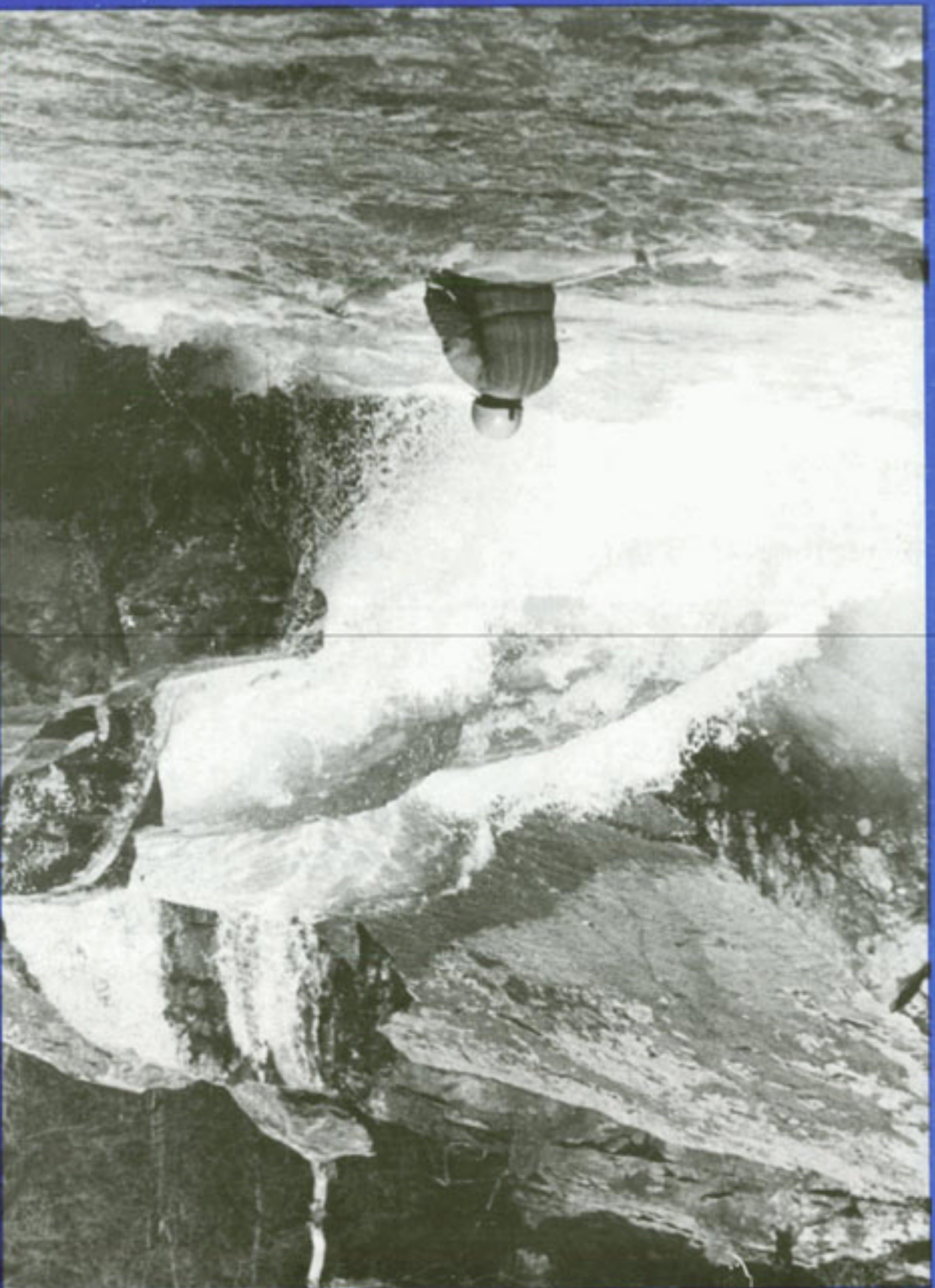


May/June 1988



american whitewater

300+ rainbow



The world's best kayak technologies. *Nadimir Vanha*

performance in color

Send for nearest dealer • brochure • poster \$1P&H
You are 300% more important to us!

noah international
71 Maple Springs Road
Bryson City, NC 28713
(704) 488-3862

noah Improved JETI
New AEROQUATIC



Get to the Heart of the Matter

performance

ROTO & blow molded kayak designs by

Nadimir Vanha

Call (704) 488-3862 for selected dealer/brochure and
☐ \$11** Noah's Challenge
☐ \$250 Trade-in
☐ FREE Poster
 Written inquiries send \$1** only for 1st class postage

now

noah 71 Maple Springs Road
Bryson City, NC 28713

Ultimate Rafting Adventures!
China : Yangtze
Russia : Katan & Bashkus
Turkey : Coruh
U-paddle option available.



Sobek Expeditions
Box 1009 15
Angels Camp, CA 95222
(209) 736-4524

GET READY FOR THE CANOE SEASON WITH ADK CANOE GUIDES

- **Adirondack Canoe Waters - North Flow**
*More than 700 miles of canoe routes in the St. Lawrence/
Lake Champlain drainage basins, and more than 30 rivers
in the north and central Adirondack Park.*
- **Adirondack Canoe Waters - South & West Flow**
*Covering the Black River, Mohawk River, and Upper
Hudson River basins. A must for whitewater paddlers.*

To order, call the Adirondack Mountain Club (518) 793-7737
VISA/MASTERCARD ACCEPTED

WE DIDN'T SET OUT TO create the ultimate kayak school. It just happened. Originally our intent was to create the ultimate wilderness lodge. Kayaking was something we did just for fun. So much fun, in fact, we now offer the best instructional program available. Everything is first class.

Our physical plant consists of 40 acres completely surrounded by wilderness. Private ponds for instruction, private beaches and 1/4 of a mile of private river front on the emerald green California Salmon River are all located on the property.

Our instructors are well-known experts, our equipment the best (exclusively by Perception) and our lodge boasts numerous amenities including a spa, hot tub and Sauna and private decks off of each room. Our teaching technique stresses safety, the proper stroke and an easy-to-learn "roll" formula.

We are dedicated to making this one of the great vacation experiences of your life. Color brochure available. Personal size classes. *Beginning, Intermediate, Advanced.*



OTTER BAR LODGE
KAYAK SCHOOL

FORKS OF SALMON, CALIFORNIA 96031
Message number 707-444-3044, or
ask operator for: Forks of Salmon Toll Station 4772



Specializing in
Squirt Boats

THE SOURCE FOR CUSTOM BUILT BOATS

NEW!
WAVE
KAYAK PRODUCTS

7780 Chamber Hill Rd.
Harrisburg, PA 17111

717-944-6320

Dealer Inquiries Invited

AMERICAN WHITEWATER

JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN WHITEWATER AFFILIATION

May/June 1988
Volume XXXIII, No. 3

in this issue



features

28 Secrets of the Watauga

It's not easy to learn about North Carolina's premier whitewater run.

by Forrest Callaway

31 The River of Many Returns

West Virginia's Big Sandy Creek--it's tough, it's beautiful, and it keeps calling paddlers back for more.

by Chris Koll

36 Northern Hair!

The North Branch of the Contoocook--Steepcreeks aren't limited to the backwoods of West Virginia or the Carolinas.

by John Porterfield

40 Phoenix Kayaks

Bigger doesn't necessarily mean better for long-established whitewater boat manufacturer.

by Chris Koll

46 End Notes

We are what we drive.

by Ron Burke

departments

6 letters

8 AWA briefs

12 Conservation Currents

Dams threaten Cheat system...Arkansas River paddlers fight regulation...Penobscot access offered...Chattooga airport update...Northwest rivers threatened...New Upper Yough regulations...Successes on Black and Housatonic

26 Safety Lines

Pack light, but pack right

by Charlie Walbridge



**KAYAKS
FOR THE CONNOISSEUR
A FULL RANGE OF
KAYAKS & ACCESSORIES**

featuring designs by
TOM DERRER
One of America's Leading Designers

**Now also produced
on the East Coast**



Please send \$2.00 for our
complete information package.

East of Lake Michigan write:
LAMINEX INDUSTRIES
Bldg. 4 Thompsons Point
Portland, ME 04102
(207) 775-2800

West of Lake Michigan write:
EDDYLINE KAYAKS
Paine Field S., Bldg. 302
Everett, WA 98204
(206) 743-9252

editor's forum

Compiling the "conservation currents" section of **american whitewater** too often seems like writing an obituary. Every week I receive news releases announcing the damming, diversion or development of another of our **whitewater** resources.

So, it comes as a pleasant change of pace in this issue to report the AWA's successes in preserving some of the Northeast's premier whitewater runs.

Only a few years ago, the AWA's conservation efforts were sincere but disjointed. The rules of the environmental protection were simply too complex, too obtuse. We didn't really fully understand how to go **about** saving a river.

We've served our apprenticeship. The river battles reported in this month's conservation section can be chalked up in the win column. The AWA is primed to shoulder the responsibility of one of the nation's foremost whitewater advocates.

And it appears our expertise has been gained just in time. Right beside the details of our Northeast victories are reports of new threats on such popular runs as the Forks of the Cheat in West Virginia, the Arkansas and numerous rivers in the Pacific Northwest.

Clearly, the AWA took some punches in the opening round of the small **hydro**/river development fight...battled even-up in the middle period...and now enters the final round **confident** and in top shape. Our most decisive river wars lie ahead, but the AWA is prepared to wage them.

In other notes, comments concerning the content selection of articles printed in *American Whitewater* is pretty well split down the middle. Half the letters criticize our articles as catering to the "**barechested**" paddling population--too oriented toward class V boating exploits--while the other half clamors for more stories about cutting edge river runs.

Actually, my only requirements for publication is that a submission be original, fairly well-written, and accompanied by photos.

Unfortunately, many topics geared toward the intermediate paddler like class III rivers, roll and technique instruction, and river ratings are already covered in depth by publications like *Canoe* and **River Runner**. It's tough for us to compete against the professionals.

But if I get suitable manuscripts dealing with less than hair-raising material that meet those **three criteria**--I'll be happy to print them. Just send them my way.



American Whitewater Staff

Editor: Chris Koll, 6 Farnham St., Cazenovia, NY 13035 (315) 655-3159
Regional **editors**: John Porterfield, Bob Gedekoh, Forrest Callaway
Membership Director: Marge Weaver, 146 N. Brockway, Palatine, IL 60067

Advertising Director: Phyllis Horowitz W(914) 679-2300 H(914) 688-7401
conservation: Pope Barrow

Safety: Charlie Walbridge

Address Changes: Keith Morgan, 2601 Tanglewood Dr., Durham, NC 27705

**THE
AMERICAN
WHITEWATER
AFFILIATION**

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

1986-1988

President

Marge Cline

1343 North Portage
Palatine, IL 60067

Pope Barrow

136-13th Street, S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20003

Rich Lewis

1304 Chinook Trail
Frankfort, KY 40601

Keith Thompson

1171 N. 10th Street
Laramie, WY 82070

Phyllis Horowitz

P.O. Box 329
Phoenicia, NY 12464

1982-1985

Ken Horowitz

P.O. Box 88108
Seattle, WA 98188

Peter N. Skinner

Box 272, Snyder Rd.
West Sand Lake, NY 12195

Ron Walters

Idaho State University
Box 8118

Pocatello, ID 83209

Executive Director

Risa Callaway

P.O. Box 375
Denver, NC 28037

Treasurer

Claire Gesalman

6301 Hillcrest Place
Alexandria, VA 22312

**FREE
CAMPING CATALOG**

CAMPING,
CLIMBING,
BACKPACKING,
HIKING, BIKING,
OUTDOOR CLOTHING

WRITE OR PHONE FOR OUR
FREE DISCOUNT CATALOG

Eureka, Jansport, Sierra Designs,
Slumberjack, Cannondale, Peak 1,
Chouinard, Lifa, Optimus, Lowe,
Woolrich, Columbia,
Camp Trails, MSR,
The North Face,
Gregory,
Kelty.

PHONE 201-445-5000
CAMPOR
P.O. BOX 999-700
PARAMUS, N.J. 07653

**FIND OUT WHAT
WORLD CLASS
STANDARDS ARE.**

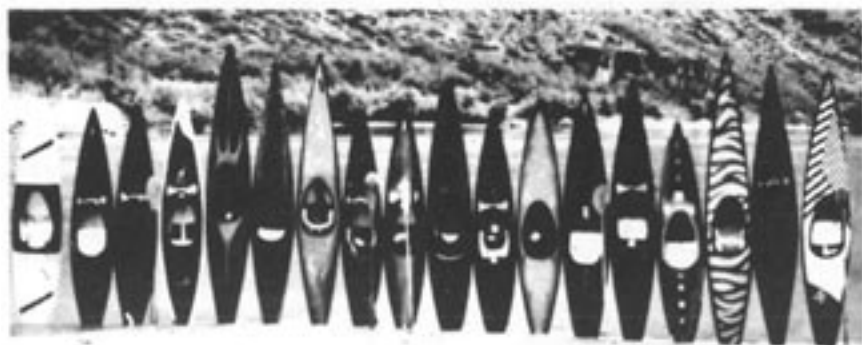
From White Water
to Ocean Touring

Entry
Level
to
Expert

**400⁰⁰
to
1200⁰⁰**

PHOENIX
Since 1973

For more information, give
us a call.
Toll free ■ 800-354-0190.



WE SPECIALIZE IN SQUIRT KAYAKS

The Pro Jet by New Wave is in stock in sizes from full to an 1 1/4" cut. We carry only the heavy duty 5 over 6 layups with epoxy seams and minicell walls as the standard. Other squirtable boats in stock include the Surge, the Ferrier and the Aero-Bat C-1. We also stock surface boats including. Dancers. Dancer XT's, Mirages. Gyra-Maxs. AeroQuatics. Fits. and Dragonflys. Call us for a price on a new deck boat delivered anywhere east of the Mississippi.



BOB TAYLOR'S
APPOMATTOX RIVER CO., INC.


610 N. Main St.

Farmville, Virginia 23901

Phone 804-392-6645

Open Tuesday-Saturday

FREE! WHITEWATER EQUIPMENT CATALOG



CASCADE OUTFITTERS
A Tradition of Quality River Equipment
PO Box 209 • Springfield, OR 97477
503 (747-2272)
Toll-Free Order Line 1-800-223-7238



Test yourself with the best!

Canada's first and finest adult whitewater school, (established in 1972), provides highly personal instruction from beginner to expert levels in both whitewater kayaking and open canoeing — leading to diplomas recognized worldwide. Located on the Madawaska River, near Algonquin Park, M.K.C. offers all the comforts of a vacation resort — including delicious meals served up with world-class hospitality — as well as excursions to the nearby and fast-moving waters of the fabulous Petawawa and Ottawa Rivers.

Our classes are small (a 1:5 ratio), and our currents clean, warm and uncrowded.

Rates start at Weekends: \$92.00; Five Days: \$140.00 (U.S.), subject to currency exchange. Book early to avoid disappointment.

For more information and application form, please write for our brochure.

2 Tuna Court, Don Mills, Ontario, M3A 3L1
(416) 447-8845.

After June 1st: Barry's Bay, Ont., P.O. Box 635, K0J 1B0 (613) 756-3620

MADAWASKA KANU CAMP

CANADA'S FIRST WHITE WATER SCHOOL
FOR KAYAKS AND CANOES

letters to awa

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your December announcement that the Salt Caves hydro-electric project received your 1987 Hydromania Award. The proposed Salt Caves dam is an atrocity and an insult. We in Oregon will certainly do everything we can to make certain the project does not proceed. The support of national groups such as yourselves is deeply appreciated.

Your award has helped make a laughing stock of this project in Oregon, and that help is invaluable.

I had the opportunity to represent the Klamath River Canyon in the Oregon Legislature for eight years recently. The canyon is an irreplaceable asset with both whitewater and native trout fisheries of national significance. The cultural and archaeological resources are also irreplaceable.

As always, you are right on target with this award, and it's deeply appreciated.

Sincerely,
Deschutes (Oregon) County Board of Commissioners
Tom Throop, Commissioner

Dear Senator Byrd,
AWA,

I'm a Dutchman and I worked from October 1986 till October 1987 in your country. During that stay I once got the opportunity to run the Gauley in a whitewater kayak, which I greatly enjoyed. Even if I would never get another chance again, I would feel very grateful for the whitewater friends I've made in the USA if, with your support, the West Virginia Rivers Bill (H.R. 900) would pass the Senate soon. I'm very much convinced that protecting rivers like the Gauley is worth a lot of effort and will pay

itself back in more happy people.

I thank you for your attention.

Yours sincerely,
Ferdinand M. Spit
Utrecht, Netherlands

P.S.--From the last issue I especially liked the Niagara Gorge run report and pictures a lot. I'm already dreaming of running it myself once...

Dear Chris,

As a whitewater enthusiast (and infrequent contributor to American Whitewater), I'm overjoyed to hear of the successes enjoyed by the AWA in protecting northeast rivers—especially the Black.

For years, it seemed like the only river news was bad news—more of our favorite runs drowned by dams. Now, hopefully, the AWA has turned the corner in combatting these usurpers.

Again, my thanks to the AWA and particularly Pete Skinner for his indefatigable efforts in resisting river developers.

Go get them, AWA!

Sincerely,
Ron Burke
New York

Line your cat box...

Save a river!

Plenty of paddlers need a subscription to another whitewater magazine like they need a concrete kayak...not at all! But even if you don't plan to read American Whitewater's dramatic river stories, pertinent safety features or significant conservation updates, your **entire** \$15 annual membership fee is funneled into the **AWA's** important conservation and safety programs.

So, even if you don't want another magazine cluttering your coffee table, join the AWA and find other creative uses for American Whitewater. Your cat and endangered **whitewa-**ter rivers will thank you.

Yes, I want to join AWA and receive a subscription to American Whitewater. I've enclosed my tax-deductible contribution of \$15 (\$18 Canada, \$25 overseas) to help conserve our whitewater resources and promote river safety.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Mail to Marge Weaver, 146 N. Brockway, Palatine, IL 60067

AWA Products



Pricing information

T-shirts, white

AWA logo: short sleeve (S,M)/long sleeve (M,L,XL) 8.00/12.00

Bold New Look: short sleeve (M,L,XL)/long sleeve (M,L,XL) 8.00/12.00

AWA river caps 8.00

AWA embroidered patches 1.00

AWA waterproof decals .50

AWA Safety Codes (1-100) .25

(101-200) .20

over 200 .15

mail order with check to AWA, PO Box 375, Denver, NC 28037

AWA T-Shirts

•choose from traditional design or bold new AWA graphic

•50/50 cotton-polyester

•electric blue and bright orange

•long or short sleeves

River Caps

•baseball type, closed back

•hand-sewn AWA patch

Embroidered Patch

AWA Waterproof Decals

AWA Safety Code

American Whitewater
back issues



Own the best.
Canoes by Whitesell, Ltd.
 (404) 325-5330, Box 9839, Atlanta, GA 30319



KAYAK WITH THE BEST!

- ★ The leader in kayak instruction since 1975
- Nationally renown staff
- 2- to 5 day courses for beginning to advanced students
- State of the art kayaks and accessories
- Courses in kayak safety & rescue, slalom racing and hotdog kayaking

P.O. Box 460, Lotus, CA 95651
(916) 626-8006



SERIOUS EQUIPMENT FOR SERIOUS PADDLERS
 A FULL LINE OF GEAR FOR
 CANOES • KAYAKS
 RAPIDS • LAKES • OCEANS

Featuring quality products from Perception, Aquaterra, Extrasport, Voyageurs, Pacific Water Sports, Blue Puma, Body Glove, Werner and more.

Write for our FREE Catalog of River Gear. Dealers: Ask about our Rescue Bags, Sprayskirts, and Pagies.

