written without help from the following people:

Reid Gryder for coordinating my trip back to Oak Ridge in Sept 2018 to meet some of the old gang and for taking me on a trip down memory lane back into Catoosa. Mark Bevelhimer, president of both the modern-day ETWC and TCWP, for making me guest speaker at the ETWC meeting (where I talked way too long!). Robert Humphries and Chuck Ochiltree for sharing their entertaining narrative about early plateau paddling before they were aware of ETWWC. Robert still has a vivid memory of my dilemma at Watauga’s Stateline Falls: “I thought our club was going to have its

first fatality!” Mark Hall, Charlie Walbridge, Dan Demaree, and Fred Young shared conversations and/or correspondence about their early adventures with ETWWC. Fred’s “CANEEY FORK!” letter to ETWWC in 1972 was my introduction to whitewater paddlers who were known and respected throughout the East. Jim Janney & Cassie Bruno were gracious hosts and let me crash at their house in Knoxville while doing research for this article. Jim, originally from St. Louis, runs the modern-day gnar in the Southeast mountains and is a mover and shaker for local trips.

Finally, many factors led me to write this article, but it was the publication of the electronic article “The Secret History of the Green” in Canoe and Kayak, <https://www.canoekayak.com/whitewater-kayak/the->

secret-history-of-the-green/ including the names Fred Young, Mark Hall, and Martin Begun, that made me realize their early boating history with ETWWC deserved to be told.

About the author

In 1972 John Tansil joined American Whitewater (AW) and the affiliate East Tennessee Whitewater Club. He also became a life member of both Tennessee Scenic Rivers Association (TSRA) and Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning (TCWP). After moving to Missouri, the author and his wife Linda became active in Missouri Whitewater Association (MWA) and were later elected to life membership in MWA. Although age has taken its toll, the author continues to paddle whitewater, mostly in Missouri but also along the Appalachians and Rockies.

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A LEARNING OPPORTUNITY ON THE RUSSEL FORK

BY MATTHEW SMITH

THE RUSSEL FORK is a beautiful river situated on the border of Kentucky and Virginia in the Interstate Breaks Park, and it is a staple for Southeast boaters. It's a unique river and an amazing gorge. Every October boaters come from all around to enjoy weekend releases of between 800 and 1,000 c.f.s. These levels offer whitewater enthusiasts a Western style high-volume creek experience with some very tight, technical, and pushy rapids. While the gorge is a committing run, it offers plenty of sneaks and easy portages to allow people to bite off as much or little as they want. You can find Class V boaters pushing themselves by taking a difficult line right next to Class IV boaters sneaking an easier line. It makes for a great experience to see such a mix of people on the same river.

While most release weekends are great fun at a perfect spot to meet up with old and new friends, the Russel Fork also has a well-earned menacing reputation. It has taken the lives of several people and has been the site of countless close calls. It is a very unforgiving river that quickly stacks up penalty points for the errant line. In short, it commands respect. Release weekends in October will see thousands of Russel Fork laps. The vast majority will be good, clean laps on some of the highest quality rapids in the Southeast. This can induce complacency, and the Russel Fork will punish complacency. Below, I will describe the events that happened to me on October 5th, 2019 at a rapid called Fist.

The lead-in to Fist is directly below Towers, which is the first Class V rapid on the Russel Fork. Fist is known as the most dangerous spot on a river filled with very dangerous spots. Coming into Fist is some Class III water directly below Tower's eddies. Coming down towards the main drop there is a large fan rock in the center of the rapid. Water hits this rock and creates a huge

wave hole on either side of it. To the right of the fan rock there is a small slot and then a shelf that has water pulsing over it at 800 c.f.s. That's the fire escape line. Below 900 c.f.s. the fire escape is super sketchy, in my opinion, due to the fact that a mistimed line could potentially lead to dropping into the fan backwards. On river left there is a shallow line that leads to the eddy beside the fist rock. Here you can either portage the rapid or do the "hairy ferry" across the current, into the middle line, which I will discuss later. The main danger in the rapid is the fist rock which gives the rapid its name. It sits to the left, about 30 feet behind the fan rock. However, the fist "rock" is actually several rocks stacked together with an opening in the center that creates a sieve. The opening is only about four or five feet wide and about six feet deep. The water pours into this sieve and then pushes down into a pretty large cave that exits behind the fist about 20 feet away. The problem with Fist is that the hole created by the fan rock feeds directly into the sieve, so that a successful run requires you to drive through the hole while maintaining a right hand angle and then driving through the current pushing towards the sieve. The move itself is not that hard but the consequences of a missed line are horrendous, and there is no way to set up any kind of safety. Below is the description I wrote a few days after my incident to let the locals and other boaters know what happened.

