

# american whitewater

July/August 2000



The Lower Gauley  
vs. The Ocoee

page 54

**FIRST DESCENT  
OF THE HUITZILAPAN**

page 66





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# american whitewater

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Volume XL, No.4

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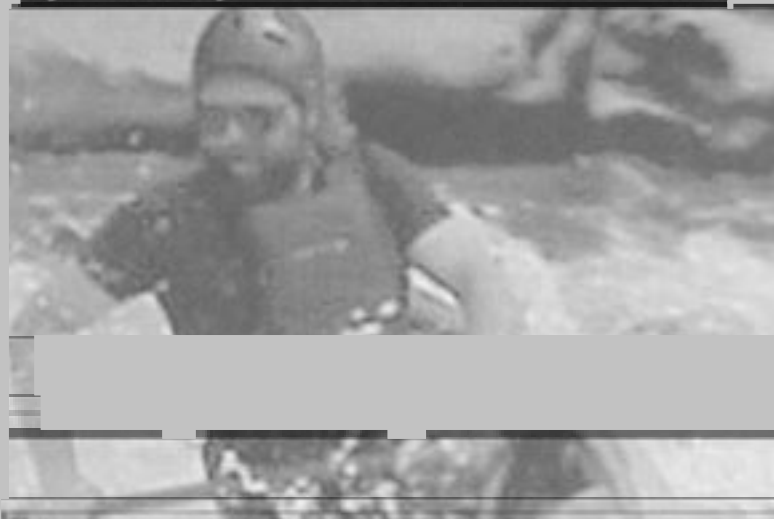
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Cover Photos : "Hell Hole" on the Ocoee River, TN  
Photo © Lynda Richardson



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## Toy Story III

With the explosion in the popularity of whitewater kayaking, it should be no surprise that many celebrities have taken up the paddle. Just this spring Phyllis Diller and Brad Pitt were seen challenging the Forks of the Kern; while, back east, Britney Shields and Gregory Peck have become regulars on Chattooga IV. But who knew that two of America's most beloved dolls, Barbie and GI Joe, have been running rivers for years? In fact, Barbie and GI Joe have been active AW members for more than a decade, and have just been appointed honorary members of the AW Executive Board.

We caught up with Barbie and Joe one evening in early June at the *tres chic* Gold King Restaurant in Silverton, Colorado. They had just tackled the 26-mile long Upper Animas, but neither seemed worse for the wear. In fact, they both looked like they had just come out of the box... the cardboard and cellophane box, that is, not the Class V Rockwood Box. As we chatted, Barbie, clad in a flamingo pink Patagonia pile jump suit with matching barrette, picked delicately at a mezulin and radicchio salad, while Joe, sitting tent pole erect in camo, devoured a bloody 16 ounce Delmonico steak, three butter-drenched baked potatoes and six ears of sweet corn. Barbie sipped mineral water, while Joe downed one draft after another. Our conversation was interrupted several times by small children seeking autographs... requests which Barbie and Joe graciously honored.

**AW: It would seem that the two of you would move in completely different social circles. But here you both are in the wilds of Colorado, kayaking together. How long have you known one another?**

*Joe: Actually we've been right tight for quite a spell. I met Barbs at a toy convention 25 years ago. Let me tell you, she was a hot*

*number, even then. As our careers advanced we rendezvoused from time to time and we spent a lot of time bivouacked on the same shelves.*

*Barbie: And we've been kayaking together for, oh... 12 years or so. Don't tell anyone, but I taught Joe to roll.*

*Joe: (grinning sheepishly) Yeah, it's true. The Pentagon wanted to develop a Special Forces whitewater unit, so they sent me and a couple of my Seal buddies to the NOC. But the instructors couldn't do nothin' with us. Called us lunkheads. Fortunately Barbs happened to be there on a modeling job... she'd already been yakin' for a couple of years... and she took us under her pretty little wing. She sure made those Seals sit up and bark. It's kinda embarrassing... can you imagine if the commies figgered out who taught me to kayak?*

**AW: Do you boat together often?**

*Barbie: Not as much as we'd like. Our schedules are terribly hectic and we're always on the road. Besides, our interests are different. I've gotten into rodeo... park and play. Hell Hole on the Ocoee is my scene. Joe is a hair boater. He's not happy unless he's defying death in some rugged place like Turnback Canyon or the Crystal Gorge.*

**AW: But you were both on the Animas today. That's a tough run.**

*Barbie: (wrinkling her nose) Oh, I don't consider the Animas to be so difficult.*

*Joe: She's just being modest. Hell, the first time I ran the Green Narrows my nose was right on her tail. Barbs can handle anything the river throws at her. That Shannon Carroll ain't got nothin' on Barbs. Barbie is indestructible.*

*Barbie: Well, it's true. I've never been hurt. But sometimes on tough rivers I get a teeny bit messy, and that's even worse!*

*Joe: (laughing) Yeah, like when have you ever seen this little number with a hair out of place? That Ken's one lucky schmo.*

**AW: By the way, where is Ken?**

*Barbie: (shaking her head) Wimped out on us... droveshuttle, then went shopping in Durango.*

*Joe: Cut the poor grunt a break, Barbs. Some kid yanked his arm out of the socket a month ago. He's still hurtin'.*

*Barbie: (wrinkling her nose again) Ken's a poser. A pretty boy. Strictly cabbage patch. If he had his way we'd spend all our time on the Lower Yough. Or Chilli Bar! Sometimes I think I ought to get myself a real man!*

**AW: Like Joe, here?**

*Barbie: (blushing) Perish the thought! Joe's already got a wife. His M-16.*

*Joe: (with a grin, but a bit of menace in his eyes) Yeah, don't be startin' no rumors. Me and Barbs are just boatin' buddies. Ken hears that crap and he's liable to kick my butt.*

*Barbie: (rolling her eyes) Ken couldn't kick your butt if you had both hands tied behind your back!*

**AW: Maybe we had better change the subject. How about you, Joe? Ever been hurt on a river?**

*Joe: Nah, nothin' serious. One time I got caught in mean hole on Icicle Creek and my head popped clean off. But the medic glued it back on and I was back in my boat the next day.*

**AW: Do either of you have any big kayaking trips in the works?**

*Joe: I've been eyeballin' the topos for first iescents in Greenland. Reckon there are some bitchin' waterfallsthere. I'm hoping I can get the Twitch boys to tag along and shoot a video. We know Tao ain't scared of the high ones, but can he handle them when they're frozen rock solid?*

*Barbie: Well, I'm determined to make the U.S. Rodeo Team next year. But if I can slip away, I'd love to paddle the Italian Alps. Fergie says the kayaking there is to die for.*

**AW:** So, what kind of boats are you paddling these days?

*Joe:* Well, I paddle Government Issue. But I can't gripe. Uncle Sam does right by me. A high-volume creek boat with loads of room for my AK-47, machete, grenade launcher, Swiss army knife, bivvy sac, K rations and a flamethrower. All sold separately, of course.

*Barbie:* I have several boats. They're all teeny and pink.

**AW:** So you aren't sponsored?

*Barbie:* Well... not by any single company. I've had so many offers. After all... I am Barbie. In the end I decided in the interest of fairness I'd just take free stuff from everybody! As long as it's pink and cute, of course.

**AW:** If you were going on a week paddling trip and could only take one thing with you beside your boating gear, what would it be?

*Joe:* A bazooka.

*Barbie:* Waterproof mascara, for sure. I learned a long time ago that as long as you look cute, everything else takes care of itself.

**AW:** What kind of shuttle vehicles do you drive?

*Barbie:* Oh, I must confess... I've never actually driven a shuttle. After all, I am Barbie. But if I ever did have to, any fancy SUV would do, as long as it costs more than \$35,000 and is cute and pink.

*Joe:* I shuttle in my Humvee, unless I'm on a mission or yakin' a river where there are access problems. Then I use a Sherman tank. Ain't nobody gonna' keep me off the river when I show up in that! Fact is, now that I'm on the AW Board, I aim to use my Sherman to help Jason Robertson solve sticky access problems all over this great land of ours.

**AW:** How about you, Barbie? What kind of volunteer work do you intend to do for AW? Safety?

*Barbie:* Gracious, no. Safety is so icky. I just can't be bothered with it. I mean, all that safety gear is so bulky and ugly. I certainly don't have room for it my teeny little boat. Why don't they start making cute little pink throwropes, carabiners and whistles for boaters like me? Well, until they

do I intend to focus my energies on more important things, like river conservation or access. Or events. Maybe I'll sponsor a fashion show at the Gauley Festival.

**AW:** You both attended your first AW Board meeting last May in Idaho. What did you think?

*Barbie:* Well, we were afraid there might be a lot of puppets on the Board. You know, being dolls, neither Joe nor I can abide puppets! But those AW folks really speak their minds! Joe and I were dying to go tackle Jacob's Ladder, but every day they locked us in the meeting hall until we reached consensus.

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Joe: But any Board that holds their pow-wows on the Payette is all right by me. Those AW folks don't just talk about rivers, they paddle 'em. After the meeting me and Barbs fagged along with a bunch of them and cruised the Middle Fork of the Salmon. Three days... self-contained... 120 miles... high water... camping in the freezing rain and snow. Now that's my kind of fun.

Barbie: (nose wrinkled again) Well, the group soaks in the hot springs were nice. But, between you and me, some of those AW Board members are rather scrawny.

AW: One last question. Do you consider yourselves new school or old school?

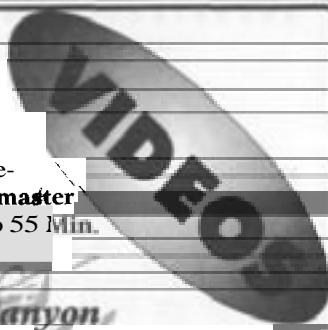
Barbie and Joe: (in unison) Neither. Like everyone else in AW, we're way too kewl for school!

Bob Gedekoh

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## They Dared Me to Print This!

To da editor,

Da Joinal be gonna straiten us out. "Testosterone Toxicity," "Look B-4 Yew Leap" an no more fotos of joy boyz runnin fallz. COSMIC LAUGH. Yew think yew R edge butt yew R blunt...Yew R hat. Yew R B-hind da times...revues of commercial videos by D Team, skill job. Da rivers ragin an yew on de pond. Six months of superhero action in vi-D-O "Death City Kay-yakers" and no woid in de Joinal. Too spicy 4 yew??Tunes are mega vibe by BLZ Bub an Poison Pot, runs nameless hyper-NAR. Da Joinal is bout what yakkin wuz, "Death City Kay-yakers" showz what yakkin WILL B. No can show yew da flick—gotta pay 4 view, but da woids of what R to cum is skreemed full force. May-B yew can still hear?? Just 4 YEW BLZ Bub grants permission to hear da song "You WILL know me." Listen up!!!

I B square jamming  
OJR aka Buff Joe

### You WILL Know Me

You are reading "the Guide" an watchin the gauge

Takin yer eighth leak cuz da river's in rage.

Me jeep pulls up an we dump in our load  
Hardmen wit yaks, a sight to b-hold.

Chorus:

Yew see I M on of the chosen few  
A member of the Crazy Kayak Krew.  
Wheelin' King and Kreekin' Star  
I B shreddin the s... an ...kin the Nar.

Me Nbuffcake buddies pound down beer  
Decked out in flashy wundergear.  
Kool Lidz hot shades buttz tite as clams  
We B hot to trot an flim the flam.

Chorus

Yeah me stuntz make geezers wheeze  
I B looking for sweet sleeze not smeeze.  
O! time yakkers hate my fame.  
Their deeds R dun an they R lame.

Chorus

Don't give me them rubber boyz  
With dare inflatable toyz  
Cuz buttheadz knowz catz N duckz  
R fer gearhead schmuckz.

Chorus

Medieval?? Clean?? Gimme a break!!  
Whitewater iz cartwheels in a lake????!  
Safety ropes R fer dopes  
Losers wit fears not hopes.

Chorus

Yer galz R givin me da eye  
Yer ho-hum NI B fly.  
Boofer chicks R always quick  
To take a ride on my pleasure stick.

Chorus

Law dogs bark, butt they have no bite....  
Poachin' illegal goodies in my D-lite.  
I raze hell N de cops give chase,  
But I p... in yer booties N laff in yer face.

Chorus

I bike I board I blade I bad  
I got eveything yew wish yew had.  
A sweet ass boat a rock hard bod  
A custom molded pleasure pod.

Chorus

Bad Boy Klub lissen to da dub  
Me Me Me R a pleasure rub.  
I'm sic yew hic lissen to the schtick  
N buy my latest kayak flick.

NEW Chorus:

Yew see I M one of the chosen few  
A member of the Crazy Kayak Krew  
Yew WILL know me but I won't know yew  
**Yew WILL know me but I won't know Yew!!!**

Editor's Reply: They dared me to print this. Now I know how Ed Sullivan felt the first time he saw the Rolling Stones. Now, can anyone tell me what it means?

## On Bending the Rules

Dear Bob,

In regard to your discussion on "bending the rules" (March/April 2000 Forum). I'd like to say that you are preaching to the choir, but it is the general congregation that I worry about. I agree totally with your suggestion that rules can be broken, often with little or no consequence. The problem as I see it, though, is that the key ingredient in choosing to disregard a rule is EXPERIENCE. This is exactly what lacks in the general population and beginning kayaker.

I have no doubt in the ability of an experienced kayaker to look at the photo of Robyn Abernathy running a low-head dam (Sep/Oct issue), recognize the flow levels, and determine the likelihood of a serious hydraulic at its base. In reality, though, 75% of the year the water levels will be such that running that low-head dam (or any other) will have potentially fatal consequences. Does the nine-year-old kid in Barnes and Noble

reading American Whitewater understand that fact?

Rules are critical for conveying to the masses the situations and conditions that generate the highest probability of injury or death. As an ACA instructor I rely on safety rules to do just that. My hope is that students will leave my class with the basic skills necessary to begin kayaking. One of those basic skills is the recognition of inherently dangerous situations. If and when they possess enough firsthand knowledge to know when a low-head dam can be safely run - I will agree with you that it may be time for them to bend the rules.

Sincerely,  
Ron Rogers  
Redwood City, CA

## Experience & Safety

Dear Bob,

Your recent Forum article "No Rules" was terrific. There are way too many would-be rule makers out there trying to tell us what is dangerous, often with no experience of their own. I am delighted that you have decided to rattle this cage and I would be glad to help you hunt down any escapees.

American Whitewater has always been evenhanded with safety issues. They call their safety information a "Safety Code" not "Safety Rules," and although some of the suggestions need a tune up, most of it is good advice. Also, Charlie Walbridge clearly understands what makes boaters do the things they do, and his analysis of accidents is both thoughtful and compassionate.

The real culprits here are loose cannons, boaters, and writers that have decided that they know eveything and it's their mission to set up straight. As I do a lot of solo boating, I attract these types with unfortunate regularity. Several times a year I have to endure a lecture from another boater (never rangers) telling me why boating alone is dangerous and why I shouldn't be doing it. About 15 years ago I started asking these finger shakers what solo trips they had done. The response became ridiculously predictable. None of them had any experience at all on solo trips.

Now tell me seriously, would you take advice on running a river from someone who had never run it? Would you take advice on a boat from someone who had never paddled it? Then why would we take advice on solo trips from someone who had never done one? When it comes to safety issues, what we need is advice based on real experience, not people's emotional problems.

To help your readers differentiate between the good, the bad, and the ugly, you might adopt a policy that requires writers



trying to give advice on safety issues to briefly summarize their real life experience on that particular issue. So if someone wants to recommend against boating during electrical storms, they must tell us about their real life experience while boating in these storms. If they admit having no experience, you might also ask them a second question "Do you really think it is a good idea to give advice on something you have no experience with?"

Then go ahead and publish their letters along with the answers to these two questions. This would help us evaluate the merits of their advice, and probably provide us with some good laughs as well.

W Scott Morris  
Santa Fe, N. Mex.

## The Old, Old School Checks In

Dear Bob,

I just finished Gesslein's article and your response.

You are both "crazies." I belong to the "old, old, school." I don't know why I continue to read that stuff, but I suppose it is because I understand you guys.

And, some of it is very funny — rough, but funny. And sometimes you come up with some very perceptive observations.

Like rules. I paddle alone most of the time on whitewater or on Lake Superior. I think I am safer, perhaps, when I travel alone. I don't know. I use better judgement then, better preparation, etc. When I paddle with my young, crazy friends, I may try to stretch my abilities.

I wish there were some old, old kayakers who could write in and put you guys in a proper perspective.

If I had the writing ability, I would do it. But your audience of old, old kayakers is so small, I wouldn't have much support. I was born in 1920.

Why do I continue to read your foolishness? Because I still live to paddle that whitewater! And I understand you guys, and, when the streams get low, I love to paddle Lake Superior!

Keep up the dialog. You do get across some good thoughts — your articles even cause me to think, sometimes!

John P. Snyder

P.S. I hope some day you will decide to contribute to the system so that we won't have to put numbers on our boats. You can't all be that tight!

Editor's note: When I turn 80 I hope to be boating like Mr. Snyder.

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## New School Rebuked

Dear Editors:

I ask that the AWA consider giving Mr. Gesslein a permanent column on page-one of American Whitewater magazine; he and the New School deserve a voice. It would seem that Mr. Gesslein and the Old School are at cross-purposes over many issues. The sport has changed tremendously in the last few years—so much so, that it is now possible in two months to obtain the skills and judgement it used to take 20 years to obtain using the old-school methods. At present Mr. Gesslein's subscription money goes to a number of causes including: river conservation, dam release negotiations, festival organization, and publishing this magazine—all of which Mr. Gesslein finds grievous fault with. It seems obvious that Mr. Gesslein and company have no need of any of these services to facilitate and advance "their" sport. Nevertheless, as an AWA member representing the New School, he is entitled to a hearing. While this idea is being circulated, I would like to propose a few additional remedies.

### Non-Release Days put to Good Use

I submit that Mr. Gesslein et al. Paddle on non-release days only. The advantages so obtained would be multifarious. 1<sup>st</sup>] Old and new school paddlers would be permanently separated, reducing tension on the river, and Mr. Gesslein would never have to acknowledge, or thank those responsible for the release. 2<sup>nd</sup>] New school paddlers would be free to run any drop or line they wanted, unobserved and uncriticized by old school paddlers, and unconstrained by water flowing in the river bed. 3<sup>rd</sup>] Mr. Gesslein could paddle everyday during the summer, and would only have to yield a few days to the Old School for activities that required negotiated whitewater releases. I would hope that Mr. Gesslein's column would be devoted to documenting these as-of-yet undocumented midsummer exploits.

### The Positive Side of Death

Mr. Gesslein could also expound upon the more positive side of death. Until the Old School is willing to accept death, and for that matter paralysis, as just another potential outcome of a successful day's paddling—I fear the two sides will be forever far apart. Yet, I can understand the desire of the New School to make, and learn from their own mistakes. All of which will be documented on the Internet in *streaming real-time video* under titles such as: [watchkarlgetsweptintotheundercut.com](http://watchkarlgetsweptintotheundercut.com), no doubt.

### Smoke On The Water

I must admit that Mr. Gesslein's comments are right on-the-mark about smoking—especially in light of the fact that stron-

ger-means have more recently become available. It is a contradiction that must be resolved—if old school boaters are determined to shorten their life-spans, they should do so directly, by paddling low-volume rodeo-boats down Class-V steep creeks.

I have yet to see Mr. Gesslein in any kayak videos (most of which are probably shot during the week, on non-release days while Mr. Gesslein is working, no doubt); I can't accurately judge his claim that, *those* dudes in the videos *are* in *fact* no better paddlers than most of us. However, I hope American Whitewater will consider publishing photos of his 60 foot waterfall exploits; the addition may attract advertising revenue from the makers of spinal prostheses.

### Fifty Percent of His Blade is Missing ahem.....

The fact that fifty percent of Mr. Gesslein's paddle blade is missing should in itself explain why the Old School prefers not to use the Duffek stroke on Class-V steep creeks.

### He's Missing Half His Blade....

However, the fact that half of Mr. Gesslein's paddle blade is missing may be the salvation of his financial woes. It is quite commendable that he still chooses to use a paddle in that condition as his primary river running tool. All old school paddlers should consider donating their broken, bent, and busted paddles to the *New School*, as a goodwill gesture. I suggest setting up a broken-paddle collection box at the bottom of Crystal during the Moose River Festival. Maybe some Old School, badass, cigar smoking, jammed keyboard, helmet wearing, festival organizer could get on this pronto!

### Kayaks on the Interstate

While the free paddles might go part of the way toward defraying some of Mr. Gesslein's expenses, the kayak manufacturers will have to pitch-in and do their part as well. Inexpensive state-of-the-art kayaks, with 90-day shelf lives need to be developed as soon as possible! Better yet, a completely moldable kayak might be invented—one that could be run over numerous times to produce that next highly desirable hull configuration. In this way anyone holding a class-B tractor trailer license could become a legitimate kayak designer.

Finally,—when on some thankfully-remote Patagonian creeking expedition,—the inclusion of a Gesslein column in American Whitewater magazine would provide old school boaters a ready source of fire starting material, without having to worry about destroying the content of the magazine.

Respectfully,  
Bill Horvath  
Port Crane, New York

Editor's reply: Please don't treat Karl too harshly. His letter was a tongue-in-cheek commentary on old school boaters and meant to be taken in jest. In fact, Karl is a dedicated AWA volunteer who recently spent a lot of time creating our great new internet message board.

## Putting the Hammer Down

Dear Editor,

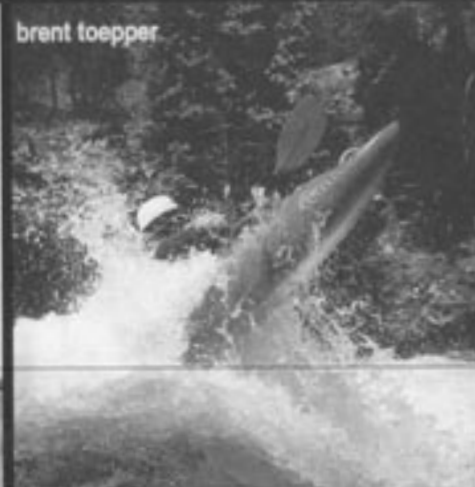
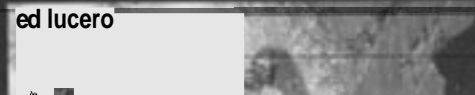
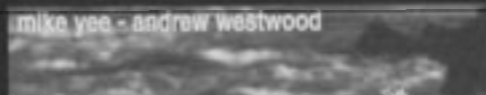
I am frequently impressed by the industry-wide quality that exists in whitewater boating. It is nice to be presented with so many good products to choose from and so few bad ones. Another thing that impresses me is the quality and the nature of the advertising, especially in American Whitewater magazine, and I would like to thank the advertisers for it. It is refreshing to see women featured positively, as participants, instead of as sex objects and attention attractors as is common in so much of the advertising we are confronted with in our lives. In recent editions, DeRiemer, NOC, Shredder, Dagger, and Perception have all run such positive ads. It is outright awesome to see Wavesport ads featuring women who have achieved so much in rodeo; they deserve the positive portrayal and the congratulations. I like knowing that my niece could flip through the pages of AW and come away thinking that she too can be a boater—that it is a sport for both men and women.

I recognize that there are exceptions. One kayak manufacturer in particular seems to subscribe to the same advertising philosophy as the cigarette, motorsport, and liquor industries, and I'd hate to guess what they think of women from the portrayal in their ads. I've never seen this company show a woman using one of their boats. (I know that NOC has done this for them in a frequently run NOC ad, but that's like having Mom do the book report for you.) Have they ever shown a scantily clad man clinging to a hot female paddler's leg?

I don't expect this letter alone to result in a change in their advertising style. However, for years it has bothered me to see their sexist attitude so visibly displayed in ads in my favorite whitewater journal, and I'll not buy products from them again unless their ads change. Hammer for sale—make offer.

Tom Yurista  
Middlebury, Vermont

Editor's reply: We have received a number of letters from others who share your view on this matter. (See the May/June issue.) I applaud you for standing up for what you believe in. (Now, just how much do you want for that Hammer?)



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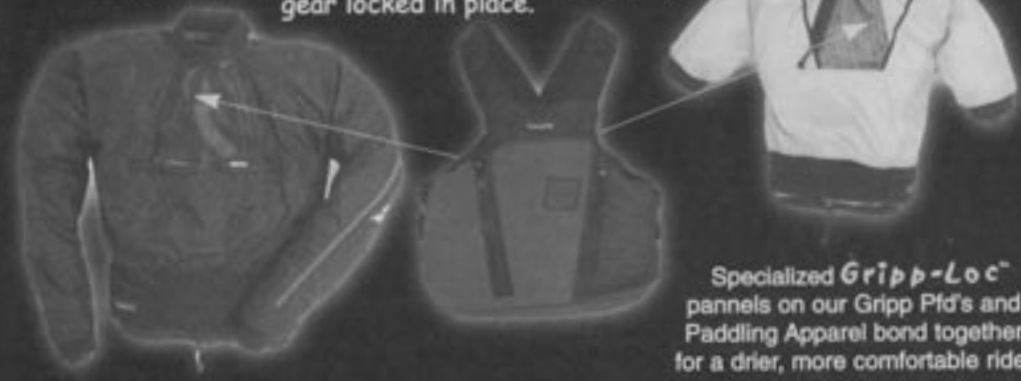
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By Blue Ice Clothing  
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lined front pockets, AW logo (gold /  
white) on chest and high doubled collar  
Color: Slate Blue.

**\$55.**



**\$18**



**Polartec 300  
Warm-Up Vest**

By Blue Ice Clothing  
Front fully lined with micro  
fleece, 2 zippered front pockets,  
long cut back high doubled collar  
for extra warmth AW logo on  
chest. Color: Navy.

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Whitewater Design T-shirts: \$15 / L & XL only / Colors Mocha, Moss, Gray Ash			
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# Guidelines for Contributors

**Please read this carefully before sending us your articles and photos!** This is a volunteer publication, please cooperate and help us out. Do not send us your material without a release - signed by all authors and photographers (attached)!!

The editorial staff of *American Whitewater* carefully reviews all material submitted for publication. We are particularly interested in receiving full-length feature articles, conservation and club news, special event announcements, articles pertaining to whitewater safety and short, humorous pieces.

Articles should fit our established format: that is, they should be stylistically patterned to fit into our Features, AW Briefs, River Voices, Conservation Currents, Safety Lines, Humor or End Notes sections. Exceptional photographs and whitewater cartoons are also welcomed.