WILDWATER DESIGNS
 230 PENLLYNPIKE, PENLLYN, PA 19422
 215-646-5034

awa briefs

Schedule announced for Maryland Classic

The schedule for the 1988 Maryland International Canoe/Kayak Classic to be held on the Savage River, the site of the 1989 World Championships has been announced and as is follows:

Monday, June 20, 1988
 Registration
 1000 cfs/Wildwater Training
Tuesday, June 21, 1988
 Boat Inspection/Wildwater Team Meetings
 1000 cfs/Wildwater Training
 Opening Ceremony--Evening Entertainment
Wednesday, June 22, 1988
 Boat Inspection Wildwater
 1000 cfs/Wildwater Training
 Wildwater Non-stop Runs
Thursday, June 23, 1988
 Boat Inspection Slalom
 1000 cfs/Training/Wildwater Individual Competition
Friday, June 24, 1988
 1000 cfs//Slalom Team Meetings
 Free slalom Training
 Wildwater Team Competition
 Boat Inspection Slalom
Saturday, June 25, 1988
 Emergency Boat Inspection
 1000 cfs/Slalom Non-stops
 Slalom Individual Competition (K-1, C-2, K-1W) Tentative
Sunday, June 26, 1988
 1000 cfs/Slalom Competition (C-1 and Teams) Tentative
 Awards and Closing Time (Piedmont Dam)

Women on the Colorado

An all-women's kayak and paddleboat descent of the Grand Canyon is being offered by Friends of the River as a low-cost 13 day charter trip to begin

August 13. A portion of the proceeds will benefit Friends of the River, a leading conservation organization dedicated to the preservation of our rivers and streams, and to the formulation of balanced water policies.

Sue Norman, a former member of the U.S. National Women's Kayak Team, and Lee Miller, a Class V kayaker with numerous wins in whitewater rodeos will be leading the trip. They will be combining their skills and experience with a strong safety-consciousness and a special emphasis on fun, adventure and challenge.

Moki-Mac Expeditions, a small family run outfitter which has been running the Canyon since the late 1950's, will be providing raft-support, experienced guides and a cuisine that promises the participants a trip of comfort and luxury.

Because this is a benefit for Friends of the River, it is possible to offer this trip at the low price of only \$1,250 for the full 13 days. With special arrangements, non-kayakers could hike in or out of the Canyon at Phantom Ranch, thereby participating in only the first 6 days or the last 8 days of the trip. Six days would cost \$720, 8 days would cost \$960.

Space is limited and early reservations are strongly advised. Thirty percent of the trip price will save a spot and payment in full is due by June 12. All kayak and canoe participants must have their level of skill approved by Lee Miller at (707) 526-2550. For a reservation, application or more information regarding this trip or any other specially chartered raft and kayak trips being offered by Friends of the River, call or write: F.O.R. Booking Service, Fort Vason Center, Bldg. C, San Francisco, Ca., 94123. Phone (415) 771-0400.

Russian river trip scheduled

When it appeared that paddling might open up in the U.S.S.R., I launched a campaign to gain entry. No simple matter; however, I was finally given permission in March 1987. The

briefs

result was a trip down the Katun River, a stunning, high-country stream in southwestern Siberia.

We paddled Russian catamarans, a surprisingly effective craft when we had to negotiate heavy Class 4 action. A National Geographic photographer was in our party, and I hope they may ultimately do an article on this wonderful region.

One result from last summer's expedition, has been an agreement between Sovintersport, our hosts, and myself for publication and U.S.-Canadian distribution of a brochure describing their 1988 Katun River catamaran programs. This represents the first commercial opening of a river in the U.S.S.R. to Western paddlers.

That an American is producing advertising literature for the Soviet government is, I believe, unique--& estroika in action--John Lentz Katun River Expedition, 5424 Mohican Rd., Bethesda, MD 20816.

Great Northern opens Penobscot access road

There's good news and bad news from Milinocket, Maine--at least for paddlers. The good news is that the Great Northern Paper Company, which owns all the land surrounding the best section of the West Branch of the Penobscot River, now permits boaters to pass through the gates of their power plant at the head of Ripogenus Gorge.

The bad news is that it now costs \$8.00 a day to use their logging road which is the only access route to the river. If you stay overnight, it will cost you an additional \$6.00 a person to sleep in the campgrounds located on their property (Maine residents get reduced rates).

So, are the Great Northern managers the good guys or the bad guys?

Opinion among the outfitters and rafters in the area is mixed. Some feel Great Northern is simply getting into the

recreation business as company brochures claim. Others feel Great Northern is extracting payment for the role rafters and boaters played in frustrating their plans to build a hydropower dam on the river's Big Amberjockwackamus (Big A) Rapid.

The West Branch of the Penobscot adjoins Maine's unique and spectacular Baxter State Park. (Reservations to camp in the park are allocated in a January 1 lottery, and after that the casual visitor will be very lucky to get in the park on a last-minute cancellation.) Mount Katahdin, the northern terminus of the Appalachian Trail, is the centerpiece of the park and attracts climbers from all over the east.

The whitewater run, although fairly brief and with significant flatwater stretches, is particularly scenic and contains one truly memorable rapid--the Cribworks.

AWA members recoanized at film festival

Presentations by several AWA members finished in the winners' circle at the Fifth National Paddling Film Festival held in Lexington, Kentucky on February 26 and 27.

The annual event, sponsored by the Bluegrass Wildwater Association and Menasha Ridge Press, featured the work of professional and amateur whitewater filmmakers, video artists and slide photographers. Approximately 350 whitewater enthusiasts attended the festival at the University of Kentucky Health Science Learning Center according to Barry Grimes, BWA Film Coordinator.

Best of Festival Award and Best Recreational/Scenic Award went to Bob Gedekoh for a slide presentation, *Laurentian River Trilogy*. Gedekoh's entry included highlights from three wilderness kayaking expeditions in northeastern Quebec. Articles regarding two of these explorations had appeared in *American Whitewater*, the



COMPLETE WATERSPORT SOURCE

Mad River Canoe



SAWYER
CANOES

aquaterria

KAYAKS & EQUIPMENT

- AVON
- SEA NYMPH
- OARS & PADDLES
- LIFE VESTS

- PATAGONIA
- HENRI LLOYD
- STEARNS
- WATERPROOF STORAGE BAGS

SEND FOR
OR CALL
(201) 261-5000

FREE

OUTDOOR CATALOG

226 Rt. 17 PARAMUS, NJ 07652

VISIT OUR 3 NEW JERSEY LOCATIONS

Rt. 17
PARAMUS, NJ
201-261-5000

Rt. 17
RAMSEY, NJ
201-327-8141

Rt. 46
LEDGEWOOD, NJ
201-584-7798

WATAUGA
LAMINATES

17 current boat designs to choose from, including; The NEW "Extra Jet", "Jet", "Mobius Thruster", "Fit", "Extra", "Mopho", "Extrabat".

We specialize in SQUIRT BOAT construction custom built for the individuals size and weight. GRAPHICS ARE FREE

KEVLAR BOATS only \$625.00

Kits available for considerable less; vacuum-bagged boats considerably more.

\$50 shipping max. to West Coast

Factory direct sales available if we do not have a dealer in your area.

WATAUGA LAMINATES
RT. 4 BOX 74
BANNER ELK, NC 28604
704-963-4033

briefs

AWA journal.

Niagara: Scary Fun, a crowd pleasing video by Paul Marshall featuring AWA Executive Director Risa Shimoda Callaway, Forrest Callaway and open boater extraordinaire Nolan Whitsell, captured the award for Best Hair entry. Filmed during last fall's historic runs of the Niagara Gorge, Marshall's stunning whitewater footage elicited OOOHS!, AHHS! and cheers.

Faces (And Other Body Parts), a humorous and racy photo directory of the Bluegrass Wildwater Association produced by Carole Bryant, was judged the Best Club entry.

Mr. Bill's Kayaking Adventure, documenting the indomitable little clay man's harrowing induction into Pittsburgh's Three Rivers Paddling Club, won the award for Best Humor presentation.

Gaspar River Gold, a slide presentation by Ken Cooke outlining the Southern Kentucky Paddler's Society's hands on efforts to clean up the Gaspar River received an Honorable Mention in the Club category. **Summer Whitewater Colorado Style**, an action packed video presentation by Wisconsin Mark Altmann, merited an Honorable Mention in the Recreational/ Scenic Category.

The Best of Show in the Professional Division went to BWA videomaker John Davis for **Heart of Dampness**, an ethereal parody of Conrad's **Heart of Darkness** and Coppola's **Apocalypse Now** that brought down the house. Documenting a man's degradation and ultimate ruin by his addiction to whitewater boating, Davis's work provided "heavy" food for thought to the many whitewater fanatics in the audience. The production starred the BWA's own "Mr Danger", Mike Weeks, who coincidentally, served as party organizer for the festival.

Honorable Mention in the Professional Division also went to Davis for 1987 **Savage River Invitational**, a video featuring racing on the river slated to be the site of the next world championships.

Other popular entries included **The Nehanni**, a film documentary of AWA president Marge Cline's expedi-

tion on a remote Canadian River. **Guatemala: Whitewater in Paradise**, a video by Paul Marshall reminiscent of **Raiders of the Lost Ark**, included footage of jungle ruins and the perilous ascent and exploration of an active volcano.

Boating in Wisconsin, throughout the Appalachians, in Alaska, in the Grand Canyon and on the Salmon River in Idaho was spotlighted in other programs.

Matters of serious consequence to boaters were not neglected at the Festival. The proposal to build an airport on National Forest Service Land adjoining the Chattooga was discussed and attendees were encouraged to contact their legislators to register their objections. River access problems in Kentucky due to no trespassing restrictions were also reviewed.

A reception held Friday night for out of town participants included viewings of some of the most popular entries from previous years. Other popular videos from recent festivals were viewed during a catered lunch Saturday arranged by BWA member Don Spangler.

The award ceremony was held at a raucous pool party Saturday night that also included a boisterous dance contest and an equipment raffle organized by BWA member Richard Smithers to benefit the American Rivers Conservation Council. An appearance by the ever popular Women in Rubber climaxed the evening and a significant portion of the audience. The fandango, which raged until nearly three in the morning, demonstrated once again the legendary partying prowess of the members of Bluegrass Wildwater Association.

It is no secret that Bluegrass Wildwater Association members know how to have a good time, and they really work hard to make sure that their guests at the festival have one too. Thanks to their hospitality the National Paddling Film Festival has become one of the most popular whitewater events in the country, a perfect way to escape those winter blues and kickoff a new boating season.

Long Lake announces Moose procedures



Jim Deihl on Bottom Moose

The Moose River Corporation, a subsidiary of Long Lake Energy, doesn't mince any words regarding its position on recreational boating on New York's Bottom Moose River inside the property of its small-hydro project: it doesn't like it...at all.

Fortunately for boaters, Moose River Corporation is compelled by requirements of its license to grant 20 days of recreational releases each year. The releases are scheduled for eight consecutive Sundays starting the third week of April and the first two Sundays of October.

In addition, 10 optional days through the April 16-October 30 paddling season can be scheduled by contacting the River Information Clearinghouse Hotline at least five days in advance of the desired date.

The water-release arrangement was part of a compromise worked out between Long Lake and AWA during the licensing process for the Moose River project that dewater a mile-long section of the famed Bottom Moose run during power generation.

In its pamphlet **Provisions and Procedures for Whitewater Boating Within the Moose River Project Area**, Long Lake clearly states that it is only providing whitewater recreational opportunities because it is forced to—not as a service to the paddling public.

The question of access to the project area during high periods of high water when natural flow spills over the dam is still unresolved. Long Lake has indicated that it will attempt to limit whitewater activity to only the 20 sched-

Long Lake claims its restrictive policies are based on a **concern** of possible litigation. However, it's no secret that Long Lake and AWA have been involved with a number of spirited disagreements over the past three years.

Regardless of the reasons behind Long Lake's restrictive policies, limiting the waters inside the Moose River project area penalizes whitewater boaters. The Bottom Moose stands as one of the foremost expert runs in the northeast United States. Starting three miles above the project area, the run features five major drops before reaching the newly constructed dam.

As an alternative, paddlers can plan to boat the Lower Moose section, a class III-IV run, and finish with the rapids still available on the Bottom.

conservation currents

Five proposed dams threaten Cheat system

"The Cheat watershed is fantastic no matter which way you look at it. If you are a gung ho Corps of Engineers type, you drool in frustration at seeing water running freely every second over one of the largest uncontrolled watersheds in the east, but if you are a paddler, you see it as a place of almost infinite variety of water too test the mettle of your skill and your boat."
—from Wild Water West Virginia

An engineering report prepared for the Tucker County (WV) Commission proposes construction of five dams on headwater tributaries of the Cheat River. The proposed crushed rock dams are of moderate size (90' to 120' high) and would be operated for flood control purposes only. In other words, they would be "dry" dams maintained without pools most of the time. The dams would be located on Gandy Creek and on the lower sections of the Shavers Fork, Laurel Fork, Glady Fork and Dry Fork Rivers.

The report, prepared by Robert Eli, a Professor of En-



gineering at West Virginia University at Morgantown, has been submitted to the Army Corps of Engineers, Pittsburgh District. The Army Corps in turn expects to see Congress appropriate funds to perform a feasibility study of the proposal, as well as other alternatives for "improvements" in the Cheat Basin.

Tucker County, which comprises most of the upper Cheat watershed, was hit hard by the Great Flood of 1985, particularly at Parsons, the county seat. The initial stated goal of the report was to design "structural measures" for protection for Parsons from a flood of this magnitude.

On November 4-5, 1985, the Cheat crested at Parsons at 176,000 CFS, with 15 percent of the flow contributed by the Blackwater, 60 percent from the Dry Fork (including Laurel and Glady Forks) and 25 percent from Shavers Fork. Statistically, this flood was "off the chart"

and cannot be reliability classified as to probability of recurrence. The report concludes only that the Great Flood exceeded the frequency of a 500 year flood.

Only one alternative was deemed sufficient to control such a flood, consisting of three large (up to 250' high) dry

dams. Two would be located on the dry fork and one on the Shavers Fork. The report concludes, however, that siting problems and high costs (hundreds of millions of dollars) make this alternative obviously infeasible.

The report proceeds to scale back its goal to protection for Parsons (and downstream points) for 100 year floods.. The report finds that because of the steepness and high elevation of the Cheat headwaters, the most severe flood risk in the Basin arises there. To illustrate, the Cheat Basin has about 50 percent of its drainage upstream of Parsons, and yet that area contributed 85 percent of the total water flow of the Great Flood. Thus, consideration of dams is concentrated on the headwater tributaries.

The Blackwater was found to be too steep in its lower reaches to allow sufficient reservoir storage in relation to the size of the dam. To allow the Blackwater to remain uncontrolled, and still afford 100 year flood protection to Parsons, the study recommends dams on (1) Gandy Creek upstream of Whitmer, (2) Dty Fork above Hendricks, (3) near bottom of Laurel Fork, (4) near bottom of Gladly Fork, and (5) Shavers Fork above Parsons.

The report has several shortcomings. First, by its own admission, it does not address the economic feasibility of the proposal at all. However, it recommends that such an economic study be performed, presumably by the Army Corps.

Second, the report does not even mention, much less address, the severe effects the dams would have on the environmental and recreational attributes of the Cheat Basin. The dams would be "dry" most of the time, but would be filled on occasion, which would devastate plant and animal life in the pool areas. Thus, the pool areas would likely consist of giant mud bowls. For example, the proposed Laurel Fork Dam would be 120' high

(spillway height) and 630' wide. Its "normal" pool would cover only four acres. Filled, it would cover 177 acres. A paddler on the formerly lovely Laurel Fork could paddle down the river through the mud bowl, but would then face a horrendous portage up and over the dam.

Third, the report clearly has a dam builder's bias. Flood control alternatives to dams (such as levees, floodwalls and channelization of the river near popu-

lated areas) are given short shrift and dismissed out of hand. The study criticizes such measures in that they would not have controlled the Great Flood, and yet, the five dams proposed would be also overwhelmed by such a flood.

The fact is that these alternatives to dams are far cheaper, do less environmental damage, and are effective flood protection. A good example is the Army Corps project at Kitzmiller, Md. on the North Branch

An ode to the Cheat

The Cheat's waters rise in the pine-fringed alpine meadows on the western side of Spruce Knob, West Virginia's highest mountain, and then disappear at the Sinks to flow under a ridge (Gandy Ridge). The waters also gather in the forested heights of Pocahontas County, and flow north, uniquely carving a groove down the middle of a ridge (Shavers Fork).

The waters rise on a high plateau in the beaver ponds and wetlands of Dolly Sods Wilderness (Red Creek) and Canaan Valley (Blackwater River). At the edge of the plateau, Red Creek drops over a series of falls as it stairsteps its way down to the valley floor. At the other edge of the same plateau, the Blackwater plunges over Blackwater Falls and rushes down 1,000 feet in elevation in eight miles, forming West Virginia's longest Class IV-V rapid.

The waters also drain

the gentle farm country around the Fort Necessity Battlefield in south central Pennsylvania, reentering West Virginia near the picturesque millworks at Bruceton Mills (Big Sandy Creek).

The Cheat Basin is known for its dramatic scenery. As you ascend U.S. Route 33 on Rich Mountain and look over the Dry Fork Valley, the vistas are reminiscent of the low Alps in Switzerland. There are several famous waterfalls: the magnificent, horseshoe-shaped High Falls of the Cheat on the Shavers Fork, Blackwater Falls, and Wonder Falls on Big Sandy Creek, a favorite photo spot for whitewater experts.

The scenery is also intimate: the Laurel Fork is thought to be the most beautiful river in the state, as you paddle a vernal valley through vast growths of mountain laurel and soft stands of spruce.

The Cheat is a white-water paradise, not just for the tens of thousands of rafters who run the Cheat Canyon every spring, with its famous rapids such as Big Nasty, High Falls and Coliseum. Each of the major tributaries is a popular, scenic and challenging run in its own right. Ask those who have run the lovely Laurel Fork, with its many three-foot ledges, Slide Rapid on the Blackwater, or Zoom Flume and Little Splat on the Big Sandy. The whitewater ranges from the serene (Dry Fork), to the expert (Shavers Fork McGee Run or the Lower Big Sandy) to the expeditionary (Upper Blackwater Canyon).

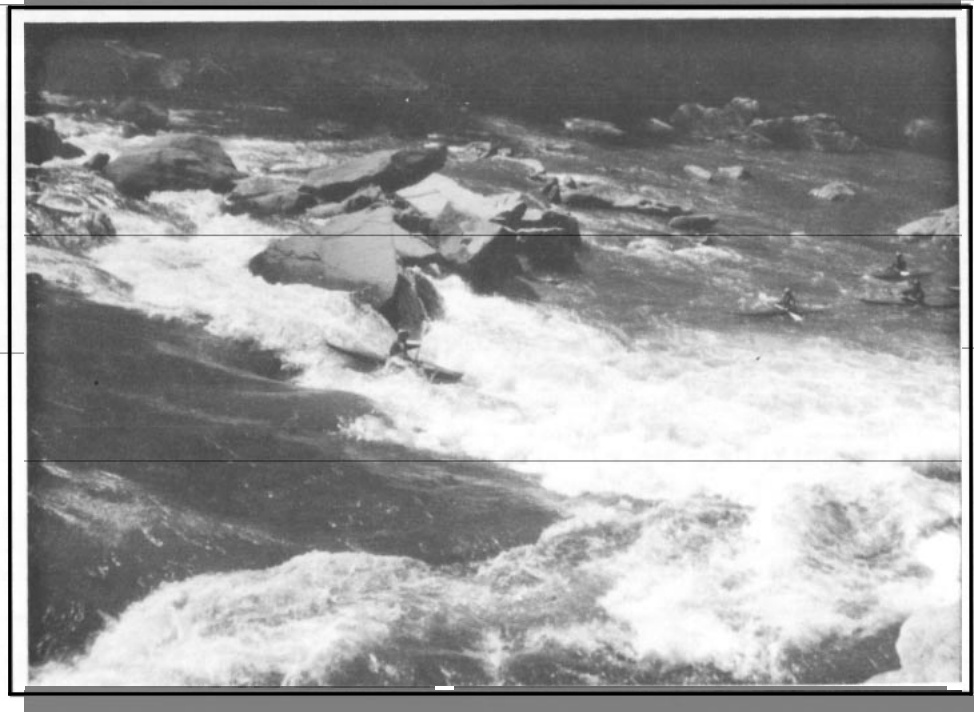
This is the Cheat Basin. Fabulous. Incomparable. It is the most spectacular and most valuable recreational watershed in the Eastern United States. Is it a proper place for five major dams? Or any dams?
—mac thornton

conservation

Potomac. Ironically, the report hints that 100 year flood protection might be achieved for Parsons by such alternative measures, citing a 1965 Army Corps study. The report also fails to mention zoning to prohibit construction below the level of the 100 year floodplain.