Hey folks, so I'm gonna clear up what happened at Fist on Saturday, October 5th. It wasn't beatering or something fluky. I made a poor decision and nearly paid for it with my life. Most of the locals know me because I've been paddling the RF on the reg for about 10 years. There was a time when I was getting up there 20-30 times a year. I might be assuming, but over that time I believe I've built up a reputation for being a pretty good paddler who isn't prone

to getting in over my head or paddling above my skill set.

My preferred line at Fist has always been the main line (I've never known why it's called the main line since only a handful of people run it), which is the line where you start from right ferrying center left before turning right to punch the hole right below the fan rock and then paddling through the current past Fist. I've probably run this line around 100 times and never had any issues. With that said I've never paddled Fist a single time that I wasn't scared. It's an easy line that if you mess up there's a better than not chance you're going to die, which I can attest to on a very personal level now. Below I'll describe what happened then discuss my lapses in judgment that led up to it.

I was nervous about running Fist to begin with that day because, through circumstances, the only boat I had to paddle with me was my Nano which wasn't designed for the RF, and I had never paddled Fist at release levels in anything other than a creeker. I knew I was gonna get thrown around a little on the RF that day but other than Fist I wasn't that worried. I had been leaning toward walking Fist but then I had great lines leading up to Towers, then had a sweet line there and was feeling strong, so I decided to run it. I had the same anxieties the first couple of times running gorilla in the Nano and falsely analogized the two. My line started out good, but I hit the hole aggressively and immediately knew I'd screwed up. I hit and didn't push up and over. Instead the hole pushed my bow left and subbed me and I squirted out. As I came out of my brace and reconnected it was too late to do anything. I was headed straight into the Fist. I leaned forward as much as I could and hit the rock with my bow. It immediately sucked my stern down. I reflexively set up for a roll as I went over. The downward pressure was very strong

and sucked my boat and myself down. At that point it was already pretty dark, and I wasn't sure how much of my boat was down there with me. I pulled myself forward and reached to pull my skirt but it was obstructed.

When we pulled my boat out, the stern was below the water line pointed into the cave. Only the bow was above the water at about the middle of the cockpit which was pinned against the right wall. I assume this was how I was pinned and the rock was keeping me from pulling the skirt. I immediately went to plan B and started trying wriggle my way out either through my skirts tunnel or forcing it to blow. I fought for what had to be between 15-20 seconds trying to force my way out of the boat before it finally popped. I believe the pressure from the sieve actually helped me here. The second I came out, I went down and it went pitch black and was very disorienting. I was already desperate for air and started reaching out to find the floor, ceiling or walls to orient myself and start fighting out. I want to emphasize how fast and strong the current is in there. I swirled around for a second then immediately was being sucked through. My head banged into the roof and I started clawing with the flow while pushing my face hard into the roof searching for an air pocket. I assume I was coming up on 30 seconds underwater because I was having to force myself to keep from reflexively breathing in and I felt I was losing consciousness when I finally felt an air pocket and I was able to take a shallow breath as I raced past it. A few more seconds and I started to see light. I can't describe the feeling of seeing daylight. It finally spit me out. It's hard to tell, but I guesstimate from the time I flipped to coming out through the cave took around 40 seconds. I had no control inside the cave. I was going where the water took me. Any obstruction inside the cave and I wouldn't have had the air or energy to fight through it. My decision to abandon the skirt immediately and go to plan B was about 10% of my survival that day while the other 90% was dumb luck.



Fist on a different day, with a different paddler.
Photo by Gerald DeLong

Had everything not gone exactly how it did, I don't think I'd be here today.

I'll quickly summarize the mistakes I made that day. 1. In the end, I was complacent. Just because I've run a rapid 100 times doesn't mean that #101 is going to go well. 2. I didn't take into account how much Fist has changed in the last couple of years. It's more dangerous now than three or four years ago because it's shifted and more flow goes into the Fist now. That means the vast majority of my runs at Fist are irrelevant to the rapid today. If I had those 80-90 runs at Fist as it is today, some of those could have been close calls. 3. Equating my anxiety about running Fist with my fears of running Gorilla. While Gorilla is the harder, more technical rapid, Gorilla has room for error which Fist does not. Screw up the notch you still have a few seconds to roll or correct angles. Do the same at Fist and things are gonna go dark. 4. It's just a terrible thing to do, putting your friends in a position to possibly have to do a body recovery. 5. Its

all about risk assessment which I failed that day. The reward for running that rapid, especially with the limitations I knew I was working under, was not even in the same ballpark as the risk I was taking and the horrible position I was putting EVERYONE else on the river that day in.

To close out, I do want to apologize to everyone out there that day. I love the RF river, but I love the scene even more than that awesome river. It's one of the best river scenes out there and I damned near ruined a great weekend and a party for everybody. I really mean that. With that said I also want to thank everyone for the love and support and well wishes I received that weekend. Let's go Forkin very soon. See everybody in a couple of weeks, and make sure to give me hell when you see me portaging Fist.