If possible, articles should be submitted on a 3-1/2-inch computer disk. (Microsoft Word if possible - others accepted.) Please do not alter the margins or spacing parameters; use the standard default settings. Send a printed copy of the article as well.

Those without access to a word processor may submit their articles typed. Please double space.

Photos may be submitted as slides, black or

white prints, or color prints. Keep your originals and send us duplicates if possible; we cannot guarantee the safe return of your pictures. If you want us to return your pictures, include a self-addressed stamped envelope with your submission. Because we publish in black and white, photos with a lot of contrast work best.

*American Whitewater* feature articles should relate to some aspect of whitewater boating. Please do not submit articles pertaining to sea kayaking or flat water. The best features have a definite slant... or theme. They are not merely chronological recountings of river trips.

Open the story with an eye-catching lead, perhaps by telling an interesting anecdote. Dialogue should be used to heighten the reader's interest. Don't just tell us about the river... tell us about the people on the river... develop them as characters. Feature articles should not be written in the style of a local club newsletter.

If you are writing about a commonly paddled river, your story should be told from a unique perspective. Articles about difficult, infrequently paddled, or exotic rivers are given special consideration. But we are also interested in well written, unusual articles pertaining to Class III and IV rivers as well. Feature stories do not have to be about a specific river. Articles about paddling tech-

niques, the river environment and river personalities are also accepted. Pieces that incorporate humor are especially welcome. Open boating and rafting stories are welcome.

Don't be afraid to let your personality shine through and don't be afraid to poke a little fun at yourself... and your paddling partners.

Profanity should be used only when it is absolutely necessary to effectively tell a story; it is not our intent to offend our more sensitive members and readers.

Please check all facts carefully, particularly those regarding individuals, government agencies, and corporations involved in river access and environmental matters. *You are legally responsible for the accuracy of such material.* Make sure names are spelled correctly and river gradients and distances are correctly calculated.

Articles will be edited at the discretion of the editors to fit our format, length, and style. *Expect to see changes in your article. If you don't want us to edit your article, don't send it to us!* Because of our deadlines you will not be able to review the editorial changes we make prior to publication.

*American Whitewater* is nonprofit; the editors and contributors to *American Whitewater* are not reimbursed. On rare occasions, by prearrangement, professional writers receive a small honorarium when they submit stories at our request. Generally, our contributors do not expect payment, since most are members of AW, which is a volunteer conservation and safety organization.

## Release For Publication

I hereby release my work (literary, graphic or photographic) for publication in *American Whitewater* magazine.

I understand that my work may be edited or cropped at the editors' discretion.

I understand that I will not be paid for my work.

I accept responsibility for the accuracy of the information included in my submission. I have not libeled or slandered any individual, corporation or agency in this work.

I understand that all or some of my work may be reprinted at some future date in an *American Whitewater* publication.

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Signed \_\_\_\_\_

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This release must be signed by *all* the contributing author(s), photographer(s) and graphic artist(s).

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# Purpose

## American Whitewater

Our mission is to conserve and restore America's whitewater resources and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely.

The American Whitewater (AW) is a national organization with a membership consisting of thousands of individual whitewater boating enthusiasts, and more than 100 local paddling club affiliates.

**CONSERVATION:** AW maintains a complete national inventory of whitewater rivers, monitors threats to those rivers, publishes information on river conservation, provides technical advice to local groups, works with government agencies and other river users, and-- when necessary-- takes legal action to prevent river abuse.

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

**EDUCATION:** Through publication of the bimonthly magazine, and by other means, American Whitewater. (AW) provides information and education about whitewater rivers, boating safety, technique and equipment.

**SAFETY:** AW promotes paddling safely, publishes reports on whitewater accidents, maintains a uniform national ranking system for whitewater

rivers (the International Scale of Whitewater Difficulty) and publishes and disseminates the internationally recognized AW Whitewater Safety Code.

**EVENTS:** AW organizes sporting events, contests and festivals to raise funds for river conservation, including the Ocoee Whitewater Rodeo in Tennessee, the Gauley River Festival in West Virginia (the largest gathering of whitewater boaters in the nation), the Arkansas River Festival in Colorado, the Kennebec Festival in Maine and the Deerfield Festival in Massachusetts.

AW was incorporated under Missouri nonprofit corporation laws in 1961 and maintains its principal mailing address at 1430 Fenwick Lane, Silver Spring, MD 20910 (301) 589-9453. AW is tax exempt under Section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

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The opinions expressed in the features and editorials of American Whitewater are those of the individual authors. They do not necessarily represent those of the Directors of American Whitewater or the editors of this publication.

On occasion American Whitewater publishes official organizational policy statements drafted and approved by the Board of Directors. These policy statements will be clearly identified.

# Director's Cut

by Rich Bowers

Approaching the next drop!



## American Whitewater Board & Staff

Front Row: Bob Gedekoh, Mark White, Paul Tefft, Jennie Goldberg, Kara Ruppel-Weld, Nancy Galloway, Risa Callaway, Landis Arnold. Second Row: Lynn Aycock, Chris Kelly, Rich Bowers, Jason Robertson, Barry Tuscano. Third Row: Lee Belknap, Jay Kenney, Ken Ransford, Kevin Lewis. Fourth Row: Brooke Drury, Sherry Olson, Jeff Leighton, Jayne Abbot. Back Row: Bill Sedivy, John Gangemi, Nick Lipkowski, Richard Penny. Missing: Phyllis Horowitz, Chris Koll, Bob Glanville, Charlie Walbridge, Chuck Estes, Barry Grimes, Tom Christopher, Sue Langfitt Fuller, Joe Greiner.

In the last Journal, I talked about American Whitewater's efforts to undergo its next strategic planning session. This article is an update on our work and a thank-you for the many members and partners who helped us move this forward.

Before we started our planning, we took the time to find out what members and non-members thought about us as an organization, how effective we are, and where we should be concentrating our efforts. We interviewed more than 140 interested and diverse individuals around the country, through a series of focus group meetings in Boise (ID), Pittsburgh (PA), Silver Spring (MD), Asheville (NC), Boulder (CO), and Chico (CA).

Those attending the focus groups were asked their thoughts about trends and issues related to whitewater, what they as a paddler care about most, how American Whitewater can serve boaters best, and to identify what they see as American Whitewater's top priorities. As usual, our members and friends gladly volunteered to tell us exactly what they



"Avoiding the workload"  
Jason Robertson chilled after all-day meetings in Idaho.

thought about us!

We listened and we learned a lot. Not surprising, our members identified river conservation as a critical part of our mission, especially dam relicensing, dam removal, and opening new rivers. Access to rivers came in as a top priority also, so close that I can't list one above the other. Even nonmembers and those not directly linked to this organization identified American Whitewater as a lead force in conservation and public access. Another priority was for American Whitewater to mobilize boaters and get them involved in more issues.

Going into this process, I wanted to see



how our members and friends weighed in on the perception that conservation and access can be separate, sometimes conflicting issues. But we learned that to the majority of our members, conservation is synonymous with access. As one person put it, "What good is it to gain access if the river is trashed?"

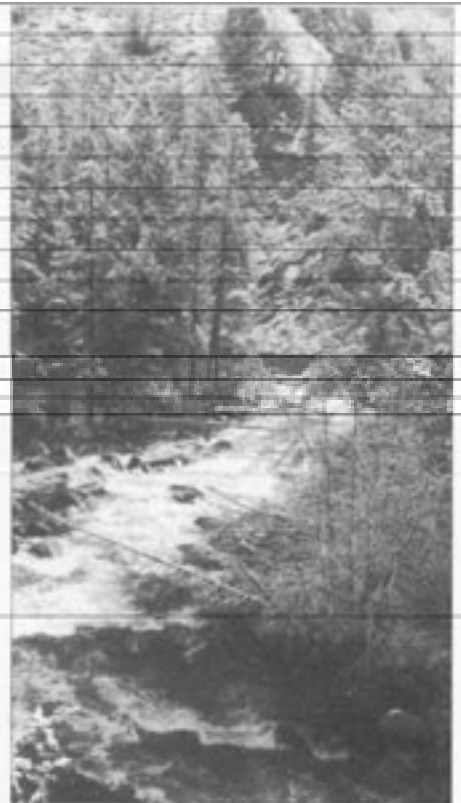
In May we held our spring board meeting in Idaho and began to put these pieces together and to prioritize the information we gathered through this process. Idaho was only the first of many meetings that will be required to plot the course for this organization over the next three years, and we will continue to provide updates as we move forward. By late summer, we hope to have not

only a strategic plan ready, but also an organizational workplan for our members that details how we will achieve our goals and better link boaters to this effort.

I'd like to thank all of those who helped coordinate and plan these focus group meetings, and each of you who gave your time to tell us what you think. As always, whether we are conducting flow studies, constructing an access site, hosting an event, or doing internal planning, the strength of American Whitewater lies in its volunteers and the commitment of its members. Thanks for being there!

S.Y.O.T.R.

Left: Strategic Planning 2000, Below: Spring in Idaho. Tributary to the Upper Salmon.



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## Support for Rivers and Recreation in the Roadless Areas Proposal

by Rich Bowers

At stake is 60 million acres of forest managed by the Forest Service, areas that remain wild and roadless but unprotected. These areas shield many of America's rivers, headwater creeks, and watersheds as well as the land and forest resources that are vulnerable to development pressures and critical to human-powered outdoor recreation. Rivers such as the Chattooga (SC/GA/NC), the Selway, and Middle Fork Salmon (premier multi-day wilderness runs in ID), the Salt (AZ), the Cheat (WV), and others that provide benefits for all those who fish, hike, climb, kayak, canoe, or raft along rivers.

Last November, American Whitewater asked its members to help support efforts to use the U.S. Forest Service's (USFS) Roadless policy to safeguard wilderness rivers, establish a federal paddling policy, and protect 40 million acres of forests, many protecting the headwater areas of the rivers we paddle. As usual, our members came through, and in early spring American Whitewater met with USFS Chief Michael Dombeck and Deputy Chief Jim Furnish in Washington, D.C. American Whitewater presented Chief Dombeck with more than 200 letters of support from our national membership of whitewater boaters, and asked the chief to use the Roadless Areas Proposal to protect rivers and wilderness, and opportunities for human-powered outdoor recreation.



American Whitewater also spearheaded and presented Chief Dombeck with a letter signed by 22 national, regional, and local river conservation organizations, recreation groups, and local paddling clubs—all requesting that the Forest Service play a larger role in protecting watersheds and wilderness. The USFS is already a critical player in river protection and river recreation. It is charged with managing 96 designated components of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System (some 4,316 miles).

Joining American Whitewater on this letter were the following: New York Rivers United; Montana Fishing Outfitters Conservation Fund; River Alliance of Wisconsin; New England F.L.O.W.; West Virginia Rivers Coalition; Alabama Rivers Alliance; Friends of the River; California Sportfishing Protection Alliance; Utah Rivers Council; Dogwood Alliance; Southeast Forest Project; American Rivers; American Canoe Association; Northwest Resources Information Center; New Hampshire Rivers Council; Idaho Rivers United; Sawmill River Watershed Alliance; Canoe Cruisers Association; Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning; Tennessee Paddle; Grand Canyon Private Boaters Association.

For more information, see the article "The Future of Roadless Areas" in the last Journal, or call American Whitewater at (301) 589-9453.

## New Frontiers for American Whitewater

With our conservation and access efforts spanning the continent, many of you have seen firsthand the positive effects of American Whitewater's work. Maybe you've roared down the Tallulah on a release day, used an American Whitewater-owned take-out area, or volunteered for a controlled flow study providing crucial information for a dam relicensing.

American Whitewater gets great support from its members, clubs and events—support which allows us to work on these issues so important to all of us. We are proud to announce wonderful gifts of \$500 from Tennessee Paddle's Obed Festival, \$1,000 from the Festival on the French Broad and \$3,200 from the National Paddling Film Festival. Special thanks goes to Dale Robinson, Chris Donochod, and Zina Merkin for all their hard

work in organizing these events.

With an increasing number of hydropower relicensings occurring in the Southeast, we are enlarging our conservation efforts there, and want to work on the issue of industrial forestry and chipmills as well. But to do this properly, we need to hire a Southeast coordinator. We need your increased support to make this possible.

Our volunteers have done a fabulous job of designing an amazing new website which will provide you with an enormous range of paddling information—but we don't have the money to put it up or maintain it.

Please check to see if your employers will match your charitable donations, or if they offer grants that American Whitewater might be eligible for. Consider making a special gift to American Whitewater in support of a

program you're particularly interested in.

Thank-you for all the support you give American Whitewater. It makes all our work possible, and ensures there is more accessible whitewater for all of us.

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Gaithersburg, MD 20879  
Telephone: (301) 840-0890  
Account: 8305-02694

## New intern at American Whitewater



My name is Toni Mehraban and I am an intern at American Whitewater this summer working under the Development Director, Nancy Galloway at the national office in Silver Spring, MD. This summer I will be conducting a study detailing the economic impacts of human powered recreational boating on several dam-controlled river segments, some free-flowing rivers, and some whitewater parks in the United States. Some of the rivers that I will be looking at include Tallulah, Deerfield, Gauley, Watauga, Arkansas, Youghiogheny, and the South Fork of the American. I hope to find out what portion of the local economy can be linked to boating in those areas. This study will primarily focus on private boaters but will also include information on commercial boating and the growth of outfitters providing rafting trips and paddling instruction.

As paddling sports become more popular, there is an increase in demand for gear and supplies. Kayaks were the number one paddlesport purchase in 1996 and, combined with canoes, totaled \$99.1 million in sales. Other paddlesport accessories totaled \$200.1 million in sales in 1997. In 1999 there were 468,000 whitewater kayakers and 720,000 whitewater boaters. These numbers show that paddlesports contribute a large amount to human-powered outdoor recreation sales and participation. My hope for this study is to show that paddlesports and boating opportunities via improved access sites and hydro flows are very important to the economy and to the people who participate in the sport. Check out American Whitewater's website <http://www.awa.org> for the complete study in August.

I am a Civil and Environmental Engineering student at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City, UT and will receive my B.S. in May 2001. I came to American Whitewater to volunteer my time and learn more about the beautiful whitewater rivers in the United States. I have been rafting on the San Juan River and Split Mountain on the Green River in Utah and am very excited to go kayaking this summer with the great staff of American Whitewater.

## Successful Ocoee Rodeo Highlights Conservation of Southeast Rivers

by Rich Bowers

**"I believe that conservation of our whitewater resources goes hand in hand with the promotion of the sport..."<sup>99</sup>**  
**American Whitewater Events Director Jayne Abbot**



Jayne Abbott explaining "Why there are no cowboys at the Ocoee Rodeo."

American Whitewater annually hosts more than 25 different river festivals, races, and whitewater rodeos around the country. The purpose of these increasingly successful events is to celebrate rivers and to promote the mission of American Whitewater. Like any celebration, this means having fun with your friends and family, and reflecting on the great rivers you have paddled over the years. It also means taking a serious and proactive look at the threats that can or could affect the rivers you paddle!

This year the Ocoee Rodeo, which enjoyed a record setting attendance for both competitors (234+), spectators (3000+), and volunteers (800+ hours), played a major role in educating boaters and others about the affects of chip mill production on private lands and rivers in the Southeast. Chip mills are growing quickly and are significantly affecting the water quality and beauty of some outstanding whitewater. Since 1985, more than 156 chip mills have opened in the Southeast, consuming an estimated 1.2 million acres of forest a year. Like giant pencil sharpeners, chip mills grind whole trees into small flakes used for pulp, paper, and particleboard.

continued ►



## Pushing the conservation message at the Ocoee Festival

Jeff Espy - Hooked on the Outdoors Magazine, Jay Kenney & Risa Callaway - American Whitewater, Bunny Johns - Nantahal Outdoor Center

Seven of the nation's top whitewater recreation companies joined American Whitewater at the Ocoee and called for Vice President Al Gore and Tennessee Governor Don Sundquist to provide leadership in protecting whitewater rivers. A copy of the Vice President's reply to American Whitewater President Jay Kenney is included with this article. Joining American Whitewater, Dagger, Perception, Patagonia, Lotus Designs, Harmony, Mountain Surf, and the Nantahala Outdoor Center asked for a moratorium on new chip mills.

These companies and organizations also stressed that human-powered outdoor recreation provides local and regional economies throughout the South with long-term growth opportunities. The Middle Ocoee generates in excess of \$20 million to the local economy each year and this number could be greatly increased if the Tennessee Valley Authority returned water to the Upper Ocoee on a regular basis (a huge issue at this year's Ocoee Rodeo).

Local radio and television stations in Knoxville and Chattanooga, and nationally through the Associated Press, covered the Ocoee Rodeo and explained how chip mill production affects whitewater rivers. Media



coverage highlighted volunteer boater involvement and concern over how this issue affects whitewater rivers.

Chip mill production was targeted at the Ocoee because it is far more than a simple forestry issue; it has had dramatic and definitely adverse effects on classic southeast rivers. "Vast clear cut areas are increasingly noticed by recreational paddlers as they drive the backroads to put-in and take-out locations," said American Whitewater Past President Risa Callaway, "the sights are alarming because the 'new variety' of clear cuts leave no trace of growth." Boaters also see waters that once ran clear and clean now murky from sedimentation and turbidity," continued Risa, "this has increased dramatically in the last few years, so that even first-timers to many rivers and streams wonder why the rivers always seem like a sudden torrent has flushed the banks. It is an everyday scene, recently due in large part, to chip mill proliferation."

Increased chip mill cutting in the watershed of the Chattooga River and the Chauga River has led to increased siltation and downstream impacts on these popular rivers, as well as the Conasauga and Jacks River. The pristine North Chickamauga Creek, recently the focus of conservation efforts through

acid mine treatment projects, has seen the quality of its waters significantly impacted by heavy logging and clearcuts within the last year. A similar situation has occurred in the watersheds of the South Cumberland State Park with impacts occurring on the Savage, Big, and upper Collin's watersheds.

Besides using events to get the conservation and access message out, events are a great way to demonstrate the willingness and commitment of whitewater boaters to work on river issues. You can expect to see an even greater effort by American Whitewater to include and educate you, our members, on these issues in the next few months. At future events, we hope to augment the exceptional volunteer efforts of our members by including pro-whitewater athletes, and other top paddlers, in promoting awareness on whitewater rivers.

To wrap up, I'd like to thank the hundreds of volunteers who help American Whitewater put on such awesome events. Just as the rodeos and festivals wouldn't happen without your help, the rivers we paddle and the freedom to enjoy them depend on you. Please volunteer with American Whitewater so we can demonstrate to the world just how much rivers mean to us. And if you're a famous paddler (at least in your own mind), please hook up with us. The promotion of the sport and the conservation of its resources depend on your efforts.



Ocoee Rodeo 2000

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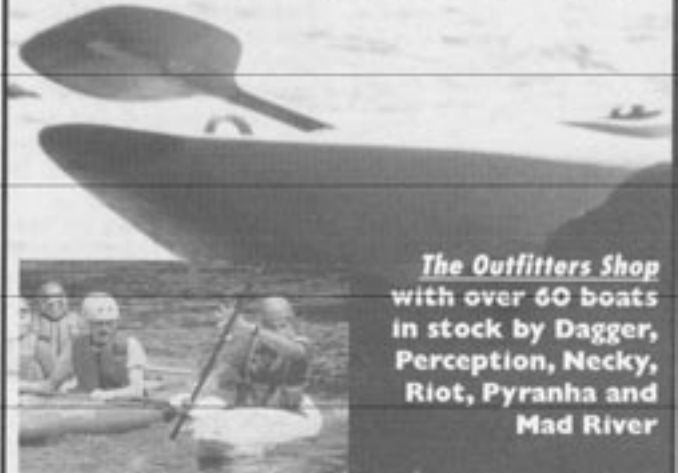
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# Chelan Gorge Whitewater Flow Study

Chelan PUD, operator of the Chelan Hydroelectric Project, finally agreed to conduct a whitewater controlled flow study in the Chelan Gorge in eastern Washington state. The study will take place in July. Chelan backed out of a similar flow study in the summer of 1999 due to liability concerns. The Chelan river drops 400 feet in 1.5 miles. Many consider the Gorge unrunnable. American Whitewater Conservation Director John Gangemi observed flows of 250 to 500 cfs in the Gorge in June, 1999 and declared it a whitewater cathedral. John will report the results of the study in an upcoming issue of American Whitewater.

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## What is Green Power?

*In the past six months many boaters have contacted me seeking advice on the purchase of green power. To try and help wade through the issues I thought I would offer some guidance on selecting your energy source. This advice is not intended to be comprehensive since that would require a tomb of information covering environmental impacts for respective energy sources.*

### First some background:

Like the phone industry, Congress authorized the restructuring of the electric utility industry. Historically, individual state public service commissions set electric rates for utilities in monopolized territories. Each state is responsible for restructuring their electric utility industry from a state regulated system to a competitive market. Each state is proceeding at their own pace drafting new state legislation authorizing a free market place. No two states have identical legislation. American Whitewater, as a steering committee member of the Hydropower Reform Coalition and the California Hydropower Reform Coalition, has been steering state legislation in a river friendly direction.

Most state restructuring legislation requires utility companies to contain a portfolio of energy products with a percentage classified as renewable. The list of renewables includes wind, solar, geothermal, and often times hydropower. American Whitewater, the HRC, the CHRC, numerous other environmental organizations as well as the White House do not categorize hydropower as renewable. The National Hydropower Association (NHA) claims hydropower is renewable. The NHA capitalizes on the fear of global warming as a means of pushing hydro as a green energy source. Global warming is a real threat for our planet but substituting environmental degradation of our rivers for global warming is not going to solve the problem. That threat can only be mitigated through conservation—reducing our consumption of natural resources at all levels.

American Whitewater does recognize that hydro's fuel source, water, is renewable. But the term renewable is not synonymous with green or clean energy. Calling hydro green is the equivalent of claiming that all timber harvesting is green because trees are renewable. Some forms of timber harvest have far greater impact than others. Hydropower dams have tremendous impacts on our rivers degrading habitat for native aquatic species, impeding fish passage, and reducing or eliminating river recreation opportunities to name a few. As with various timber harvest practices, some dams have greater impacts on riverine ecological processes than others. Recognizing these differences, the Low Impact Hydropower Institute developed a set of eight environmental and social criteria from which to evaluate whether a hydropower facility has an ecological and social impact on the river. Those with minimal impacts receive the green stamp of approval. This stamp can be used to market the energy produced from the hydropower facility as green energy.

Some states designate hydropower facilities generating less than 30 megawatts of power as green energy. The old adage "size doesn't matter" rings true for hydro power impacts as well. A 2 megawatt hydropower facility can have more impact than a facility that generates 200 megawatts. Again, look for the Low Impact Hydropower Institute stamp of approval.

### Making the Choice:

Just like the deregulation of the phone industry we can all expect to be deluged with marketing propaganda claiming that company A has the best, most environmentally friendly plan. Read the fine print. Be sure that any hydropower included in the renewables/green portfolio has the Low Impact Hydropower Institute stamp of approval. Don't be fooled by size distinctions.

Many companies will want you to pay more for renewables. We should pay more for renewables to help develop a viable market for wind, solar and geothermal so that it encourages more development of these energy sources. Unfortunately the utility industry is repackaging 70 to 100 year old hydro projects into renewables and selling the power at higher rates. We want to discourage further expansion of hydropower dams on our rivers. More importantly, hydropower with its free fuel and long presence in the energy market is and should continue to be one of the cheapest energy sources. I for one would not pay more for repackaged hydro energy already being generated from an aging dam.

Feel free to contact me should you have further questions and good luck wading through the marketing gimmicks. John Gangemi, American Whitewater Conservation Director; 406-837-3155; e-mail: [jgangemi@digisys.net](mailto:jgangemi@digisys.net)

## Kern River Boater Permit System

The Sequoia National Forest in Southern California is considering elimination of permits for private boaters on all sections of the Kern River downstream from Johnsondale Bridge (Forks take-out). Private day-use permits, referred to as manifests, have been required for years on the Kern. Paddlers have never liked the manifest requirement and some have been ticketed for failure to comply. This management strategy has made the private boating community distrustful of the USFS. Over the past year a group known as the Kern River Private Boaters (KRPB) have been meeting with the USFS to foster better relations and management of the river resource and associated user groups. The KRPB recommended the USFS drop the permit system since the objectives of the permit system are A) out of date; B) have never been applicable to river users; and C) are covered under other USFS regulations. As a result of these meetings, the USFS is tentatively planning to suspend the manifest requirement. If suspended, the USFS would choose instead to monitor river use through boater counts and visitor surveys conducted by river rangers already on the Kern. The KRPB has also recommended changes to the Forks of the Kern permit system. The KRPB will be working with the USFS on the Forks permit system in the following year. The KRPB has done a tremendous job establishing a constructive dialogue with the USFS. This dialogue has resulted in more user friendly management of the Kern River. Helmets off to the individuals putting in the hard work on the KRPB.

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# Poe Flow Study

Monk Kareicen working the foam in "Taboggan" on the Poe section of the North Fork Feather.



Boaters gathering at the put-in for the Poe Controlled Flow Study.



Kurt Sable boofing a drop on the Poe section of the North Fork Feather.



Kevin Lewis, American Whitewater Board Member acquiring new shuttle rig.

American Whitewater conducted a whitewater controlled flow study May 19-21 on the Poe section of the North Fork Feather River in Northern California. Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) dewateres the 7.5 mile section of the North Fork Feather between Poe dam and Poe powerhouse. American Whitewater is currently engaged in three hydro-power relicensings with PG&E on the North Fork Feather. In June 1999, American Whitewater along with Shasta Paddlers and Chico Paddleheads, conducted a controlled flow study the Rock Creek and Cresta sections of the North Fork. Each relicensing presents an opportunity to restore 50 miles of whitewater boating to the North Fork Feather.

The Poe reach has had the reputation of being one of the more difficult runs on the North Fork Feather. Under hydro project operations, water only spills into the Poe reach during extreme high water events making this Class V run quite intimidating. In the May controlled flow study, PG&E released 3 flows over a 3 day period; 500, 800, and 1400 cfs. Nine kayakers paddled the 4.5 mile upper Class V stretch. They were joined by additional kayakers and catarafts on the lower 3 mile Class III reach. The upper section proved to be extremely appealing moderate Class V paddling. The lower section was a great intermediate run with play spots at the higher flows.