Copies of the report and further information can be obtained from Mac Thornton, American Canoe Association Conservation Chairman (Middle States), 322 Tenth Street, S.E., Washington, D.C. 20003. Phone (202)543-4923.

Individuals or groups who wish to receive pertinent public notices and to participate in the public phases of the Army Corps consideration of dam proposals in the Cheat Basin should express their interest by writing to Colonel George M. Miller, Jr., District Engineer, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Pittsburgh District, 1000 Liberty Avenue, Pittsburgh.



Drydams offer threat of future retrofits

So what's the big deal about a "dry" dam--are boaters turning so wimpy that they can't stand a little carry? After all, the dam would be filled only in times

of flood, right?

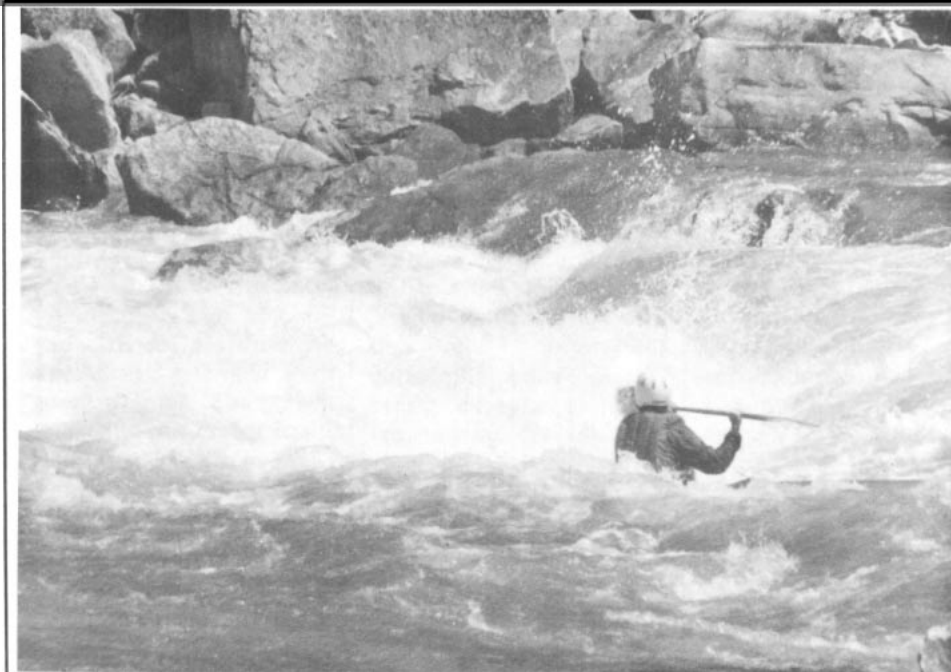
Well, maybe...

The problem with building a dam is that once it exists--the intended purpose can be altered. A

retrofit to enlarge the project or add hydroelectric capabilities is a distinct possibility.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), the governmental agency that licenses river projects, tends to place fewer restrictions on existing dams than in cases where no development is in place. FERC has an attitude that seems to say, "Well, the damage has already been done...so what do a few changes matter?"

Whatever mitigation plans are submitted to accommodate whitewater activity, the bottom line reads: any dam on the Cheat system threatens whitewater usage--if not now, then in the future.



**Cheat Canyon action
photographed by Paul
Marshall, Ed Grove.**

Arkansas River paddlers fight increased regulation

Reprinted from Currents

The Bureau of Land Management is planning to turn over its lands along the Arkansas River in the mountains of Colorado to the Colorado state government. The proposal is likely to fundamentally affect river running rights on one of the nation's most popular rivers. It also may set a disturbing precedent for public rights to Federal lands elsewhere. The state government in Oregon recently assumed greater regulation of the popular Deschutes River in that state, and other state governments are also

expanding their river regulations.

The Arkansas starts in the mountains of Colorado and flows east to the Mississippi, passing through Arkansas. Between Granite, Colorado, and Canon City, Colorado, there are nearly 100 miles in which rapids are never more than a few hundred yards apart, and in places are continuous for over a mile. The stretch includes "The Numbers" rapids, Brown's Canyon, and the Royal Gorge, as well as other sections.

For much of its length, the Arkansas is bordered by ranches, roads, and the railway, although there are

some significant stretches of undeveloped land. The ownership of land along the river is a patchwork of Bureau of Land Management and private holdings. Virtually all river running is done as day trips.

The river has been popular for recreational river running since the 1950's, when the town of Salida began the annual FIBARK river races. Rounded granite boulders dot many of the rapids, creating whitewater mazes at moderate levels and thundering holes at high water. Many river runners rate the Arkansas among the ten best rivers in the nation for whitewater.

Commercial rafting began on the river in the mid-1970's, and government agencies estimate that over 100,000 people now take raft trips each summer. For Brown's Canyon, on summer weekend mornings a continuous train of commercial rafts leaves the put-in areas and heads into the canyon, with no interruption for several hours.

Raft outfitters launch and take out both on private lands and Bureau of Land Management lands. The BLM began requiring permits and fees for these operations in 1979. The BLM does not regularly police the river itself and



NORSE PADDLE COMPANY

WHITEWATER

CANOE & KAYAK PADDLES

with proven

- performance you demand
- durability you want
- value that makes \$ sense

Call or write for information & outfitters in your area;
RD1, Spring Mills, PA 16875 814-422-8844

WHITEWATER VIDEO SERIES

Hardboating
East Meets West

Squirtboating,
holeriding and
surfing, class
IV + canoeing.
\$44.95 includes
shipping.



Gravity Sports Films, Inc.
100 Broadway • Jersey City, NJ 07306
Order Toll Free (800) 346-4884

KEEL-HAULERS OUTFITTERS

-PERCEPTION-HYDRA-PRIJON-HARMONY-MOHAWK-
-YAKIMA-BODY GLOVE-BERMUDES-HELLY HANSEN-
-KOKATAT-SILVER CREEK-EXTRASPORT-SEDA-

-DISCOUNT PRICES - FAST MAIL ORDER SERVICE-

-CALL OR WRITE FOR A FREE CATALOG-

30940 LORAIN RD. NORTH OLMSTEAD, OH 44070
(216) 779-4545

WOMEN KAYAK/RAFT TRIPS

Unforgettable and outrageous!

FOR raises money to save rivers through chartering affordable kayak and raft trips. Join some of the best women kayakers in the country. * Grand Canyon, Main Salmon and Dolores Rivers. All experience of a lifetime.

Call: Friends of the River
(415) 771-0400

a non-profit organization protecting wild rivers: est. 1974

KAYAK AND RAFT TRIPS

For the beginner to the expert

FOR raises money to save rivers through chartering affordable kayak and raft trips. Kayak and raft the Grand Canyon. Salmon, Rogue and everywhere in the West. Special charters and bookings. They are fun, safe, affordable and memorable.

Call: Friends of the River
(415) 771-0400

a non-profit organization protecting wild rivers: est. 1974

conservation

has not set any limits on use by either commercial or noncommercial boaters. At present, anyone can boat freely on all sections of the river.

Facilities: The Colorado Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation (the "State Parks Division") wants to take over the BLM lands along the river and set up an "Arkansas River State Recreation Area," with "some sort of intensively managed, user funded, locally responsive approach" to river regulation, according to its November 1987 "Action Statement." The agency envisions developed launch sites with restrooms, picnic tables, parking lots, and similar facilities. Rangers would require drivers to pay

fees or show an annual "parks pass" to enter these areas. At present the BLM provides simple gravel parking areas and an occasional outhouse, with no fees.

At a second level, the Parks Division would seek greater control over running the river itself as well as use of its streamside facilities. So far its plans are still vague, and the State Legislature would have to pass additional legislation to give the Division such authority. The Division then proposes some combination of regulations designed to spread out use on the river. It may set up a specific schedule for outfitter launches. It may "zone" the river so that some segments would be

closed to river runners altogether, at least during part of the year. It may charge lower fees for weekday use than on weekends.

The agency does not actually propose a system of permit limits or allocations at this time." It believes that encouraging users to spread out, and providing facilities, will be sufficient measures for at least a few years. In fact, the agency plans to promote increased commercial rafting on the river. "The Division sees itself in the role as a supporter and facilitator of economic development," the plan says. "Establishment of an Arkansas River State Recreation Area would provide a readily market-

able product." The promotion would presumably intensify the need for limits and allocations, at least for commercial operations, and possibly for noncommercial boaters as well. On all of the Federally-managed rivers where both commercial and noncommercial use is limited, noncommercial boaters must apply to lotteries or wait years for permits, while commercial operations continue as usual with no significant wait for customers. The proposal contains nothing to suggest that things would be any different on the Arkansas under Parks Division management.

The agency proposes to set up an "Advisory Board" to help plan its program. The board would include

WHITEWATER VIDEO SERIES



Paucartambo-Inca River

John Armstrong's thrilling film of a 1985 attempt by four Americans to make the first descent of Peru's Paucartambo River, a 14,000 foot drop through the heart of the Inca Empire. \$54.95 includes shipping.

Gravity Sports Films, Inc.
* 100 Broadway • Jersey City, NJ 07306
Order Toll Free (800) 346-4884

"QUALITY WHITE WATER PRODUCTS"

American


welding & mfg.

Aluminum rowing frames, camp kitchens, dry boxes and tables.
Achilles & SOTAR inflatable boats and FishRite aluminum boats & sleds.

(503) 773-5582

5179-C Crater Lake Hwy.
Central Point, OR 97502

Call or Write for our
Free River Equipment Catalog



TEST DRIVE A T-SLALOM and T-CANYON

The T-Slalom is a favorite among beginners and experts alike. Its design characteristics allow quick spinning, good playing, and easy rolling. And the blowmolded hull has four times the tear-strength of roto-molded boats. New this year from Prijon is the T-Canyon. This shorter new boat is perfectly designed for extreme descents and its unique high performance hull promotes fast spinning, excellent playing, and easy learning.

The T-Slalom and the T-Canyon. Test drive them today. But be careful: you may find you need a two-kayak garage.

For more information or your nearest dealer call: 303-444-2336

PRIJON

Wildwasser Sport USA, Inc.
P.O. Box 6017 Boulder, Colorado 80506

photo: Rod Walker

conservation

representatives of commercial and noncommercial river runners, fishermen, and various local interests. The plan contains no indication of how any conflicting goals of the different interests would be resolved.

Scenarios: The Parks Division began its involvement in river running in Colorado in 1984, when the state's legislature passed a law authorizing the agency to license commercial raft trip outfitters operating anywhere in the state. One state legislator told **NORSI CURRENTS**, "The outfitters came to us and begged us to regulate them." The agency can now shut down outfitters who do not meet basic requirements, but it currently cannot limit the size of outfitter operations

or limit use of any particular river.

As one outfitter explained after a recent meeting concerning the river, it is still relatively easy for new outfitters to start operations and compete with existing ones. Many outfitters want the state government to set a ceiling or cap on outfitters on several popular rivers, or even a statewide moratorium on new river outfitters, so that the existing ones would hold a share of river access rights that would suddenly have value.

"The fortunate outfitters will then hold valuable 'user days' or the equivalent," says a former Colorado Whitewater Association president and long-time observer. "A few will buy each other out until there

are a dozen or so, who will wield political and legal power out of proportion to their numbers. This is the single most important issue for the outfitters, who want to be in a position to sell that windfall. It's also a trap that the Colorado Whitewater Association and the Colorado Environmental Coalition should not fall into. Both groups should be concerned about any policy that turns management of the river over to private businesses."

Such a scenario would echo the present situation on the major overnight river trips in the West that are currently managed by the Federal government. On those rivers, some ten to twenty concessionaires or 'special use permittee' have virtually permanent

ownership of the majority of the river use rights. Commercial permits for such rivers have recently been old from one operator to another for well over one million dollars.

Other outfitters in Colorado do not favor this fixed-allocation pattern. Instead they envision a continued competitive market with opportunities for popular outfitters to expand.

A key difference is the legal status of the lands surrounding the rivers in question. The Federally-managed overnight rivers flow through National Parks or Wilderness areas that Congress has designated for preservation. Federal agencies interpret this as authorization to limit the amount of river running to

*One to four day whitewater rafting trips
Salmon and steelhead fishing*



GROUP KAYAK SUPPORT TRIPS on the permit section of the **'Wild & Scenic' Rogue River.**

A Complete Line of
River Running Rental Equipment available at

Write or Call for
Information:
P.O. Box 1647
Grants Pass, OR 97526
(503) 479-9554



WHITewater VIDEO SERIES
Paddleboating Down East

...rafts and docks on five
of the West's most popular rivers
New, Cheat, Gauley, Tygart and
Upper Youghiogheny \$44.95 includes shipping

Gravity Sports Films, Inc.
100 Broadway • Jersey City, NJ 07306
Order Toll Free (800) 346-4884

CRICKET PADDLES

Custom quality, handmade paddles at
reasonable prices from the paddle maker.

**Straight, 5°, 14°, whitewater and
kayak models.**

**30 day money back
guarantee on direct orders.**

Dealer Inquiries Invited.

CRICKET PADDLES
Michael Jones
1188 Aspen Meadow Dr.
Evergreen, CO 80439
303.670-1149 (evenings)

RIVERSPORT
213 Yough Street
Confluence, PA 15424
(814) 385-5744

One of the top whitewater schools in the country. **Riversport** offers a safe yet challenging experience for first-time beginners, as well as experts.

Friendly instructors, small classes, excellent equipment, and a beautiful riverfront camp combine to provide the perfect setting for learning whitewater skills. Students are carefully placed in small classes according to skill level, paddling interest and age. We guarantee your satisfaction. Ask about our special clinics and group rates.

conservation

preserve wilderness

qualities. By contrast, there is no preservation law at all for any lands along the Arkansas. Even the most remote stretches of the river are still near a railroad, dirt roads, ranches, and other installations. The State Legislature would have to pass new laws before any limits or allocations could be imposed.

Critics: Because the Parks Division proposes to "intensively manage" the river and yet has no specific management plans, its proposal has drawn criticism both from people who think it should impose more limits, to preserve natural features, and from people who think it should impose fewer limits, to maintain the present

freedom to run the river that noncommercial boaters enjoy, and a free market in the commercial rafting industry. Noncommercial boaters, fishermen, and environmentalists are all concerned that the Division's program will become a tool of commercial raft outfitters, and other users will be displaced, as they have been on the Federally-managed western rivers. One member of the board that directs the Parks Division recently told a NORS staffer, "If you (noncommercial boaters) want free access to rivers, go somewhere else."

The transfer of authority also raises questions about keeping Federal lands open to the nation's citizens, rather than turning them over to state agencies

dominated by local commercial interests. If the BLM proceeds with the transfer without an environmental statement, it may violate the National Environmental Protection Act and other laws. The BLM supports the transfer at present, apparently due to political pressure from outfitters and state government leaders. The transfer could be finalized in less than a year.

Penobscot Road Regs

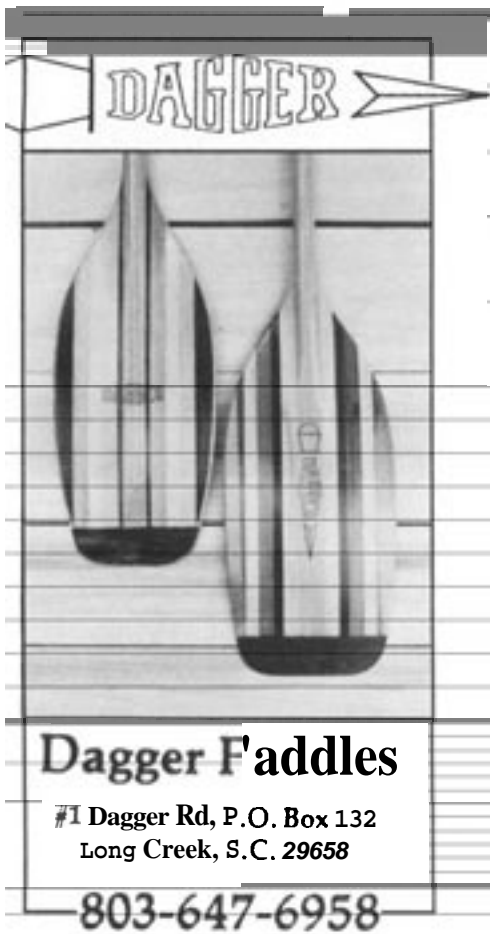
There's good news and bad news from Milinocket, Maine—at least for paddlers. The good news is that the Great Northern Paper Company, which owns all the land surround-

ing the best section of the West Branch of the Penobscot River, now permits boaters to pass through the gates of their power plant at the head of Ripogenus Gorge.

The bad news is that it now costs \$8.00 a day to use their logging road which is the only access route to the river. If you stay overnight, it will cost you an additional \$6.00 a person to sleep in the campgrounds located on their property (Maine residents get reduced rates).

So, are the Great Northern managers the good guys or the bad guys?

Opinion among the outfitters and rafters in the area is mixed. Some feel Great Northern is simply



Dagger Faddles

#1 Dagger Rd, P.O. Box 132
Long Creek, S.C. 29658

803-647-6958

W S S WHITEWATER SERVICE & SUPPLY CO.

An Affordable Way to Sell or Repair Your Used Equipment

- *Whitewater Trader*

A clearing house, in newsletter form, for used whitewater equipment.

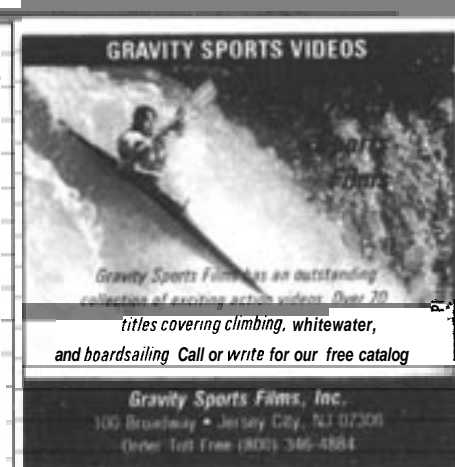
Repair Services

- Raft/Canoe/Kayak
- Custom Outfitting
- Custom Gear to your specifications
- Complete line of repair parts

Write or call for information

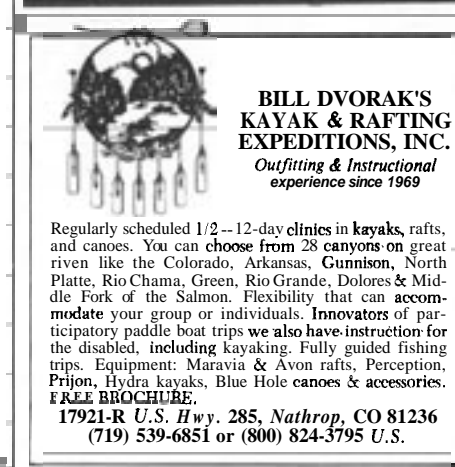
20 Wesser Cr. Rd.
Bryson City, NC 28713
(704)488-6525

GRAVITY SPORTS VIDEOS



Gravity Sports Films has an outstanding collection of exciting action videos. Over 70 titles covering climbing, whitewater, and hoardsailing. Call or write for our free catalog.

Gravity Sports Films, Inc.
100 Broadway • Jersey City, NJ 07306
Order Toll Free (800) 346-4884



BILL DVORAK'S KAYAK & RAFTING EXPEDITIONS, INC.
Outfitting & Instructional experience since 1969

Regularly scheduled 1/2 - 12-day clinics in kayaks, rafts, and canoes. You can choose from 28 canyons on great riven like the Colorado, Arkansas, Gunnison, North Platte, Rio Chama, Green, Rio Grande, Dolores & Middle Fork of the Salmon. Flexibility that can accommodate your group or individuals. Innovators of participatory paddle boat trips we also have instruction for the disabled, including kayaking. Fully guided fishing trips. Equipment: Maravia & Avon rafts, Perception, Prijon, Hydra kayaks, Blue Hole canoes & accessories. **FREE BROCHURE.**

17921-R U.S. Hwy. 285, **Nathrop, CO 81236**
(719) 539-6851 or (800) 824-3795 U.S.

conservation

getting into the recreation business as company brochures claim. Others **feel** Great Northern is extracting payment for the role rafters and boaters played in frustrating their plans to **build** a hydropower dam on the river's Big **Amberjockwockamus** (Big A) Rapid.