WILDERNESS WHITEWATER

PADDLING INTO THE WILDERNESS

BY LISA RONALD



Spruce Park Rapid on the Middle Fork Flathead. This was once the proposed site of a dam that would have dramatically affected this Wild and Scenic river.
Photo by Lisa Ronald

GUSTS OF WIND shook the airplane hanger doors as we reclined against our kayaks shouting to carry on conversation over the din of hail pelting the metal roof. We might not fly today. But sometimes great adventures start awry.

Hours later, after a break in the afternoon storms, we hurried to contort ourselves, kayaks and gear into two small Cessna airplanes at Montana Air Adventures in Kalispell, Montana. Buzzing low over the Swan Mountain Range, we saw lightning split from distant clouds as we banked hard, dove into the river canyon, and landed on a thin strip of wet grass in the middle of the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex. Through the heart of one of America's wildest wilderness areas flows the Middle Fork Flathead Wild and Scenic River, a gin-

clear ribbon of water—the destination of our whitewater vacation and a symbolic reminder of why our country started protecting free-flowing rivers back in the 1960s.

I had been planning this self-support whitewater kayaking trip for a year. After two years of river advocacy work, I was ready to see for myself where the river protection ethic originated. Here, amid rugged, craggy mountains and Grizzly bears, is the site of the proposed Spruce Park Dam. Thankfully never built, the fight against it by Montana's famous Craighead brothers marked the beginning of what would ultimately become a nation-wide river protection system created by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968.

The Cessnas lifted back into the sky, their engines fading into silence, and now the adventure—part history lesson, part frothy whitewater respite—could begin.

After hauling our gear Sherpa-style from the airstrip to the river, we ate chili in the rain and woke to a wet, dull gray morning. We pushed off from the banks through spongy fog. The green-tinted waters of the Middle Fork Flathead Wild and Scenic River come from iron found within the rock walls along the river corridor. During our first day, we paddled amid pancake-stacked rock slabs and through Class II and III boulder gardens ending with the Three Forks Rapid, a triple channel drop into a deep pool.

Granite Cabin marked our first camp, 11 miles downstream from the Schafer

Meadows airstrip, on a rocky point opposite where the Castle Lake Trail meets the river. Paddlers who don't want to fly can pack boats eight-ish miles over Granite Pass to the Granite Cabin or run Granite Creek. Castle Lake is a steep two-mile hike to a lake that appears to have been larger in the past; an expansive bowl contains what's left of the lake. There we feasted on fresh trout cooked over a campfire. That evening, we watched the resident beaver preen himself on the far shore and fish for his own dinner in a dark pool against the steep rocky bank.

A sunny second day of paddling treated us to a bear sighting—a small jet-black fellow with the signature round black-bear ears eating fresh greens near the river. Grizzly and black bears both call the expansive 1.5 million-acre Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex home, which means hanging food is a necessary measure for camping in the Middle Fork Flathead corridor. We paddled through the Twenty-five Mile Rapids and the Lunch Creek Rapids, both a series of boulder gardens, but with noticeably more water. From burbling trickles to distant waterfalls, between Schafer Meadows and the Essex take-out, 20 creeks flow into the main river stem, with Granite Creek being the largest.

Our second night's camp at the beginning of Spruce Park was one of the few large, recognizable camps on the river with plenty of flat tent spots. We competed in a rousing card game on patches of rare beach sand, took dips in water frigid enough to make me squeal, and slept under a cloudless starry night. Our last day on the river featured the fabled Spruce Park Rapids. There, for nearly two miles, the river canyon steepens

Top: *The flight to the put-in of the Middle Fork Flathead*

Photo by Allison Jackson

Middle: *Three Forks Rapid*

Photo by Lisa Ronald

Bottom: *Soaking up the Wild and Scenic Splendor*

Photo by Lisa Ronald



WILDERNESS WHITEWATER



Middle Fork Flathead Scenery

Photo by Allison Jackson

remote wilderness run, but the remaining 53 miles between Bear Creek and the confluence with the South Fork parallel the highway that marks the southern border of Glacier National Park.

Fishermen and day floaters joined us on the river at Bear Creek, the first take-out access point. Just around the corner from the Goatlick Rapids, a trip already rich in wildlife sightings, offered us a final treat—a mother and baby mountain goat. Floaters are prohibited from stopping in this area to ensure that the goats can lick salt from the river canyon walls in peace.

The Essex take-out came all too quickly, and with it, a return to normal civilized life. Whenever one paddles into the wilderness, one must also paddle back out. My connection to this place will remain strong and lasting through the cherished wilderness whitewater weekend memories made here in Montana.

and narrows, delivering a lineup of rocky rapids, boiling hairpin turns, and worlds of underwater ledges and multi-colored cobblestones. Although the proposed Spruce Park Dam could likely have been built anywhere within these two miles, I have to imagine that the choice location was the final rapid, a long steep channel with entrance boulders, some must-make moves, and a sharp curving exist.