Local boaters made significant volunteer contributions to make this flow study possible both on and off the water. Local volunteers are an essential element for success on all American Whitewater conservation and access issues. Get involved with river issues in your area. Contact American Whitewater to learn more about issues on your rivers and ways you can volunteer. They're your rivers.



# San Joaquin River, California: Multiple Hydro Relicenses

*In May, Southern California Edison (SCE) kicked off the relicensing of seven hydropower projects in the San Joaquin River system. SCE is taking an innovative approach in this relicense effort: SCE is wrapping all seven hydro projects into a single relicense using a watershed approach.*

American Whitewater in conjunction with the San Joaquin Paddlers has elected to participate in this relicense proceeding. Engaging in this hydropower relicense is a minimum 5.5 year commitment. Because there are significant whitewater resources in the San Joaquin watershed (see Stanley Holbeck, pages 184-193) American Whitewater is gearing up to participate in this relicense. The San Joaquin Paddlers, a local American Whitewater affiliate club, will work closely with Conservation Director John Gangemi in this relicense proceeding. Participation in this multi-project relicense will require a considerable time investment because SCE plans to hold monthly meetings. Fortunately for the local paddlers, SCE keeps them well nourished with sandwiches and cookies at meetings — enough to make it through their next self support trip.

## Exploring Opportunities to Restore Whitewater impacted by Hydro Projects in the Southeast



In late April, American Whitewater's Conservation Director John Gangemi and a team of local paddlers met in Sylva, North Carolina to investigate the whitewater resources of the East and West Fork's of the Tuckaseegee River. Nantahala Power and Light (NP&L) operates a hydropower project on each fork of the Tuckaseegee consisting of multiple dams, diversion tunnels, and powerhouses which ultimately dewater or flood long stretches of the river channel. The end result is a complete loss of whitewater boating opportunities on both the East and West Forks. A number of paddlers that explored the reaches in April will track these relicense proceedings. NP&L has a total of seven hydropower projects undergoing relicensing in western North Carolina. American Whitewater is looking for paddling clubs and individuals to help in these relicense proceedings. Please contact John Gangemi at the Bigfork Conservation office (406)837-3155, e-mail: [jgangemi@digisys.net](mailto:jgangemi@digisys.net) or American Whitewater's new southeast Conservation Coordinator, Zog Aitken in Asheville, NC (828)645-5299, e-mail: [tsuga@bellsouth.net](mailto:tsuga@bellsouth.net)

### NP&L Projects up for Relicense:

River/Project	Name	No. of Dams	WW Class
Hiawasee River	Mission Project	1	Class I
Nantahala River	Nantahala Project	3	Class III-IV
Oconolufy River	Bryson Project	1	Class I
Tuckaseegee, East Fork	East Fork Tuck. Proj.	4	Class III-?
Tuckaseegee, West Fork	West Fork Tuck. Proj.	2	Class III-IV
Tuckaseegee, mainstem	Dillsboro Project	1	Class III
Tuckaseegee, mainstem	Franklin Project	1	Class ?

Above: One of the drops on the East Fork of the Tuckaseegee River in Bonas Defeat Gorge.  
Right: Boaters gathered to explore the East and West Forks of the Tuckaseegee River in North Carolina.



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## Utility Proposes to Rebuild Farad Dam on California's Truckee River

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Sierra Pacific Power Company (SPPC) has filed an application to reconstruct the Farad diversion dam on the Truckee River. The Farad Dam, the uppermost of four operated by SPPC, washed out in the 1997 floods. The old dam created an unrunnable hydraulic thus obstructing downstream navigation. With the dam gone, paddle use increased on this section of the Truckee over the last few years. SPPC is proposing to put in a new dam that is paddler friendly—meaning it will be runnable at all water levels through use of an inflatable bladder on the spillway. Runnable or not, American Whitewater questions the value of reconstructing the dam for this outdated hydroelectric project. The canal is in disrepair and the powerhouse only generates 2 megawatts. Reconstruction hardly seems worth the capital investment. Leaving the river free flowing at the former diversion site could help restore federally listed lahontan cutthroat trout. American Whitewater would like to see SPPC's water right reallocated to a downstream location to help in the effort to restore riverine processes necessary for recovery of the lahontan cutthroat as well as maintain unobstructed navigation on the Truckee River.

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## FERC Approves Boundary Creek Preliminary Hydropower Permit

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The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) approved Continental Lands preliminary permit for a hydropower project on Boundary Creek in northern Idaho. American Whitewater filed for rehearing requesting the FERC reconsider their decision in light of the unavoidable environmental and recreational impacts as well as the fact that Boundary Creek has been designated as a protected watershed by the Northwest Power Planning Commission. American Rivers and Idaho Rivers United joined American Whitewater in the rehearing request.

The preliminary permit grants the hydro developer exclusive rights to file an application for a hydropower license on Boundary Creek. The FERC issues preliminary permits for a period of three years. During the preliminary permit phase, the permit holder conducts studies to determine the economic and engineering feasibility of constructing a hydropower facility on Boundary Creek. The permit does not allow them to begin construction of the hydropower facility. The permit holder is required to submit reports every six months to the FERC describing progress on the engineering, environmental, and economic studies.

Boundary Creek is a stellar Class IV-V wilderness run with the gradient ranging from 250-375 feet over the 7-10 mile length. Boundary Creek has only one rapid—it starts at the put-in and terminates at the take-out. This is a physically demanding run. Just when you mentally want the gradient to back off it steepens yet again. Boundary Creek is a gem in northern Idaho and one the paddling community cannot allow to be dewatered and scarred by a hydropower project. It is largely believed that the hydropower proposal is a mere ploy to force the USFS to reopen the road that parallels Boundary Creek. The USFS closed that road in 1997 due to the sedimentation entering the creek from road washouts. American Whitewater supported that road closure. Boaters are able to access the put-in via the Saddle Pass road. For more information about Boundary Creek contact John Gangemi, American Whitewater Conservation Director.

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## North Fork Feather On Nation's Most Endangered Rivers for 2000

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The North Fork Feather River was listed on American Rivers list of Most Endangered Rivers for 2000. The group listed the North Fork Feather due to the multiple hydroelectric dams which divert water into a series of stair-stepped penstocks and powerhouses leaving much of this river channel void of water. The hydropower projects are applying for new 30 year licenses. This relicensing in combination with the potential sale of these dams to separate owners in the state restructuring of the power industry could further degrade the North Fork Feather. Prior to dam construction the North Fork Feather River was rated as one of the fifth best rainbow trout fisheries in the world. American Whitewater has been actively engaged in restoring instream flows and whitewater flows to the North Fork Feather. The series of dams dewater 50 miles of classic Sierra whitewater ranging from Class III to Class V. American Whitewater has conducted whitewater controlled flow studies on the 4.5 mile Class III Roger's Flat reach, the 4.5 mile Class V- Tobin reach, the 5 mile Class IV Cresta reach, and most recently the 3.5 mile Class III Bardees Bar reach and the 3.5 mile Class V Poe reach.

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**Jason Robertson, Access Director, contemplates "Fee Demo" along Idaho's Main Payette River.**

## "Coastal Canoeists Challenge Clubs to Protect Navigability"

Roanoke, VA- The Coastal Canoe Club has stepped up to the plate and is challenging other canoe clubs to donate funds to American Whitewater's John's Creek Legal Access Fund to protect navigational rights on Virginia's rivers. The Coastal Canoe club will match up to \$1,000 in donations from other clubs.

Conservation Chair Liz Garland encourages clubs to pass the hat or pull money out of the treasury and make a serious donation reflecting the serious nature of the legal threats boaters are facing on America's rivers.

As you may recall, a boater was arrested for trespassing while floating down the Class IV John's Creek in 1998. Since the arrest, American Whitewater's legal team has been preparing a case challenging the landowner's right to obstruct passage on this popular whitewater river. At present, we have spent more than \$8,000 laying the foundation for the case. Now, we need your support and the active

support of clubs such as the Coastal Canoeists.

Please help us by asking your club to support our navigability legal defense team on John's Creek and America's other popular whitewater rivers.

American Whitewater's Access Director Jason Robertson observed that "we want to treat this case right and ensure that boater's rights to float their favorite creeks and rivers are protected by the courts. But we need broad public support as well as funding to accomplish this goal. The Coastal Canoe Challenge provides both, and we hope that it will encourage other clubs to step forward."

Tax-deductible donations can be sent to Johns Creek Legal Fund, care of American Whitewater at P.O. Box 636, Margaretville, NY 12455 or hand-delivered to Back Country Ski & Sports in Fayetteville, WV (toll free 877-226-8754) or Blacksburg, VA (toll free 800-560-6401).

## "Watermark Paddlesports Obtains Public Access on the West Fork of the Wild and Scenic Chattooga River"

By Veronica Griner and Jason Robertson

Easley, SC (April 2000): In a move to help guarantee access to the most controversial stretch along the Wild and Scenic Chattooga River in Georgia, WaterMark Paddlesports representative Robert Reid purchased a controversial 230-acre tract and immediately resold the land to the Conservation Fund. In doing this, Reid and WaterMark Paddlesports ensured public access on this important southeastern river for the future.

"I really wanted to take away the problem regarding the navigability," says Reid, an avid fisherman and paddler, and one of the principals of WaterMark Paddlesports, the company that owns Perception Kayaks, Dagger, Islander Kayaks, Harmony Accessories, Palm Equipment North America, Lidds Helmets and Freedom Paddles. "The West Fork of the Chattooga should be an open body of water.

That waterway belongs to everyone."

The Chattooga, which is designated a Wild and Scenic River, attracted national attention in 1972 when Burt Reynolds navigated this river in the movie *Deliverance*. Since then, thousands have paddled this river but it wasn't until 1997 that a controversy arose when a group of investors decided to purchase the land for a housing development and threatened to prohibit river access. The methods these owners employed included stringing a wire across the river with a sign attached saying, "No Trespassing, Fishing, Floating, Private Property. Survivors will be prosecuted."

In 1998, American Whitewater provided key information on state and federal navigability laws to the USDA Forest Service in their lawsuit against the landowner and also worked with a local attorney

to protect the public right of navigation.

"Having personally paddled the Chattooga for nearly 30 years, I'm delighted to see WaterMark play a major role in resolving this controversy," says Joe Pulliam, President of Dagger and former American Whitewater board member. "It's fantastic that our industry has reached the level where we can exercise financial clout in a positive manner for the benefit of a river and paddlers. Access issues remain on the Chattooga, but this is a major step forward."

Because of the former owners' actions, a lawsuit was brought upon them by the U.S. Government who stated that it was within their authority to ensure that visitors to the National Forest would have the opportunity to freely navigate the West Fork for recreational purposes. Currently, Reid and the WaterMark attorneys are working with the government to settle this issue ensuring public access.

"I'm proud to be associated with a company that follows through on its commitments. When WaterMark entered the paddlesports category, they were dedicated to grow participation and focus on access and environmental issues," states Jim Clark, President of

Perception Kayaks. "Restoring public access to the West Fork is an example of WaterMark's commitment to the sport."

Rex Ronert, Vice-president of the Conservation Fund, has indicated that his group would transfer the land to the U.S. Forest Service thus increasing the acreage of the Chattahoochee National Forest. "Mr. Reid has been very cooperative to make this property available to us," says Bonert. "He has been very clear that he would like to see this river preserved for public use."

"Access is critical to paddlesports and all water-based recreation," states John Rukavina, Chief Operating Officer for WaterMark Paddlesports. "WaterMark is delighted that public access on the West Fork of the Chattooga now seems secure."

For more information about this land acquisition, contact Perception at (864) 859-7518. For information about other access and conservation issues threatening the Chattooga watershed, contact American Whitewater's Access Director Jason Robertson at 301-589-9453.

## "SCOTT'S GULF NEWS FLASH!!!!"

By Chuck Estes

Editor's Note: Chuck Estes is beginning his fourth year as an American Whitewater board member in 2000. Chuck is also a dedicated member of the Friends of Scott's Gulf and has been working successfully with the State of Tennessee and BridgestoneIFirestone for several years to move this valley into public ownership.

Tennessee Governor Don Sundquist and BridgestoneIFirestone Inc. announced that BridgestoneIFirestone will donate 6,000 acres of its land in Scott's Gulf to the State of Tennessee. This will add to the previously donated 4,000 acres that forms the existing BridgestoneIFirestone Conservation Area.

The newly donated area means that the entire river gorge property formerly owned by BridgestoneIFirestone will be protected forever as the BridgestoneIFirestone Conservation Area. The river gorge and surrounding area has scenic bluffs and cliffs, waterfalls, caves, and more than 20 miles of challenging whitewater on Bee Creek and the Caney Fork River. The Caney Fork River gorge has been called the Grand Canyon of the Cumberlands. The gorge is very remote with little access into the beautiful hardwood canyon.

Important to hikers and whitewater boaters, the newly donated area contains the Scott's Gulf Road. This will allow the eventual reopening of the road for foot access. The road down to the confluence of Bee Creek and the Caney Fork River had been closed by BridgestoneIFirestone for the past year. Hikers and boaters are asked to NOT use the Scott's Gulf Road as access until the property has been deeded to the State. The property is still owned by BridgestoneIFirestone until the deed has been conveyed. So please do not trespass until we announce the property has been deeded to the State. This may take several months.

A huge THANKS to all who helped make this a reality!!! Many people donated time and money to help the Friends of Scott's Gulf bring this special area to the public's attention and encourage BridgestoneIFirestone to do the right thing. In the end, BridgestoneIFirestone recognized the proper course and has shown great civic leadership in making this donation. Please send them a thank you note (BridgestoneIFirestoneInc., P.O. Box 148900, Nashville, TN 37214-8900).

### The River Safety Report 1996 - 1999

By Charlie Walbridge

A project of the American Canoe Association  
and American Whitewater

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This is the sixth collection of whitewater accident reports published since 1974. . Most canoe, kayak, and raft enthusiasts will never encounter a fatal accident during their careers, but all can benefit from the experiences of thousands of river runners contained in these reports.

Readers will become increasingly aware of how accidents occur, and will develop be better able to recognize and avoid dangerous situations. The reports show what works, and what doesn't.

The sport of whitewater paddling has grown tremendously. Although better equipment and training makes river running safer than ever, more paddlers mean more accidents. The reports in this book involve a variety of boat types, skill levels, and river difficulties. Many accounts are written by the people who were actually there; all feature a detailed analysis by river experts. The reports are gripping, disturbing, and always enlightening.

Help support AW! For a \$25 donation your book include a  
personal note signed by the author!

# "Governor Davis Cuts State Park Fees By Half: Reduced Fees Will Increase Public Access to Camping, Beaches and State Parks"

CALABASAS, CA (May 1, 2000) - Governor Gray Davis announced a plan for cutting state park fees in half, making California's park system among the most affordable and accessible in the nation.

"We created the park system for all Californians and, now, I want to make sure our parks are accessible to all Californians," Governor Davis said. "More Californians than ever before will be able to enjoy these special places of grandeur and glory."

Governor Davis made the announcement on the first day of "California State Parks Month." The Governor was joined by Secretary of Resources Mary Nichols, State Parks Director Rusty Areias,

Assembly Member Denise Ducheny, and Assembly Member Virginia Strom-Martin.

The across-the-board fee reductions will make many state parks a more convenient and affordable location for shorter visits and picnics, as well as longer visits such as camping, boating, or other recreation. The proposed reductions will begin in 109 California State parks, museums, and historical sites on July 1, 2000; additional fee reductions will be implemented among the remaining 46 parks on January 1, 2001.

## "PLANNUS INTERRUPTUS"

By Richard Martin and the Grand Canyon Private Boaters Association

"... No, there's not going to be a revolution in river management at the Grand Canyon. But the hard fact is there never was going to be a revolution anyway."

That's a comment I received the other day in response to Superintendent Arnberger's anticlimactic statement announcing the termination of the public input process to reform Grand Canyon river management, the Colorado River Management Plan (CRMP).

The current revision process began in 1995 when Grand Canyon National Park (GCNP) planners began to prepare a replacement for the poorly crafted 1989 plan, based on the hastily prepared, very flawed 1981 plan, itself a strange concoction fashioned from bits and pieces of the wilderness inspired, but aborted 1980 plan that called for river management techniques leading to the river corridor and back country wildlands being designated Wilderness.

On February 23, 2000, several hours before the Board members of the Grand Canyon Private Boaters Association were to meet with Superintendent Arnberger, his office issued a press release to the media, announcing the termination of the CRMP process. Rumors about the future of the CRMP had been circulating for weeks, still, we were surprised and shocked to hear the news that planning had stopped, and that the important issues of access, allocation, and Motors vs. Wilderness would not be dealt with before concession contracts were scheduled for renewal in 2003.

The Superintendent singled out the Motor vs. Wilderness issue, and the contention surrounding it as the predominant reason for CRMP cancellation. Arnberger expressed the opinion that the issue could never be resolved by the GCNP staff. He claimed that the resultant stranglehold on the CRMP by this issue is a valid reason for the park to abandon the public process that they encouraged GCPBA and other stakeholders to buy into for the last four years. It seems the nasty problem of ensuring equal opportunity for currently 6,800 people, half of whom will wait from eleven to twenty-two years to lead their own trip down the Grand Canyon, is no longer a concern for the Park.

Arnberger's choice of aggressive inaction follows directly in the unbroken path of footprints left behind by his predecessors, a string of Superintendents unwilling to grapple the tug of war generated by the Motors vs. Wilderness issue.

Who could blame him, or them? Things are pretty "nice" down there, at the bottom of a very grand canyon. As Superintendent Arnberger pointed out, delaying a decision will not make matters

worse—of course that concept excludes the steadily growing waiting list. This termination will do nothing to relieve the growing anger and ill will generated by the flagrant inequity of a system that rewards the well-heeled with easy access. Additionally, every year wilderness

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compatible management techniques are ignored, lesser standards become more entrenched.

The Superintendent expressed his dismay and discouragement with a process that would doubtlessly lead to the Park becoming embroiled in litigation. He told us several times that park concessionaires assured him if their allocations were touched, or motor use was mandated to be eliminated, that the park would wind up in court. He implied that he would expect nothing less from any of the other parties involved, if their polarized positions were rejected. That is probably true.

What to do? Go for the gold, punt, scuttle the ship—settle for status quo?

The environmental degradation caused by excessive over flights, the encroachment of Canyon Forest Village, the traffic mess, Hualapai claims and desires, and so on are problems cited by Superintendent Arnberger as more in need of his attention. Obviously they are very important, and we congratulate him for meeting the challenges of those problems. But, this writer cannot agree that they are significantly more important than striving for the preservation of the special ambience of the park, represented by vast wildlands of the inner canyon. That is what the visitors to the rim come to see, dream of, and be inspired by, and what travelers within those walls sacrifice to experience.

While deliberating, we can't ignore that back in 1969 the Secretary of the Interior ordered the NPS to inventory all its lands to determine their suitability for wilderness inclusion. The responding planners concluded wilderness designation was appropriate for the backcountry of the Grand Canyon. Accepting that recommendation, NPS policy mandated that the area be managed in a wilderness compliant manner. Following that mandate, planners prepared ad-

ministrative policy to comply. Enter the Hatch Amendment.

It would appear that the NPS planners gearbox got stuck in reverse back in 1980, when Senator Hatch (R-Utah) stalled resolution of the Motors vs. Wilderness question by introducing his seemingly omnipotent Amendment. Hatch's amendment, though legal for only one year, seems to have tumbled the aspiring Park managers from their tenuous, wilderness perch. Twenty years later we can see how well that has worked.

Surrounded by the certainty of lawsuits from the disappointed or discouraged, superintendent Arnberger might have recognized he enjoyed a certain freedom. The freedom to strive for and insist on the best from all participants, his planners, the concessionaires, and the private river runners. He's missed a rare opportunity to manifest the dream of his profession, to preserve and expand for the future, that unique treasure that he has been entrusted to manage.

Instead he settled for the mediocre, leaving himself and his constituents stuck in the rut worn by his predecessors. He expresses dismay at the tired bickerings of his trudging constituents. He ignores his opportunity to provide the needed leadership to resolve these issues.

Time to switch gears. How about trying out that four speeds forward gearbox and blast us into the needed river revolution?

*Note: gcpba NEWSWIRE is a FREE service to the boating community from the Grand Canyon Private Boaters Association, paid for by our really dedicated members... YOU can be a member, check out: <http://www.acoba.org> Send your e-mail address to [gcpba@gcpba.org](mailto:gcpba@gcpba.org) and they'll add you to the list, tell them to remove you and consider it done.*

## 'Forest Fees Not an Issue?'

Dear Editor:

I read with some amusement the Zierhut and Robertson exercise in righteous indignation about efforts to make the Recreational Fee Demonstration Program permanent. How dare the Federal Government require recreational users to pick up the costs of providing access to and ensuring safety on public lands. If the bureaucrats in Washington get away with that, they may try to force mining firms, timber companies, and ranchers to pay a fair price for their use of public lands.

It appears that the author's most compelling argument against the Program is that people would rather not pay fees. I would rather not pay them, but the real issue is one of fairness. Every American benefits from our national parks and forests and contributes through taxes to their protection and maintenance. However, those of us whose recreational activities impose extra burdens on their management should be willing to pick up the tab for the costs they generate.

There are, of course, legitimate issues with the Program. Do the fees accurately reflect the costs of additional services? Are there provisions to ensure that fees do not drive away lower income users? Do fee revenues free up funds for much needed land acquisition and environmental restoration?

Some advice to Zierhut and Robertson: stop your whining, pay your fair share, and focus on real issues.

Mike Springer  
Rethesda, MD

Mike,

continued ►



Thanks for the letter. As this fee test program has come closer to becoming permanent, American Whitewater has stepped up to the plate and taken a lead on examining its effectiveness and we have found little reason to support the permanent extension of the program at this time.

The answer to each of your questions about Fee Demo is a resounding "No." The fees do not and are not designed for cost recovery, nor are they based on services rendered. There are no provisions related to fairness based on income, ability to pay, or type of activity. And, fees do not "free up

other funds for acquisition or restoration. In fact, though the USFS raised \$20 Million in 1998 from Fee Demo, their budget was cut by a corresponding amount. The simple truth is that as fees are increasing, funding is decreasing.

Regarding the other points in your letter, American Whitewater has advocated that extractive industries should pay their fair share for their impact on our national resources. If certain uses have added expenses, it may be appropriate to recoup some of those costs. However when this cost-recovery policy has been implemented and targeted towards river runners in places such as the Colorado, Green, Deso-Gray, and Yampa, the federal land management agencies have gone beyond the intent of cost recovery legislation and have tried to recoup costs for ALL incidental recreational management expenses and even left boaters carrying the burden for other recreationists.

For clarification, American Whitewater does not oppose all fees; however Fee Demo has been implemented unfairly and has specifically targeted river runners. As we reported in the May/June 2000 issue, about a quarter of all Fee Demo sites are on rivers, though river management and river use represents a minuscule portion of the rec-



reation management budget, and much less than 1/10 of 1% of visitation and use on public lands.

Yes, I am philosophically opposed to paying fees for merely accessing public lands, though I believe in fees at developed camping areas and some environmentally sensitive scenic attractions that attract high use. However, I separate my personal position on Fee Demo from American Whitewater's position and am working proactively with the agencies to ensure that they get the funding they need from other sources.

American Whitewater is actively working with the American Hiking Society

ORCA, ACA, Access Fund for climbers, American Alpine Club, Continental Divide Trail Alliance, NOLS, Outward Bound, and Public Access Coalition for a \$700M increase in funding for the USFS alone. Many of these same groups also signed the attached letter (in the Access Articles

portion of this Journal) to Congressman Regula asking for his support in opposing permanent extension of this program before a careful analysis of the test can be completed.

American Whitewater is taking a lead on this issue and working with dozens of other national organizations, including the Forest Service, BLM, and NPS, to repair the existing system. However, we continue to oppose permanent implementation of Fee Demo as long as it unfairly targets river runners, and as long as the agencies fail to respond or solicit public input on the appropriateness of the fees and how they will be used.

Sincerely,  
Jason D. Robertson  
Access Director

## "Recreation Groups Urge Regula to Oppose Forest Fees"

By Jason Robertson

In May, almost a dozen mainstream national recreation organizations, including American Whitewater, signed a letter to Congressman Regula urging Congress not to support permanent implementation of Fee Demo on America's public lands. This letter is reproduced below.

The Honorable Ralph Regula  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Interior Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Regula:

The undersigned organizations, representing the human-powered outdoor industry and more than a quarter of a million public land users, oppose the Administration's proposal to permanently implement the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program (FeeDemo)

and oppose any phase II expansion of the program at this time.

In addition, we would support an extension of the existing fee demonstration program for no more than one year, and only if that extension is predicated upon an extensive review of the successes and failures of the program to date, and a hard look at the future of fees on public lands.

The existing Fee Demo experiment should only be extended for one year if Congress requires the agency to provide the following information during that period:

Which Fee Demo sites and which elements of the program have worked.

Which sites and which elements have failed.

What criteria determine whether an individual fee program is successful and whether the program as a whole is successful.

If a permanent program moved forward, what national guidance, based on lessons learned in fee demo, would be given to local managers.



- What role fees can realistically play in the federal lands and recreation management.
- The impact of backcountry user fees on backcountry users.
- Public acceptance of "user" fees vs. "entrance" or access fees.
- Whether recreation fees provide a barrier to use.

Many of the undersigned organizations were original supporters of Fee Demo.

Our current objections stem largely from inequities in the administration of the program and the inability of the agencies to provide solid information on what in the program has worked and what has not, and with what criteria. Our support anticipated that Fee Demo would function as a true experiment, evolving in response to the concerns of the outdoor recreation community and others. While this responsiveness has occurred in some places, mostly it has not. Once a manager comes to rely on a specific fee or fee system it becomes very difficult for users to effect change.

Among our concerns are:

- At some fee demo sites, one type of user is charged a fee while another is not. There



are cases where people are being charged a fee to kayak or raft on a river, while fisherman and hikers accessing the same resource are not.

- Practicalities of fee collection often determine who pays a fee, while key basic principles important to the users - such as fairness - get overlooked.
- Lack of agency coordination has resulted in one user paying multiple fees. Outdoor enthusiasts on hiking, backpacking, or paddling trips have had to pay multiple fees in a single outing simply because they pass into a different jurisdiction or through another fee area.

The agencies have also failed to appropriately address fundamental questions related to fees on public lands. Serious questions remain on the public acceptance of fees, the public's ability to pay fees and the effectiveness of user fees across a spectrum of recreation venues, particularly dispersed recreation, backcountry and wilderness venues.