The West Branch of the **Penobscot** adjoins Maine's unique and spectacular Baxter State Park. (Reservations to camp in the park are allocated in a January 1 lottery, and after that the casual visitor will be very lucky to get in the park on a last-minute cancellation.) Mount Katahdin, the northern terminus of the **Appalachian Trail**, is the centerpiece of the park and attracts climbers from all over the east.

The whitewater run, although fairly brief and with significant flatwater stretches, is particularly scenic and contains one truly memorable rapid—the Cribworks.

Chattooga Airport Update

The Commissioners from Rabun County, Georgia have asked the U.S. Forest Service to deed or swap them a tract of land or give them a special use permit so the Federal Aviation Administration will build them an airport. The request is for a 270 acre tract of land in the **Chattahoochee** National

Forest just south of Highway 76. The proposed runway would be 1,000 yards from **Woodall** Shoals and just 500 yards from the National Wild and Scenic Chattooga River corridor.

The proposed site is very near the section of the Chattooga that is heavily used by kayakers, canoeists and rafters. The Chattooga has been a popular paddling destination for people from all over the U.S. for fifteen years and more than 60,000 people paddle the **river** each year. The surrounding National Forest is used for hiking, hunting, fishing, camping and general outdoor recreation by over half a million people each year.

The wild and scenic quality of the Chattooga

would be jeopardized by the construction of the airport:

--the area receives from 60 to 80 inches of rainfall per year and erosion and siltation into the river would be impossible to control.

--the proposed airport orientation is perpendicular to the river and approach and take-off would be directly over the airport.

--rare wildlife such as eagles and osprey as well as several species of rare and endangered wildflowers such as the mottled trillium **now grow** in the Chattooga gorge and could be effected by the subsequent increase of noise and the **possible soil disturbance**.

The Rabun County Commissioners will try to portray this as a local issue

The Best Boaters In The World Are Coming To The USA!

Colorful and functional paddling wear designed by Champions Richard Fox and Davey Hearn for **Wild-Water**.



Warm and flexible Avilastic and PVC drysuits from **DryFashion**



The best paddling gear is now available from **Northwest River Supplies**. See our complete line of equipment and accessories at your local specialty shop or call or write for free 1988 catalog.



1-800-635-5202

P.O. Box 9186 AWA Moscow, ID 83843



conservation

between jobs and economic growth and river conservationists. In fact, building an airport next to a Wild and Scenic River is a national issue; five times as many people paddle the river each year as live in Rabun County and most of those people come from all over the United States.

The Forest Service should reject the concept of a land-swap out of hand. At very least, an Environmental Impact Statement should be conducted before any action is taken.

Northwest Hitlist

Northwestern whitewater rivers are currently under a state of siege as

dam builders propose projects that would damage or destroy a number of top-notch runs. The dam builders hit-list reads as follows:

WASHINGTON

North Fork **Snoqualmie-Bellevue** has applied for a license on FERC project No. 5926 which will destroy the beautiful and varied class 3 run on the North Fork. FERC rejected the application and **Bellevue** appealed the rejection. The Northwest Rivers Council filed a letter against the appeal and FERC still has not ruled on it 23 months later.

Cispus--Lewis County P.U.D. has been granted a license to build the **Cowlitz Falls** project which will inundate the last mile-and-a-half of the pretty class 2-3 run on the **Cispus**. Local

residents are working to stop the dam because it will raise their electric rates as well as destroy the river. The project may be stopped yet.

Dosewallips--Jefferson County and Tacoma have sought a license for a diversion project which will interfere with salmon and steelhead migrating up the only river which gives the fish access to the east side of the Olympic National Park. So far the project has been blocked by the State Dept. of Ecology's denial of a water quality permit, but the denial is being appealed.

OREGON

Klamath--The City of Klamath Falls' proposed Salt Caves project would destroy the outstanding class 4-5 whitewater trip

and blue ribbon trout fishing on this southern Oregon river. The State Dept. of Environmental Quality has denied a water quality permit, but the city is appealing the denial.

IDAHO

North Fork **Payette**--Two projects threaten this nationally known whitewater gem. The City of Tacoma's project No. 10342 (identical to Idaho Power's abandoned project) would put the river in a pipe from Smith's Ferry to Banks, destroying the incredible class 5 kayaking run. Gem State Irrigation's proposed project No. 10341, is even worse, destroying not only the famous class 5 section of the North Fork, but also the class 3-4 **Cabarton** stretch. South Fork **Payette**--



Kayaking

—Exhilaration on Whitewater—

YOU'LL learn the basics in our beginner clinics or fine tune your skills in our intermediate clinics. All clinics are taught by ACA certified instructors. One or two day clinics with classroom sessions, video tapes, and on river instruction.

We also offer canoe clinics for the canoeing enthusiast!

CALL US TODAY!
(717) 443-9532

CLINIC INFO
Send to: Whitewater Challengers, Inc.
P.O. Box 8 White Haven, PA 18661

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State/Dist _____
Phone _____

The Oxbow project, No. 6329, has been revived to threaten the South Fork which is one of the most popular recreational rivers in Idaho.

Snake--Two sets of projects threaten different portions of the Snake. First, the City of Tacoma is considering buying electricity from the private developers of the A.J. Wiley project, No. 8807, on the Snake near Bliss, Idaho.

This stretch provides a very popular class 2 trip, the only one within 150 miles of the site. Second, the Milner project, No. 2899, and the Star Falls project, No. 5797, would chip away at the Murtaugh run on the Snake. Milner would reduce flows for one-half mile below the dam, making the run a more difficult class 5.

The Star Falls project would reduce the water to less than runnable levels for most of the year in Amnesia rapid.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

If you are concerned about any of these rivers, you should contact the AWA River Defense Project at 136-13th St., S.E., Washington, DC, 20003 and the Northwest Rivers Council at PO Box 88, Seattle, WA, 98111.

You should also call the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in Washington and ask to be placed on the "service card list" to receive FERC notices about the project. Be sure to give them the project number. FERC can be reached at (202)357-8721.

Upper Yough regulations won't solve congestion

On March 11, 1988, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) announced plans to establish "emergency" regulations for commercial whitewater rafting on the Upper Youghiogheny River (Swallow Falls to Friendsville). The regulations will take effect for the 1988 season and will establish rules for insurance, guide qualifications, equipment and number of trips per day per outfitter.

Limits on outfitter numbers and trips per day is the most controversial aspect of the regulations. The Upper Youghiogheny Advisory Board has recommended a limit of

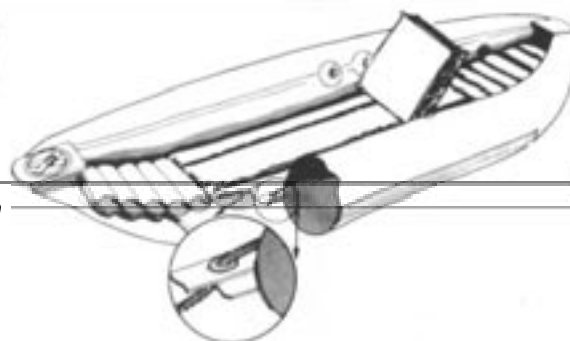
three commercial outfitters with four rafts **per day**. This would result in a total of 36 commercial customers per day. (Each raft carries one guide and three customers.)

As would be expected, the Maryland DNR is under pressure from a number of rafting companies from nearby states who would like to run commercial trips on the Upper Yough. In response, DNR has proposed to allow only three rafts per day per outfitter but to place no **limit** at all on the number of outfitters or on the total number of commercial customers per day.

DNR has stated that it



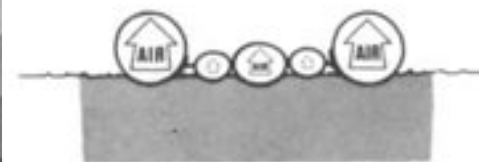
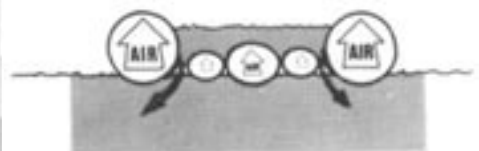
"Unsinkable"



Padillac
SELF-BAILING KAYAK

1 & 2 man models available

San Francisco Chronicle 'Whenever the craft takes on water, the displacement... empties it out almost immediately.'
River Runner Magazine 'A design which could set standards in inflatable performance.'



Forget about any watercraft you've been in. Picture yourself floating on an air mattress, then hit by a wave. The water rushes off, leaving this mattress high and dry - simple displacement. Now lace this mattress to a kayak tube and you have **Padillac**.

Padillac floor is laced, above the water line, the full length of the boat leaving grommet holes open to drain the water.

Consider the **possibilities**, a boat that empties itself instantly. No more pulling off in tight spots to empty the boat of water. Never again

will you have to **maneuver** a sluggish swamped boat. The ease of storage and stability it has over a rigid boat makes Padillac the ultimate craft.

Padillac is built with some of the toughest materials known today. The core fabric is **manufactured** for bullet proof vests. This virtually **indestructible** fabric is then coated both sides with abrasion resistant Hypalon. That means it can stand up to daily beating against rocks. Commercial raft guides depend on this **kind** of performance year after year.

Write or call for fabric sample & informative pamphlet.

P.O. Box Z • Kemville, CA 93238

(619) 376-3225

Ask about our other self-bailing and standard rafts.

conservation

expects about six outfitters to do business on the river. They expect this to result in a total of 54 commercial customers per day. (18 more than the Advisory Board recommendation.)

But there are over 30 outfitters now operating in adjacent states. Under the DNR proposal, each one of them would be allowed to run trips on the river, subject only to the three raft per day limit and other qualification requirements (insurance, guide training, etc.)

The absence of a limit on the total number of commercial customers who may be on the river during a two-hour release is a major flaw in the DNR proposal. Two-hour releases from Deep Creek Lake are the norm during



Pete Zerfleis negotiates an Upper Yough drop.

summer periods. With a release this brief, all river runners have to squeeze on a small bubble as it proceeds down river. The situation which already exists would be almost comical if it were not for the inevitable traffic jams and

safety hazards. To find a solution, a carrying capacity and river management study should be done.

While awaiting the results of a study, a limit should be established to protect river runners from injuries due to overcrowd-

ing and to maintain an enjoyable experience. Without a limit on the total number of commercial river passengers per day, conditions will continue to deteriorate.

The Advisory Board recommendation of 36 commercial customers per day is widely accepted as reasonable and workable. If tied to a limit of three outfitters, it is supported by some of the most experienced existing outfitters.

Although private boaters are not officially regulated under the DNR proposal, overcrowding amounts to a *de facto* reduction in private usage. Only so many people can jam themselves on this *small* river at one time. At some point, increasing com-

please turn to page 44

The LAZER

Featuring

- high speed hull that carves like a slalom boat & spins like a play boat.
- A high deck & extra large cockpit for comfort & safety — the LAZER fits you!

WAVE Sports, Inc.
P.O. Box 5207, Steamboat Springs, CO 80477
Write or call for your nearest dealer (303) 879-4371

DARE TO BE DIFFERENT

SEDA PRODUCTS
introduces
MASTER from PYRANHA



Sleek, fast, maneuverable, modern asymmetrical design by PYRANHA, winners of all Whitewater World Championships since 1977. Molded from tough cross-linked CXL 9000 polyethylene. Volume 66 gals., length 11 ft. 8", beam 24." Paddle the whitewater thoroughbred.

Send for more information now or call.

DEALER INQUIRIES REQUESTED



SEDA PRODUCTS

P.O. BOX 997
CHULA VISTA
CA 92012
(619) 425-3222

Finally... some *good* news for a change!

FERC halts dams on Black until impact studies issued

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) shocked and delighted paddlers throughout the Northeast by issuing a carefully researched 40 plus page decision in January that concluded that the Brownville, Woods Falls ("Knife-edge" rapids) and Felts Mills small hydro projects "would result in significant, long-term, cumulative adverse impacts to whitewater boating and fishery resources in the Black River Basin."

FERC further decided that if the developers of these projects wished to go forward with them, full environmental impact statements would be needed. Some have said that no small hydro project which was required to prepare a full EIS has ever been licensed by FERC.

Although FERC's decision has yet to receive widespread press coverage, its impact is undeniable. Because at least three major projects will require additional detailed



Boaters plunges through the opening hydraulic of Knife's Edge rapid on the Black River. One of the dams placed on hold by FERC's order would dewater the drop.

studies and therefore may never be built, this decision will be felt across the country and for years and decades to come. After years of advocacy by AWA and other groups, FERC has finally agreed that river sports are important enough to tip the scales against power production.

The Black River is one of New York's most dammed rivers with 30 projects (nearly 40 different dams) which according to FERC are existing or proposed.

In considering the cumulative impacts of the proposed projects on the lower Black River, FERC considered six major projects and their physical river impacts as set forth in the table below:

The Brownville Project,

proposed by Boise Cascade Corporation for a site one mile downstream from the new and operating Glen Park Project, would inundate five major rapids cherished by kayakers and rafters alike. AWA rounded up an impressive bevy of experts who filed hundreds of pages of testimony before FERC in opposition to the project. Using a wide variety of arguments, they demonstrated that the construction and operation of Brownville would essentially destroy the Watertown-Dexter whitewater experience now enjoyed by many thousands of paddlers each year throughout the summer months.

The company has sought a delay in the *continued on next page*

Housatonic granted reprieve

Thanks to an extraordinary pro bono effort on behalf of AWA, ACA, and the Housatonic Area Canoe and Kayak Squad (HACKS) by Washington D.C. lawyer, Paul Flynn, AWA Executive Director, Risa Callaway, and HACKS president, Doug Gordon, filed a 17 page FERC intervention for project # 2576-005 on the Housatonic River. As discussed in the last issue of American Whitewater, this project threatens to dewater the challenging and scenic Class IV-V Bulls Bridge section on all but approximately 25 days each year. (It now runs 90 days each year).

Intervention in this proceeding was made much more problematic by the fact that the consortium was seeking intervention some months after the deadline had passed, although Doug Gordon and famed C-1 racer and coach, James McEwan had submitted comments and dealt with the developer, Connecticut Light and Power.

Surprise greeted AWA, however, when it received *continued on next page*

conservation

The Black... a valuable, recreational resource

proceeding to reconsider its options in the wake of this decision.

Just upstream of the Glen Park project, Hydraco proposed to create a canal bypass and powerhouse for the Black around the entire "Knife's Edge" rapids section, perhaps the most challenging whitewater drop on the entire river.

Although Hydraco had pledged to provide releases and relocate its intake weir, FERC rescinded their preliminary permit in late 1987 because the company had failed to provide FERC with information it requested. Although Hydraco is appealing that rescission, the larger FERC decision should create additional reasons to drop the project.

The Felts Mills project proposed by Long Lake Energy Corp. would recreate two breached dams and submerge a third dam in between the two. It would create one of the largest new impoundments New York State has seen in many years. The impoundment would stretch at least 7.1 miles, eliminating a very substantial proportion of the few miles of fast moving water left in the river's 112 miles.

Although Long Lake recently submitted to FERC a carefully written report by natural resource planners Parkin and Giffen which concluded that the project "offers little or no opportunity for commercial whitewater rafting," they did



opine that the project "would eliminate the whitewater that presently exists in the project area. This is an undeniable loss in an area where summer rapids are unusual and would undoubtedly be missed by the few who boat it presently."

FERC staff stated in its decision that the stretch of the Black affected by the project "offers an outstanding and unique resource offering family style canoeing." It is unclear what procedural actions Long Lake will take next on this project in the face of the FERC requirement to prepare an EIS.

It is not hard to see why FERC concluded that three of these deserved EISs, considering that these three projects under consideration **would reduce the "currently available whitewater" in the Black an incredible 76%!** In addition, FERC pointed out that the three projects would have significant adverse impacts on the resident fishery

resources as well.

This decision creates a new and very complicated procedural process for the three projects to weather before licenses could ever be issued. Although FERC denied the New York Recreational Rivers Council late intervention at about the same time, AWA lawyer, Catherine Cotter of Washington has determined paddlers can re-intervene when (and if) the EISs are ever issued. When and if that time ever comes, **AWA will** be fully prepared to vigorously protect these unique free flowing river resources.

This decision is a landmark for river basin assessment. It should be studied by all intervenors across America where several projects are under consideration on **whitewater** rivers. This decision in conjunction with the Housatonic decision may signal a change in views at FERC about the value and defensibility of whitewater recreation.

Black River Honor Roll

The sacrifices of AWA lawyers, expert witnesses, and volunteers and unending financial support of the membership appear, at last, to be paying off. A partial Black River War honor roll includes:

Ron Smith
Pat Cunningham
Ron Wilson
Catherine Cotter
Brian Faller
Vern Husek
Leigh Blake
Drayton Grant
Pete Skinner
Gary Randorf
Pope Barrow
Mike Tucker
Tim Mount
Barbara Rottler
Bob Kaufman
Carlos Stern
Charley Walbridge
Steve Taylor
David Brown
Steve Massaro
Dave Conrad
John Loomis
Skip Luken
Rob Stevens
Steve Anderson
Ernest Zampelli

Mousatonic...

a notice from FERC dated March 3, 1988 stating:

"The movants have legitimate interests under the law that are not adequately represented by other parties.... It appears to be in the public interest to allow the movants to appear in the proceeding."

AWA Director Peter Skinner will be meeting soon with Gordon and McEwan to determine appropriate strategy directions.

NY Assemblyman sponsors progressive river bill

NYS Assemblyman Hoyt (remember - Mr. "Leftover Lizard" featured in the last issue of American White-water) recently received a river conservation bill authored by professionals in the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). Hoyt's staff, AWA, and others will tinker with the language of the bill and hopefully, it will fare better than Hoyt's river bill did last year.

The policy and findings of the bill will warm the hearts of paddlers everywhere:

"This proposal is intended to afford special recognition of and better protection for the State's river resources in light of recent amendments to federal legislation dealing with **licensing** of hydro-electric **facilities....** The increased pace of development [from generous PURPA buyback rates] and the resulting pressure on river resources have focused both State and national attention on the subject of river protection."

The bill would obligate the NYS DEC to promulgate criteria which would assist it in choosing the "unique" river segments deserving protection from hydro projects. Under the federal Electric Consumers Protection Act, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) is not permitted to license project on segments states designate as unique. While DEC is creating the criteria and choosing the

unique sites, any applications for Section 401 water quality certificates (the state's only handle to block hydro projects except for this "uniqueness" designation) must include a petition for individual determination of the special attributes of the proposed hydro site.

The DEC is also directed to prepare a comprehensive plan for conserving rivers now outside the wild and scenic system. The NYS Public Service Commission is directed to not allow recovery of facility costs for projects constructed on such unique segments after the law is enacted.

Assuming strict implementation schedules and other drafting problems can be cured, this bill will create a strong platform for increased protection of rivers in New York.

Sadly, Governor Cuomo at this writing had not yet adopted the bill as part of his program. AWA and the NY Audubon Society in conjunction with other environmental groups will be pressing forward aggressively to change his mind and seek its passage.

Oswegatchie River Update

Barry Robinson, well known paddler ["Mr. Maw"] of Schenectady, New York labored long and hard to file a substantial and detailed response January 25 to five whitewater use questions posed by FERC to AWA in November. These questions requested characterization of the



photo by Paul Alton

Gentle hydraulic at Sissonville Rapids on NY's Raquette

Of-dammed Raquette River Threatened by another project

During the Fall of 1987, AWA's Steve Massaro in his New York hydro site inventory effort identified a proposed hydro project whose adverse visual and recreational impacts would be substantial—the 2.2 megawatt Sissonville Project near Potsdam on the Raquette River. In a strong letter to DEC February 3, 1988, the New York Rivers Council set forth paddlers' concerns about the value of the affected river segment. The letter stated that:

"This project will flood a

series of rapids extensively enjoyed by paddlers and other river recreationalists. These rapids are the only major rapids available near Potsdam and are favorite spots for river enjoyment. In fact, these are the only open rapids on the river left below Carry Falls Reservoir. As such, they represent perfect candidates for designation as unique natural resources under the federal Electric Consumers Power Act."