I took a moment to deliberately imagine how profoundly a dam would have changed this place. The unusual flapjack rocks, the rainbow stones, the foamy rapids—all buried under water. What simple secrets we would have lost amid the ecological havoc. I felt privileged in that moment to experience such a powerful connection to history and to place.

We were still celebrating our clean lines when Highway 2 abruptly whizzed into

view, busy with Glacier National Park visitors. For 26 miles, the Middle Fork Flathead Wild and Scenic River is a truly



Its pristine tributaries help make the MF Flathead a national treasure.

Photo by Lisa Ronald

STAFF HIGHLIGHT

Q & A WITH SCOTT HARDING, NATIONAL STEWARDSHIP ASSISTANT



AW's new National Stewardship Assistant, Scott Harding.

American Whitewater: How did you get introduced to paddlesports?

Scott Harding: My father and I got into paddling together on the Chattooga River, first in a tandem canoe, but we quickly switched over to kayaks hoping to reduce our number of swims. I have to credit Outward Bound for putting me into a whitewater kayak for the first time.

AW: Who has influenced you the most in your paddlesport career?

SH: I've had the good fortune to work alongside many amazing whitewater kayak instructors and each of them has influenced me in many ways. But if there's one thing that has influenced my paddling the most, it's squirt boating, and for that, I have to choose Jim Snyder, the primary innovator of the squirt boat, the master of the charc, and a priest of subsurface river theology.

AW: Tell us something that few people would know about you.

SH: I've worked most of my adult life in jobs related to rivers, but for a couple years I owned and operated an organic ice cream business.

AW: Favorite river snack?

SH: Whatever you brought in your drybag.

AW: What's on your bucket list for AW achievements?

SH: I have no shortage of river stewardship goals but larger than any single one of these is the goal helping make river conservation more of a mainstream issue nationwide. If we can engage our entire whitewater community first, then work on expanding the base of river advocates to the general population, we'll see the groundswell of support we need for protecting and restoring rivers on a large scale. This is something every paddler and river enthusiast can be a part of.

AW: What was the first AW project you engaged with?

SH: I'm new here, but during my first week on the job I filed papers for AW to get into the fight against proposed dams on the Little Colorado, helped advocate for Wild and Scenic eligibility in Utah, and began work on a river access issue in California.

AW: River craft of choice?

SH: Depends on the day but I've really been getting into paddling my family's heirloom Perception Revolution cataraft from 1991 on day trips and multi-day runs. It's a roto-molded, Russian-style cataraft and I think

there are only a few remaining. If you're still paddling one, please get in touch with me!

AW: What's your local run?

SH: The Salmon River flows through our yard and a lot of days I have it all to myself. It's a spectacular river system. Boaters should paddle here more. Just please don't call it the Cal Salmon in front of the locals.

AW: What river song is in your current playlist?

SH: "Hometown Tribute" by Rush Sturges from his *A Life Worth Living* LP. Not only is Rush a phenomenal paddler and filmmaker, he's also a talented musician with whitewater in his blood. This track is about California's Salmon River where Rush grew up and where I live.

AW: What's one of your whitewater paddling aspirations?

SH: I also fly an unpowered paraglider. I'd love to squeeze a packraft onboard and fly way up a remote river in Alaska and paddle back out. A couple of people are doing this already. I can't imagine a more intriguing way to experience the sky, mountains, and rivers all together.

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PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Each day American Whitewater faces new challenges that threaten our whitewater rivers. To aid us in this fight, we rely on support from members, donors, foundations, and partners in the industry. Companies throughout the whitewater and outdoor industries are stepping forward to support AW's River Stewardship work. American Whitewater urges you not to make purchase decisions blindly. When you buy your next piece of outdoor gear there are many factors to consider: quality, dependability, comfort, safety, and fashion. American Whitewater hopes you will add one more consideration to this list: corporate responsibility. Support companies that support your rivers.



KOKATAT WAS FOUNDED in 1971 by Steve O'Meara, who found himself falling in love with the community and natural beauty of Arcata, California. Immediately he began to plant the seeds of our commitment to sustainable and responsible business, a business that was, and is, focused on helping people enjoy the outdoors safely.