We also have concerns about how receipts are being spent by the agencies, how Fee Demo is impacting management decisions, the impact of the program on congressional appropriations, and the lack of opportunity for public input.

We urge you to oppose the Administration's request to make the program permanent, or any expansion of Fee Demo at this time. Over the past three years the support for this program by many of the nation's most dedicated public land constituencies, including hikers, backpackers, climbers, canoeists, kayakers, and bikers has diminished. Any permanent national program regarding user fees should have broad support, or at least acceptance, by those who will have to pay the fees.

We are dedicated to working with Congress, the agencies, and with our own constituents to develop a consensus approach on the proper role and application of user fees. Granting permanence to a flawed Fee Demo program would give agencies little incentive to seek such consensus.

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# Middle Bar Reach of the Mokelumne: CA

By Katherine Evatt of the Foothill Conservancy

Public access to the long-closed Middle Bar reach of the Mokelumne River got a real boost this winter as district attorneys in Amador and Calaveras counties declined to prosecute paddlers who were cited for trespassing in December and March. DAs Todd Riebe of Amador County and Peter Smith of Calaveras County both strongly affirmed the public's right to use the river, including the East Bay Municipal Utility (EBMUD)-controlled Middle Bar section between Highway 49 and Pardee Reservoir.

In addition, Smith determined that kayakers Andy McKinsey of Groveland and Keith Franklin of Pine Grove were not trespassing in March because they left the river in a Calaveras County road easement just below the Middle Bar Bridge. Smith also noted that his office's resources "should be spent prosecuting more serious offenses than people who kayak down the Mokelumne River."

While the DAs' actions have effectively opened the river for now, a permanent arrangement is needed. Fortunately, the California State Lands Commission, represented by Deputy Attorney General Lisa Trankley, began to push EBMUD to accommodate river access early this year. Trankley provided key information and advice to the

local DAs when the kayakers' action came to light and has been in touch with other interested parties.

Local governments joined the effort this spring. The Calaveras County Board of Supervisors and city councils in Amador County's five incorporated cities have all expressed support for Middle Bar access. Negotiations for permanent access and facilities are likely to occur this year.

The Middle Bar access issue has received a great deal of local media coverage in the foothill counties and has been covered by the *Sacramento Bee*, *Stockton Record*, and Sacramento TV station KOVR. Local conservation organization Foothill Conservancy has been active in the effort, working with the cited kayakers, a local attorney who contacted the DAs on their behalf, the attorney general's office, the media, local governments, and paddling, fishing, and conservation groups including American Whitewater.

If you'd like to help obtain permanent access to the Middle Bar reach of the Mokelumne, contact the Conservancy by e-mail: [fhc@outdoingit.com](mailto:fhc@outdoingit.com). A longer story on recent events is in their most recent newsletter, found at: [www.outdoingit.com/fhc](http://www.outdoingit.com/fhc)

## Trouble on the Waters



If you had trouble getting to the river, let us know. Use this form to report access problems so that AW can convince legislators and government authorities where and when river access is a problem. If you have met an irate landowner, noticed signs forbidding access, or were stopped by a landowner, barbed wire fence or a locked gate, tell us about it on this form. If several boaters are arrested or involved, only 1 form should be filled out per incident naming a boater available for future contact.

River \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Date of incident \_\_\_\_\_

Access code categories: List below or circle the categories, multiple categories are ok.

Brief description of incident:

Boater contact \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City etc. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 email \_\_\_\_\_

Landowner/Agency/Sheriff contact (if known)  
 Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City etc. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 email \_\_\_\_\_

1. Trespass. Ticket, warning or arrest for:
  - 1.1.0 Trespass on private property
  - 1.2.0 Trespass on public property
  - 1.3.0 Criminal trespass arrest
  - 1.4.0 Civil trespass lawsuit
2. Public Access Closure
  - 2.1.0 Denied by federal law
    - 2.1.1 Denied by BLM
    - 2.1.2 Denied by Forest Service
    - 2.1.3 Denied by Nat'l Park Service
  - 2.2.0 Denied by state
  - 2.3.0 Denied by local authority
3. Injury from man-made obstacles
  - 3.1.0 Barbed wire or fence
  - 3.2.0 Low head dam
4. Obstacles running river, scouting or portaging
  - 4.1.0 Fence or chain on land blocking access
  - 4.2.0 Fence, wire, or tree on river blocking access
  - 4.3.0 Warning of no trespassing or posted sign
  - 4.4.0 Vehicle towed, ticketed, or vandalized
  - 4.5.0 Threats or acts of violence

### 5. Closures: Rivers closed that were once open

- 5.1.0 Closed by private landowner
- 5.2.0 Closed by government agency
  - 5.2.1 Federal
  - 5.2.2 State
  - 5.2.3 Local
- 5.3.0 High water closure

### 6. New access fees

- 6.1.0 Charged by private landowner
- 6.2.0 Charged by government agency
  - 6.2.1 Federal
  - 6.2.2 State
  - 6.2.3 Local

### 7. Dam controlled rivers

- 7.1.0 Water turned off
- 7.2.0 Inconsistent flow: too much or too little
- 7.3.0 No notice of releases

### 8. Lawsuits and legislation

- 8.1.1 New legislation to block river access.
- 8.1.2 Lawsuits to block access.
- 8.2.1 New legislation to enable river access.
- 8.2.2 Lawsuits to enable access.

Send to Ken Ransford, 475 Sierra Vista, Carbondale, CO 81623, 970-963-6800, FAX 970-963-6700. [ransford@csn.net](mailto:ransford@csn.net)

Access is a constant struggle. The AW Access Committee needs your help.

By Jayne H. Abbot, Events Manager



3. Gregg Gnecco
4. Doug Depew
5. David Monnier
6. Laurie Brown
7. Ryan Linnehan
8. Mark Richard
9. Joe Hitchins
10. Mike Herrera

### K-1 Women Sport

1. Fanny Gregoire
2. "Bean" Susan Stagg
3. Anna Boucher

### K-1 Men Sport

1. Adam Craig
2. Rob Lee
3. David Smallwood
4. Micheal Phelan
5. Tim Nanof
6. Jay Roy
7. Derrick Suba
8. Patrick Levesque
9. Doug Ziegler
10. Keith Merrill

## Rodeo Event Results

Top 10 placements listed. For full results, go to [www.nowr.org](http://www.nowr.org).

3. Jamie Cooper
4. Tanya Shuman
5. Gabriella Campbell

### K-1 Women Expert

1. Marian Gaether
2. Astrid Ensign
3. Brooke Schickendanz

### K-1 Men Expert

1. Brad Aitken
2. Robert Hogg
3. Dominic DePalma
4. Jake Spies
5. Rio Jose Hibarger
6. Dan Burke
7. Eric Eckhoff
8. Jacob Selander
9. Jono Stevens
10. Crash Lowe

### K-1 Men Sport

1. Finnie McMahon
2. Mike Spradlin
3. Jess Placky

4. Leo Lekas
5. Lynn Cady
6. Garrett Diskin
7. David Villalobos
8. Paul Smith

### K-1 Junior Expert

1. Bret Gideon
2. Steve Byrd
3. Derek Bettler
4. Brian Cosgrove
5. Tyler Ward
6. Sean Connolly

## Gillman Falls

### K-1 Men Pro

1. Steve Fisher
2. Eric Jackson
3. Tom McKee
4. Chad Hitchins

### C-1 Pro

1. Eric Jackson
2. Dana Henry
3. David Smallwood

### K-1 Men Expert

1. Chris Hull
2. Claude Page

## Trinity River Freestyle Rodeo

### K-1 Men Pro

1. Dustin Knapp
2. Taylor Robertson
3. Eric Southwick
4. Sam Drevo
5. Kale Frieze
6. Dan Gavere
7. Macy Burnham
8. Tao Berman
9. Brandon Knapp
10. Ben Selznick

### K-1 Women Pro

1. Simone French
2. Gaby Campbell
3. Mariann Sather
4. Jessie Stone
5. Tanya Shuman
6. Shannon Carrol
7. Polly Green
8. Lisa Beckstead

### K-1 Men Expert

1. Trevor Hudson
2. Dan Menten
3. Dominic DePalma
4. Erik Eckhoff

## Kern River Festival

### K-1 Men Pro

1. Rusty Sage
2. Jason Bates
3. Tao Berman
4. Dan Gavere
5. Brandon Knapp
6. Benny Coleman
7. Brad Ludden
8. Dan Campbell
9. Ben Selznick
10. Sam Drevo

### K-1 Women Pro

1. Simone French
2. Jamie Simon



- Rio Hibarger
- Jared Noceti
- Dan Burke
- Tyko Isaacson
- Scott Ligare
- Matt Wilson

### K-1 Women Expert

- Brook Schickendanz
- Astrid Ensign

### K-1 Junior Expert

- Covey Baack
- Bret Gideon
- Steven Byrd
- Tyler Ward
- Brian Cosgrove
- Brett Dixon

### K-1 Men Masters Expert

- Frank Gratz
- Eric Ronmus
- Doug Nowacki

## New River Rodeo

### K-1 Men Pro

- Blakeney, Jimmy
- Fisher, Steve
- Jackson, Eric
- Johnson, BJ
- Craig, Billy
- West, Jeff
- Holcombe, Andrew
- Kirk, Bryan
- Hopkins, Luke
- Selby, Jed

### K-1 Women Pro

- Ruehle, Deb
- Mitchell, Erica
- Wilson, Susan
- Hendershott, Melinda
- Liles, Kelly
- Johnson, Katie
- Taylor, Harriet

### C-1 Pro

- Manderson, Chris
- Hopkins, Luke
- Kennon, Barry
- Jackson, Eric
- Fields, Harry
- Smith, Ellis
- Clark, Jon
- Kortze, Denny

### K-1 Men Expert

- Garringer, Dave
- Campbell, Jonathan
- Metheny, Patrick

- Devoe, Ted
- Shimrock, Jesse
- Nelson, Jeff
- Oberhardt, Andrew
- Alexander, Scott
- Cowart, Heath
- Groves, Jeremy

### K-1 Expert Junior

- Dominic, Andre
- Owen, Jeff
- Groves, Shane
- Urban, Dustin
- Keller, Pat
- Long, Marlow
- Sherman, Jack
- Young, TR
- Edmiston, Michael
- Stafford, Chris

### K-1 Men Sport

- Varnes, Jeff
- Love, Peyton
- Morrison, Wayne
- Rohrbaugh, Curtis
- Smith, Chris
- Smithers, Charlie
- Esteve, Johnathan
- Phuller, Ted
- Ramsey, Lucas
- Trice, Ned

### K-1 Women Sport

- Carrie Metheny
- Martha Miller
- Paige Hawkins
- Kim Powers

### K-1 Junior Sport

- Morrison, Daryl
- Poli, Chris
- Stratton, Michael
- Wallin, Matt
- Watkins, Jud

## Maupin Daze

### K-1 Men Pro

- Jay Kincaid
- Taylor Robertson
- Brian Miller
- Javid Grubbs
- Eric Southwick
- Tao Berman
- Brad Ludden
- Dan Gavere
- Macy Burnham
- Dustin Knapp

### K-1 Women Pro

- Brooke Winger
- Tanya Shuman
- Aleta Miller
- Lisa Beckstead

- Simone French
- Annie Chamberlain
- Brooke Schickendanz
- Anna Levesque
- Gariella Campbell-Lloyd
- Shannon Carroll

### K-1 Men Expert

- Matt Wilson
- Rio Jose Hibarger
- Jonathon Burrill
- Eric Eekhoff
- Dan Burke
- James Fredericks
- Jason Wing
- Eric Flury
- David Norrell

### K-1 Women Expert

- Astrid Ensign
- Sara Mullett
- Kira Susnis-Wing
- Natasha Nowakowski

### K-1 Men Expert Master

- Rick Fernald
- Gary Korb
- Morgan Smith
- Kim Sprague
- Jeff Jones

### K-1 Men Expert Junior

- Max Mancini
- Eddie Hake
- Derek Beitler
- Travis Winn
- James Byrd
- Covey Baack
- Ty Maxwell
- Bret Dixon
- Tyson Titerator
- Steven Byrd

### K-1 Men Sport

- Dirk Bradford
- Patrick Scranton
- Mark King
- Chris Harvey
- Kirk Barnes

### C-1 Men Expert

- Brian Miller
- Daniel Campbell-Lloyd
- Eric Southwick

### K-1 Men Beginner

- Jeff Jones
- Sam Hass

## Bob's Hole Rodeo

### K-1 Men Pro

- Jay Kincaid
- Keith Liles
- Taylor Robertson
- Andy Bedingfield
- Dan Gavere
- Ron Turner
- Eric Southwick
- Javid Grubbs
- Brandon Knapp
- Dominic DePalma

### K-1 Women Pro

- Simone French
- Aleta Miller
- Brooke Winger
- Charlene Starck
- Tanya Shuman
- Gabriella Campbell-Lloyd
- Polly Green
- Annie Chamberlain
- Brooke Schickendanz
- Maryanne Saether

### K-1 Men Expert

- Eric Eekhoff
- Dan Baker
- Jacob Selander
- Matt Wilson
- Jason Wing
- Dan Menton
- Trevlor Tanhoff
- Dan Burke
- Bret Kiene
- David Norell

### K-1 Women Expert

- Kira Susnis-Wing
- Becky Briston
- Astrid Ensign
- Rachel Moldover
- Sara Mullett
- Roberta Porter

### K-1 Men Junior Expert

- Max Mancini
- Steven Byrd
- Derek Beitler
- Ty Maxwell
- Bret Dixon
- Eddie Hake
- Travis Winn
- Pat Secor
- Josh Matsell
- Bobby Pool

### K-1 Men Expert Masters

- Gary Korb
- Rick Fernald
- Kim Sprague
- Morgan Smith
- Allen Warneckie

**C-1 Men Expert**

1. Brian Miller
2. Daniel Campbell-Lloyd
3. Eric Southwick
4. Tim Davies

**K-1 Men Sport**

1. Tim Blecha
2. Teera Kanchari
3. Mark King
4. Brian Fields
5. Owen Kelly
6. Patrick Scranton
7. Mark Blaine

**K-1 Men Beginner**

1. Sam Hass
2. Joel Hass

**Ocoee Whitewater Rodeo**

**K-1 Men Pro**

1. Javid Grubbs \*
2. Andrew Holcombe\*
3. Tyler Curtis (Canadian)
4. Brandon Knapp\*
5. Ethan Winger\*
6. Jimmy Blakeney\*
7. Sam Drevo\*
8. Tao Berman\*
9. Eric Jackson\*
10. Jay Kincaid (alternate)

"qualified for 2000 US Freestyle Team

**K-1 Women Pro**

1. Deb Ruehle\*
2. Julie Dion (Canadian)
3. Aleta Miller\*
4. Brooke Winger\*
5. Whitney Lonsdale\*
6. Erica Mitchell\*
7. Kelly Liles\*
8. Nikki Kelly (Canadian)
9. Maria Noakes (Canadian)
10. Jamie Simon (alternate)

"qualified for 2000 US Freestyle Team

**C-1 Men Pro**

1. Allen Braswell\*
2. Chris Manderson\*
3. Ellis Smith\*
4. Eric Jackson (alternate)
5. Brian Miller
6. Luke Hopkins
7. Barry Kennon
8. Harry Field

9. Joe Langman
10. Eric Southwick

\*qualified for 2000 US Freestyle Team

**OC-1 Pro**

1. Brian Miller\*
2. Joe Langman
3. Eli Helbert\*
4. Frankie Hubbard\*
5. Bo Wallace (alternate)
6. Denny Kortze
7. David Kahn
8. Mike Costas

"qualified for 2000 US Freestyle Team

**K-1 Men Junior Expert**

1. Jeff Owen\*
2. Calef Latorney\*
3. Rob Thompkins\*
4. Marlow Long\*
5. Kyle Scarbrough (alternate)
6. James Sloan
7. Sean Brabant
8. Trip Jennings
9. Scott Mann
10. Pat Keller

\*3 qualify for 2000 US Freestyle Team; Calef will not be going, Marlow will be taking his place with Kyle as the alternate

**K-1 Women OJR Expert**

1. Katie Herzog\*
2. Kate Townsend\*
3. Brenna Kelleher
4. Becca Red

"qualified for 2000 US Freestyle Team

**K-1 Men Pro Squirt**

1. Clay Wright"
  2. Tom McKee\*
  3. Dan Gavere\*
  4. Brendan Mark
  5. Dominic DePalma
- \*qualified for the 2000 US Freestyle Team

**K-1 Women Pro Squirt**

1. Erica Mitchell\*
  2. Tracy Hines\*
  3. Paige Hawkins\*
- \*qualified for the 2000 US Freestyle Team

**K-1 Men Expert**

1. Patrick Metheny
2. Scott Doherty
3. Gregg Gnecco
4. Todd Graffe
5. Al Gregory
6. Brad Brewer
7. Jeff Nelson
8. Jeremy Groves
9. Keith Yell
10. Ted DeVoe

**K-1 Women Expert**

1. Melinda Hendershott
2. Jen Kafsky
3. Christie Dobson
4. Katie Hilleke
5. Cindy-Lee Jamieson
6. Dixie-Marree Prickett

**K-1 Men Sport**

1. Shannon Morris
2. Mike Broetzman
3. Ned Trice
4. David Knox
5. Trey Young
6. John Rodney Mitchel

7. Luke Ramsey
8. Lynn Smith
9. Ed Stamm, OJR
10. Trevor Stewart

**K-1 Men Beginner**

1. Dru Smith
2. Douglas Ziegler
3. Brian Riley

**K-1 Women Beg/Sport combined**

1. Mindy Freeman
2. Anna Roark
3. Heather Chapelle
4. Paige Hawkins
5. Carrie Metheny
6. Ashlee O'Steen

**K-1/C-1 Men Junior Sport**

1. Matt Russell
2. Charles King
3. Rob Ellis
4. Dave Hoffman
5. Luke Cotton
6. Ivan Hibarge

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# AMERICAN WHITEWATER'S 2000 SCHEDULE OF RIVER EVENTS

Come celebrate whitewater rivers across country through American Whitewater's world famous festivals and competitions.

## AMERICAN WHITEWATER FESTIVALS

Salmon River Whitewater Festival	July 8-9	Pulaski, NY	Dan Murn	315-298-6475	dmurn@pacs.cnyric.org
<del>Sacandaga Festival</del>	<del>July 15</del>	<del>Hadley, NY</del>	<del>John Duncan</del>	<del>518-696-5710</del>	<del>nofear@global2000.net</del>
Black River Festival	July 22-23	Watertown, NY	Chris Koll	315-652-8397	cko111234@aol.com
Deerfield Festival	July 29	Charlemont, MA	Mike Coleman	781-646-6744	colemanm@beaconarch.com
"Don't Call This a Festival River Rendezvous"	September 2-4	Belfort, NY/Beaver River	Chris Koll	315-652-8397	cko111234@aol.com
Gauley Festival	September 16	Summersville, WV	Phyllis Horowitz	914-586-2355	whiteh2o@catskill.net
Ohiopyle Falls Race and Rodeo	Sept 30 - Oct 1	Ohiopyle, PA	American Whitewater		301-589-9453 www.awa.org
Russell Fork Rendezvous	October 6-8	Haysi, VA	Brent Austin	606-278-2011	surfin@kymtnnet.org
Moose River Festival	October 14	Old Forge, NY	Chris Koll	315-652-8397	cko111234@aol.com

## American Whitewater Cascade Series

A series of American Whitewater premier level races from mild(er) to wilder held across the country.

Black River Race	July 22	Watertown, NY	Chris Koll	315-652-8397	ckoll1234@aol.com
Gore Canyon Race	August 19-20	Kremmling, CO	Paul Tefft	970-923-3955	enviro@rof.net
Russell Fork Race	October 7	Haysi, VA	Brent Austin	606-278-2011	surfin@kymtnnet.org
Gauley River Race	September 25	Summersville, WV	Donnie Hudspeth	304-658-5016	dhud@geoweb.net
Moose River Race	October 15	Old Forge, NY	Chris Koll	315-652-8397	cko111234@aol.com

## RiversLiv 2000 Series- Presented by American Whitewater

Gorge Games Freestyle Event	July 10-11	Hood River, OR	John Trujillo (Tree)	541-386-8751	info@outdoorplay.com
Black River Festival Rodeo	July 23	Watertown, NY	Nancy Weal	315-788-2538	fishinsp@hotmail.com
<del>Ottawa River Rodeo</del>	<del>September 2-4</del>	<del>Bryson QR</del>	<del>Paul Sevcik</del>	<del>416-222-2223</del>	<del>paul@equinoxadventures.com</del>
Kootenay Rodeo	September 2-4	Castlegar, BC	Gerry Harmon	250-362-2128	gharmon@bcgas.com
"Get Your Boat Salty" Surf Contest	October 21-22	Oakland, CA	Elaine Baden	510-893-7833	CalKayak@aol.com

## OutdoorPlay.com Freestyle Championship Series,

In partnership with American Whitewater Where the Pro's compete for \$5,000 in CASH PRIZES per event. Overall winner's CASH PURSE (\$7,500). (applies to Pro K-1M, K-1W, C-1 & OC-1 only)

Ocoee Whitewater Festival	May 19-21	Ducktown, TN	American Whitewater	828-645-5299	jhabbot@aol.com
***** Ocoee is also 2000 US Team Trials event *****					
( South Bend Freestyle Championship	August 18-20	South Bend, IN	American Whitewater	828-645-5299	jhabbot@aol.com
( Wausau Freestyle Kayak Championship	August 25-27	Wausau, WI	Julie Walraven	715-845-5664	design@dwave.net

## OTHER EVENTS

Pre-World Freestyle Championships	June 28-July 2	Sorte, Spain	www.rocroi.com/wwwfreestyle
Export A - A Whitewater Rodeo Challenge	October 7-8	Bryson, QB	Paul Sevcik 416-222-2223 paul8equinoxadventures.com

## East Coast Rodeo Surf Circuit

Ocean City Kayak Surf Festival	September TBA	Ocean City, NJ	Jim Caterina	609-728-0171
Outer Ranks Surf Kayak Rodeo	September 9-10	Nags Head, NC	Pam Malec	252-441-6800 pam@khsports.com
Folly Beach Surf Kayak Rodeo	October 21-22	Folly Beach, SC	Carol Townsend	843-762-8106 prch2o@bellsouth.net
North Myrtle Beach Surf Kayak Rodeo	October 28	No. Myrtle Beach, SC	Rick Gardner	843-272-4420

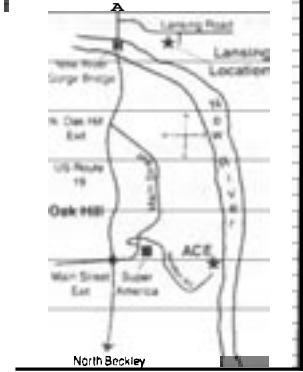


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## Other Weekend

## Highlights

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Breakfast served by the  
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7:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. at  
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September 16, 1999

5:00 p.m. to 2am

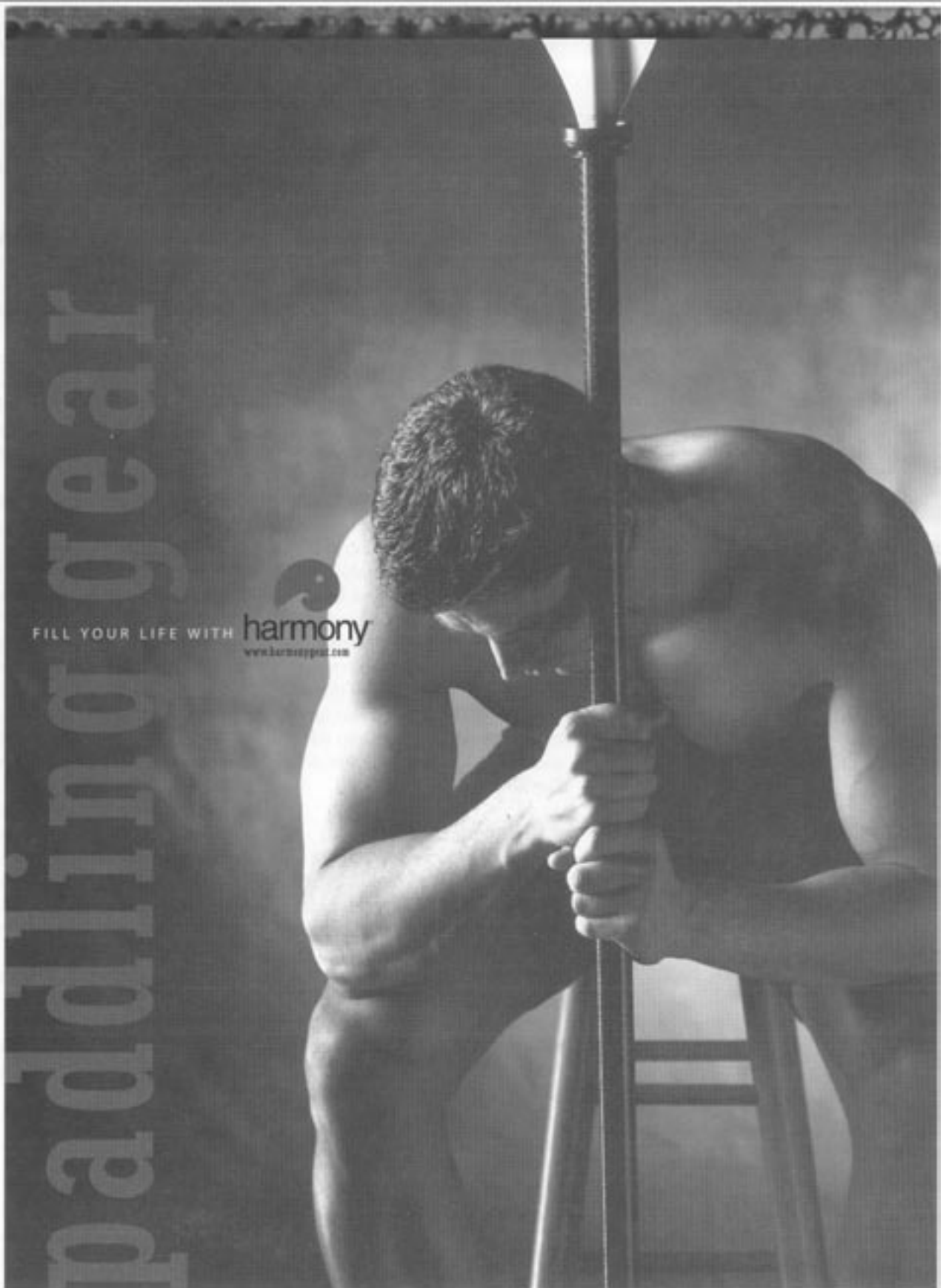
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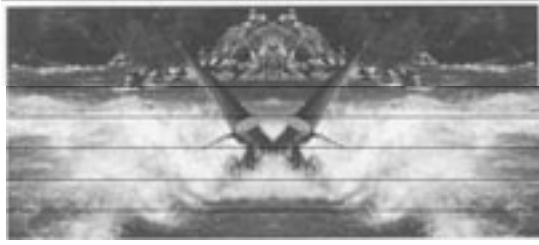




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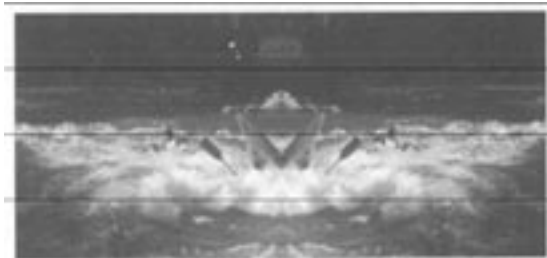
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by Ken Fischman



feature

# .ANIMAS LA .PLATA, THE .WATER .PROJECT .FROM .HELL



My first glimpse of Durango, Colorado was in the summer of 1995, when, seeking some information, I pulled my truck-camper into the Chamber of Commerce parking lot, situated in a pleasant city park just south of town. I discovered instead: (1) a whitewater river of an incredible green color, (2) kayakers playing in a great ender hole, (3) a permanent Class III slalom course, and (4) a spectators' stand on the bank adjacent to the hole. As I stood watching the boaters play, I guess I went into a sort of reverie—I fearlessly propelled my bow right into the deepest part of that ender hole. I rocketed out of it, grabbing a lot of air! The appreciative audience, packed on that stand, immediately burst into applause. I knew that I had found my paradise. I had been trying to get back there ever since. I made it last year when I moved to Durango. However, I have discovered that there is a monster loose ■ this whitewater paradise. Its name is ALP, a.k.a. the Animas-La Plata Project.