The letter goes on to say:

"The rapids are heavily used by members of a north country club for the purpose of learning and enjoying river sports. Paul Alton, a well known Potsdam paddler, stated that these rapids are excellent training sites. The waves provide perfect sites for a beginner to learn the basic techniques required in most aspects of whitewater recreation. Several well

please turn to page 44

please turn to page 44

safety lines

Pack light, but pack *right*

Skimping on basic lightweight safety equipment can bear a heavy price

By Charlie Walbridge
AWA Safety Chairman



The past twenty years have seen many changes in whitewater **spurt**, especially in the area of equipment. Open canoes that roll and kayaks that squirt were not even thought of when I began paddling, but they are commonplace today.

But while sharper **skills** and improved gear allow paddlers to tackle streams of previously **unimagined** difficulty, many of these people are leaving critical backup gear behind. **Since carrying** too much is as much of a problem as taking **too** little, let's take a look at what equipment is really needed, what is optional, and what **can be** left behind.

Personal Protective Gear

First, the basic safety gear: a boat in good repair with adequate **floatation**; a life jacket, helmet and cold water protection. This list is well known to any novice, but many of today's paddlers have a minimalist philosophy which cuts too many corners.

Many squirt boats, lacking much buoyancy to begin with, are not outfitted with floatation bags to "save weight." Low buoyancy life jackets and ultra-light helmets reduce protection in exchange for less weight and increased mobility.

Cold water protection, even in this **age** of drysuits, **may be left behind** for the **same** reason. Some people even boat without shoes, making scouting, portaging, rescues or **walkouts** extremely unpleasant. In my opinion, these are not intelligent tradeoffs.

Many of the people who are making these choices have not **been** "trashed" by a river in years and have no conception of what it's going to be like to swim a class III-IV drop with such marginal protection. To begin with, **I feel** that anyone **who uses** a helmet without a **minimum of 1/2" to 3/4"** of shock-absorbing foam is taking a foolish **risk**. Head injuries have not always **been** rare in the past, and excellent helmets are not really that heavy. Even light, flashy helmets can be retrofitted with extra foam without trouble.

As for life vests, **I strongly** recommend that all paddlers, especially those who "never miss their roll," take deliberate swims under controlled conditions. Aside from teaching **them** to handle themselves in the water, this will show you just how much protection you're getting from your current life vest. Most people will think twice about low-buoyancy **PFDs** after a few swims in turbulent water.

Rescue Gear

Weight-conscious minimalists have a million excuses as to why they can't carry rescue tools. They say they **have no** room, or that the added weight throws off their boat's delicate balance.

The real reason is that ropes **and hardware**, like the seat belts in your car, are seldom **truly** needed. It takes real discipline to bring them along, week after week, **for the** one time that you **have to** put it **to use**. It's a bit of a nuisance, but it can save you considerable grief.

The rescue gear you should be geared to the **difficulty** of the run. A single set of **gear** is probably enough for a **small** group **running** class I-II rivers. On more difficult runs, however, however, rescues must be initiated swiftly by the boater nearest the accident. This mandates the presence of ropes and hardware in every boat.

What are we **talking** about here? Not **much, really**. A rescue bag with **65-75 feet** of stout line. Two standard carabineers, and every **outdoorsman's** reliable companion: a small, sharp knife. Total weight: about 2.5 **pounds** for the rescue bag; about .5 pound for the other tools. Three pounds total.

But... when everyone in the group carries them, there is a formidable pool of equipment of complex rescues. Like many of us, **I've** been tempted to leave this small package behind. But the thought of **realizing**, after the fact, that my laziness contributed to a fatality has usually persuaded me to bring them along.

This "rescue kit" can be lightened in a number of ways. Since a rescue bag will

absorb considerable water, carrying it in a **drybag** or bagged in plastic can reduce weight substantially.

The new compact rescue bags deserve a close look. Many feature a short (50') length of light (1/4") line which lack the reach or strength needed in real life. Several incidents have been reported to me in which ultra-compact rescue bags have failed to perform when needed. My own feeling is that 60' of **1,500 pound** test line represents a **minimum effective** standard. The extra length will often make a critical difference. The new SPECTRA ropes, which combine high strength, floatability and light weight, offer much promise despite their high cost.

Buying and carrying the tools is a start, but you must be skilled in their use. Take a rescue course or set up your own practice sessions with a good book and some friends until you know what you are doing. Remember that carelessness with ropes in swift water can harm others. Never abandon a rope in a river, even if it is snagged. If you can't release it, cut it off as short as possible. An abandoned line **almost** cost one paddler his life on the **Chattooga** River this past year.

The question of first aid supplies needed on rivers is controversial. On day trips with experienced friends on accessible rivers I typically bring several compresses, a triangular bandage and duct tape. My idea is to stabilize any injury and get help fast.

On overnight trips or runs far from civilization, a full first aid kit will be needed, not only for secondary items like aspirin but for the extra supplies needed to help **someone** when medical attention is far away. On commercial, instructional or expeditionary outings, a first aid kit should never leave the party. But on roadside runs, it can reasonably be kept in your car.

Since water eventually works its way into even the most secure storage, I recommend **double-bagging** all components with zip-loc bags. Getting bandages to stick to wet paddlers is always a hassle. **Tincture** of Benzoin, a sticky preparation applied to the skin, will solve that problem in a jiffy.

Back-up Gear

Being prepared for the worst is a tradition among serious outdoor athletes. But since **"full back-up"** is prohibitively heavy, you must match your extra equipment to the demands of the run. Spare paddle requirements exemplify this approach. The

usual guideline is one or two spares per group. On a run which parallels a road, however, it's perfectly reasonable to carry no spares at all. On rivers which lie away from good access, you can forgo the **extra paddle** if you are willing and able to walk out when **your primary** paddle breaks.

This might be fine in the summer, for example, **but risky in cold** weather. Either way, I'd rather carry the paddle than risk spoiling my trip. If the run traverses rugged country or requires several days to complete, extra paddles are mandatory. On lengthy expeditions, additional spares, say one for every three or even two persons, may be sensible.

The same attitude can be applied to food and clothing. My motto is always **to carry** a bit more than I need. On summer day trips, for example, I always have a paddle jacket (or a pile sweater in paddle jacket **weather**) **inside my drybag**. On day trips, a few extra candy bars will serve as emergency rations; on overnight it's sensible to carry an extra meal or even an extra day's nourishment.

When each person has these few simple items, the group possesses considerable **resources**. Often, they will make the difference between getting a weak or injured member of your party out on time and an epic struggle in **fading light**.

On long runs, there may be need to bivouac. Minimalist **theory** states that the weight of overnight gear will slow you down and force you to use it. Hard men and women may wish to follow that advice, but there is a middle course. A lightweight nylon tarp or "bivvy bag," some extra food and matches **can** provide marginal comfort with little weight penalty. Mine weighs only 1.5 pounds! I don't **take it out on** any day trip, but it's nice **to have** available for those 26-mile **one-day** paddling orgies on isolated runs.

Emergency Patching

A number of important back-up items have not been discussed. The **first** is matches. They're so light, I always have some along, even though I can't remember when the last time I **used** them to start a fire.

While plastic boats have eliminated the need for duct tape for boat patching, this handy stuff is great for all kinds of **emergency** repair. **When running** steep rivers in wet weather, we used to carry a small can of **wetsuit glue** along. Duct tape won't stick to a wet boat, and boats don't dry in the rain. But you can mop a damaged hull up as

best you can, coat the area around the crack with wetsuit glue, and ignite the glue with a match.

Yes, it's risky, and you have to watch it carefully, ready to blow it out if it gets too hot. It works because the solvents in the glue will burn away, leaving a dry, warm, sticky surface that duct tape will stick to forever. It's much faster and convenient than fiberglass, and works well on all but the most severe cases of boat abuse.

Map and Compass

Orienteering is an important skill for river runners. When you know the terrain you can monitor your progress and make intelligent decisions in the event of **trouble**. Most river runs in the East are **conveniently** laid out: roads, trails or railroads follow the run for a fast exit in case of emergency. In this case, maps are not really needed.

But many times, even on isolated **Western** runs, there are less obvious trails which can get you out more quickly. On accessible runs I consult a map and commit the "escape routes" to memory before leaving. On truly isolated runs, I carry a map. Those who charge off into untracked wilderness without a clue as to how to get out if their boat is lost are playing a fool's game. A lightweight compass and the skills to use it are also helpful; mine weighs two ounces!

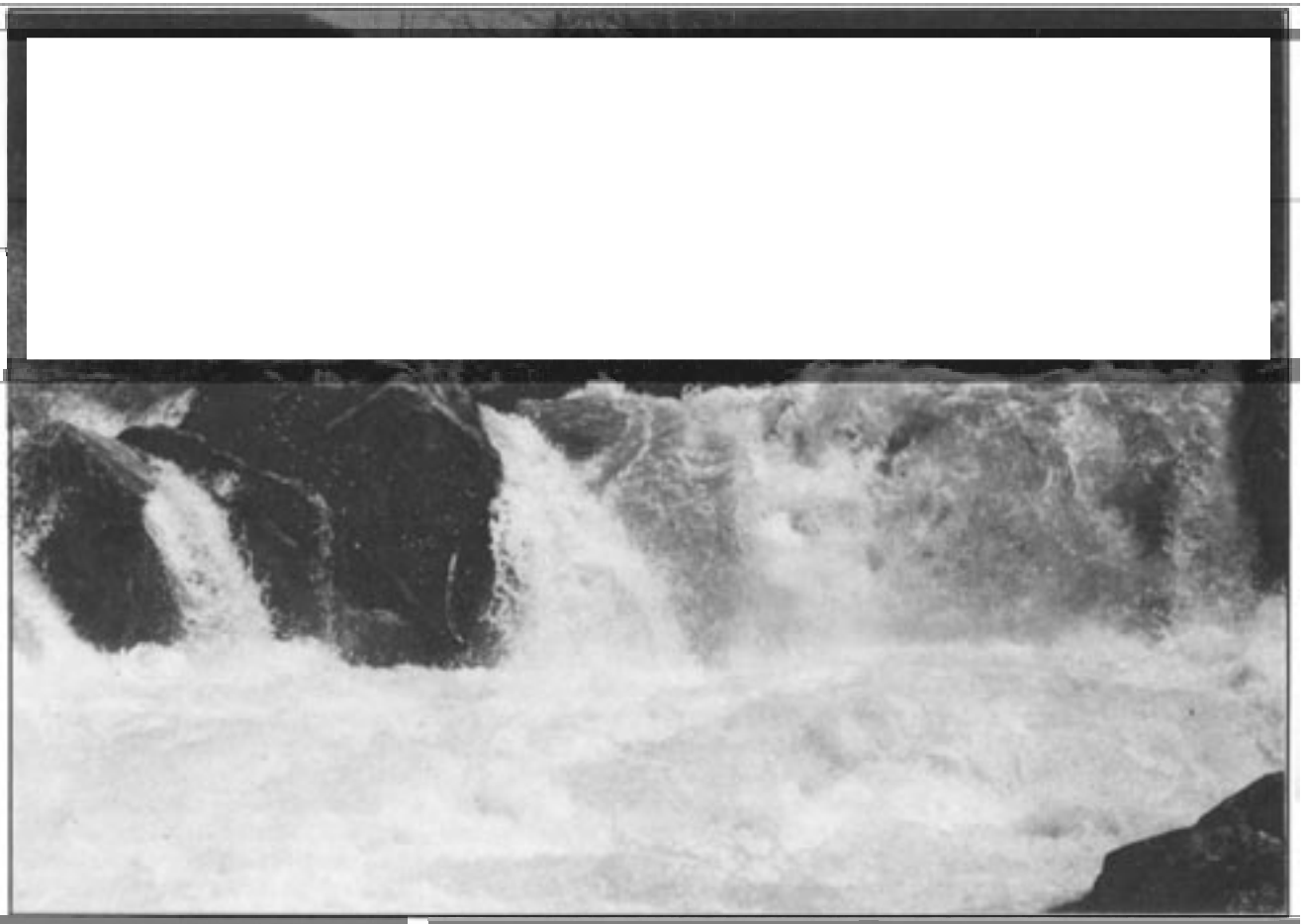
Confer with knowledgeable local paddlers to supplement the information **&** the map. Trails become roads, and vice versa, as civilization ebbs and flows.

Wait a minute--isn't this getting to be a lot? **Well, the sum total** of my rescue tools, food and bivvy sack is about six pounds. That's about the weight of a 35 mm SLR with an 80-200 zoom lens. And believe me, I carry as little of this as possible on runs with readily available escape routes.

I've always carried my own spare paddle because the length I use is so unusual. Many **kayakers** have paddled out of difficult runs using this ungainly stick! And my **rescue rope** is handy on portages to keep people out of trouble.

I've always paddled for **fun** and never enjoyed hardship. The biggest mental hurdle to overcome is **preplanning**: deciding to collect your gear together in a small package before you get to the river. Much of the satisfaction of running difficult water begins with careful preparation, which gives you an extra edge of confidence in tight places.

W *secrets of the* WATAUGA A



By Forrest Callaway

Maybe **you can find your way** through the mountain roads of western North Carolina to the **town on Boone**.

And if it's early on a Saturday morning in March, maybe you'll stumble onto a little caravan of shuttle cars, kayaks roped down on top, parked in front of Shoney's Big Boy Restaurant.

But that doesn't mean you've found your way to the put-in of the Watauga River...or that you're about to be initiated into the mysterious manners of Carolina's premier class 5 run.

Because even if you lurk outside Shoney's, waiting to accost **one of the resident** paddlers as they emerge after wolfing down a country breakfast of herculean proportions, a question about the Watauga is likely to elicit a pale, **distraughtful** look as if someone's blood is soon to be let.

Or, maybe one of the good old boys will lean back and with a voice that **could** pass for **Gomer Pyle** reply, "Not **tale-in**', not **tale-in**', not **tale-in**'."

As you will discover, the secrets of the Watauga are not easily found out.

The country surrounding Boone, North

Carolina is **fraught** with contradictions..

--Like so much of southern Appalachia, it is a terrain that juxtaposes stunning natural beauty with the obvious evidence of man's abuses. Backwoods shanties are framed against magnificent mountain vistas.

--Appalachian State University, located in Boone, offers a wide variety of four-year and graduate programs, yet, just a few miles out of town, you wouldn't be sur-

Above: John Sheppard approaches "The Falls" during a high-water run of the Watauga Gorge.

prised to discover an active still in some deserted hollow.

--Local good ole' boys rattle down the roads in beat pick-up trucks, spittin' out the windows, while one ridge over the downhill chic of the South frolic at North Carolina's three top alpine ski resorts.

Like the region, the Watauga is full of paradoxes. For instance, the Watauga's gradient has been listed ~~in~~ North Carolina Whitewater by Bob **Benner** at 90 ft/mile for the entire run. While 90 ft/mile is nothing to shake a stick at, it sure wouldn't make you call in sick on Friday to go paddle.

The truth of the matter is while the entire run is five miles long, the actual wham-bam-thank-you-mam gorge is three miles and drops at a stomach-wrenching 175-200 ft/mile.

Beyond the gradient, the river itself is particularly hard to describe.

Most rivers are lumped into two broad categories according to their characteristics: a stream is either classified as a **pool-drop** river where a paddler makes a decision and then goes for it or it is termed a boulder-garden run that requires slowly eddy-hopping down longer rapids, like a craftsman weaving a basket.

The Watauga, however, has it all. And its schizophrenic personality makes it doubly difficult to **get to know**.

There's a definite fraternity of boaters who regularly ply the waters of the Watauga. And like many fraternities, membership in the group is very select.

Appropriately, Boone is a college town--home of Appalachian State University--and most of the paddlers on the



Watauga are students or alumni of ASU. Every year, a pledge class of two or three new boaters are tapped in from the student body and indoctrinated with the society's secrets.

There's no secret handshake, fraternal **mottos** or songs...but it could be argued that hazing still exists within the Watauga fraternity. After all, the river offers some of the hardest paddling in the South. And more than one Watauga initiate has been rewarded with a pledge "pin" on the river's technical, obstructed drops.

But by the time four years have elapsed (or five or six years, if ASU **student-paddlers** are like other collegiate boaters) the pledge has graduated with a BS in the Watauga's difficult curriculum.

Outside of the ASU connection, the

number of paddlers on the Watauga is ~~lim~~ ited. A big day will see 15 boaters on the river and perhaps no more than 30 different paddlers will put on during the course of a season.

To a large degree, the river's exclusiveness is due to its bad-ass reputation. Intermediate paddlers avoid the run, even in the company of an experienced leader. Like the Upper **Yough** five years ago, the river possesses an unknown quality that scares a lot of people.

Perhaps the fear is **legitimate--the** Watauga has a nasty **disposition**. But more likely, paddlers avoid the Watauga because they are unfamiliar with **the river--** and without the benefit of a four-year **river** practicum at ASU, it's a very difficult piece of water to learn.

Just finding the put-in for the Gorge and its five-mile stretch of class 5 rapids **has** its difficulties. The river parallels state Route 421, but the water drops away from the road upon entering the gorge with steep, tangled slopes of rhododendron. Theoretically, a paddler could walk out of the gorge ~~from~~ anywhere on the left, but the hike up the slope **through** the thick vegetation would kick your tail.

In actuality, after the low-water bridge on the state-maintained side road that marks the put-in, there are only three access points to the river in the gorge. The



(Right) Second drop of Hydro at high water. (Above) Watauga put-in presents a pastoral scene that changes abruptly downstream.

only real option out of the gorge is in your boat.

Knowing when there's sufficient water for the run is also a confusing question. There are two ways: the TVA citizens action line can give you a daily reading if you call after **9:30 a.m.** The reading is taken upstream of the put-in and will more than likely be low. At least 50-100 cfs to their reading to get close to the **actual** water levels. A TVA reading of 200 or **more** puts you in business.

The only drawback from this avenue of obtaining water levels is that the **gauge will** occasionally be frozen. And as **the** gauge is located upstream of the put-in, the reading is likely to be 50-100 CFS lower than the **actual** water level within the Gorge.

Consequently, most local paddlers refer to the low-water **bridge** at the put-in to gauge levels. **When** the river runs at 17" below the bridge pylon, the water is right at 200 cfs. The Watauga has been paddled at levels up to 1,000 cfs—but when the water is right to the edge of the bridge, you're venturing into the **realm** of hair-boating.

Just when you think you've got the Watauga figured out, **just when** you think you've developed a feel for the river, when you've finally settled in to the **rhythm** of the water and you're confident you **can** anticipate what lies around the bend, the Watauga will reveal a new **personality**.

The Gorge run opens with a **pair** of blind boulder gardens--Burp and Grind followed by **Shitkicker**--that remind **you** of the two identical twins you went to school with. At first glance, you can't tell them apart and maybe after seeing them time after time, **you can differentiate** between them because one has a mole and **the other** doesn't.

Both drops share the same M.O.--enter river right, paddle toward a large **anvil-shaped** rock, then cut left three feet in **front**. Once past, you pick the **cleanest line** possible to the bottom.

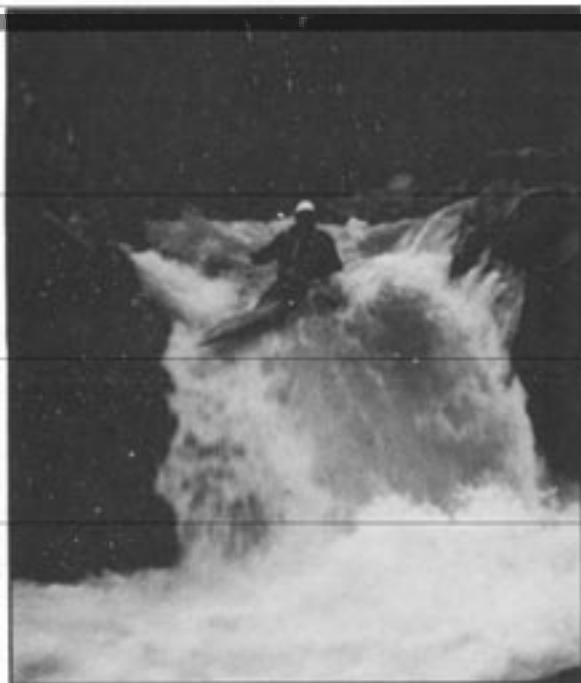
Boulder-garden type rapids continue with Boogie Two Shoes. It's a joy for people who know the river and make this into a race course by straightening the bends, cutting through tight slots, and whooping it up as they go down. For the first-timer, it is an exercise in eddy hopping into oblivion.