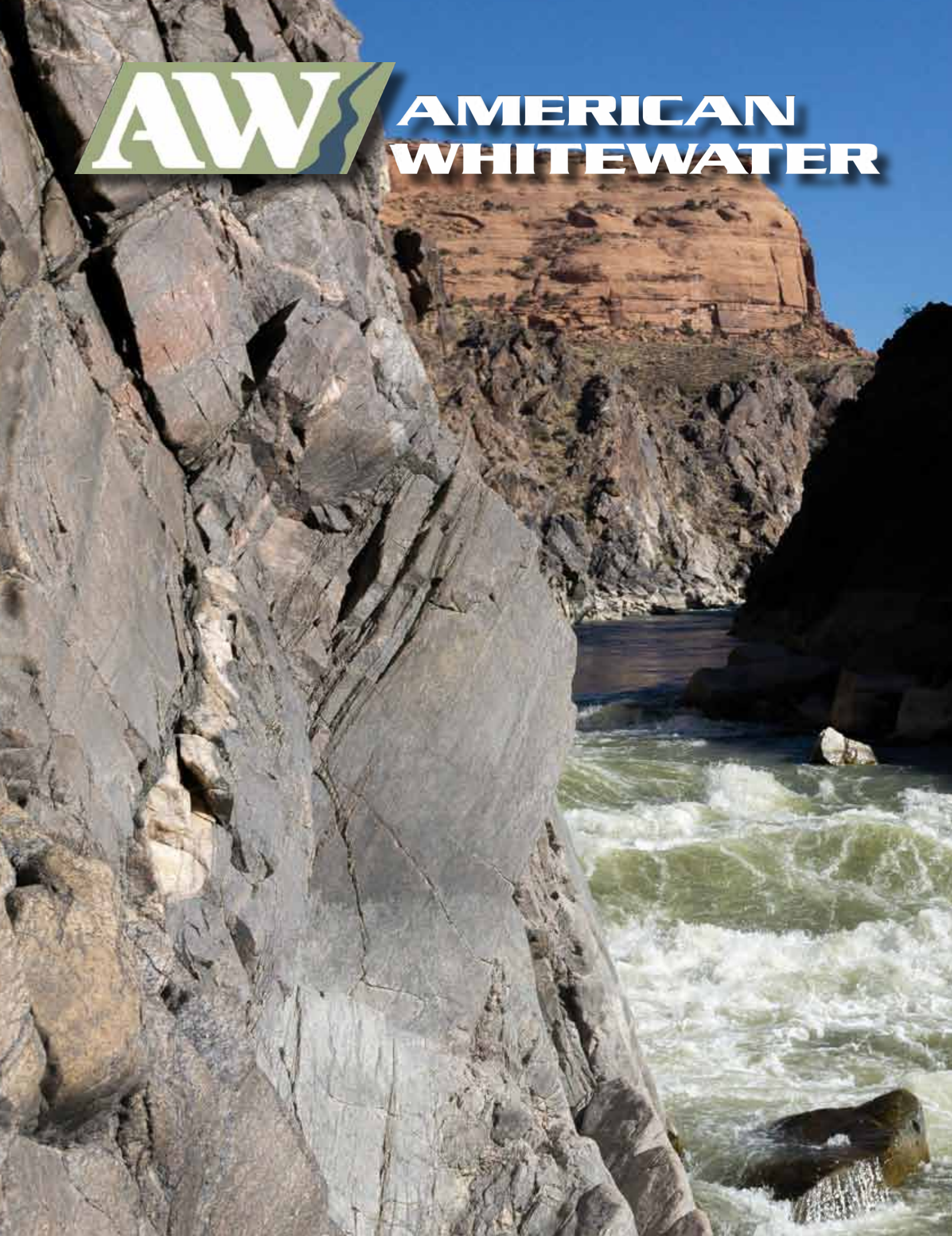
Today our sustainable roots extend deep into our core philosophy. Kokatat is a team of people who are dedicated to designing and manufacturing the best products we can for a sport and community that require performance to stay safe. That commitment has never wavered and will continue to drive us forward in the years to come.

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NEWS & NOTES

AW ROGUE TRIP 2020

BY MARK SINGLETON



FOR THE PAST several years, the staff of American Whitewater has joined with a number of our members to participate in a four-day float trip on the Rogue River in Southern Oregon. This trip has been a great opportunity to connect with members in ways that build a lasting understanding of the role of recreation in fostering a stewardship ethic. As one of the original eight Wild and Scenic rivers in the country, the Rogue is an outstanding classroom for American Whitewater's river stewardship program. Staff members share current projects, their challenges and successes, as well as highlights of national policy work that affects Wild and Scenic rivers like the Rogue. The trip is made possible through the support of Northwest Rafting Company. They provide professional guides, exceptional food, transportation to and from Galice (the put-in), and group equipment.

In June 2020, American Whitewater members will again have an opportunity to join American Whitewater staff and board members for this exclusive trip on the Rogue. We invite you to come learn more about what we're up to while having a great time enjoying one of our nation's first Wild and Scenic rivers. You will have the option of bringing your own boat, renting a boat, or joining as a passenger on one of the rafts. The price for the trip will be \$1045, with a portion of the trip proceeds going to American Whitewater to support our work.