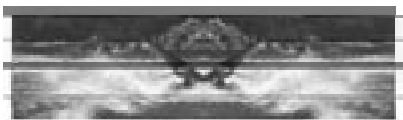
### A Recipe for Disaster

Mix together in unequal proportions: a beautiful, undammed Class V whitewater river in a water-starved portion of the country; Native Americans deprived for over a hundred years of their treaty-guaranteed water rights; a booming ex-mining and railroad town; ranchers who believe that access to water is their birthright; an outdoor-oriented populace, containing a surprisingly large proportion of kayakers and rafters; a powerful group of Water Buffaloes (western wheeler dealers, who make money out of water like

Rumpelstilskin spun straw into gold); the Federal Bureau of Reclamation; a do-good Secretary of the Interior; and a water project that cartoonist Rube Goldberg would only have conceived of in a nightmare, and what do you get?—Animas La Plata, the water project from Hell.

### The Grandiose Plan—"Big ALP"

Back in the 1950s, latecomer dryland farmers and ranchers in the La Plata River area, one valley west of Durango (where the water had already been taken by others, in accordance with the unique Western water doctrine of "I've got mine, and the hell with you") conceived of a plan to get some water of their own, again in a time-honored western way—by stealing it. This time they would steal it from another river, in a different watershed, the Animas. Their plan was as audacious as it was bizarre. The water was to be taken out of the Animas, pumped up 1,000 feet through mountains to a series of reservoirs, and distributed from there. The Bureau of Reclamation (BuRec), which has never seen a dam or reservoir it did not like, was chosen to build it. Needless to say, the Ute and Mountain Ute Tribes, who had water rights on the Animas and La Plata rivers dating back 100 years, were not part of this 710 million dollar deal. Even in the dam crazy days of the 1960s the project proved too nutty to fly, and was never funded. However, it was authorized by Congress in 1968. Thus was born the original infamous Animas-La Plata Plan, here-



## ■ Its full name is "El Rio de Los Animas Perdidos in Purgatorio" (the river of lost souls in Purgatory)

inafter referred to as "Big ALP." It is important to remember that Big ALP has never been deauthorized, and therefore is still a real threat, waiting in the wings.

### **Durango, the Whitewater Capital of the USA?**

All you have to do to start a lively argument among boaters, is to ask what town they think is America's boating mecca. From Kernville, CA to Nantahala, NC, each town will have its passionate advocates. In Carver's Brewery on Main Street, or at the Steamworks there won't be any challengers to the statement that Durango is the place. These are simply a few of the all year round hangouts of the largest, most energetic group of whitewater boaters I have ever seen.

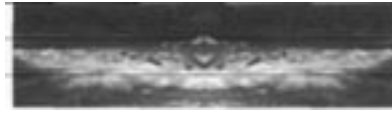
As you drive around Durango, you will notice that every other car has a yak rack, usually with several very short, garish kayaks on it. A surprising number of these vehicles are older Isuzu Troopers, or alternatively, if the drivers are yuppies, red Jeep Cherokees are the SUVs of choice.

A strong third choice is a (usually rusting), sticker emblazoned, old car, topped with the familiar, needlelike silhouette of a racing kayak. The racing community here is the best organized because of the nature of their sport. It has had a strong influence on the paddling culture of Durango.

The Animas River is the longest free flowing whitewater river remaining in the southwest. It flows 105 miles from the old mining town of Silverton, high in the San Juan Mountains of Colorado, to its confluence with the San Juan River in Farmington, New Mexico. Below Silverton, it is protected from pollution, soil runoff from logging and grazing, and most importantly from dam building, because it is surrounded by the Weminuche Wilderness. There, its milky green waters (some say that the milkiness is caused by the melting from remnants of glaciers above Silverton, others blame an old aluminum mine above Silverton. The green color may be due to the upstream presence of

abandoned copper mines. Anyway, it looks beautiful) flow through Class III -V+ rapids in canyons. Further downstream, it flows through the San Juan National Forest, and plunges into the narrow Upper Box Canyon (Class V). It then funnels into the Lower Box Canyon, an even narrower, log-choked chasm that is described in "Western Whitewater" as an unrunnable death trap. (there are persistent rumors that it has been run, but as no one has come forward to claim the first descent, it either was done by witches on a moonless night or those gallant paddlers must still be in there). All along these fearsome gorges runs the Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad, the most spectacular railroad ride in America. In fact, boaters can be dropped off and picked up along the way. All of this has made the Animas arguably the most spectacular and legendary whitewater river in America.

Its full name is "El Rio de Los Animas Perdidos in Purgatorio" (the river of lost souls in Purgatory), so named by the Spanish ex-



## ■ McPhee Reservoir... This is the dam, completed in 1989, that has messed up 150 miles of what many cherished as the best wilderness run in the West.

plorers, Frs. Dominguez and Escalante. The story goes that some of their party drowned in the Animas, and being unable to recover their bodies for last rights, their souls were condemned to Purgatory. True or not, it makes a good story. Some Durangans swear that these souls are still slaving away for minimum wages in the nearby ski resort of the same name.

The river abruptly emerges from the Lower Box, and continues, meandering gently for 11 miles through the bucolic (that means there are cattle grazing there) lower Animas valley, surrounded by outrageously red striated cliffs. This makes a nice Class I canoe trip. When you reach the north end of town, there is yet another slalom course (flat water, this time). This is also the start of the Class II-III Town Run, ending at The Durango Whitewater Park and the Smelter Rapid (Cl. III-) slalom course. Smelter is the site of the slalom event during Animas River Days, one of the country's outstanding whitewater extravaganzas, held in late June.

Just a half mile downstream from the Park is the Santa Rita

Hole, where the Animas River Days Rodeo takes place. This is what Gordon Banks and Dave Eckhardt have to say in *Colorado Rivers And Creeks*. "... the Santa Rita Hole. "You could stop here and spend a couple of hours surfing your brains out. ... just below the hole comes the next "thing" on the river, a great set of haystacks. Kayakers can use up the last of their forearms slidin' and glidin'." Here is where you will also find a city park and access right in back of Four Corners River Sports. **WARNING! It is Santa Rita and the play waves and holes down here that would be most adversely affected by ALP, because the pumping station will be situated just below the Whitewater Park, and will be sucking 250 cfs out of the Animas.** Below Santa Rita, there lies another popular run consisting of almost 20 miles of Class II-III rapids, extending into New Mexico. These rapids would also be partially dewatered by ALP.

If you haven't had enough whitewater on the Animas, get in your car and drive just 30 miles east to the beautiful upper Piedra River (two boxes, Class III+ to IV)

or 20 miles further to the town of Pagosa Springs and sample the Mesa Canyon run on the Upper San Juan (Class III ) or its East Fork (3 miles of Class V). After your exertions, you can relax in the delightful hot springs right in the middle of town as you contemplate the rapids of the San Juan, flowing beside the springs.

You can also drive a few miles west and sample the canyons of the Dolores River (Class II-IV), if you are lucky enough to catch a release from the McPhee Reservoir. (This is the dam, completed in 1989, that has messed up 150 miles of what many cherished as the best wilderness run in the West. At that time, McPhee was considered the last hurrah of the western mega-water projects. Wrong! ALP proves that the Water Buffaloes still dream of more rivers to "conquer." Even as I write, two more dams on the upper reach of the Dolores are on the drawing board).

If you haven't had enough whitewater, you can drive a few more miles northwest, towards Moab, where you can try out Cataract Canyon (Class IV-) on the



Colorado River, or how about Westwater Canyon? Also, within a half day's travel are the Grand Canyon and the Taos Box of the Rio Grande. Are you facing towards Mecca yet? No? Then consider this. Durango is the home of Durango Whitewater, a slalom racing club, which sent 5 athletes to this years Olympic trials. It has both a senior and junior Whitewater Development Team.

Durango Whitewater holds an annual auction at the Abbey theater, along with competition slaloms and clinics.

The Durango Whitewater Addiction, a hodge podge of rafters, kayakers, etc. runs river trips, mostly on big water. Animas River Days, held every year in June, draws paddlers from all over the country. Fort Lewis College, perched high above the town on a mesa, holds rolling sessions and has a schedule of WW trips. With all this, the majority of Durango's boaters are an anarchistic bunch, who, to paraphrase Groucho Marx, would prefer not to belong to any organization that would have them. They just show up at the river, hoping to meet some people to paddle with (and they almost always do). Just to round things out, and to concede nothing to the under 21 set, Seniors Out-

doors (you must be at least age 55 to belong) has recently organized a nascent kayaking committee. (However, if kayaks over 10 feet long were to be banned from the Animas, I hear that they would all be grounded.)

**The Hydra-Headed Monster**

Hydra was the many-headed monster in Greek mythology that



grew two heads in place of every one that was cut off. Sometimes it seems that ALP is that sort of monster. It has been around for more than 30 years now, and every time we think it is finally deceased, it permutes into another form, but one just as deadly.

Big ALP, introduced in 1968, included a reservoir with 280,000 Acre-Feet (AF) capacity, allowed massive irrigation, had an estimated cost of \$754 million, and did not provide any water for the

Ute tribes. It was a barefaced grab for water and wealth by the Water Buffaloes. It never got through Congress, although its backers kept trying to get it passed, in various forms, for 18 years.

An event occurred in 1986, that was eventually going to change the political-economic climate of ALP. The Ute Tribes, after trying for 100 years to clarify their water rights guaranteed under the Treaty of 1868, were finally able to

work out an understanding with the federal government. It was called the Colorado Ute Water Rights Settlement, and in it, the Tribes' water rights were quantified. After being cheated, misled, and put off for so long, the tribes were smart enough to have an escape clause inserted. It gave them the right to sue for their

claims to water from seven rivers that flowed through their reservations, if they received no ALP water by 2005. This deadline has dangled over the heads of the Water Buffaloes, like the sword of Damocles, ever since then.

During this time, the Water Buffaloes, ever resilient, ever



nimble and persistent, continued to search for a formula that would nullify their opponents' arguments, draw in political allies, and get the water flowing—in their direction.

In the mid 1990s, ALP backers came up with yet another version of Big ALP in which Municipal and Industrial (M&I) water would be provided for several downstream New Mexico towns, and most importantly, the Ute Tribes were included. Ostensibly, the Utes were to get one third of the water. Construction was scheduled to begin in 1996. However, environmentalists, boaters, and other ALP opponents uncovered some interesting facts: (1) the project would return only 37 to 40 cents on the tax dollar spent, not the \$1.40 claimed by BuRec in their Cost-Benefit Analysis; (2) Even the ranchers and farmers benefiting from it admitted that ALP would not fly unless it was almost completely subsidized; (3) ALP would have disastrous environmental consequences, adversely effecting fish, water quality, wildlife habitat, and probably causing radioactive pollution

from Uranium tailings located on the construction site; and (4) most importantly, the Indians, placed last on line for the water, would probably not get any, except in the wettest of years (so, what else was new?).

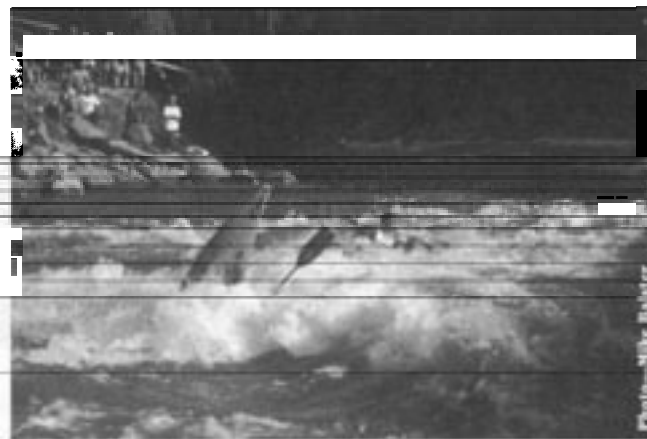
SUGO (Southern Utes Grassroots Organization) says that it speaks for “traditional” southern Ute families. Ray Frost, the SUGO Spokesman, stated that a “kinder and gentler alternative to ALP is needed to protect the Tribes' cultural and spiritual values... *Many Tribal members know little about ALP and nothing about alternatives.*”

This version of ALP died, but

construction of ALP. The ALP backers were busy too, and came up with a scaled down version, dubbed by the media as "ALP Lite." For the first time, there was no provision for non-Indian irrigators. It would provide only one third of the water envisioned by Big ALP, but an almost full-sized reservoir would be built. Why the unnecessarily big reservoir? Anti-ALPers were suspicious. Was there a Phase II in the wings?

In 1998, amidst continuous infighting and maneuvering, yet another version of ALP was proposed, called "ALP-Ultralite." It would provide no water for irrigation.

Things became nastier in 1999. Colorado Lt. Governor Joe Rogers, at a meeting of all sides, convened to work out a compromise, called ALP opponents "zealots" and "extremists." Needless to say, no compromise was forthcoming. Earlier that year, Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt had stepped into the fray with a proposal for a downsized storage facility and pumping plant together with a \$40 million Water Acquisition Fund for the Tribes. He also proposed a municipal pipeline, from Farmington, New Mexico to the Navajo Nation in Shiprock, about 75 miles from Durango (classic pork barreling). There was also



like the Hydra, it grew two more heads. It garnered allies in the New Mexico towns and the Ute tribes. The monster was soon alive and roaring.

In 1997, SUGO proposed a \$100 million Ute Legacy Land and Water Fund to buy land and water rights from willing sellers. Other ALP opponents quickly signed on, offering a "No-Dam Option" for \$115 million, that would provide water for the Utes without the





## ■ ALP supporters..proclaim that the Tribes' water rights under the 1868 treaty were long overdue and should finally be honored.

an Administration alternative with all these ingredients, and a fishermen's recreational component added that would increase the reservoir capacity by 33%. BuRec was ordered to come up with yet another Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS) that would analyze all the various plans and recommend which it considered best.

In January of this year, the Ute tribal councils, under a lot of pressure, finally revealed their proposed plans for their portion of the ALP water. It was an environmentalist's worst nightmare. No bucolic farm and ranch irrigation has this. Among the more prominent projects were water for:

- a Coal-fired power plant
- a Strip mine
- a Gas-fired power plant
- 2 Golf courses

When the DSEIS came out, there was more bad news, especially for paddlers. Minimum flows from April through September would be 225 cfs. In a low

snow pack year, this would make summer paddling below Santa Rita Park impossible. Wildlife habitat would be reduced even further by 3,000 acres. BuRec proposed to "mitigate" this by purchase and taking over management of other land. That would be like borrowing from Peter to pay Paul. The last time I looked, they were not making any more land.

### **ALP Covers itself with an "Indian Blanket"**

In 1868, two Indian tribes, the Utes and Ute Mountain Utes, living in southwestern Colorado and northwestern New Mexico, signed a treaty with the United States, in which they were forced to give up their age-old hunter-gatherer existence, of which their spirituality and entire life-style had been an integral part, and agreed to live on reservations and become farmers. They had no choice. It was either that or be annihilated. They were promised water rights. These promises were never kept. Their water was stolen by ranchers and farmers, aided and abetted by the courts. As you can imagine, it was pretty hard for the Indians to become farmers without water to irrigate their land. They were re-

stricted to lands in which it was impossible to make a living in a money-based economy.

Later, when gold and silver were found on the Ute Mountain Ute reservation, in the area around Silverton, (Take a guess how Silverton got its name) the boundaries were redrawn and the Indians were pushed off land that had been designated for them. Variations of this sad scenario were inflicted on tribes all over this country, but it has only been in recent years that most Americans have become familiar with them. (It wasn't in the history books I read as a kid.) It has understandably generated a lot of sympathy, and some guilt.

ALP supporters have lately become the Ute Tribes' "best friends" and proclaim that the Tribes' water rights under the 1868 treaty were long overdue and should finally be honored. Fears that the tribes would prevail in court if they sue in 2005 undoubtedly played a part in this turnaround. Also, it was a clever strategy to play upon the public's guilt.



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This strategy has apparently taken in most of the Clinton administration, especially the Secretary of the Interior Babbitt, who has practically fallen all over himself to finally "do right by the Indians." The Tribal councils finally bought into ALP, mostly I suspect, due to frustration from their failure for over 100 years to get the water due them, and in anticipation of the financial benefits that would accrue to them. One group of Native Americans however, was not taken in. Sage Remington, the Spokesman for SUGO, stated that the "...proposed uses only confirm that the project is *wrapped up in an Indian blanket...* The reservoir is not for Utes, but to serve developers and to economically benefit those fortunate enough to buy land and speculate." (italics mine)

### A Night at the Theater

Two Hundred people crowded into the Abbey Theater in downtown Durango to celebrate the Whitewater Weekend Annual Benefit Auction. It was organized by Durango Whitewater, the local group which promotes all aspects of whitewater racing. This was the culmination of the group's annual weekend whitewater activities that had included a spring whitewater paddling tune-up clinic, and a Citizens Slalom Race, held at Smelter Rapid at Santa Rita Park earlier that day.

Your author had participated in the tune-up clinic, and had been wasted by John Brennan, coach of the Junior Slalom Team. The Animas was roaring and that turned the Flat water Slalom Course into a real challenge. First off, John made us paddle several

hundred yards *upriver*. Yours truly brought up the rear, huffing and puffing all the way. No wonder Durango Whitewater had sent so many paddlers to the U.S. Jr. Slalom Team Trials. One thing was for sure. With a slave driver like Brennan for a coach, those slalom paddlers must have been very fit. Kidding aside, John is a delightful man, and I learned a lot from him, or more accurately, had to unlearn almost all the moves I had been taught many years ago by an Austrian slalom champion. I discovered that kayaking has undergone a revolution, not only in equipment, but in teaching and paddling techniques.

The atmosphere at the auction that evening was joyous and celebratory. It felt like a big, happy family gathering. Everyone knew each other well enough to make a constant stream of mostly ribald jokes at each other's expense. After a silent auction, food contributed by a local brewery, and plenty of liquid refreshment, Things settled down to the important business at hand, auctioning off services and kayaks from major manufacturers. Auctioneers, Andy Corra, a local paddling legend, and co-owner of Four Corners River Sports, and Jim Clements, entertained their friends with a kind of Abbott and Costello act, enlivened by ribald jokes and innuendoes. They had special fun auctioning off the "services" of several good-looking young male paddlers. The main bidders were equally attractive young women, and much was made of just what those "services" would consist of. Bidding by the ladies became particularly frenzied when a handsome, curly-haired young man, with enormously broad shoulders (he looked like a muscular version of L.A. Lakers coach, Phil Jackson), advertised as a rodeo champ,



Photo—Durango River Race Association.

was brought on stage. The auctioneers promised that he would teach his "moves" to the winning bidder.

The long shadow of ALP fell lightly over the festivities. Kent Ford, former C-1 slalom champion, now coach of the Development Team, and one of the leaders in the fight against ALP, was seen from time to time in earnest conversation in the theater lobby with several people. ALP was never mentioned on stage, but I could not help but wonder as I watched the festivities, that if it is built, what effect it would have on this vigorous, buoyant paddling community.

### The EPA to the Rescue?

As the defenders of the Animas dug in in a last ditch effort to ward off the combined forces of the Water Buffaloes, BuRec, Department of the Interior, the Ute Tribes, and both Republican and Democratic politicians, their cause looked desperate, if not hopeless. But, what did they hear in the distance? Was it the faint sound of a bugle? Into the fray rode the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). "Cannons to the right of them, cannons to the left of them, cannons in front of them, volleyed and thundered. Boldly they rode, and well." Noble EPA! At the 11th hour, EPA's Region 8 Administrator, Bill Yellowtail, submitted the Agency's com-

ments to Pat Schumacher, the Bureau of Reclamation's division manager in Durango. He raised questions about the project's impacts on wetlands and native fish, and stated that the SDEIS did not provide sufficient information on these and other environmental concerns. Will this be enough to stop the umteenth reincarnation of ALP? Doubtful. But perhaps it will slow its momentum sufficiently, so that other voices may be heard. In other words, it may be up to you now. If you rise in righteous indignation over the sacrifice of this beautiful river to the gods of greed, we may yet prevail.

### Last Minute Update

With all their ducks lined up in a row, the water Buffaloes are trying to ram through legislation in the waning days of this Congressional session before the legislators rush home to campaign. As this article goes to the Editor, early in May, Rep. Scott McInnis (Republican, CO) has just held a hearing on ALP in Washington (only one opponent was allowed to testify). Procedurally, this is very strange because BuRec's Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) is not even due out until later this month. It seems like a case of "sentence first, verdict afterward," but ALP opponents are not surprised. Senator Ben "Nighthorse" Campbell (Republican, CO) has introduced legislation bypassing the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) and declaring that ALP meets all environmental standards. If you wonder how he can know this prior to the issuing of the SDEIS, there is a wonderful bridge in Brooklyn Campbell would also like to sell you.

## GROUPS OPPOSING ALP

*Contact them to offer encouragement and support.*

A-LP Central  
[Angelfire.com/al/alpcentral/](http://Angelfire.com/al/alpcentral/)

Earth Justice Legal  
 Defense Fund  
 Attn: Mary Wells  
 180 Montgomery St #1400  
 San Francisco, CA 94104-4209  
 (415)627 6700

Kent Ford  
 (970)259 1361  
[kentford@frontier.net](mailto:kentford@frontier.net)

Four Corners Action  
 Coalition  
 Orion Hutton, Head  
 (505)334 9071

Friends of the Animas River  
 Peter Butler, Head  
 (970)259 3209

Ray Frost  
 S.U.G.O.  
 Southern Ute Grassroots  
 Organization  
 (970)563 0100

Sierra Club  
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[sierraclub.org/alp](http://sierraclub.org/alp)

Sierra Club, Rocky Mountain  
 Chapter  
 Jim Decker, Head  
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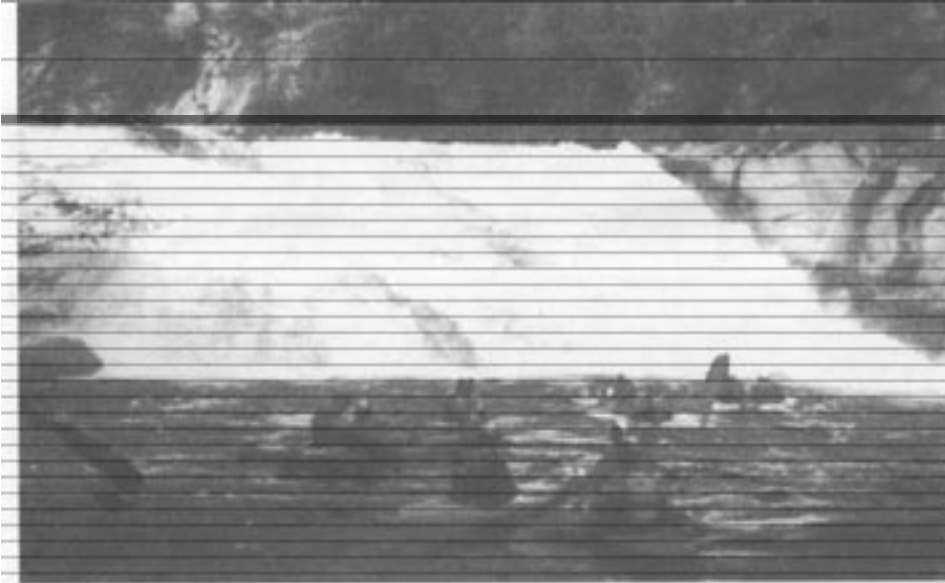
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## Applications for the Year 2000 Tallulah Fall Releases

Fall releases for the Tallulah Gorge are scheduled for the weekends of November 4th & 5th, November 11th & 12th and November 18th & 19th. **Note: The deadline for submitting applications for the November releases is September 1, 2000 - so send in your applications as quickly as possible.**

Great cooperation among Georgia State Parks, Georgia Power Company, American Whitewater, local boating groups, and the boaters ensures the agreement over a 30-year period will continue in effect.