At this point, the uninitiated paddler might be starting to relax. The Watauga appears to be nothing but a natural slalom course...tight and technical, but nothing **you couldn't pick your way down**.

But then the Watauga sheds its skin and the creature that crawls out is another animal indeed.

Hydro, the next major drop, is the first of the get-out-of-your-boat-and-scout a pids. Generally **considered** a class IV, Hydro can quickly become a class V when water levels creep upward.

The rapid is a series of three ledges, the



Another view of 'The Falls'--this time at a more reasonable level as Forrest Callaway takes the drop.

first of which has a screaming left turn at the bottom. The second ledge, strategically placed by the River Gods, threatens to screw things up for the final drop. And as you might imagine, the last ledge of Hydro is where the rapid gains its name--all the water plunges into **a mean, ugly** hole.

After Hydro, the river bed funnels down to a width of approximately 15 feet creating a Western river feel. Heavy Water, the wildest rapid in this section, starts out blind from river right and then opens up in the middle with a burst of acceleration matched only by a 911 turbo Porsche and ending with a blind **swoshing S-turn** at the bottom.

Next up lies Diana's Ledge--a rapid whose name changes for whoever was ate up there last. In this case, the most recent victim was Diana Holder of Roanoke, **Va.**,

and her story demonstrates the **changeable** nature of the Watauga.

The rapid is not known as one of the Watauga's most **difficult drops**, and is generally run on one of three different **lines, according** to the water level. In the spring of 1987 while running **the Gorge** at a high level, Diana entered the rapid **on the route** customarily **used** at normal levels and was recirculated in the hydraulic at the bottom. Held by the hole for a terrifying length of time, Diana required **CPR** to be revived.

Changeable lines, powerful sluices, technical boulder gardens--at this

point all that is **missing** in the **Watauga's whitewater** repertoire is a waterfall. That comes next...

"Tennessee the Hard Way," best known as "The Falls," is a class V, 18-foot waterfall with a difficult approach. Most of the water wants to sweep you far river left (**a.k.a.** Tennessee the Wrong Way) approximately 30 feet above the lip of the drop. That's not the place you want to be, as a submerged rock on the bottom left of the falls mandates a right-hand "boof" move.

This is not a place to blow your line and it is not a place for the faint hearted. There is an **easy** portage river left if you choose.

The run ends with a pair of "gimme" drops--the **kind no** one scouts but that are guaranteed to unsettle your stomach. The first is Boof Falls, a 12-foot vertical drop that, if done correctly, will land you in an eddy below. The

next is called Rewind, a 6-foot drop at the end of the Gorge that tradition **demand**s **you run** backwards to **make everything** upstream count.

Here again, your stomach ends up in your throat before a feeling of relief start **taking** over as you realize you've finished the Gorge.

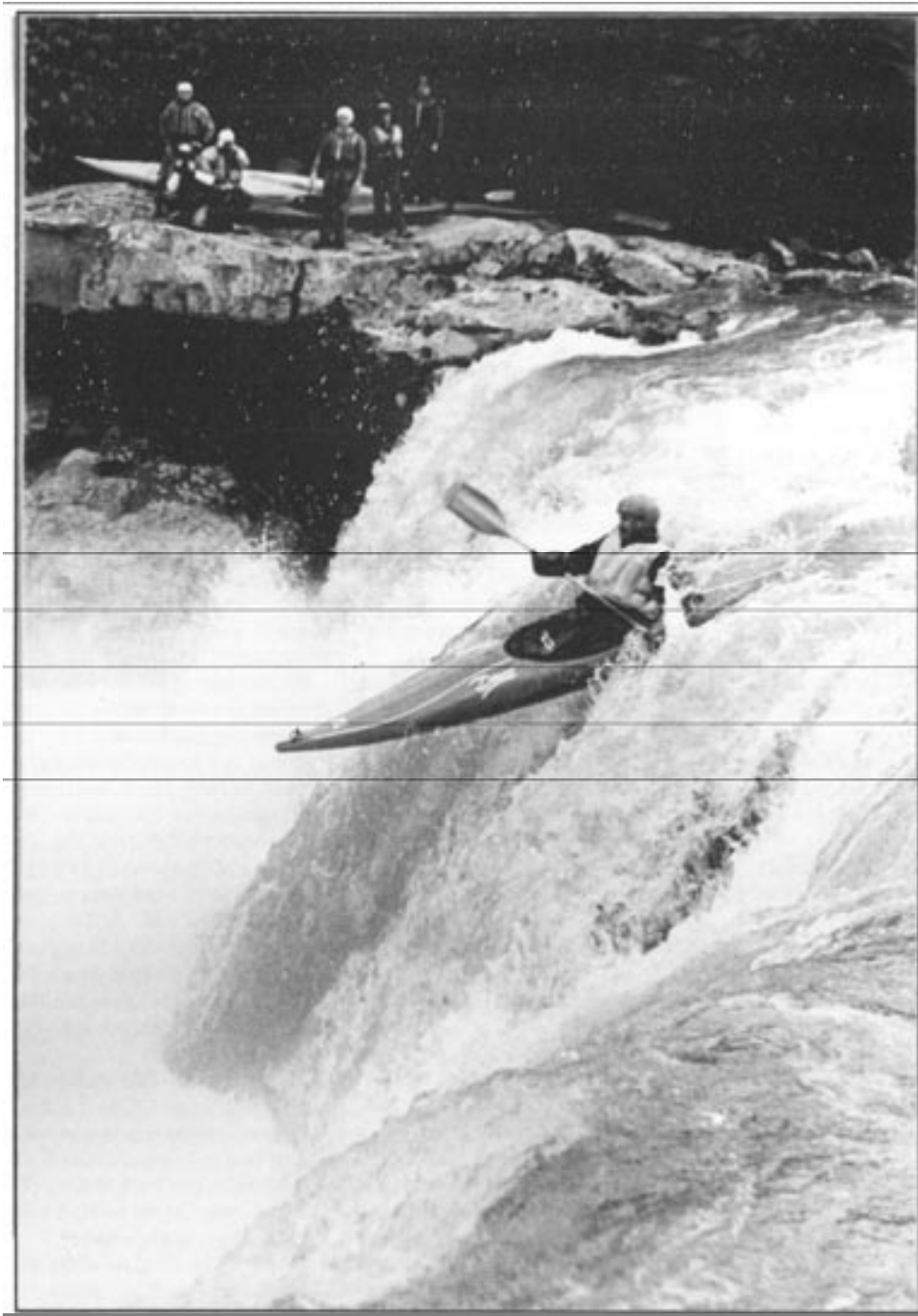
The secrets of the Watauga are difficult to unravel. But maybe if you show up at **Shoney's** on a Saturday **morning** in the early spring, or matriculate at Appalachian State, you'll **find** a way to learn of its varied moods.

But don't ask me no more questions, 'cause past what I've already spilled, I'm....

"Not **tale-in'**, not tale-in', not **tale-in'**."

The River of Many Returns

Big Sandy Creek



There's probably plenty of paddlers who, by virtue of experience, are better qualified to write this piece about West Virginia's Big Sandy Creek.

Steve Taylor, for instance, actually owns a rustic cabin nestled in the mountain laurel just feet away from the put-in. And there are Pittsburgh paddlers who, living only an hour away, will make the run twenty times a year.

But in my defense, I have to admit that I've **boated** the river, I've **walked** the river, and I've **swum** the river. The unusual combination of those three perspectives has enabled me to gather a unique familiarity with the Big Sandy--an intimacy few other paddlers would care to duplicate.

In fact, the only way I haven't done the Big Sandy is fly the river. It has been suggested, given my early proclivity for finding trouble on that particular run, that it was only a matter of time before I'd view the creek from that vantage point as well.

No chance of that. With my checkered past, I'd never have become an angel.

Like a cat, I once fully believed I owned nine lives. But after my **first** year of paddling the Sandy, the river had claimed at least two of them.

My initial experience with the Sandy came on a rainy Sunday in late April 1981. I had fallen in with a group of paddlers loitering around Albright, West Virginia, looking for an appropriate run. We eliminated the Cheat Canyon--the river was brown and swollen, cresting over seven feet. Finally, we decided to attempt the Little Sandy, running the tributary down to its confluence with the Big Sandy, then finishing the trip on the main stem at Rockville.

Photos and text by Chris Koll.
Opposite: Bob Gedekoh plunges over The Falls.



Big Splat

The trip proved to be exciting, if uneventful. The Big Sandy was running at **8.7--an** especially high level--but the blood and guts of the Big Sandy lies below Rockville. We arrived **safe and sound**.

I should have quit while I was ahead.

Back at the Little Sandy put-in, I was already strapping my boat on the racks when a van pulled up and a burly, **bull-necked** C-boater leaped out and demanded:

"Anyone want to paddle down to **Jenkinsburg?**"

Sure, I assented, if he would lead me down.

Fifteen minutes later we were back on the Little Sandy. Less than an hour later, we were well past Rockville, and I realized that perhaps the Lower Big Sandy was a bit more than a bargained for. At that level, the **current** hurled us down the stream through a sea of waves and swirling eddy lines.

We had carried the Falls--a sheer **18-foot** drop generally **unrunnable** at levels over **7.5--and** blasted through the Zoom Flume when my partner turned and commented.

"You're doing pretty well. How long have you been boating?"

"Three months," I replied.

His face blanched.

"You can roll, can't you?" he asked.

Well, I could--most of the time. But after we ran the next drop--Little **Splat--I** flipped while threading my way through some larger rocks into what was described as a "must" eddy **on the left**. My roll was no

where to be found. I bailed out.

Iknew that 30 feet below lay Big Splat--a two-stage, **25-foot** water-fall. I also knew, at that level, a swim over the falls was almost guaranteed to be **fatal**. I **practically** planed across the water to an eddy behind a **mid-river** rock and then scrambled aboard.

What to do? My perch was out of **rope-throw**. There was another boulder 10 feet closer to shore...if I could just jump far enough to make that eddy...

By this time my partner was beached on river left. I pantomimed my intentions. He vehemently signalled no.

Then, in a remarkable display of boat control, he ferried his C-boat through the swift current, feet from the lip of the drop, to the eddy behind my **rock**. I **lay** across the back deck of his canoe, like a frog, and he calmly angled the boat back to land.

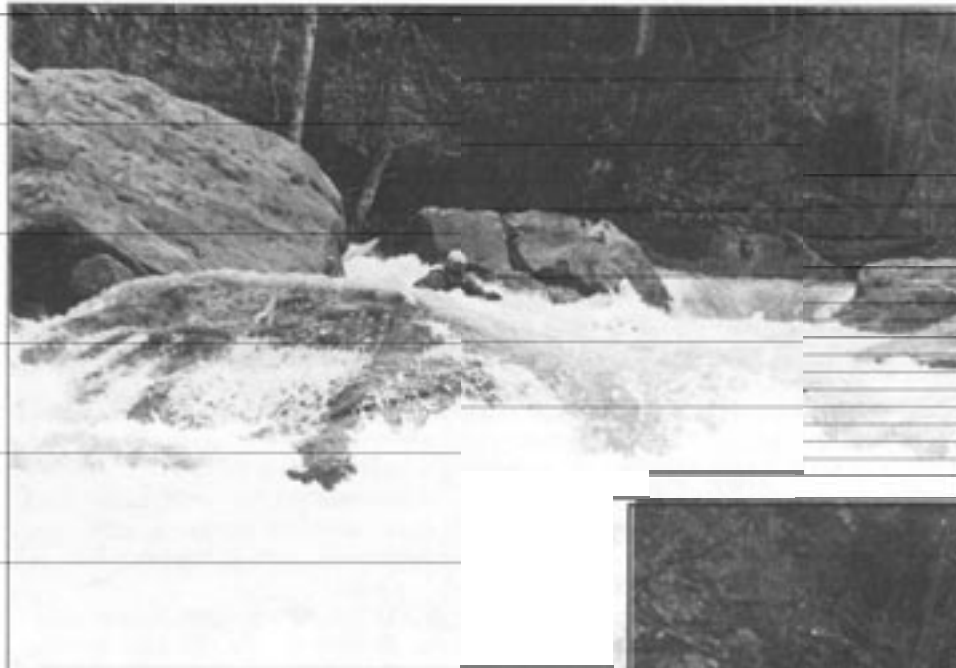
From shore, I took my **first** look at Big Splat. **The river** tumbled through a **narrow** slot on the left, dropped over a five-foot ledge into a tiny pool, then crashed over a 15-foot falls straight down upon a rock the size of a car.

My boat and paddle were no where in sight. I didn't care. In fact, I was relieved.

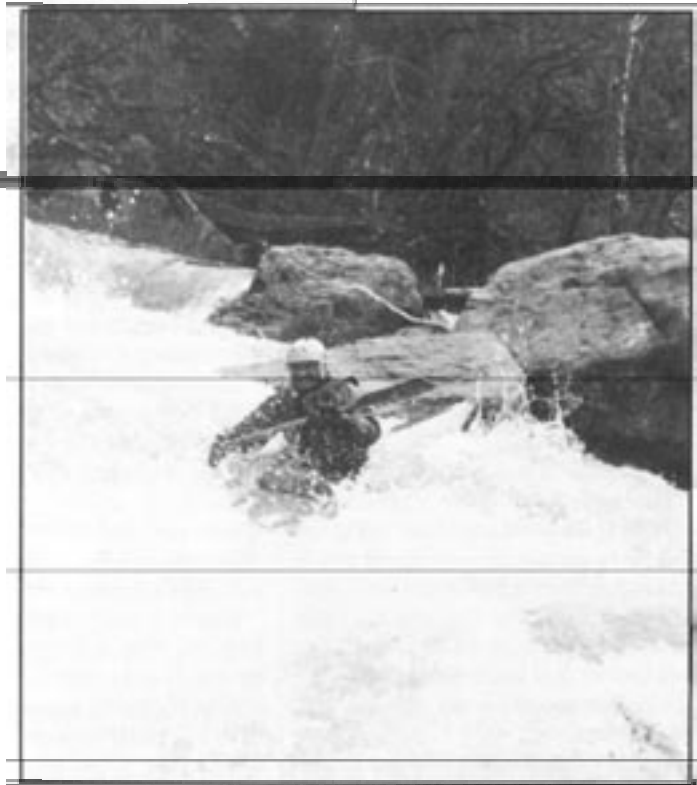
My companion was already shouldering his boat as I returned from my scout.

"I'll meet you back at Rockville," he informed me. "At this level, it won't take me long to get to the bottom."

And off he went, speeding down the Sandy at flood, alone, **as serene as** if he was



Near the end of the Lower Big Sandy, a paddler crashes through First Island Rapid in the series of photos to the left and below.



floating a class II brook.

The identity of my mysterious companion was, of course, Dean Tomko—one of the nation's foremost hair paddlers. And although the excursion cost me a boat and a paddle and a few gray hairs, the expedition proved invaluable.

After that ill-fated day, I went back to class III-IV water for a bit more seasoning. But when I thought I was ready to step back up to class V, I called Dean, and he would let me tag along on some of West Virginia's top runs. He might have felt a little guilty, although he had no reason to be—and ultimately I benefitted from paddling in his company.

In fact, I wish Dean had been along a year later during the trip in which I learned the dubious distinction as "the guy who swam Big Splat."

With the Sandy running at 7.0, and paddling with a group of three boaters, I ran down Little Splat first. To be honest, I had forgotten how close the end of Little Splat was to the point of no return for Big Splat.

As I drifted down on the right, I suddenly came to the realization: **Wait a second...I know where I am...and I don't want to be here.**

I landed beside a midstream boulder and started to scramble out of my boat...then I felt my grip slip. My fingernails etched streaks in the rock as I slid into the current.

I submerged going over the first drop and did not surface in the pool. But in the

back of my mind, I kept thinking of the splat rock at the bottom of the final falls, and attempted to make my way to what I thought was left.

Then, still underwater, I felt myself falling, falling, falling, and I was in the recirculation. Try as I might, I could not stroke to the surface. My arms and legs felt like they were being twisted from my body. It was impossible to judge time. I remember thinking, "Jeez...a fellow could die here."

Curling into a ball to alleviate the buffeting, I was suddenly sucked to the bottom, spit from the hydraulic, and emerged

ten yards downstream.

I walked away unscathed from the second incident. But most readers might wonder if somewhere along the line, I might have suffered some brain damage. What on earth could motivate a sane person to paddle into harm's way...and then go back for a second helping?

To answer that question is to understand the attraction of the Big Sandy.

There are as many reasons for otherwise rational individuals to take up white water boating as there are paddlers. Every

boater has his own personal motivation. But there are some common threads that weave through the attraction of the sport:

--Paddling as an escape vehicle. There's no doubt, one of the primary benefits of whitewater boating is that the sport is so all-consuming. Once on the river, there's little room in your conscious for work-a-day worries. **Your only** concern is getting down the rapid.

--Paddling as a vehicle to encounter natural beauty. Whitewater rivers often traverse secluded areas and boat is the only method by which to experience them. And what better way to enjoy wilderness areas with little impact--boats won't even leave a footprint.

--Paddling as a psychological and physical challenge. Your **nine-to-five** life may be **filled** with routine, but the weekend whitewater paddler is constantly offered the opportunity to test his strength, skill, stamina and courage against varying water conditions.

If any of those three reasons sound familiar, then you're halfway to understanding the Sandy's allure.

Putting on the lower Big Sandy is more than simply driving to a river bank and pitching your boat off the bridge. No, traveling to Rockville, West Virginia is like entering another world.

And indeed it is--a world time forgot.

Fist you turn off West Virginia state route 26 at the unincorporated village of High Point and take the paved road until it turns to dirt. The further inland you travel, the more the road disintegrates, the more disheveled the condition of the deserted farm houses. It is like a trip into the Twilight Zone where for every mile, the land ages 50 years.

Finally, the road branches into a Y. One lane leads off into a rutted cow pasture. The other turns left and descends for **two miles** into **the gorge** carved by the Big Sandy.

At one time, the road was a major West Virginia thoroughfare but now its surface, worn down to the bedrock, is an obstacle course designed to test the endurance of a vehicle with low ground clearance. You bump down the hill in first gear, weaving from one side to the other to avoid the ruts and rocks. A **creek tumbles** down in a **series** of cascades on your right, and as **you near** the bottom, the road is cloaked in a canopy of evergreens and mountain laurel.

Suddenly, the road abruptly veers to the left, you can see patches of the Sandy's

emerald **green** water through the trees, and you are in Rockville.

There isn't much to the town. Steve Taylor's one-room cabin lies back in the laurel and a pair neatly-kept camps, always vacant during paddling season, are framed by pines. The road crosses the creek over a **90-year** old bridge, its girders **covered** with a patina of rust and its wood decking curling with age.

You'd swear you've left the 20th century behind if it wasn't for the solar antenna spread like wings over the automatic gauging station.

Across the creek, the road winds up a hill and through a field of **debris** where the remains of a few abandoned homesteads stand. Like so many West Virginia landscapes, there are some rusted hulks of forgotten cars and farm equipment and a veritable sea of discarded **bottles** and cans. In the middle of this panorama is a single shanty--the home of Rockville Rosie.

Rosie is the only full-time resident of Rockville. She is a woman of indeterminate years--her face is deeply wrinkled but the deep layer of dirt obscures her true age. She is slight, but spry, and her eyes are unusually bright and shiny. She lives with the company of her geese and goats.

Like most **hermits--Rosie** doesn't care much for people--especially smart-ass college **kids** from **Morgantown** who occasionally **find** their way to Rockville and torment her and her animals. But she doesn't seem to mind paddlers. As a matter of fact, Rosie is downright fond of Taylor and Phil Coleman of Friendsville.

Maybe Rosie recognizes something in paddlers. Maybe Rosie senses that part of the reason boaters have come to Rockville and the Big Sandy is to **escape** a little bit of the world. And in that **respect**, we're a little bit **like her**.

It would be difficult to select the single most beautiful river setting in West Virginia. From the heights of the New River Gorge to the thickly forested banks of the Middle Fork to the sheep-walled valley of the Blackwater, the **Mountain State** possesses an abundance of magnificent scenery.

But if you were forced to pick the single most breath-taking stretch of river in the state--the Big Sandy would win. Hands down.