The trip, which will take place June 18-21, 2020, will be fully outfitted by Northwest Rafting Company with professional guides and all group equipment. The trip is suitable for all skill levels. Last year we had paddlers representing the full range of skill levels from experts who are out every weekend, to folks who had not been in a boat for

a while, and some who were just getting into an inflatable kayak or raft for the first time. Everyone is welcome on this trip—the only experience you need is a love of rivers. One of the most important concepts the Rogue trip will reinforce is what we all know firsthand—it is our common love of whitewater that makes us such passionate defenders of rivers. Oh yeah, and the food is excellent and the camping superb. Last year, we had a full trip, so make your reservation soon to ensure a spot on the Rogue trip with American Whitewater this summer.

Make your reservation directly through Northwest Rafting Company's website today at www.nwrafting.com/rogue and selecting the June 20 - 23 trip with American Whitewater under "Dates and Prices." We hope to see you on the Rogue River this June!

*Leave a lasting legacy to the
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Become a member of the American Whitewater Enduring Rivers Circle,
created exclusively to honor and recognize people who have helped to
continue our river stewardship efforts through a gift to
American Whitewater in their estate plans.

For more information about making a bequest to American Whitewater
CONTACT Bethany Overfield : 1.866.262.8429 or bethany@americanwhitewater.org



AFFILIATE CLUBS

AW'S ORIGINAL PURPOSE

BY BETHANY OVERFIELD

American Whitewater's original purpose since 1954 has included distribution of information among its Affiliate Clubs. We have over 100 current AW Club Affiliates and they are all doing great work on your behalf; if you don't belong to a club, consider joining one.

American Whitewater has two levels of Affiliate Clubs - a Supporting Affiliate Club or an Affiliate Club. Affiliate Clubs that choose AW's \$100 annual level are recognized in the AW Journal, on our website club page, and in our annually published Honor Roll. In order to be recognized at this level, a Club needs to maintain an annual \$100 contribution.

Affiliate Clubs that choose AW's \$400 Supporting Affiliate Club annual level are recognized in the AW Journal, on our website club page, and in our annually published Honor Roll as well as being listed as sponsors of an AW stewardship presentation each year. In order to be recognized at this level, a Club needs to maintain an annual \$400 contribution. A Supporting Affiliate Club can revert to the \$100 Affiliate Club annual level at any time.

An Affiliate Club that is already being recognized as an AW Lifetime member is recognized in the annual Honor Roll as a Lifetime member. They do need to contribute either at the \$100 or the \$400 level annually to be recognized as an Affiliate Club in the AW Journal and under the Affiliate Club heading of the published Honor Roll. Is your club missing from this list? It might have expired. Contact me at membership@americanwhitewater.org to square your club membership away!

Supporting Affiliate Clubs

Alaska

Fairbanks Paddlers, Fairbanks

California

Gold Country Paddlers, Placerville
Sierra Club Loma Prieta Paddlers, San Jose

Colorado

Colorado Whitewater Assn, Denver
Dolores River Boating Advocates, Dolores

Georgia

Georgia Canoeing Association Inc, Winston

Kentucky

Bluegrass Wildwater Association, Lexington

New Jersey

KCCNY, Flanders

Ohio

Keelhaulers, Cleveland

Oregon

Oregon Whitewater Association, Tigard

South Carolina

Foothills Paddling Club, Greenville
Palmetto Paddlers, Columbia

Washington

Paddle Trails Canoe Club, Seattle
Washington Recreational River Runners, Renton

Affiliate Club by State

Alaska

Nova River Runners Inc., Chickaloon

Alabama

Coosa River Paddling Club, Wetumpka
Huntsville Canoe Club, Huntsville

Arizona

Outdoors Unlimited, Flagstaff

California

Chico Paddleheads, Chico
River City Whitewater Club, Sacramento
Shasta Paddlers, Redding
Smith River Alliance, Crescent City

Colorado

Friends of the Yampa, Steamboat Springs
High Country River Rafters, Wheat Ridge
Rocky Mountain Outdoor Center, Buena Vista
San Miguel Whitewater Asso, Telluride
Team Colorado Whitewater Racing Club, Longmont
Upper Colorado Private Boaters Asso, Glenwood Springs
Western Colorado University Whitewater Club, Gunnison

Connecticut

Housatonic Area Canoe & Kayak Sq, Lakeville

Delaware

AMC Delaware Valley Chapter, Oaks (PA)