Tallulah Gorge is an advanced expert whitewater run involving Class IV and V rapids. In addition, it has severely limited access in and out of the canyon in case of accident, and is further restricted due to the fragile nature of the gorge and the existence of several federally endangered species, including "Persistent Trillium." Only persons paddling qualified whitewater craft will be permitted to paddle Tallulah Gorge. Qualified whitewater craft are defined as follows: Kayaks (one or two person); whitewater canoes or open hard boats; decked canoes, including C-1s and C-2s; and qualified inflatables. Per Georgia Parks, qualified inflatables means a craft that has a manufacturer's rated maximum occupancy of 1-2 persons and is owned (not rented or borrowed) by the applicant or a boater on that permit. Determination of eligibility will be made by American Whitewater's representatives, according to established DNR guidelines.

If you are unsure of your whitewater skill, do not attempt the Gorge. Boating accidents are always unwelcome, but are even more unwelcome during such limited releases. Besides hurting yourself, you may jeopardize future whitewater releases in this incredibly beautiful canyon.

Tallulah Gorge State Park is administered by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Access is limited to 120 boaters per day, in groups of no more than three. The permit system has been changed slightly to better serve the needs of the boaters. Please follow all instructions exactly when making your application. Call American Whitewater at 301-589-9453 for further information.

### PERMIT INSTRUCTIONS

- I All permit requests must be mailed in a legal-size envelope
- II The outside of the envelope must contain the following:
  - C The applicant's name and return address in the upper left corner.
  - D The date of the permit requested and the number of people in the group, including yourself (maximum of three), in the lower right corner.
  - E Adequate U.S. Postage for First Class Mail. The correct address: Tallulah Gorge State Park Boating Permits, P.O. Box 248, Tallulah Falls, GA 30573.
- VI The envelope must contain:
  - G A legal size return envelope bearing the applicant's name and return address, and adequate U.S. postage for first class mail.
  - H A 3 x 5 inch index card containing the following information:
    - IX the applicant's name, address, and daytime phone number;
    - X the name and daytime phone number of another member on the permit.
    - XI the date of the scheduled weekend release being requested; and
    - XII the number of people in the applicant's group (not to exceed three, including the applicant).

A person may apply for one permit for each weekend, but each request must be made separately.

**PLEASE READ AND FOLLOW ALL OF THE INSTRUCTIONS. FAILURE TO COMPLY WILL RESULT IN DISQUALIFICATION OF THE APPLICANT'S PERMIT REQUEST.**

Boaters are reminded that much of Tallulah Gorge State Park is extremely rugged and potentially hazardous. It is also an environmentally sensitive area. To protect the visitor from the gorge, and more importantly, the gorge from the visitor, all regulations and laws are strictly enforced. Remember that polite, responsible and safe behavior is expected.

1. Permits allow access for both days of the release weekend. Each permit holder, or one of two alternates listed on the application together with all other members on the permit, must check in by 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, or the permit will be released to those on the waiting list. If the permit holder or one of their alternates does not check in by 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, the permit is cancelled for both Saturday and Sunday. A permit allows a maximum of three people paddling qualified whitewater craft.

2. The dates for the Fall 2000 Releases are November 4-5, November 11-12, and November 18-19. A separate request must be submitted for each scheduled release weekend.

3. Requests may be submitted after January 1, 2000 for the 2000 release season. The drawing for November 2000 permits will be held on Friday, September 1, 2000. Mail your requests at least ten days before the drawing.

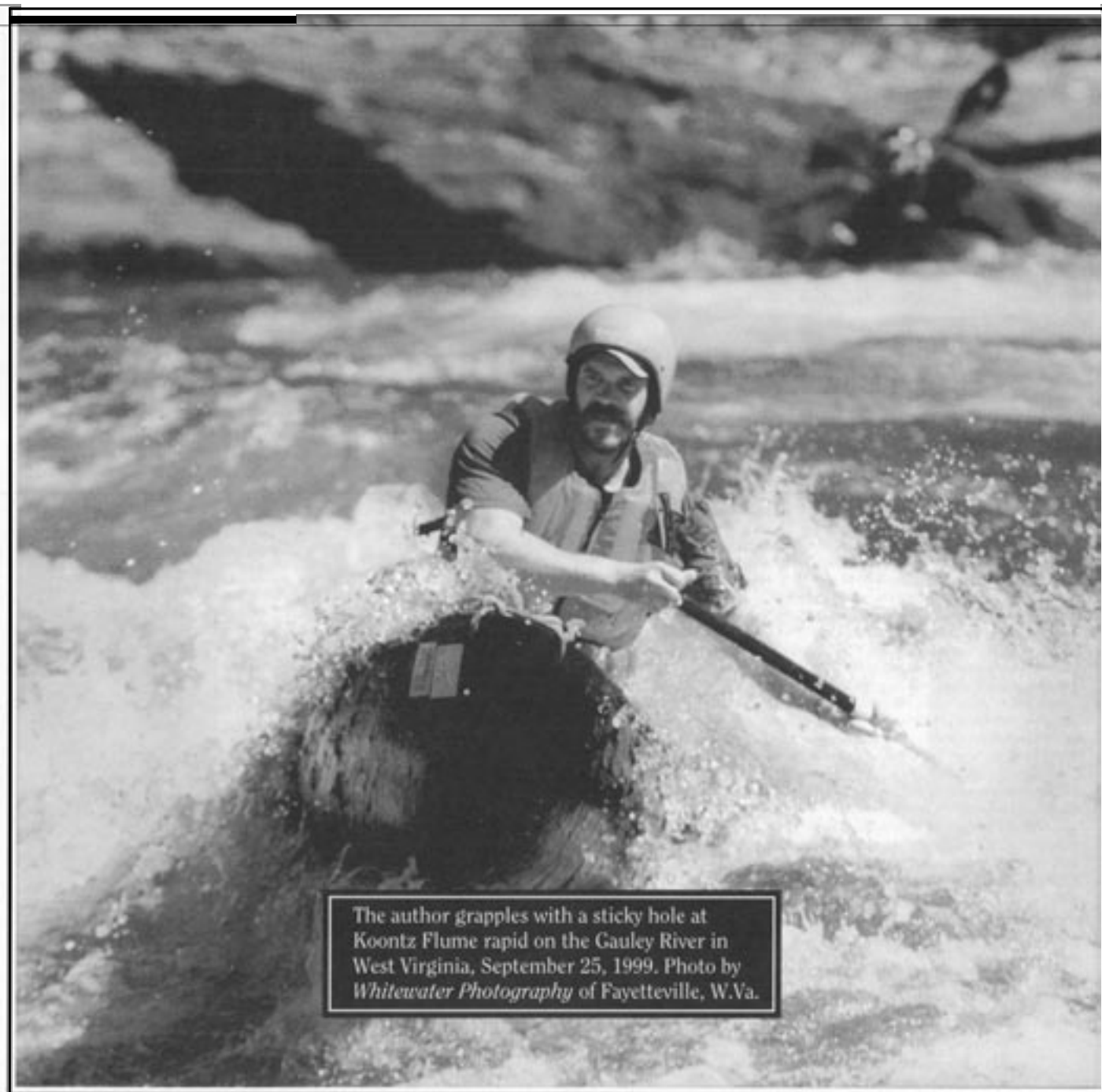
4. Permit holders will be notified of a successful draw by mail from Tallulah Gorge State Park. You are encouraged to confirm that the scheduled release has not been postponed or cancelled due to adverse or emergency conditions. Call 1-888-GPC-LAKE to note whether a postponement or cancellation message has been added to the recording.

5. Camping for boaters is available at the state park campground. Call the Park at 1-706-754-7970 and identify yourself as a boater; you will be directed to the special boater camping area.

6. The Boater Parking Area is not a campground. The area will be blocked off at night and overnight parking will not be permitted. Dispose of trash properly. Be discreet about your choice of beverage.

7. Each group and boater must check in by 11:00 a.m. on each day of the release at the Boater Registration Table. This table is also used for sharing reminders, rules, lost and found articles, and so on.

8. Walk-ons: The rules allow 20 walk-ons each day of the release. Additionally, boaters can get on the wait list for cancelled permits. Names for the walk-ons and the wait list will be done by lottery each day. Names will be taken between 8:00 and 9:00 am, at the Boater Registration Table. At 9:00 am, a lottery will determine the order for the 20 walk-on slots and for the wait list order. Wait list boaters will then be assigned permits as they become available. This means that all 120 slots can be filled each day.



The author grapples with a sticky hole at Koontz Flume rapid on the Gauley River in West Virginia, September 25, 1999. Photo by *Whitewater Photography* of Fayetteville, W.Va.

# A Heavyweight Bout: The Lower Gauley vs. The Ocoee

By Jeff Barrow

**W**ater rushed under Koontz Rock and pinned a man's body in the darkness below. As I dipped my paddle for the first time in the Gauley River, I watched a grim tug-of-war unfolding on the rocky shore.

A dozen paddlers pulled on a bright yellow rescue rope stretching out of the shadows beneath the house-sized rock. The rescuers leaned back on the taut line and fought a one-sided contest against the crushing current.

This was unique in my river experience. I'd never paddled with the reality of danger staring me so starkly in the face. No one on the river that day could deny its hazardous nature.

Some whitewater rivers possess malice — not in intention but in fact. A river can be studded with strainers and undercut rocks, keeper holes and killer drops, remote access and cold water. A river is a force of nature — unthinking, unemotional — but it can display malice nonetheless.

Certainly, the Gauley River in West Virginia showed a malicious face to me on Saturday, Sept. 25, 1999. I had reached the point in my whitewater career where the Lower Gauley seemed like the next logical-step. Less than a month earlier, Scott Swafford, my hometown boating buddy, and I had paddled the Ocoee, and we'd heard the Lower Gauley is just a bigger, badder version of its Tennessee sister, or "...like the Ocoee on steroids," according to one guidebook.

After doing both rivers, I have drawn a different conclusion. There were significant differences that surprised me and for which I was unprepared.

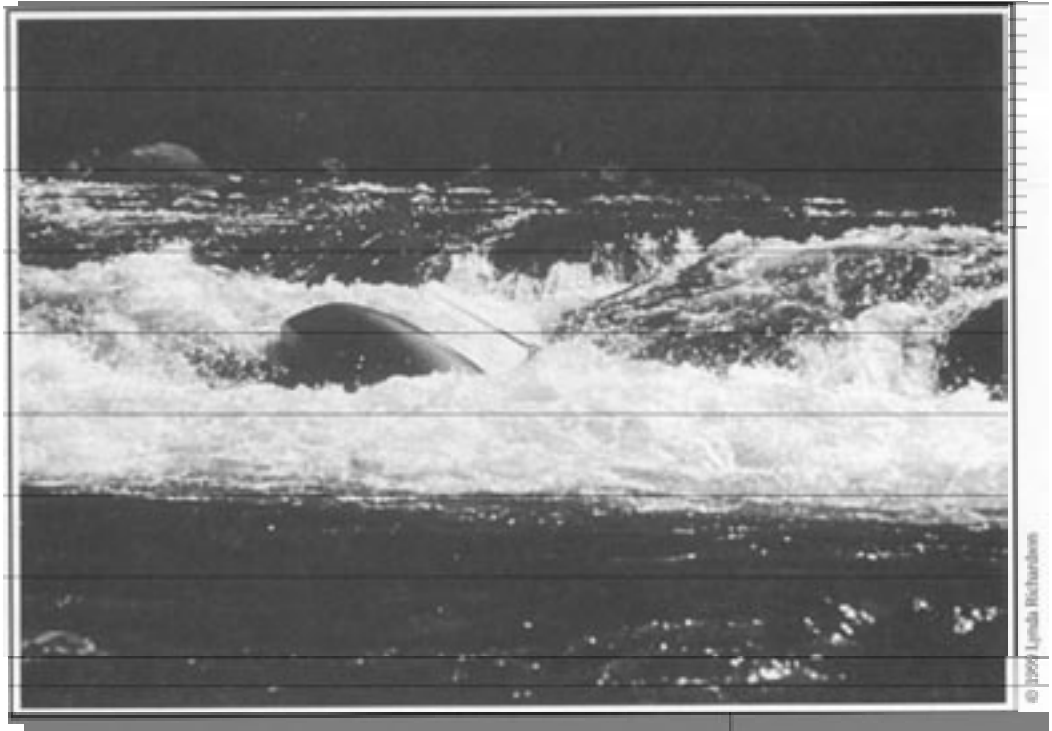
## GETTING THERE

Scott and I drove all night to get to the Gauley from our homes in Columbia, Mo. His Mohawk Probe and my Dagger Rival were secured to the roof racks as we took turns sleeping in the back of the Jeep Cherokee. We arrived to the dawning of a bright autumn day

in the mountains. Amazingly, we felt fairly well rested after the 12-hour trek.

We had arranged to rendezvous with Chris Kelly, an experienced whitewater boater from back home, and a board member of the American Whitewater Affiliation (AW). Chris is keen on introducing others to the paddling world and he had offered to lead us on our maiden Gauley voyage.

Although we live far from any whitewater meccas (the Gauley and



© 1999 Lynda Richardson

Ocoee rivers are both 700 miles away), Scott and I have steadily advanced our open-boating capabilities over the past five years. We've acquired better equipment and improved our paddling skills while working our way up to Class III and IV rapids on the St. Francis River — Missouri's premier whitewater run. We've competed as whitewater racers in both downriver, slalom, and sprint events.

For the past two years, we've pushed our envelope further with paddling trips to the Appalachian Mountains and the fall lines of Virginia and Maryland. We've tested ourselves at the New River Gorge in West Virginia, the Nantahala in North Carolina, the Ocoee in Tennessee, the James River through downtown Richmond, Va., and the Potomac River below Great Falls, Md.

*Jeff Barrow enjoying*

*"Double Suck,"*

*Ocoee River.*

We knew about big water. Sure we did. We'd run Class IV rapids — the entire gamut from ball's-out, bodacious drops to twisting, technical runs. For weeks before this trip, we'd practiced rolling our canoes and we felt ready to test them in "combat" on the Gauley River.

Of course, we wanted to enjoy the annual Gauley Fest, too. We'd heard this wild gathering was like a Mardi

line to launch. Of course, crowded parking is an issue on both rivers; the difference being the Ocoee has a paved parking lot with bathrooms. The Lower Gauley has woods.

Granted, we'd arrived during Gauley Fest and the mob prevented us from getting as close to the river as we wanted. But even under less crowded conditions, the hike in would have been a grueling march.

*Kayakers let rafters*

*"play-through" on*

*Tennessee's Ocoee*

*River.*



© 1999 Lynne Richardson

We grunted down the mountain path, sweating in the heat and choking on dust. Mercifully, our **"Bataan Death March"** ended at the put-in..

Gras for boaters. Needless to say, we were psyched for an epic whitewater journey.

### ACCESSIBILITY

The approach to the put-in for the Lower Gauley immediately grabbed my attention. The drive itself caused an adrenaline rush. My eyes popped wide-open as the Jeep crept around deep ravines and crawled along gravel roads scratched into the mountainside.

Right off, I could see differences between the accessible Ocoee and the remote Gauley.

The Ocoee has a two-lane paved road running parallel its entire course. The put-in is an easy stroll down a concrete ramp. The major impediments at the Ocoee are the hundreds of rafts and thousands of raft customers waiting in

At first we carried our boats along the single-lane gravel road — a narrow path squeezed and sometimes blocked by parked vehicles. These trucks, cars, and vans displayed license plates from coast to coast.

We hauled our gear with the help of gracious friends and turned onto a long, steep trail. In the roughest places, the federal authorities had built boardwalks and stairways to ease the route. We grunted down the mountain path, sweating in the heat and choking on dust. Mercifully, our "Bataan Death March" ended at the put-in where we prepared to launch.

### CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

On the approach, I noticed a big cultural difference between the Ocoee and the Gauley rivers. The Ocoee



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crowds fostered an impersonal feeling — like the all-alone emotion you get walking in a big city. People seemed aloof, sticking to their cliques and avoiding contact with boaters they didn't know. Perhaps the Ocoee's ambience was a function of the ratio of commercial tourists to hard-core boaters — the more tourists the less

friendly the boaters.

On the Gauley, an almost tribal sense of belonging pervaded the atmosphere. Strangers came up to talk to us, or yelled directions and advice. People were openly friendly. It felt like we'd come home from a long journey and folks were glad to see us.

Boaters strolled up and down the

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Entering the rapid,  
I quickly found that  
I'd enrolled in a  
physics tutorial  
taught by the river.

"Hell Hole"

road, or they surrounded their vehicles while arranging gear, changing clothes, talking, laughing, shouting, eating, drinking, smoking, joking. It was Gauley Fest, after all, and everyone wanted to celebrate the dazzling day.

### INITIATION

The Lower Gauley's first rapid, Koontz Flume, rages about 200 yards below the put-in. The lack of easy, "practice" rapids is common to both the Ocoee and Lower Gauley — each

had dropped.

We approached Koontz Flume where the rock strata constricted the river's flow and the backed-up water gained speed. In fact, its speed surprised me. The current moved much faster than it appeared. And since the force of the water increases with velocity, I was even more surprised by its force.

Chris Kelly and his partner, Margie Holley, in a Dagger Caption led our little fleet of open boats down the "conservative route" on river left. Scott fol-



© 1999 Lynda Richardson

has an initial run that blasts downstream like a water cannon.

On the Ocoee, you get about three strokes in a crowded eddy before peeling out into the powerful stream. On the Lower Gauley, you paddle in a big pool before entering the meat of the rapids. You can ferry back-and-forth to get either psyched up or psyched out.

As we launched on the Gauley, a guy told us to stay away from "river right" to avoid interfering with the group performing a rescue under Koontz Rock. In fact, the group's effort had become an attempt to recover a drowned kayaker. At that moment, the river still pinned the body under the rock. Recovery would have to wait until the next day at dawn after the dam's release was shut off and the water level

lowed them while I dodged rafts and hung back on the potential energy building in the pool.

I saw Scott struggling up ahead in the whitewater. He flipped and disappeared, but I could still see his red boat bobbing through the waves. I started after him, feeling a mixture of curiosity and intimidation — why had he flipped on the "easy" route?

Entering the rapid, I quickly found that I'd enrolled in a physics tutorial taught by the river. Today's lesson: When the speed of water doubles, its force quadruples.

### SPEED/FORCE

The brawny Gauley swept me into holes and toward rocks with an inevita-

bility that both fascinated and appalled me. I grappled with the sticky holes to keep my momentum and remain upright. After a couple of holes nearly flipped me, a big rock hunkered in my chosen route. If I'd possessed a keener comprehension of the current's force, I'd have saved myself from a dunking. Instead, I tried to ferry in front of the rock, hell it looked like I had plenty of room, but no... no way... not at all. I'd misjudged the first rapid of the day but not the last.

This physics lesson (Force = velocity squared) repeated itself several more times on the Gauley where distances mystically shortened due to the incredible strength of the current.

Time seemed to slow down in Koontz Flume as my Rival hit the rock, spun around and flipped, but only halfway. I hung from my thigh straps, partly underwater and fully motionless like a mouse in a trap. Fortunately, I was able to breathe.

What to do? My thoughts flashed to the paddler trapped upstream under Koontz Rock. I didn't want to get pinned like him... Should I try to roll upright or should I eject from the boat?

I hung tough, struggling briefly to get upright. I pushed my paddle against the rocky bottom for extra leverage. The boat moved slightly and the current turned the canoe, flipping it instantly. At that point, I didn't even consider a combat roll.

### COLD WATER

I abandoned ship and the 58-degree water shocked my system. I quickly internalized today's second physics lesson: water whisks heat away at a rate 20 times faster than air. This lesson was made more emphatic because the air temperature hovered in the upper 70s while the water temperature, chilled in the depths of Summersville

I tried to ferry in front of the rock, hell it looked like I had plenty of room, but no... no **way...**



Photo by Tamara Neumann

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"Hell Hole"



I found myself perched on the brink of a sudden drop-off, gaping into an aggressive hole of water, and thinking, "OH SHIT!"

Lake, was quite a frigid bit lower. The Ocoee River's flow also is controlled, but the water has a chance to warm up before reaching navigable sections. The river overtops a dam and makes a pretty picture cascading above the put-in. In September, the Ocoee's temperature is a welcome tonic to the Tennessee sun.

Immersed now in the conductive water of the Gauley, I held my paddle and grabbed my boat's painter while the whole lot of us flushed downstream. We hit the far-left side of Five-Boat Hole and squirted out in the relatively slack water downstream. I self-rescued and quickly reentered my canoe. I saw the other boaters in my party getting ready to return to the fray.

My chilled body reminded me that boaters are wise to avoid lingering in the Gauley River, even on a hot day. In anticipation of this, I wore a farmer-John wetsuit, insulated booties and a polypro top. I carried extra clothes, a spray jacket, food and water, and a first-aid kit in a dry bag. I'd swum in winter waters in the Midwest, so I was prepared for hypothermic conditions.

When I wasn't shivering from the cold water or slack-jawed by the current's force, I was astonished by the Gauley's gorgeous watershed. The next series of rapids — despite one named "Junkyard" — revealed the splendid

beauty of the surrounding landscape. This feature contrasted sharply with the man-made clutter spoiling the Ocoee's viewscape — particularly the wooden flume perched high on the hill, the bumper-to-bumper traffic on the road and the TVA powerhouse at the finale.

#### DIFFICULTY READING

As we threaded our way downriver, it became apparent to me that the Gauley's whitewater was much harder to read than the Ocoee's. For one thing, since the current is faster and more powerful, a paddler gets pushed more abruptly onto hydraulic challenges — especially holes and pour-overs. I found that I needed to anticipate hazards earlier and to paddle aggressively to avoid them or to set up for them. Of course this is true on any river, but the Gauley was more insistent and less forgiving.

The speed of the current forced me into positions that smashed my confidence. Even when forewarned of particular holes by Gauley veterans, I found myself perched on the brink of a sudden drop-off, gaping into an aggressive hole of water, and thinking, "Oh SHIT!"

My frozen posture compounded my mental shock. Basically, I rode into the river's churning maw like a lamb riding a wagon to market. If I survived

the hydraulic turbulence, it was due either to blind luck or a bizarre balancing act. As I ventured farther into the Lower Gauley's overpowering grip, my mentor Chris observed that I consistently quit at the "Oh SHIT!" moments. Petrified by panic, my eyes popped, my jaw dropped, and I simply stopped paddling.

Armed with that insight, I adjusted my attitude when I hit those "Oh SHIT!" situations — essentially, I kept stroking. As I gained confidence, it was my assertive (should I admit desperate?) paddling that rescued me from the recirculating nightmares that previously would have flipped me.

By the end of the run — despite increasing fatigue — I was making rapids with style that would have thrashed me in my earlier mental state. As I had learned on the Ocoee's big rapids like Broken Nose and Table Saw, I re-learned on the Lower Gauley: Don't let the river push you around.

## CONTINUITY OF RAPIDS

On the Ocoee, I found most of the "Oh SHIT!" moments were punctuated by long stretches of just plain fun whitewater. The gnarliest rapids on the Ocoee are separated from each other while the Gauley is almost a continuous series of ass-kicking whitewater with a few stretches of relative calm.

The 10-mile (23 ft./mile) run on the Lower Gauley makes for an arduous day of boating, until the final section where paddlers find long stretches of flat water. This last reach may be physically tiring, especially if there's any wind, but it's mentally relaxing after the brutal battle upstream.

The Ocoee, on the other hand, is about 5 miles (54 ft./mile). The fatigue on that river is largely self-induced and depends on how much surfing, eddy-hopping and play time each boater allows for.

## HELPING HANDS

I noticed another distinction between the boating cultures on the Lower Gauley and Ocoee rivers — the level of support from the "tribe." The Gauley boaters seemed to believe that

people could look out for themselves — and they acted on that belief. My Ocoee experience was that strangers watch out better for each other on the water, although they're less friendly at the put-in and take-out. This is a paradox that I can't explain.

My observation relates to the wide community of boaters, not to specific boating groups. For example, I was well-guarded by the boaters in my party, which in addition to the canoeists, included two kayakers, Jeff Leighton, an AW board member from Lafayette, Calif. and Adam Mayo, an AW summer intern attending the University of Tennessee in Knoxville.

They were alert and ready to help strangers as well as the boaters in our party.

In contrast to the behavior I saw on the Lower Gauley, I observed a lot of mutual support on the Ocoee.

For example, below Broken Nose several boaters set up rescue positions on shore with throw ropes handy. And when I swam there the first time (I'm 2-for-3 at Broken Nose — two swims for three runs), I didn't need a rescue but the strangers on shore talked me through it anyway — "You're doing good," they said. "Nice self-rescue; next time try it right side up."

On the Gauley, I had one stranger escort me while I swam through Lower Mash rapids — a long swim in big, fast water. She offered me the bow of her kayak, and although I declined, she stayed with me the whole time, talking me through the rough spots, telling me what lay ahead and affirming the decisions I was making.

Other than that one exception, I generally felt abandoned by the Gauley "tribe," and this both surprised and disappointed me. I witnessed lots of swims on the Gauley and observed very few proffers of help — not even the



*Jeff Swafford*

*(foreground) and Jeff*

*Barrow kickin' it on the*

*Ocoee.*

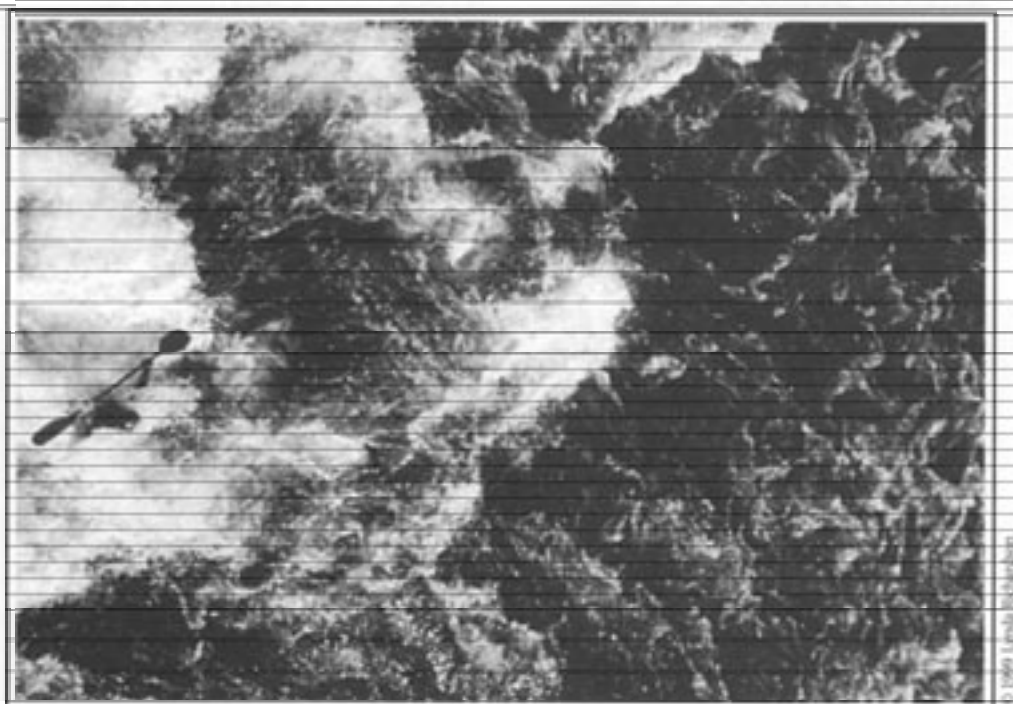
minimal inquiry: "Are you okay? Do you want help?"