Fist, there's the water. Lie most creeks, after a week of rain the Sandy runs high and brown. But given a **day or two**,

after the level drops down to seven feet or so, the water assumes a brilliant **green hue** and runs clean and clear.

In fact, green is the dominant color of the Sandy Gorge. Even in early spring before the trees have budded, thick tangles of laurel choke the banks providing a lush, verdant effect.

During certain constrictions, the gorge walls close in and sheer rock faces poke through the foliage. Dozens of tiny tributaries feed the Sandy and after a rain, countless waterfalls cascade in white curtains over the cliffs.

Old railroad grades parallel the creek on either ridge, well up above the water line where they aren't obtrusive. **When** the land dries--after paddling season ends, thank **God--hikers** walk in to marvel at the creeks two big vertical drops: Big Sandy Falls and Big Splat.

The lower Sandy **run** ends at the creek's confluence with the Cheat River at Jenkinsburg Bridge, sharing a common take out with the Cheat River Gorge trip. But while most Cheat paddlers drive up the hazardous road on the west side of the Cheat to Masontown, Sandy boaters more often than not utilize Glen Miller's shuttle service and by doing so, enjoy one last wonderful glimpse of the West Virginia mountain country.

The **east road** out of **Jenkinsburg** back to High Point is passible only to four-wheel drive vehicles but with prior reservations, Miller will meet a party of paddlers at an appointed time with his venerable stake-rack truck. Boats are stacked high in the



Having survived the first drop, paddler approaches the final ledge of Big Splat.



back, and paddlers pile in on top.

From their vantage point, as Miller's truck lurches up the steep mountain path, boaters can see the Cheat Gorge slicing through the ridges of the Appalachians. In the back of the truck on a warm spring day with a cool beer in hand (provided by Miller), you sometimes forget whether you're riding the truck because you wanted to go boating, or you went boating to ride the truck.

The summer I started boating, eight years ago, I probably paddled the Lower Youghieny 50 times. Never got tired of it. After a long absence, I went back last year. The river was unchanged—still beautiful, still full of spots to surf or blast. But somehow, the excitement generated by the apprehension that maybe I'll screw up in this rapid was gone.

Personally, I get tired of hearing people whine about the immaturity of so-called adrenalin freaks, the sanctimonious complaints about paddlers who need to be scared to enjoy themselves. Fear has nothing to do with it.

I like to run difficult drops because it's a challenge—and a test without possibility of failure is no test at all.

Although I have run the Sandy thirty times or more over the past seven years, I've never sensed a similar feeling of ennui. That's because regardless how many Sandy runs you've logged, the river always reserves just enough menace to keep you from becoming complacent.

It's a river with consequences.

Take the first major drop--the Falls are located a little more than a mile below

Rockville and immediately preceded by a relatively easy class IV that empties into a 30-foot pool just above the precipice. The entry rapid is not overly difficult, but a swim here could easily result in an IS-foot plunge over the edge.

The Falls is not a particularly difficult waterfall to jump, as waterfalls go. The trick is to paddle like a madman, hip back as you clear the edge, and "boof" the recirculation below.

The danger of the drop is directly linked to water level. At moderate levels, from six to seven feet, the recirculation is not overly threatening. But as the level climbs to seven feet and above, the hole at the bottom spreads out like batter at the base of the drop.

I watched Friendsville's Roger Zbell run the Falls at eight feet. Zbell cranked across the pool at the top--his paddle a blur--practically flew off the top and skipped across the hydraulic like a flat rock thrown sideways. Judicious paddlers consider a portage when the level creeps past seven feet, but the point is, there's always something to anticipate on the Sandy.

After the Falls, class III-IV drops continue unabated until Zoom Flume--a 12-foot slide down a slanted rock shelf. And within sight of the Flume is Little Splat where a screw-up can mean an intimate experience with Big Splat just below, as I can attest.

With practically every paddling party, after the group has made the eddy above Big Splat with nobodies in the water, one boater will turn to another and comment, "You-know, I always feel better after Big Splat." And paddlers do feel better.

A Rockville portfolio...

left: Glen Miller poses with a truck load of boaters. Below: Rosie's cabin hidden in the trees. Bottom: Bob Glanville crosses the aged bridge at Rockville to check the gauge.



They've passed a test.

I finally made it over Big Splat in my boat. Appropriately, it was Dean who led me down the drop last year. I was a little scared, but not much--I figured I had prepped for the exam and when it came time for the test, I passed pretty easily.

That isn't to say I'm running that mother every time. I've already walked it twice since. But that's why I love the Sandy...

I always come back for more because there's more to come back for.

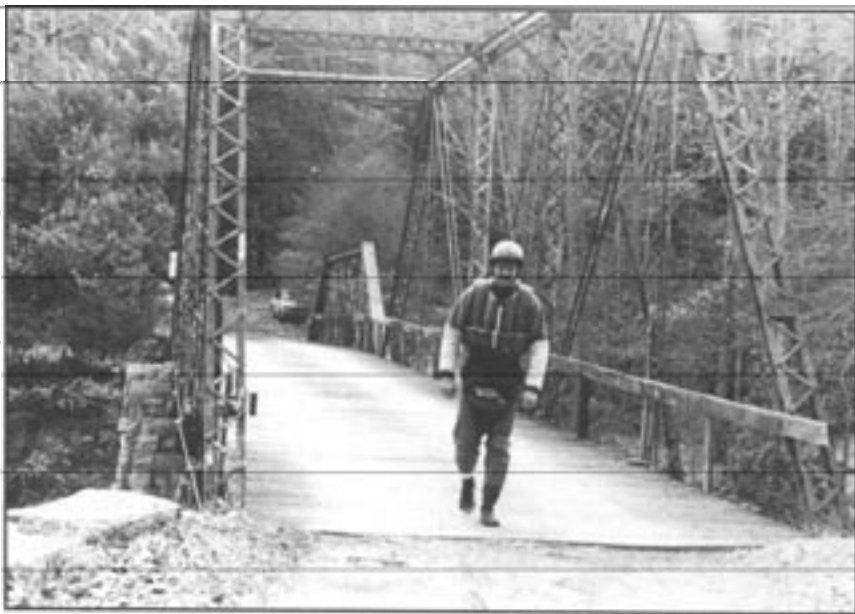




photo by Scott Underhill

**On New Hampshire's
North Branch of the
Contoocook,
you can experience...**

Northern Hair!

The North Branch of the Contoocook in New Hampshire's Monadnock Region is one of the sleeping gems of technical boating. Class IV+ to V+ drops for much of its length, the North Branch offers a long season for a small stream and sufficient challenges for the expert boater. Rapids such as Powerline Falls, Cyclops Stake, The Millrace, Liberty Farms Rapid and Beaver Cleaver Falls combine an incredibly fast pace with steep gradient during the

*Text by John Porterfield. John is the co-author of **Appalachian Whitewater, Volume III, The Northern Mountains**. Photos by Scott Underhill, a professional photographer and kayaker from Boston. Photo above: Scott Nowak plunges through **Lost Lens Rapid**.*

continuous sections (maximum 140 feet per mile), a tight river course through countless boulders that never seem to end, and the very real threat of pins and strain-ers.

The North Branch of the Contoocook rises out Highland Lake and Island Pond near Stoddard, New Hampshire, 15 miles northeast of Keene. The North Branch is unique for a small cfs stream; it has a number of buffering ponds, swamps and marshes along its ten mile length, that tend to lengthen its season. Most streams of its size tend to rise very quickly and peak, with only a few days of paddling available. The North Branch of the Contoocook's season, which normally starts in March, often lasts close to a month, with sufficient rain and snowpack. It commonly rises to low to medium levels in late fall after the leaves

have left the trees and the ground has frozen.

Like its bigger sister the Contoocook, the North Branch's waters are tea-colored, due to tannic acid, a natural pollutant produced by decaying vegetation. This tea-colored water tends to disguise the multiple boulders that clog the North Branch's streambed.

The upper stretches between Powerline Falls and Stone Arch Bridge Rapid combine big drops with solitary ponds, away from signs of civilization. The middle section that starts below Stone Arch Bridge Rapid and concludes at The Millrace is fairly continuous, with an occasional pools and quickwater stretches in which gear and paddlers can be retrieved. The Millrace Rapid at most levels is Class VI--a dance with death even at low levels. The lower

section, from the Millrace to the take out at the head of Franklin Pierce Lake, is continuous, Class IV+ to V+ whitewater--by far the most pushy and continuously demanding section on the run. The river is loosely shadowed by Route 9, which offers, at a comfortable distance, the reassurance of safety if mishap should occur.

If the North Branch **did not** contain such **difficult** rapids, it would perhaps be one of the most popular whitewater runs in the Granite State. Streamside beauty abounds, with moss covered boulders, **biih**, **fir**, oak and maple competing with the quiet solitude of the upper ponds and lower **marshes**--a quintessential Northern New England river experience.

Runnable levels vary from a low of minus 1 to plus **3/4** on the handpainted gauge, found river left, on the downstream portion of the Route 9 bridge at Stone Arch Bridge Rapids. Reasonable levels (where most of the plastic is left on **the boat** or the river isn't so high you can't get under the bridges) vary **from minus 1/2** to plus 1/2. Gauge level information is available through **The Merrimack Valley Paddlers'** river **hotline**, at 603-432-MVW.

Incidentally, the North Branch is considered a "plasticboatrun".

Strainers are a way of life on the North Branch; duck under one tree, skirt around the end of yet another, and pull out just in time to drag your boat through the snow around yet another obstruction. Last fall members of a local paddling club, The Merrimack Valley Paddlers, pulled together **to rid** the run of dozens of strainers. This effort has improved the overall safety of **the run**, but should not be interpreted as a replacement for scouting.

There are a number of entrance points to the North Branch of the **Contoocook**, depending on your stamina and ability. The upper section (Class IV+ with one Class V drop) starts at the intersection of Routes 9 and 123 in Antrim. Here, a dirt road leads to the right off Route 123 north, just above the intersection. A flatwater put-in is possible above the first Class IV+ drop, **Powerline Falls**.

Powerline Falls from Route 9 looks deadly, but luckily, its bark is worse than its bite. The falls drop 6 feet into a huge hole, then divide around a **condominium-sized** boulder. The left route of this initiation rapid is preferable. Below, the river flows through a short tunnel that should be checked first for strainers. Class **III-IV** rapids follow through the woods, with a



photo by Scott Underhill

Joe Damboise challenges "The Millrace," one of the Contoocook's riskiest drops.

long pond and inlets that could lead you astray.

The North Branch's upper whitewater stretches are divided by isolated ponds and marshes, where otter, **osprey**, **muskrat** and beaver are at home. Skim ice is often encountered in early season, with ice breaking duties alternated amongst the **team members**.

Signs of civilization on the left mark a portage around a remote, 12 foot waterfall, with the remains of a dock smashed on the rocks below. Thick stands of pine, cedar and hemlock line the banks; low hills, still devoid of development, frame the rest of

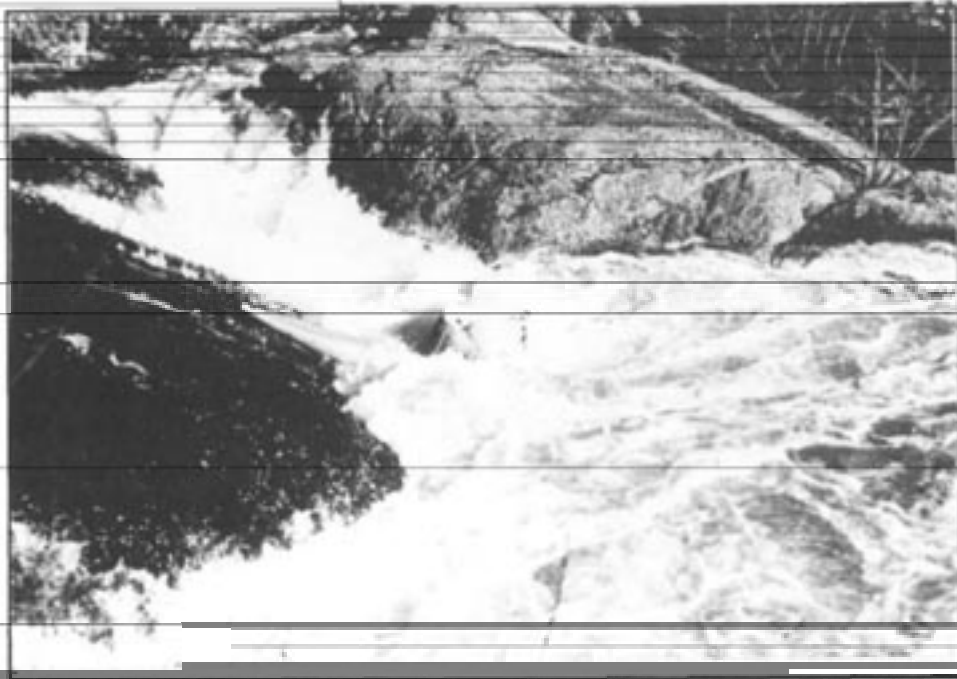
this near-wilderness scene.

Below the first portage lies a 6 foot waterfall, commonly run. On one trip, an experienced paddler who had **run** the North Branch before managed to get sucked back into the base of this drop, where his Sabre appeared to become pinned, the paddler upside down. A few seconds later, a paddle flushed **free**, the boater then forced **his** way out of his boat and began recirculating in the pour over. Wild-eyed and yelling for help, he recirculated a dozen times while party members scrambled for shore and their throw bags. The paddler finally flushed out, his spray skirt sucked off his

*Right: Scott Underhill
pinned in the middle
of Lost Lens Rapid.*



photo by Scott Nowak



*Left: Nancy Damboise
gets a face full of foam
as she punches the
hydraulic at the bottom
of Powerline Falls.*

Photo by Scott Underhill

body. Shaken but unhurt, he was able to finish the run without further mishaps.

Long, continuous technical Class IV rapids follow for the next three miles, separated by infrequent pools. First is a Class IV+ twister, Cyclops Stake. A large log, jammed in amongst the sharp boulders, jutted into the current at an upstream angle. Since removed, Cyclops Stake remains a formidable rapid even without the chance of becoming bludgeoned to death.

Another drop that stands out in this upper section is Lost Lens Rapid, where the penalties of running Class V whitewater often become apparent. Scouted from the right bank, Lost Lens Rapid is a jumbled pile of boulders loosely heaped into two

cascading waterfalls. Safer at higher flows, low flows allow many of the boulders to become pin pockets.

On this occasion, a kayaker, experienced in Class V drops, started with the right line--but back ended, and was forced to the right, pinning at the bottom of the second cascade. Pinned upright between two boulders, the deck of his medium volume plastic boat began to collapse. Quickly sliding backwards out of the cockpit, he worked himself free, but his boat remained glued to the riverbottom. Others used common sense that day and portaged, a recommended route at levels below minus 1/4.

Stone Arch Bridge Rapid is next, the

first section of the river visible from Route 8. The site of an abandoned mill, there are two routes through the twin arches, the short rapid concluding beyond a second Route 9 bridge.

The middle section begins here, the easiest portion of the river, with Class IV rapids if you take out above the Class VI Millrace. This section winds through gentler gradient, with the boulders less constricting and pools more frequent.

Just above Lovern Mill Road, the Millrace breaks the calm with a Class VI cataract that twists down a 100 yard boulder-lined slot. A portage for mortal boaters, the Millrace has been run at low levels (below 0 on the Stone Arch Bridge gauge).



photo by Scott Underhill

The Lovern Mill Road bridge below serves as the put-in for the lower section, the majority of which is continuous Class IV+ boulder dodging. A huge reed-infested marsh confuses even in flatwater with numerous routes, the outflow which leads directly into the toughest stretch of white water in New Hampshire, Liberty Farms Rapid.

This rapid diffuses the current into hundreds of channels, each competing with the next in a race through moss-covered boulders that all but block the river. Dead-end channels end in unrunnable cascades to the right; to the left a narrow slot tightropes down through the only runnable line, a line confused by numerous options that all look good from river level. This is one rapid where the scout from shore and subsequent memorization is crucial to avoid a serious pin amongst the boulders.

Liberty Farms Bridge flashes by, and for the next 3 miles, strong Class IV negotiation with the river gods continues. Without a break, Beaver Cleaver Falls appears on the horizon line, an eight-foot slanting drop bisected by a rooster tail rock on the left, and numerous holes on the right to thread through. The take-out mercifully appears a mile downstream, where the pace of the North Branch of the Contoocook

finally slackens.

Fortunately, non-boating residents who live along its banks fought for years to stop three proposed hydroelectric projects targeted for this ten mile section. The projects were stopped, and a subsequent town warrant in Antrim has restricted future penstock-type hydrodevelopment within its borders.

There are few technical runs in the northeast that can match the North Branch

Above: Bracing at Lost Lens. Below: Dropping down Liberty Farms Rapid.

of the Contoocook's easy access, rugged beauty, steep gradient, and incredibly fast pace. Next time you are in the Granite State to run the Contoocook, Otter Brook or the Ashuelot, take a short drive up Route 9 to the best whitewater New Hampshire has to offer.

photo by Nancy Damboise



Phoenix Kayaks

After 25 years building whitewater boats, bigger doesn't necessarily mean better...

by Chris Koll

Ten years ago, Phoenix probably sold more kayaks than any boat building company in the world. There was only one slight problem...

They weren't making any money doing it.

In the late seventies, before the plastic-boat revolution gushed forth a flood of Perceptions, Hydras, Hollowforms and Noahs, a whitewater paddler looking to secure anew boat had few options.

He could locate an available mold and spend a week in the garage, alternately itching from fiberglass dust and sneezing from vinyl ester fumes, while laying up a home-made kayak. Or he **could** find one of the few whitewater retailers scattered across the country where, more likely than not, the paddler would be introduced to Phoenix Kayaks.

Tom Wilson started building fiberglass kayaks in 1963 with a company called High-Performance. In 1973 he founded Phoenix and from his headquarters in Berea, Kentucky, introduced a line of cruising boats that quickly became some of the most popular models found in the East.

There was the high-volume Cascade, a boat for all waters and for all levels of paddlers, the medium-volume Savage and the classic design called the Slipper.

Although not a particularly small boat by today's pancake standards, the Slipper marked a change in philosophy in cruising kayak production from the early bath-tub designs to the sleek performance boats offered today. And coupled with the company's other models, Phoenix emerged as one of the champs of the fiberglass kayak production game.

But roto-molded plastic boats changed all the rules. With production times a fraction of fiberglass, plastic boat manufacturers were able to slash the price of whitewater kayaks. And versatile designs along with the durability of plastic gained roto-



photo by Warren Brunner

Phoenix builds the Arc, one of the original squirt boat designs by Jim Snyder.

molded manufacturers an ever-increasing slice of the market.

How could a fiberglass company compete? Hold the line on prices, perhaps. Or spend money for advertising touting the advantages of fiberglass—its light weight, repairability, or its stiffness.

Neither of which proved an answer. Life was tough at the top.

"We found ourselves with problems caused by a lot of things," said Peter Mathiesen, Phoenix marketing director. "The company found itself with a lot of overhead, high labor costs, and frankly, we had a lot of trouble collecting accounts. At the time, we had two choices: get out of the business or keep building boats and let people buy from us direct. For the most part, we've eliminated the dealers."

Whitewater retailers serve a vital function in the whitewater community. Most entry-level paddlers don't know the bow of a kayak from the stern. They need someone

to hold their hand while sorting through the bizarre jumble of equipment needed to get on a river.

In addition, there's a distinct pleasure in touching and feeling a boat before plunking down two or three week's pay for a new boat. Retailers stock boats to allow you to see before you buy. In return for those services, a retailer can expect to skim a couple hundred dollars off the top. It's only fair—the guy's gotta eat.

What Phoenix proposed was staying competitive with plastic by cutting out the dealers' profit. As you could expect, the abrupt move by Phoenix didn't earn them many friends among the retailers. In fact, as Mathiesen admits, "a lot of dealers were real pissed."

"But we really didn't have a choice," Mathiesen said. "It was the only way we could survive."

Even then, survival did not come easy. "Before the bottom dropped out, Phoenix was the #1 kayak company in Amer-

ica," Mathiesensaid. "But we definitely dropped off after we went direct. We became a lot smaller manufacturer. We've become a quiet, little company, and there's some nice things about being a quiet, little company.