Idaho

Idaho Whitewater Association, Boise

Indiana

Hoosier Canoe Club, Brownsburg
Ohio Valley Paddlers, Evansville

Iowa

Iowa Whitewater Coalition, W. Des Moines

Kentucky

Elkhorn Paddlers, Lexington
Viking Canoe Club, Louisville

Maryland

Baltimore Canoe & Kayak Club, Baltimore

Massachusetts

AMC Boston Chapter, Boston
Zoar Outdoor, Charlemont

Minnesota

Rapids Riders, Eagan

Montana

Beartooth Paddlers Society, Billings

Nevada

Sierra Nevada Whitewater Club, Reno

New Hampshire

AMC New Hampshire Paddlers, Raymond
Ledyard Canoe Club, Hanover
New England Canoe and Kayak Association, Contoocook

New Jersey

AMC Delaware Valley Chapter, Oaks (PA)

New Mexico

Adobe Whitewater Club of New Mexico, Albuquerque

New York

ADK Schenectady, Schenectady
Outdoor Education/Base Camp, Hamilton
Zoar Valley Paddling Club, Machias

North Carolina

Carolina Canoe Club, Raleigh
Landmark Learning, Cullowhee
Mind Body Play, Asheville

Ohio

Friends of the Crooked River, Akron

Oregon

Lower Columbia Canoe Club, Portland
Northwest Rafters Association, Roseburg
Oregon Kayak and Canoe Club, Portland
Willamette Kayak & Canoe Club, Corvallis

Pennsylvania

AMC Delaware Valley Chapter, Oaks (PA)
Benscreek Canoe Club, Johnstown
Bradford County Canoe and Kayak Club, Sayre
Canoe Club of Centre County, Lemont
Canoe Club of Greater Harrisburg, Harrisburg
Conewago Canoe Club, York
Keystone Canoe Club, Mertztown
Lehigh Valley Canoe Club, Lehigh Valley
Mach One Slalom Team, State College

Philadelphia Canoe Club, Philadelphia
Three Rivers Paddling Club, Bridgeville

Tennessee

Appalachian Paddling Enthusiasts, Limestone
Clean Water Expected in East Tennessee,
Sevierville
East Tennessee Whitewater Club, Oak Ridge
Eastman Recreation Club, Kingsport
Tennessee Scenic River Association, Nashville
Tennessee Valley Canoe Club, Knoxville

Texas

Houston Canoe Club, Houston

Utah

High Jim and the A.S.K., Salt Lake City

Vermont

Vermont Paddlers Club, Montpelier

Virginia

Canoe Cruisers Association, Middlebury
Coastal Canoeists, Richmond
Float Fishermen of Virginia, Sandy Hook

Washington

Northwest Whitewater Association, Spokane
Spokane Canoe & Kayak Club, Spokane
The Mountaineers, Seattle
Washington Kayak Club, Seattle

Washington, DC

Canoe Cruisers Association

West Virginia

Db! Z! Whitewater Club, Fayetteville
WV Wildwater Assn, S. Charleston

Wisconsin

North East Wisconsin Paddlers, Inc., Neenah
Sierra Club/John Muir Chapter, Madison

Wyoming

American Packrafting Association, Wilson

Quebec

Montreal Kayak Club, Montreal

Ontario

Guelph Kayak Club, Elora
Kawartha Whitewater Paddlers, The Kawarthas
Ontario Voyageurs Kayak Club, Otonabee

National

Team River Runner

DISCOUNTED AW MEMBERSHIP FOR AFFILIATE CLUB MEMBERS

AW offers a discounted Affiliate Club membership of \$25, a \$10 savings. If you are renewing your AW membership or joining as a new member, select the Affiliate Club Discounted Personal Membership online at <http://americanwhitewater.org/content/Membership/join-AW/> Or, if you are renewing or joining by mail or telephone just mention the name of the Affiliate Club you belong to and you can take advantage of the \$25 membership.

A list of AW Affiliate Clubs can be found on our website at <http://americanwhitewater.org/content/Membership/join-AW/>. If you do not see your Club listed here please encourage them to renew their Club membership or to join AW as a new Affiliate Club. Your Club's membership and your personal membership enable our staff to be active and engaged in the process of river stewardship. When you join or renew your membership your support is helping to meet the many challenges whitewater rivers face.

If you have any questions about the Affiliate Club membership, please contact me. I can be reached at 866_BOAT-4AW or membership@americanwhitewater.org.

JOIN AMERICAN WHITewater AS A CLUB AFFILIATE!

10 REASONS TO JOIN AW AS AN AFFILIATE CLUB

1. Support river access and restoration through the AW River Stewardship Team.
2. Be part of a national voice for the protection of the whitewater rivers your club values.
3. Tap into the professional expertise of AW staff for river issues that come up in your backyard.
4. Your club's members can become AW members for \$25. A \$10 savings!
5. Receive the American Whitewater Journal, the oldest continually published whitewater magazine.
6. Your club is recognized in the list of Affiliate Clubs posted to the AW website.
7. Recognize your club in the list of Affiliate Clubs noted in each bi-monthly AW Journal.
8. Post Club information on the AW Website to help paddlers find you.
9. Gain Club satisfaction from lending support to AW's stewardship efforts.
10. Improve your club members river karma.