People acted as though someone paddling the Lower Gauley ought to be able to self-rescue. But it seems to me that even the best paddler can suffer an aneurysm, an allergic bee sting, or an

be a Class IV on these other rivers. And a Class IV on the Gauley? Watch out!

Just because you've played on the Ocoee, don't expect to toy with the Lower Gauley. The Gauley is a river unto itself, and any boater would be wise to approach it with that in mind.

"Hell Hole"



After being pummeled and humbled by the river, I carried around **Pure Screaming Hell**, the final Class IV rapid on the Gauley

asthma attack and, in that moment, would need help from other boaters. It seems better to swoop to the rescue first, and ask questions later.

A generous helping of "humble pie" could even save your life.

#### A RIVER UNTO ITSELF

At the end of my inaugural run on the Lower Gauley, I felt seriously worn out but well-used at the same time. After being pummeled and humbled by the river, I carried around Pure Screaming Hell, the final Class IV rapid on the Gauley.

All in all, I came to believe that the Gauley exists in its own category. Certainly, the I-VI classification system seems to be warped when applied to the Gauley.

I had paddled Class III and IV waters on several different rivers, and I believed that I could see the similarities. I sensed certain consistencies, for example, between Class III and IV rapids on the St. Francis, New, Nantahala, Ocoee, James and Potomac rivers. But a Class III rapid on the Gauley would

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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*ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Jeff Barrow, 43, has been paddling canoes for 33 years and whitewater for eight years. He is an ACA certified instructor (OC-2 Moaing Water) and placed first in the 1995 Missouri Whitewater Championships (downriver OC-1). He is a newspaper editor and freelance writer based in Columbia, Missouri.*

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# FIRST DESCENT OF THE HUITZILAPAN

## Exploring Mexico

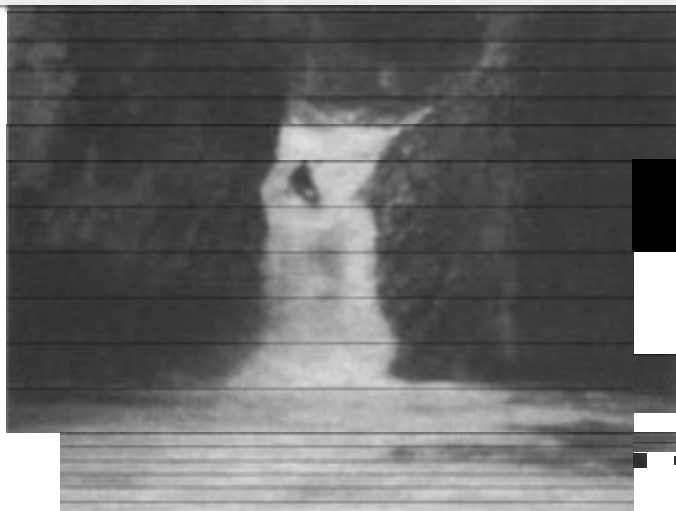
By Scott Collins Head Guide, Kayak Mexico • Edited by Rip Harwood

After a long season leading kayaking trips in Mexico, my friend Dave Bruton and I decided that it was time for some relaxation. Hey, I mean, kayaking every day on beautiful remote runs can be pretty stressful. So, for our "vacation," we decided to look for some new runs to take clients on next season. That's still considered work, right?

We had run the Barranca Grande or "Grand Canyon" of the Rio Pescados several times with clients. One of Mexico's classics, the Barranca Grande features 24 miles of continuous Class III-IV that can be paddled in a long day or on a relaxed overnight. But we wondered what lay upstream. Finally, everything was right for the exploration: we had several days without commitments and the level was perfect—low and stable. As far as we knew no one had ever done it before.

On the topo maps the Rio Huitzilapan, as the Pescados is known upstream of the town of Barranca Grande, was about 10 miles long, had the same amount of water as the Barranca Grande run, and a gradient of 180 fpm. Because we were unfamiliar with the run, we carried a tent, food, and sleeping bags for a possible overnight, in addition to rappelling gear, in case we encountered unrunnable waterfalls.

The put-in at Patlanalan was next to a beautiful lily pad strewn lake with an incredible view of the Pico de Orizaba, a dormant volcano, Mexico's only gla-



cier, and the third highest peak in North America at 18,500 feet. After picking up seven locals hitchhiking into town, we arrived at Patlanalan at 9 a.m. with a fresh supply of good karma. Despite our research, we arrived to find the river with only half the water that we expected.

In spite of a scrapey start, we were still hopeful, because according to the topos, two creeks entered just downstream. We hoped they would account for the missing water. We also figured that on a first descent it was better to have too little water than too much.

To our dismay, the two creeks

added very little water, and the flow was still quite low. The river was continuous like the first part of the Barranca Grande, but steeper and sketchier, because the water was so low. We also had the misfortune of encountering several nasty strainers and footbridges. We were getting stuck on so many rocks that I said to Dave, "You can follow me, but you might want to give me a minute to get myself unpinned at the bottom." We

negotiated several tedious kilometers of this, scouting frequently. At this point we were wondering if we would be able to finish the river in a single day. We were also thinking that the run sucked, and that there was no way we would ever bring any clients here!

Once when Dave hopped out to scout, he told me, "The rapid is clear, but it looks like it goes into a lake!" During the last flood, a landslide had created a natural dam and a lake. Coffee plants, sweet lemon trees, and orange trees were sticking out of the water. You could paddle right up to them and pick the fruit. Because we were the



first to circumnavigate this new lake, Dave decided to name it Lake Petzl Nixon. Nixon, because of Dave's famous Nixon impersonation that he has been known to do while hand-surfing a wave. Petzl because I tease Dave that he can never finish a river without having to use his Petzl headlamp. It was fun to speculate about the rapids hidden beneath us, under the lake.

On the other side of the lake the river flowed through a steep channel into the old riverbed. It was full of trees, and was quite impressive. A cactus was growing right out of the river. After a few more kilometers we noticed the riverbed change from boul-

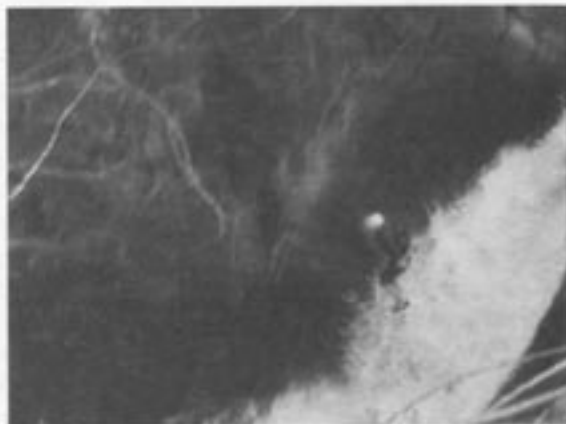
der fields to lava flow bedrock. From our previous expeditions we knew that this might indicate that the river was about to neck down and become difficult. Sure enough, we soon found ourselves deep in a set of steep constricted rapids.

Around 12:30, we stopped for lunch by some challenging rapids. One was a six-foot drop where Dave executed the most magnificent boof I've ever seen in my life, launching his entire boat into the air. Some kids

from a nearby village told us that it wasn't too far to the town of Barranca Grande, but that there were a couple of big waterfalls on the way. Now saying that Barranca Grande is "cerca" (close), is a relative term for someone who has a five-hour walk to the nearest grocery store. Their definition of a "big waterfall" is equally arbitrary, so we weren't taking anything for granted. After lunch we were extra careful not to bomb through any rapids when we could not see to the bottom. We treated each ho-

lizon line with total respect.

We knew we had reached the promised waterfalls when we saw the river disappear over an abrupt horizon line into what appeared to be a cave. After seeing the 20 foot drop from the bottom, I thought it might be runnable, but from the top it looked insane. We pulled over on the left side of the river and began looking for a portage. The problem was that we were between steep canyon walls. There was no way to walk around the drop on the left. It looked like you might be able to walk around the right, but getting there required a hairy swim directly above the



drop. I swam across clinging to the rocks. When I reached the other side I discovered that it was not possible to walk around the fall, but it *was* possible to rappel down.

Our next problem was that we would need to leave some anchoring gear at the top of the rappel, and, even worse, 150 feet downstream we can see the lip of the *next* waterfall! So our dilemma was this: we wanted to have enough gear for other rappels, and we *didn't* want to get stuck between two waterfalls, unable to get down the next one or back up the first one. Keep going or turn back? Being an optimist, I felt certain that we would be able to run, portage, or rappel the next waterfall. So I convinced Dave to keep going.

For our initial anchor we used two NRS cam straps which we had brought to tie boats on a bus. I wasn't too excited about being a test dummy for NRS cam straps. Fortunately, Dave volunteered to go first. NRS came through, and I lowered the boats down



***"I looked over the edge of the second drop, only to see that we were really screwed. The second drop was at least 30' and a piece of gnarl worthy of the next "Twitch" uideo."***

to Dave, then rappelled down to join him. We left the rope hanging at the first drop while we scouted the second, in case we had to climb back up and hike out. I looked over the edge of the second drop, only to see that we were really screwed. The second drop was at least 30' and a piece of gnarl worthy of the next "Twitch" video. I would have been delighted to walk this rapid, but that was not possible within the steep canyon walls. And there wasn't an anchoring point for a rappel. Our options were: 1) ascend to the top of the first drop with all of our gear and hike out, 2) try to climb the sheer canyon walls that had us trapped, 3) throw the boats over and jump off the waterfall, or 4) wait for the beer commercial girls to show up and make everything better.

I hate jumping. Unfortunately, that seemed like the best option, given that the other options were guaranteed to be difficult and time consuming. If we jumped we still had a shot at a clean run to the bottom. But we knew that

by taking down our rope at the first drop, we were giving up our only sure, safe way out.

To convince Dave of my optimism, or maybe I should say my stupidity, I offered to jump first. Dave happily agreed. I was a *little* worried that the water wasn't deep enough at the bottom. We were both worried that we would get stranded further downstream by a truly impassable rapid. Before jumping, we said things like, "What are you going to do if I don't surface at the bottom of this jump?" and, "I think they'll come looking for us after 3 days, don't you?" We were both kind of stressed, and after peeing about seven times and stalling for a while, I made the leap.

Fortunately, the jump was clean. As usual, my video camera stopped working, just when I started to tape Dave's leap.

Dave said he would buy me a beer if we got off the river before nightfall. Not knowing what was

around the corner was incredibly stressful, and it was one of the most intense days I've ever spent on the river.

The section of the Huitzilapan below the second falls was absolutely gorgeous. We paddled another half mile of entertaining rapids before we arrived at a third big drop. After taking a look we ran through our checklist: 1) Do we want to run it? Nope. 2) Can we portage? Don't think so. 3) Is there a place to set anchor for a rappel? Doesn't look like it. 4) Can we jump it? Nah!

Oops, not what we needed! Out of options. Dave is really not happy. But the rapid looks to me like a miniature version of Gorilla on the Green Narrows. Of course if you get hurt here you are really in the middle of nowhere. But, lacking a better option, I tell Dave that I'm going to give it a shot. It took a while to get mentally prepared. I started to peel out, but heard, "Scott, wait, I think we can rappel down in our boats." Back into



the eddy I dove. Once again I told Dave that I didn't really think that would work and that I felt confident tackling it. But by this time I was really nervous.

Fortunately I had a smooth run, as did Dave. Big relief after a must-run rapid that we would have walked if we had a choice.

The river canyon opened up below that drop. We were so happy that we gave each other a hug. We knew that we were really out of the canyon when we started to see vegetation. I told Dave that I had never been so happy to see a banana tree without bananas on it in my life.

Just a little way below the canyon, a gorgeous waterfall dropped in from the side. We concluded that was the source of the "missing" water. But we agreed that we hadn't really needed any more water in the ol' Huitzilapan, anyway! Below the waterfall the river was like the more difficult stretches of the Barranca Grande, what we had expected the whole thing to be. That just goes to show you how little you can tell from a topo map.

Mexican rivers are full of surprises. The next few miles were fast and fun, and we delighted at the signs of civilization, hoping once again that we would make it off the river before dark. Sure enough, at 5:30 we saw familiar houses in the distance and we sprinted to the take-out. I hopped out of my boat saying, "We're alive!" and claimed the beer that Dave had promised me. Negra Modelo never tasted better!

*Editor's note: Scott Collins is a Head Instructor for Kayak Mexico and is currently helping American Whitewater develop a new website. Dave Bruton owns and operates Kayak Mexico. Kayak Mexico offers instruction and trips for all skill levels, on rivers generally less difficult, but no less spectacular, than the Huitzilapan. Dave tells me that he recently purchased a large supply of tubular webbing for future explorations!*

*...goes to show you how little  
you can tell from a topo map."*



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## Wrestling with Ants: A Venezuelan Whitewater Epic Adventure

Story and photos by Dunbar Hardy

The first time I saw it I was hanging on to a pile of kayaks and gear strapped to the roof of a Land Cruiser which was winding down a mountainous road. The river canyon was an extremely deep steep-walled crack in the mountainside. I stared over the edge of the roof into the darkness, hoping to see some end to the drop off below me. No river was to be seen, as the canyon walls were too steep. A growing feeling of dread and nausea came over me because I knew that I would soon be going through



**Opposite page, top:**  
**Johnnie Kern, Land Heflin on Rio Copaz, Venezuela. Right:**  
**Brennan Guth, Rio Acequia, Venezuela.**



this gorge on the Santo Domingo River, and sensed that an epic battle would be fought.

Venezuela has a mystery to it. Not many folks that I know have been there, and no one really knew anything about the potential for whitewater paddling there. With all of the unanswered questions, my curiosity was piqued enough to get me on the plane with my kayak in tow. A group of five (Brennan Guth, Johnnie Kern, Dustin Knapp, Land Heflin, and myself) went down to Venezuela to explore the rivers of the Venezuelan Andes—a mountain range with peaks over 15,000 feet in the southwestern portion of the country. We were open to adventure, and not at all sure of what we would find.

We drove high above the Santo Domingo Gorge a couple of times en route to other rivers before we ac-

tually ventured down into it. Every time we drove along the windy road, we hung out of the windows desperately seeking just a glimpse of some whitewater below. Usually the small glances we gained with binoculars were of incredibly difficult and committing drops far away from help. We also scouted out a trail down to the river that we hiked one day. The trail delivered us onto a swinging bridge over a beautiful greenish clear flowing river engulfed by a

lush jungle. The water's clarity and the character of the rapids in view from the bridge were very enticing. What made us most nervous were the sheer walls just downstream that squeezed the river through a narrow turbulent gap in the mountainside. After this preview all of us were intrigued by such an amazingly beautiful



**Opposite page, bottom:**  
**Dustin and Land at take-out for Rio Paquey. Left:**  
**Santo Domingo Gorge, Venezuela.**

**Top photo: Johnnie Kern, Dustin Knapp, Rio Acegula take-out. Bottom: Land Heflin, Dunbar Hardy, Brennan Guth, Johnnie Kern, and Dustin Knapp.**



river, but we were also realistic about how committing this run was going to be.

Fear can only be avoided for so long before it must be faced. After we had paddled other rivers in the area, and even upper and lower sections of the Santo Domingo, it was time for us to venture down into the gorge. We were to attempt a 2-mile section of river, and had given ourselves 7 hours of daylight to complete the run. With our nervousness growing each minute, we began getting dressed for another day of paddling an unknown river in a place far from home. Extra gear, like breakdown paddles, ropes, prussiks, caribeaners, pulleys, food, water, and first aid kits, was stashed in boats. Long pants



photos © Dunbar Hardy





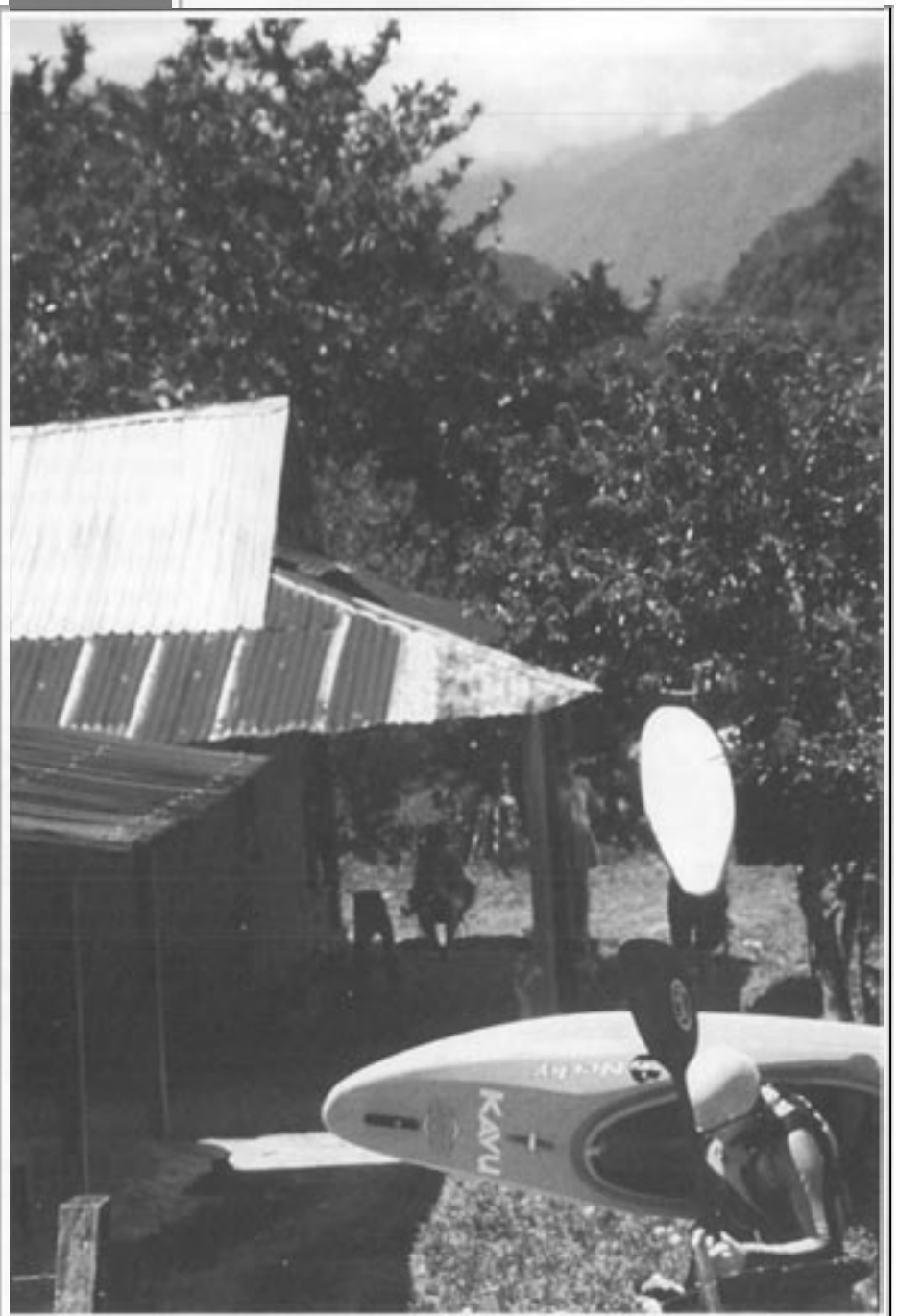
"With our nervausness growing *each* minute, we began getting dressed for another day of paddling an unknown river in a plate far from *home*."

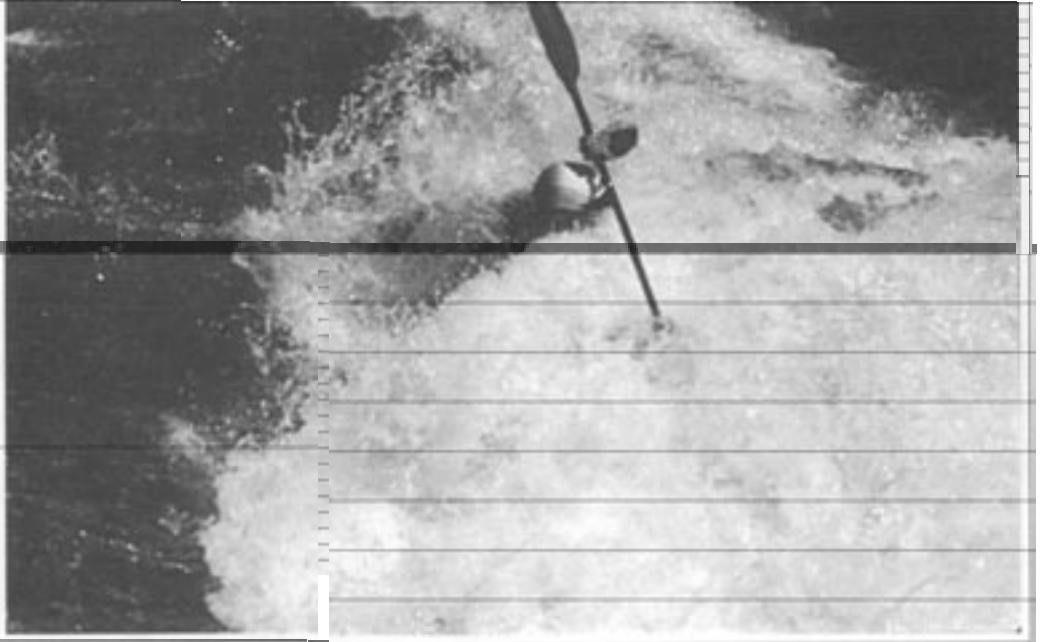
and long sleeves were put on to help with the bushwhacking, and elbow pads were tightened to absorb some of the hits that the river would be sure to deliver.

The river was almost 1,500 feet below the road. **As** we crashed, slid, and crawled our way down to it through small coffee plants, we began to realize that there was not going to be an easy way out of this one. **As** we dropped further down the mountainside, the roar of the river grew louder and anxiety levels soared. The prospect of hiking out of this river canyon was unthinkable. Finally, bursting through the last bit of jungle bushwhack, we gazed upon the clear green waters and felt refreshingly cooled. I then nervously got dressed in my battle garb. With deep breaths and vain attempts to relax, we shoved off from the security of shore into the complete unknown already feeling very committed before we had even taken a single stroke.

The walls of the river drew in steeply around us just below the put-in, and the current sped up as

*Top: Venezuelan Jungle, Rio Chama.  
Right: Dunbar Hardy putting in Upper Rio Canagua, Venezuela.*





we approached the first rapid. The river was carrying around 600 cfs with a slightly pushy feel through sievy steep smooth granite drops. With precise eddy hopping we boat scouted our way through this first drop and tried to loosen up in the short pool below. Just downstream across the short pool was another steep blind drop. Running the first three rapids or so, my confidence slowly grew and my stress level began to lessen slightly, but that was soon to change.

We had rounded the next corner and found a huge, long, ugly, kick-your-ass section of river that was pinched between vertical walls with no obvious portage routes. It was a long rapid that made me nauseous just looking at it, and so portaging was the agreed upon option for everyone. The smooth walls made it necessary for us to climb straight up a steep cliff and belay our boats up to a small ledge. Our next push was to climb into the jungle above the cliffband and anchor ourselves and boats off of tree trunks. Sweating profusely, grunting, and fending off the never-ending supply of hungry ants left me wondering if that ugly rapid was indeed runnable. Committed to finishing the portage, we swung ourselves and our boats through the jungle and rappelled back down onto a smooth granite slab just above the crux of the drop. We had taken an hour and a half to portage 50

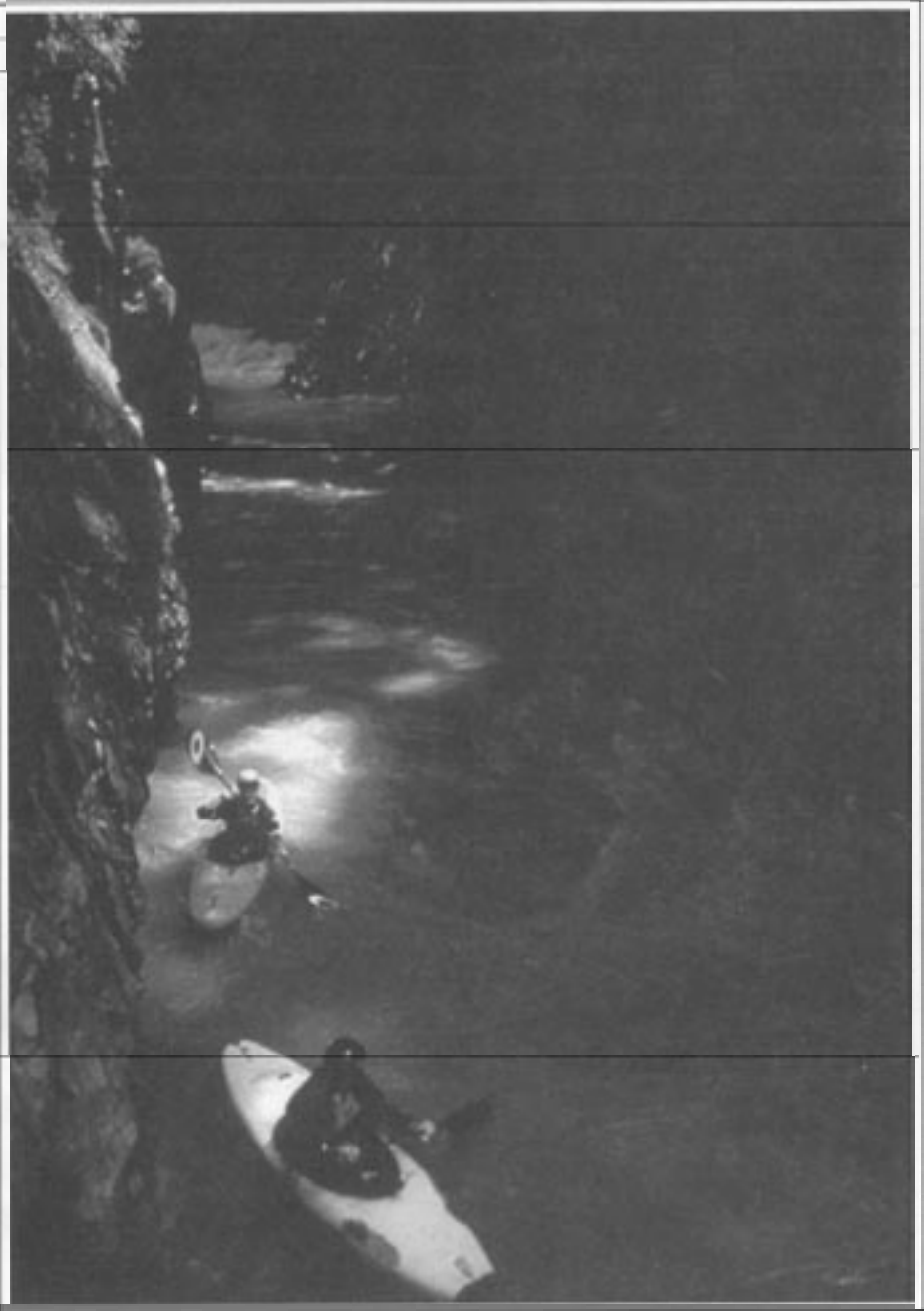
**Top photo: Johnnie Kern, Upper Rio Sinigues. Left: Johnnie Kern snake dancing on the Santo Domingo.**

**Right: Brennan Guth and Dustin Knapp in the Santo Domingo Gorge.**

yards of river, and we still were not at the bottom of the rapid.