"By the same token, we want to supply as many people as possible. We want to make boats for people. So I don't know if we're going to remain the quietest, little company."

Like the bud from which Phoenix draws its name, the boat company appears poised to rise from the ashes.

It's not just that selling direct has enabled Phoenix to hold the line and often best the roto-molded competition's sales price, but the marketing strategy has enabled Phoenix to cut costs in other areas and offer a more diversified selection of kayaks.

For one thing, Phoenix no longer needs to stock a costly inventory of boats. Nor do they need to anticipate which lines will prove big sellers only to guess wrong and find boats lying unordered in a warehouse.

"We take stock orders for certain models and then we'll build in volume,"

Mathiesensaid. "But normally you don't have to wait more than two weeks before shipment. Sometimes in the spring there will be a longer delay, but generally a model will come around in the production circuit anywhere from 24 hours to weeks from the time of the order."

Building models in batches as opposed to boat by boat increases Phoenix's efficiency. So does the company's approach to cosmetics. You can buy a Phoenix kayak in practically any solid color—but many paddlers opt for the "back-to-basics" natural finish that Phoenix has been producing for 15 years.

"Our specialty is not cosmetics," Mathiesensaid. "Sometimes we call kayaks with the wild colors and razor-stripes 'punk-rock boats.' We're more concerned with producing light-weight performance boats."

And produce them they do. Because they build to order, Phoenix can afford to offer 15 different models of whitewater kayaks and canoes.

"We feel we have a boat that can fit practically anyone," Mathiesen said.

"Let's say someone sees an ad and calls us—we'll send them a brochure and call them

back to make sure they receive it. By that time, the person will have some idea what kind of boat they're interested in, and we feel if we can talk with them, we can put them in the correct boat. We can vary to boat from person to person or from use to use."

Although Phoenix makes a plethora of designs, its three largest sellers are the Wildfire, Spitfire, Microslip and the venerable Slipper.

The Wildfire is a large volume boat geared toward entry-level paddlers or use in big water while the Spitfire series, introduced in 1985, offers an 11-foot boat in five options of sizes. While the Wildfire leads Phoenix sales, Mathiesen expects the Spitfire to continue to increase in popularity.

The Slipper design, over 10 years old, still commands respect within the paddling world.

"The Slipper may not be hot by today's standards, but it's still real warm," Mathiesen said. "It's a good boat for an upgrade. Most designs today are real tame or real

Phoenix Wildfire at play in a hydraulic.

photo by Lloyd Armstrong



outrageous. The Slipper gives them something in between."

And on the high end of the Phoenix line is the **Microslip** and the **Arc**. The **Microslip** is a **cut-down** Slipper—shorter and flatter—while the **Arc**, one of the **f i t "squirt"** designs introduced, offers less volume still.

When you consider that Phoenix 15 different whitewater designs, and that each design is available in three different materials, a paddler practically needs a computer to figure out the possible variations.

Phoenix builds boats with three different materials: a **fiber/nylon** lay-up used for the majority of its boats, kevlar used primarily for flatwater boats, and fiberlastic.

Fiberlastic is a material particular only to Phoenix on provides boat comparable in **strength** to plastic while offering the rigidity and reparability of fiberglass. The only drawback to fiberlastic is that its weight as also almost identical to plastic.

Despite its attraction for beginning paddlers who are typically tough on first boats, Phoenix execs sound almost **apolo-**



photo by Lloyd Armstead

The Wildfire's medium volume and rounded edges make it an ideal entry-level boat as well as a kayak for big water or comfortable cruising.

getic about offering the fiberlastic. After all, this is a company that bases its reputation on building lightweight boats.

"Fiberlastic has the advantage of both

plastic and fiberglass--the benefit of plastic's durability with the designs available in fiberglass," Mathiesen said. "A lot of people start with a fiberlastic Wildfire

SAFETY: Phoenix engineers safety into its boats... Even though the feature doesn't sell

Tom Wilson is dedicated to building as safe a boat as possible--whether you want one or not.

"We have two main areas of concern: building lightweight boats and safety," Wilson said. "We've made a very strong commitment to the break-open cockpit. It's a totally passive system--there's nothing mechanical about it that can fail."

With today's advanced lay-ups offered by Phoenix and other custom kayak builders, sometimes even a fiberglass boat falls to break up in a pin situation, trapping the paddler. To avoid that situation, Phoenix has designed a lighter lay-up around the cockpit area that will crack under the stress of a pin allowing

the victim to escape.

Of course, part of the boat is destroyed, but as Wilson notes, "Nobody who has ever escaped a pin because of a break-away cockpit has come back to complain."

And anyway, a fiberglass boat is repairable.

So with this extra safety feature, you'd think people would be beating down Wilson's door, looking for him to build them a boat. Right?

Not quite.

"The only problem is that you can't sell safety," Wilson said. "It's mostly people who have already been in entrapments that are really interested in the break-away cockpit. Safety features on kayaks are kind of like seatbelts--people don't wear them. They're convinced that

they'll never have a wreck."

So why does Wilson continue to beat the safety drum when most paddlers don't care to march to the beat?

"I don't like building a boat that I personally don't feel comfortable in," Wilson said. "I've been in entrapments two times and I'm alive today because of a breakaway cockpit."

Wilson's concern for safety go beyond the breakaway cockpit feature. Phoenix only manufactures designs that Wilson considers "safe."

"I recognize the squirt boat phenomenon," Wilson said. "We've been building the Arc for years, although as a squirt boat, the Arc's not real extreme. But we're not stupid...we want to stay around as a business. We have an insurance company

and they keep track of the models we build and squirt boats are a 'thou shalt not...' The liability factor is too great.

"We had to make a decision, and we thought that some squirt designs are just too close to the hairy edge of disaster. I don't see us going into the squirts."

What Wilson does intend to go into is the continued production of boats as safe as he can make them. "We have some other projects pending to improve overall safety," Wilson said.

So, Phoenix accepts the responsibility for building safe equipment--even if a paddler doesn't bother thinking about it when it comes time to buy a boat.

Phoenix continued...

and then move up to a fiber/nylon Microslip...they come up to the speed of a lightweight boat."

Wilson concurs.

"Our primary goal is to build real lightweight boats at a reasonable price," Wilson said. "We have a rule of thumb that if your boat weighs more than 20% of your body weight, it's a real unpleasant paddling experience. It's like strapping on 20-pound skis. There's a real advantage to a lightweight boat."

So Phoenix continues building lightweight fiberglass kayaks--perhaps not the most visible boat company, but certainly a more viable one.

And with a variety of designs offered at a competitive price, Phoenix plans to remain the "quiet company" that makes a loud noise in the paddling world.



- ★ Our 15th year as The #1 Kayak School in The West.
- ★ 5 & 9 day. Beginner Kayak program on Oregon's Rogue River (lodging provided).
- ★ 4-day, 40-mile raft supported trips on the Wild & Scenic Rogue (permits included).
- ★ Featuring Perception Kayaks & other top quality Kayak gear.
- ★ Write for color brochure!!!

**14894 Galice Road
Merlin, Oregon 97532
503/479-8508**

Chattooga River Conservation Work Shop and Festival

**May 29-30, Long Creek, SC
at the Chattooga Whitewater Shop**

Plan to attend and participate in the following scheduled activities:

- *Outdoor equipment displays
- Guest speakers
- Mountain bike race
- *Canoe-kayak race
- River clean-up
- Sea kayaking demonstration
- Wildflower walk
- Door prizes
- *Paddlers party

Scheduled speakers:

Risa Shimoda Calloway, AWA
Barry Beasley, SC Water Resources
Suzanne Wilkins, American Rivers
Jerry Beck, Wild River Coalition
Dave Getchell, Editor, Backpacker
William Nealy, Author
Ron Stewart, TVCC
Allen Hedden, Pres. Ga C.A.

Sponsors:

American Rivers
Sierra Club
Trout Unlimited
Heritage Trust
Wild River Co.
SC Water Resources
Wilderness Society
Forest Watch
Georgia C.A.
TVCC
BWA
Foothills C.C.
Piedmont Paddlers
Sunshine Cycle

**Take part in preserving some of
the Southeast's best whitewater !**

Upper Yough cont.

mercial customer numbers makes the river less safe and enjoyable for everyone and reduces the availability of the river to private boaters. Private boaters need to speak up to insure that this will not happen.

For more information or to join the Ad Hoc Committee to Protect the Upper Yough, contact Pope Barrow, 13613th St., S.E., Washington, DC, 20003.

Oswegatchie cont.

"Demand for the recreational opportunities afforded by the segment affected by the proposed Fine hydro project, FERC # 9694 will be substantial and varied. Its proposed design and location will cause great damage to these recreational opportunities because it will be located in the very center of the whitewater run. Because it will divide the affected reach into two short parts, neither will be long enough to sustain a viable commercial raft experience. Private paddlers will likewise be disgusted by the visual and recreational intrusion the proposed design entails and avoid the run as well."

The affected reach Barry defined was the ten mile Oswegatchie run described in detail in the May/June 1987 issue of the American Whitewater.

On the basis of analyses of Black River testimony and new research, Barry concluded that demand for paddling on the Oswegatchie would grow precipitously to 2390 user days in 1994 as a result of crowding on other rivers in the region and commercial interest in the stretch indicated by a local outfitter. Since the run is only 55 minutes east of Watertown by good roads, Robinson argued paddlers would seek out the run as an alternate to the more urban experience of the Black.

His conclusions were buttressed when Niagara Mohawk, which controls the water flow in this section of the river, stated that they provide releases between 615 to 1490 cfs. NIMO also indicated that these releases occur continuously if water storage permits. Otherwise, releases follow peak system demands starting at 8:00 A.M. Monday through Friday.

NY DEC uncharacteristically agrees with AWA regarding hydro project at Sullivan's Island

Not far downriver from the Fine Project site, the same developer has announced plans to construct another 2.0 megawatt project located at the Sullivan's Island site. Steve Massaro's hydro site inventory efforts on behalf of AWA determined that this site deserved special attention. As a result, the New York Rivers Council wrote to the DEC registering their concerns about the project's impoundment of several miles of free flowing river and creation of a 100 acre lake.

The letter stated that:

'Right now the entire distance from Talcville to Emeryville, approximately three miles long, is secluded and largely pristine. A healthy buffer of trees shields the old railroad right of way from paddler's view. Except for the occasional view of the mined area west of Talcville, a trip on this part of the river

would satisfy the most particular wilderness lover. Few people would disagree that impounding essentially this entire stretch of river to create this project represents a significant adverse impact on the quality of New York's environment."

DEC's uncharacteristically fast response to this letter pointed out that the agency actually agreed with the NYRC and had sent a letter to the developer saying so in July of 1987. That letter stated that:

"In the particular circumstance of this hydroelectric project, the following appear to be impacts which may have significant effect upon the environment and may require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement.

(1) the construction of a new dam;
(2) the reconstruction of a partially breached dam which will result in an increase in both the size and depth of the impounded water upstream;

(3) the elimination of a section of free flowing water by the construction of a new dam;

(4) increased flooding potential to adjacent shoreline areas.

(5) change to existing flooding situations that may require the provisions of new hydraulic data; and

(6) aesthetic impact of drowning upper area."

Hopefully, this letter signals a new attitude at the DEC toward free flowing rivers and that attitude will result in similar letter for other sites which create similar impacts.

Raquette cont.

formed hydraulics offer limitless opportunities for boat control development and surfing technique refinement at many water levels."

Sadly, in a letter to FERC dated June 3, 1987, DEC's Murdock MacKenzie stated that DEC has no objection to the issuance of a license by FERC... and that they have not identified any water quality standard problems. No mention is made in the five page letter about riversports except for the need of a portage in spite of the fact the project will create a new 20 acre impoundment and back the river up all the way to Potsdam.

One of the leaders of the North Country Paddlers, Paul Alton, has provided video tape of paddling and other recreational use of this stretch of the Raquette. Since this Adirondack river has already lost almost all of its mighty whitewater to dams built years ago, this small, well used stretch of rapids deserve special protection. As of mid-March, DEC had not replied to the NYRC letter.

awa affiliates

Adirondack Mt Club **Schenectady**
c/o Jack Daniels
722 Rankin Ave.
Schenectady, NY 12308-3425

Allegheny Canoe Club
c/o Walt Pilewski
755 W. Spring St.
Titusville, PA 16534

Antioch Kayak Club
c/o Karl Mahle
PE Dept. Antioch College
Yellow Springs, OH 45387

App. Mt. Club Cl. Bk Chap.
c/o Bill Cushwa
63 Silver St.
South Hadley, MA 01075

Ashville YMCA Kayak Club
c/o Charles Hines
Rt. 4, Holly Hill Ct.
Ashville, NC 28806

Beartooth Paddler's **Society**
c/o Micheal Maxwell
4440 Toyon Drive
Billings, MT 59106

Boat Busters Anonymous
2961 Hemingway Ave.
St. Paul MN 55119

Buck **Ridge** Ski Club
PO Box 179
Bala Cynwyd, PA 19004

Canoe Club Gr. **Harrisburg**
c/o Walt Sieger
2747 N. 4th St.
Harrisburg, PA 17110

Carolina Canoe Club
PO Box 9011
Greensboro, NC 27408

Chi. IL Whitewater Club
2502 Willow Street
Pekin, IL 61554

Chicago **Whitewater Assn.**
c/o Marge Cline
1343 N. Portage
Palatine, IL 60067

Coastal Canoeists
PO Box 566
Richmond, VA 23204

Colorado Whitewater **Assoc.**
7600 E. Arapahoe
Englewood, CO 80112

EMC Outdoor Program
1500 N. 30th, Box 556
Billings, MT 59101

Explorer Post 2001
11627 South Arbor
Houston, TX 77089

Farmington River Club
c/o F. Perruccio
PO Box 475
Canton, CT 06019

Georgia Canoeing Assoc.
PO Box 7023
Atlanta, GA 30357

Idaho Whitewater Assoc.
1418 Sherman
Boise, ID 83702

KCCNY
c/o Phyllis Horowitz
PO Box 329
Phonacia, NY 12464

Kayak Chapter
c/o John O'Malley
830 Wildcat Ridge
Manhattan, KS 66502

Lehigh Valley Canoe Club
PO Box 2726
Lehigh Valley, PA 18001

Meramec River Canoe Club
c/o Earl Biffle
26 Lake Road
Fenton, MO 63026

New Waves Kayak Club
c/o Morgan Smith
5330 S. Elm
Caspar, WY 82601-6426

Niagara Gorge Kayak Club
c/o Doug Bushnell
7661 Tonawanda Cr. Dr.
Lockport, NY 14090-9348

Northern AZ Paddlers Club
c/o Wayne House
Rt. 4 Box 948
Flagstaff, AZ 86001

Oregon Kayak and Canoe Club
PO Box 692
Portland, OR 97207

Ozark Wilderness Waterways
PO Box 16032
Kansas City, MO 64112

Piedmont Paddlers Canoe Club
PO Box 41051
Charlotte, NC 28241-0501

River Rendevous
PO Box 888
Telluride, CO 81435

River Touring Section
LA Chapter Sierra Club
3674 Saluda Ave.
Tujunga, CA 91042

Ross Fink
7659 Goodland Ave.
N. Hollywood, CA 91605

Sierra Club **Loma Prieta** Ch.
c/o Dave Kim
3309 Oxford Lane
San Jose, CA 95117

Syracuse Univ. Outing Club
c/o Mark Defley, Whitewater Ch.
Ski Lodge, Skytop Rd.
Syracuse, NY 13210

Texas Whitewater Assoc.
Box 5429
Austin, TX 78763

Three Rivers **Paddling** Club
c/o George Mower
206 Spencer Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15227

Triad River Runners
PO Box 11283
Bethabara Station
Winston Salem, NC 27116-1238

Valdez Alpine Club
c/o Andrew Embick MD
PO Box 1889
Valdez, AK 99686

Viking Canoe Club
PO Box 32263
Louisville, KY 40232

Willamette Kayak and Canoe Club
PO Box 1062
Corvallis, OR 97339

WPAFB Outdoor **Adventure** Club
c/o Rod Joblove
2845 Liberty Ellerton Rd.
Dayton, OH 45418

End Notes: *We're all still driving vans*

Tim Kelly's VW camper looks like what a whitewaterboater's vehicle ought to look like.

--The rear bumper was extracted like a bad tooth last winter when the van executed a three-sixty on a patch of black ice and became intimately acquainted with a guard rail.

--Closing the side door requires a maneuver similar to popping a football blocking sled: head up, hips low, keep the feet moving and slam your chest into the panel as you slam the door shut.

--Flecks of rust mottle the finish as if the van was shotgunned with a load of rock salt.

--A recalcitrant starter requires parking on hills or travel at all time with a minimum of three stalwart companions.

Now don't get me wrong, just because Tim's odometer has been taught to roll over, I'm not implying his van is a dog. There is beauty in function, and in that regard, the camper is very attractive.

The feature I like most is the pop-up roof. By slipping a couple bolts from the inside, the roof angles up at 45 degrees to create a sleeping loft.

The only drawback is that when Tim pops the top with boats still lashed to the roof rack, the vehicle resembles a mobile missile launcher. It's tough to sleep peacefully when you realize a Russian spy satellite may have targeted your bed as a nuclear impact point.

But that's a small price to pay for the camper's other obvious advantages: it has a miniature refrigerator that, with careful loading, can hold an entire case of beer; there's a two-burner range burn eggs far



Tim Kelley's VW camper

more efficiently than a camp fire; and most importantly, it contains a tape system more valuable than the book price of the rest of the vehicle.

There's even a radar detector mounted on the dash--more of a talisman of the van's better days than a deterrent to speeding tickets. The vehicle has its own warning device for exceeding the legal limits--it shakes like hell when Tim pushes 55.

Admittedly, I'm exaggerating a little about Tim's wheels. My description of the van sounds like it was lifted straight from one of William Nealy's satirical depictions of the paddling world.

Whitewater sport originated as sort of a counter-culture activity. The general populace believed there was definitely something weird about people who dressed in neoprene and apparently risked life and limb negotiating dangerous rapids.

And most paddlers, regardless if they were real-life doctors or CPAs, liked to promote that unique image.

Vans like Tim's were recognized as proper shuttle vehicles.

But now--the times, they are a changin'.

When my friend Ed goes boating, he screws on the Yakimas to the roof of his late-model Cadillac. There are some disadvantages: Ed looks askance if you crack open a brew and foam spills onto the upholstery, he prefers that you remove your wet spray skirt before you slide onto the seat, and when loading boats, he definitely objects to jumping on the hood to tie down the ropes.

But hey, that's a small price to pay for power windows and factory air. And when cruising Summersville or Kingwood for chicks, the Caddie beats the VW hands down.

Of course, not all paddlers take luxury in shuttle cars to that extreme. But the next time you park at a popular put-in, take a close look at the other vehicles sporting roof racks.

Chances are, you'll find a plethora of "civilized" four-wheel drive vehicles--models like the Jeep Cherokee, Chevy Blazer or Toyota Four-Runner--that combine the convenience of high ground clearance and improved traction with the ride associated with a car.

At least, that's outward reason so many paddlers are gravitating toward that particular type of vehicle. But I suspect that the image of the four-wheeler is also a crucial factor in their popularity.

A lot of us former van drivers just wouldn't feel comfortable behind the wheel of a vehicle that looks like it should have a peace sign plastered on the back window. And yet, driving a Volvo, Saab or Mercedes still seems a tad pretentious.


The four-wheeler gives us some middle-ground. Lord knows, I need four-wheel drive less than one percent actual road time...and I almost never take the truck on shuttle roads that actually require that kind of vehicle. But somehow, sitting behind the wheel of one of those models gives you the feeling that you're heading somewhere other people can't go.

It's probably the next best thing to driving Tim Kelly's van.



Boaters in popular four-wheel drive vehicles pull in to Gauley Festival.

By Ron Burke



*Take
me
to
the
river ...
drop
me
in
the
water ...*

Phil DeRiemer, Siete
Tazas, Rio Claro, Chile.
Photo by Lars Holbek
Kayak by Perception.

1110 Powdersville Road,
Easley, South Carolina 29640
(803) 859-7518



perception



AMERICAN WHITEWATER

AWA Journal

146 N. Brockway
Palatine, IL 60067

Address Correction Requested

NON-PROFIT

BULK RATE
Permit No. 9
West Sand Lake
NY 12196