For more information, contact Bethany Overfield at membership@americanwhitewater.org or sign-up on line at www.americanwhitewater.org/membership.



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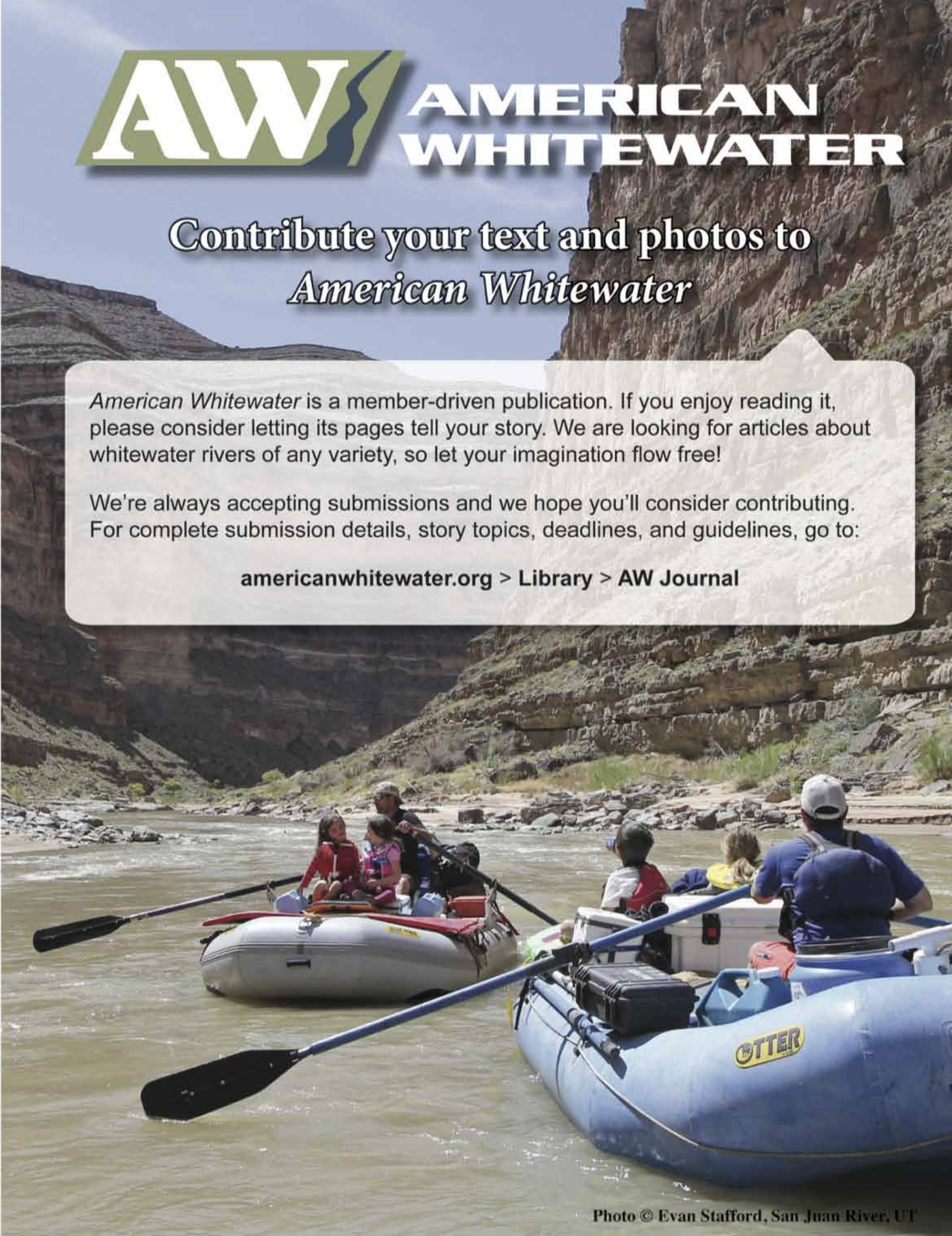
AW AMERICAN WHITEWATER

Contribute your text and photos to *American Whitewater*

American Whitewater is a member-driven publication. If you enjoy reading it, please consider letting its pages tell your story. We are looking for articles about whitewater rivers of any variety, so let your imagination flow free!

We're always accepting submissions and we hope you'll consider contributing. For complete submission details, story topics, deadlines, and guidelines, go to:

americanwhitewater.org > Library > AW Journal



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KEEN GRANTS AND COMMUNITY SPECIALIST, AND FAN @MEESTERWHEELSKERS CELEBRATES THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS ACT ON OREGON'S ROGUE RIVER.



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