Glancing underneath the slab we stood on, the river still looked very uninviting. A recirculating cauldron and a narrow slot exit were all that we could see. We continued our efforts to find a way around this heinous section of river; gingerly we traversed the wet, sloped, granite slab downstream. We found a small stair-stepped ledge that we could climb down and lower our boats to, but then a seal launch would be necessary. Lastly, we scouted downstream to see what was below and if that was even navigable; I was not encouraged by what I saw. The river continued downstream swiftly with no eddies choked between granite walls 10 feet wide, and then the river bent out of view to the right. We were having fun now. Dustin stepped up big and launched himself into the river and floated down around the corner out of sight. We waited for an eternity for some sign, signal, or sound from him. Finally we saw him, as he had climbed up the granite wall on river right. He then passed up to us the thumbs up.

With a deep sigh, I seal launched back into the river, unsure of what lay around the corner where the



river bent out of sight between sheer granite walls about a boat length apart. Around the corner was a stout but runnable rapid; it was relieving to have a section of

river that we could paddle. In the short slower pieces of current between the rapids, I floated, resting and looking around at this amazing gorge that I was now very much

**"We had rounded the next corner and found a huge, long, ugly, kick-your-ass section of river that was pinched between vertical walls with no obvious portage routes."**

"I first tried to scout which side of the river might be the easier portage route before even seeing if the rapid was runnable or not."

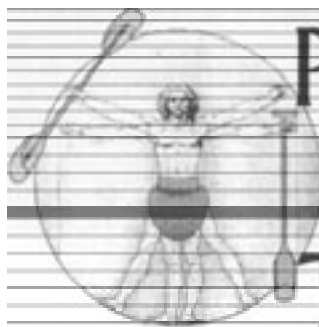
**Johnnie Kern--Upper Rio Santo Domingo.**



committed to. As I approached the top of the next few rapids, I first tried to scout which side of the river might be the easier portage route before even seeing if the rapid was runnable or not. There were numerous scouts, a few more portages, and some more quality runnable rapids; but as the day wore on our slow progress and the effort of navigating the river began to take its toll.

As the daylight began to wane and our fatigue levels became obvious, we found ourselves above what proved to be the crux of the run. Another moist smooth granite slab on river right was our treacherous take-out to scout the hideously huge, log-studded drop below us. I remained in my boat waiting for the others to exit and secure their boats. All of a sudden I

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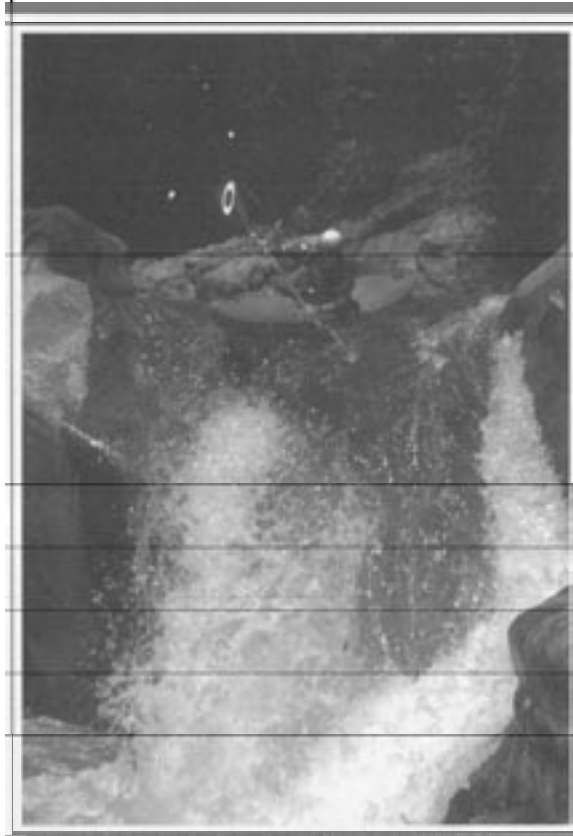
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heard a whimpering gasp of defeat as I looked up and saw Dustin's boat sliding down the slab right at me. His boat boofed off the bow of my boat and entered the river upright heading into the chaos below unmanned. My instinct was to chase it, but all I could do was watch it enter the rapid and disappear from my sight. A sense of hopelessness and despair came over all of us.

This rapid was also squeezed between two steep walls, with a splash of wood at the bottom to really put the icing on the cake. Another desperate portage plan was needed. The steep slope on the right proved to be too daunting for us to effectively portage our boats, so the plan was for the boats to fend for themselves. Half the gang climbed and clawed their way up



**Dustin Knapp—Rio Santo Domingo Gorge.**

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and over the steep jungle slope to get to the downstream side of the drop. The best plan we could think of was to put skirts on the boats and then shove them into the river. We hoped they would run the rapid without getting pinned or broached on the logs, and then get picked up at the bottom of the drop by the rest of the group.

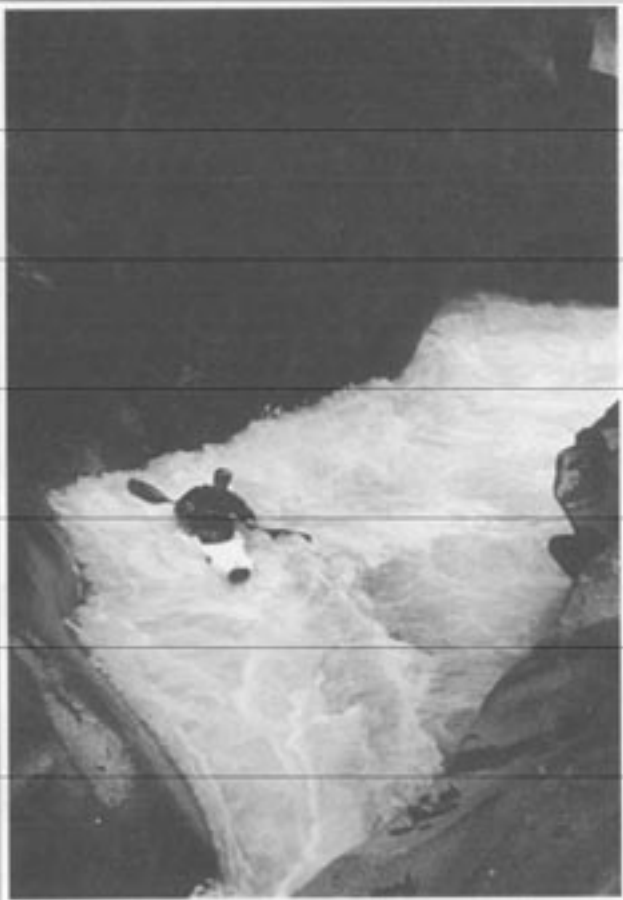
As I shoved the first kayak into the river I doubted how good a plan this was. Shortly thereafter, once the kayak entered the rapid, flipped over and then eddied out partway through the drop, I was pretty sure this plan was not going to work. I was forced to make a desperate slimy traverse across wet granite to reach a small pinnacle of rock just above the cauldron eddy that the upside down boat swirled and bobbed around in. Reaching out as far as I could with a kayak paddle, I poked and prodded the boat back out into the current. I then watched the boat slide downstream slowly and heavily towards the logs blocking the channel; I did not have a good feeling about this at all. I held my breath as the boat hit the log. It slowly shifted sideways around one of the branches, parked for

what felt like 3 hours, then miraculously flipped back upright and wiggled itself through the limbs and continued downstream. Perhaps we would get out of this place after all. The remaining kayakers all had various degrees of success in their runs, including flips, pins, skirt pops, and unintentional splats. All of the boats made it through, thankfully, and as the daylight began to disappear I started

bushwhacking my way downstream braving more hungry ants and sharp thorny plants.

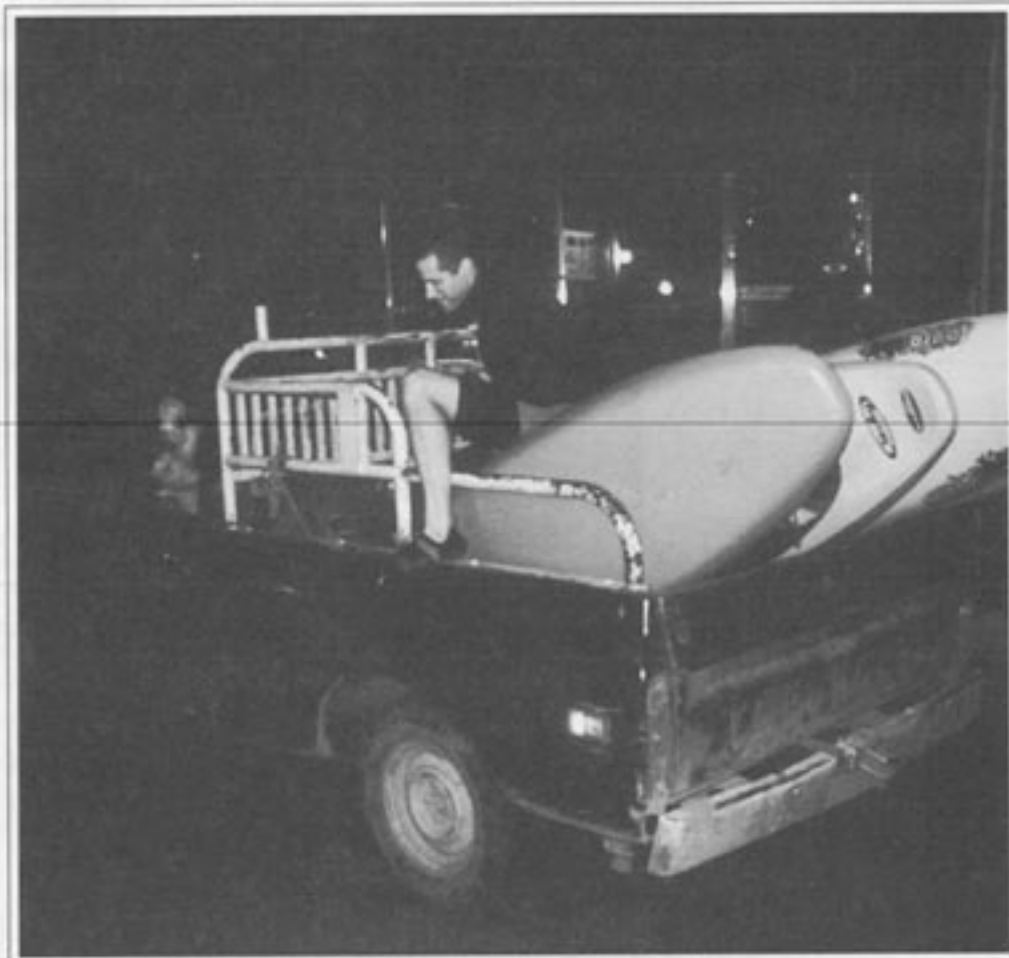
By the time all of us were back together with our boats and gear, our exhaustion was very apparent.

Day had turned to early evening and our last sips of water and bites of Powerbar were only memories. Dustin had continued downstream in search of his kayak, but the rest of us were all together. We figured that we had less than half a mile to go before we reached our take-out bridge with a driver waiting for us. We began paddling the last strong rapids before darkness completely blanketed us. Downstream a little ways we found Dustin, who had climbed down steep cliffs as far as he could and then swam a few rapids till he found his boat vertically pinned. Somehow managing to get it off the rock it was plastered on, he was now able to paddle out with us. Feeling better that we were all together now, we approached one last horizon line and saw the bridge silhouetted in the early



**Left, top: Brennan Guth, Santo Domingo. Bottom: Land Heflin, Upper Santo Domingo.**





**Left, top: Night shuffle,  
Bottom: The author and  
adventurer, Dunbar  
Hardy.**

night sky below the rapid. Desperate for the take-out, we overlooked the specifics of the rapid and recklessly bombed our way through it, not gaining any style points at all. Pulling up to the bank underneath the bridge, we were all too exhausted to get out of our boats, much less carry them up the short hill to the truck. A warm wave of relief smothered us, as we watched the sky burn and bruise with the end of a very long day.

We had completed a short, action-packed, high-effort section of an unknown river in a new country. Yeah, we had done a first descent, but we had really gotten our asses kicked. Numerous times in there we were so close to having things not work out in our favor; a part of me is somewhat surprised that I actu-

ally made it out at all. No amount of scouting from the roadside way above the river or studying maps for hours could have honestly prepared us for what was down in there. The Rio Santo Domingo Gorge was a problem that was almost too great for us to solve.

Since returning from this adventure, I catch myself at times thinking about the miles of unrun river above where we put-in; thinking of the pristine character of that upper gorge, the beautiful granite walls, the remoteness, and the purity of the flowing water. Then I come back to reality and think about how absolutely alone I would be down in that deep canyon in the bottom of the world in some foreign land sweating, grunting, and wrestling ants once again.





"Two Thumbs Up!"

Suzanna Albert

## Channel Surfing

"Without a question, the best movie we've ever watched!"

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"Everything is porn sized!"

Babe Ruth

Corran Addison (Operation Zulu, Paddle Quest, Barleys Purple Day) leaps into action in the most revealing paddling segment ever done of the fabled legend (we take full credit for his legendary status). Steve Fisher (1000 Cunning Stunts, Skream 4, Tomorrow Never Comes) throws himself over water falls, waves and women, and Dan Campbell (Beauty and the Best, Searching for the Gee' spot) looks for his lost love (not paddling); his inner soul.

What do these three hero's have in common? Nothing, but we had to work it into the sales pitch for the film, so give us a break will-ya?

Surfing from channel to channel until we passed even Channel No 5 (which is the only thing we were wearing during the filming of the last segment), these action hero's take the viewer on a whirlwind tour of insane stunts and unbelievable masquerades.



Leaping into action in this spectacular thrill ride of death-defying stunts and amazing high-tech gadgets, our Hero's go. In the most electrifying kayak film yet, the unstoppable action hero's must prevent a tremendous disaster from striking. Someone is pitting the world's kayaking superpowers against each other, and only our hero's can stop it. The world teeters on the brink of world war III - until we zero in on the true mastermind behind this devilish scheme. In a series of explosive chases, brutal confrontations and breath-taking escapes, they race to stop global pandemonium! Powerhouse action sequences including surfing Montreal's massive Mavric wave, hair boating in California and the South East, and with special cameo appearances by Long Surf Silver, Desere Grindeau, Tricky Lords and Jumping Holmes, this is undoubtedly the most fantastical adventure ever embarked upon.

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# Toby Scarpella



Last night at 12:30 my phone rang. It was my friend, Brian. His voice was heavy. As soon as I heard him say a word I knew that he was not calling for small talk. He was calling to tell me that his brother, Toby, had drowned in his kayak earlier that evening. I wanted so much to think he was joking, but I could not. He started crying on the phone after he told me. I exhaled and realized that this was indeed the truth. I said calmly "I am so sorry." What in the world could I say? What is the correct response to a statement like that? What could I even begin to do to try to comfort this friend of mine who had just found out his brother had died? I let him cry some on the phone. I felt numb, and in shock, with a true feeling of sorrow beginning to grow up inside of me.

'What happened' was the obvious next question. Apparently Toby, a long term friend of his, Brad and a new acquaintance, Jacob, were running Canyon Creek in southern Washington. It was late afternoon on March 7th. All I know is that Toby ran a drop, went underwater and didn't resurface. It was concluded that he got pinned beneath the surface, and his boat folded, trapping him under the water. Just like that his life came to an end.

It took the other guys awhile to get his body out of the water, and obviously by that time it was too late. Phone calls were then made later that night. All this time I was out teaching a beginning kayaking pool session with Toby's brother, Brian, and Toby's girlfriend Katie. Their parents were visiting in town, and they even came out to the hot springs last night with us to watch a little bit and also to soak. I said hello to their dad, and met their mom for the first time - a very pleasant family. While we were chatting in the hot springs after kayaking class, their other son, Toby, had just drowned.

I feel so much sadness and sorrow for everyone that knew Toby. This whole paddling community will grieve for him, and we all will then grieve for his family - his parents, his brother Brian, his other brother and Toby's girlfriend Katie. This accident strikes very close to home for all of the paddling community here in Durango.

I didn't sleep very much at all last night. I dread phone calls in the middle of the night - not much good news comes after midnight. Brian had to get off the phone fairly quickly because they were waiting for the sheriff to call or someone else. As he was hanging up the phone, I said, "If there is anything any of you need at all, please let me know." I have been here before, and know what death is like. I said again, "I am so sorry this happened."

I hung up the phone and fell onto the floor holding my head in my hands. I thought of Toby, disbelieving that he was actually no longer in this world. I thought of his fun upbeat energy,

his comical disorganization, his easy smile. I remember hearing his excited voice often. I thought of his dedication and commitment to his passion and his work - kayaking. You see, I am not only his friend but also his boss (if you want to call me that), as I am the Director of Four Corners Riversports Paddling School. I had seen him be very committed to teaching for Four Corners, always willing to teach and teach some more. His energy was loved by all of the kids he taught to paddle. Toby was so good at just sharing his excitement and passion for the sport. He had, without a doubt, given numerous kids in our community a positive first experience with paddling. I got to see this commitment first-hand, and was somewhat in awe of his constant want to teach and give to others. He never said no to teaching, and I really feel that he was good at what he did. He was truly open for feedback and learning at all times.

As a manager, part of my job is to train, develop and teach staff. Right now there is nothing that I can teach you, Toby. In fact, you are the one who is teaching me. I am so sorry your positive humorous lovable energy will no longer be around me. I welcomed seeing you because I knew you were always so willing to smile with me. I thank you for giving me the small and short opportunity to try to teach you from my own experience. You were a willing and open student. Beyond that between us, you were a friend of mine and that is what hurts the most. I have lost you as a friend.

I want to picture you coming back from some adventure with your smile and tales to tell me. I want you to tell me what has happened to you. I wanted to be around you more. I know that often in life I don't get what I want. I thought that I would have you as a friend for awhile. I think back on the last thing I said to you the day you left to go on this final paddling trip. I walked outside with you and said "travel safe and paddle safe." I had no psychic premonition, but I guess I did feel the need to say this. What do our final words mean to someone? You probably don't remember that exchange, but I do.

So we all are left with thinking of you now in a sudden, painful, past-tense way. You are not coming back from this adventure. I will not hear your stories. Nor will I see your smile. I am not alone in grieving over your death. A part of me also has some sadness over all of the kids who will not get to learn from you. Without them knowing it, they will miss you also. For everyone in the community we live in, we will miss you.

From myself and everyone at Four Corners Riversports, we offer our deepest and sincere support and condolences to the entire Scarpella family. If there is ever anything we can do, please do not ever hesitate to ask us. We will all remember you Toby. Thank you for being in my life.

Dunbar Hardy

# John's Brook

## A New York Class V Run for the Certifiably Insane

By Karl Gesslein

So there I was, the better part of the way down what was easily the most difficult creek I had ever paddled, standing on the shore waiting for Mike to walk down. I had just paddled a long Class IV-V by myself, trying to catch up with Mike's lost paddle. My spray skirt had been badly ripped on a log which was stuck under an undercut rock, Mike's skirt was also badly ripped. Luckily mine had ripped first, so I had gotten dibs on the only safety pin we had. The pin was now holding together the tear and keeping my little creek boat from sinking like the Titanic in this heinous 350+ fpm creek known as John's Brook.

If John's Brook had been a movie the review of it would have read like this:

John's Brook is the newest in a long line of productions aimed at appealing to the segment of the kayaking community that have hit their heads on a few too many rocks. The first two hours is spent watching kayakers hike up 3 miles of steep rocky trails dragging 100 lbs. of gear through mud and creeks and over huge boulders. You can tell from the climb that once these guys hit the water, there will be hell to pay. Once the boaters get to the water John's Creek starts out full bore and never slows down. The entire 5 miles is just one long climax with no interruption. Even people who enjoy such spectacles will be forced to switch over to autopilot or run out of energy and adrenaline after the first 15 minutes.

### Book of St John's Brook

1:1 Yea, verily thou shalt not let go of thine paddle, even if thou art stuck in a strainer, struggling to get out of thine boat. 1:2 For if thou dost let go of thine paddle, then thou must pull thine partner over that same log that thou hast broached on. 1:3 And, as thine partner looks at thee with sad and worried eyes begging you to be careful, you shall push him into the water on the downstream side of the log and say, 'Thou must go now alone and fetch my paddle which hath gotten away from me'. 1:4 And with great fear thine partner shall boat quickly, yet carefully down the next 1/2 mile of rapids until he must portage to avoid yet another log which hath blocked his passage. 1:5 Civith not up though, as another paddle awaits ye back at thine trusty car. 1:6 Thine friend shall journey to the car and return with his spare paddle so that thou may complete thine run. 1:7 Although the rain continues to fall, and the creek continues to rise, and although thou art hungry and tired, thou must continue on. 1:8 For thou hast traveled so far to see it, and thou will have it done.

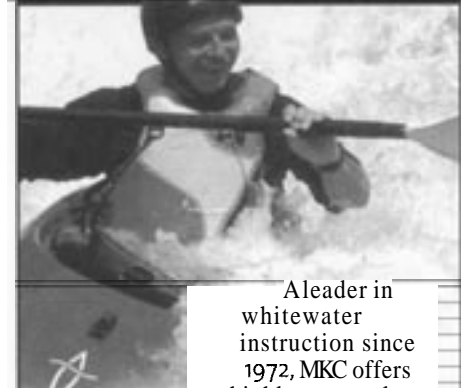
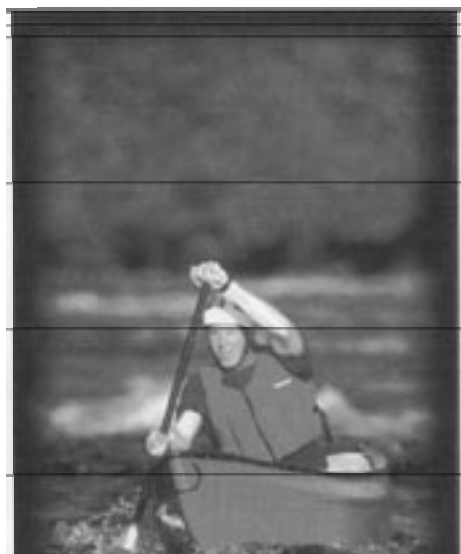
Inevitably they will wonder when it will end, and whether or not the actors will just say "enough" and walk out of the canyon.

While only a dozen or so drops rivaled the Bottom Moose in difficulty, the sheer continuousness of the John's Brook caught Mike and myself off-guard. It was a bad gear day, though it was a good paddling day. Usually I'm anxious to keep paddling after most runs. This time I was happy to be back at the car. It had been 10 hours since I had eaten and I had guzzled all the water in my bottle after hiking the first 1/2 mile. I had been drinking riverwater the rest of the way. By the time we had reached the take-out I was relieved and exhausted.

The next time you see an old school creeker who has been paddling longer than you've been alive, ask where the best run in the northeast is. If they say John's Brook, shudder in terror at the thought of the heinous hike and of all those drops, one right after another, with few eddies and lots of wood. More strainers in fact than I have seen in ALL the rivers I have run in my piddly 4 year paddling career. While everything else in NY is in flood, this creek is one that is better reserved for the certifiably insane.

*Editor's note: Karl Gesslein is the new schooler who has stirred up such a controversy in our Letters to the Editor section. He is also a dedicated AW volunteer, who created the AW Internet message board.*

*stirred up such a controversy in our Letters to the Editor section. He is also a dedicated AW volunteer, who created the AW Internet message board.*



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Dave Rudmelle getting an eddy at Greyhound.

and small rivers. Although I've always been quick to pick up new sports, kayaking seemed to go against all my natural instincts. However, I was hoping to be ready for the New River Gorge by the time the water levels fell and the temperature rose for the summer.

The water stayed high through June, but when July came around, the water subsided to one foot at the Fayette Station gauge. I began to get anxious about getting into the Gorge when my friend, Ingrid, in Richmond, Virginia told me that her friend, Sean Cantrell, an expert paddler and part-time video boater, was coming to Fayetteville the weekend of July 18<sup>th</sup> for a wedding. I had met Sean once, but had never paddled with him. We contacted each other and he coaxed me into taking the plunge.

Sean and I met at the Fayette Station take-out on Saturday morning. As we loaded his gear into my truck, AW's own Jayne Abbot asked us for a ride to the Cunard put-in. Along the way, I informed Jayne and Sean about my excitement and fear. Having grown up so close to the river, I had heard hundreds of horror stories about the "River of Death."

At the put-in, we made our way through the crowd and into the warm green water. I felt comfortable in my boat and my excitement mounted as we approached Upper Railroad Rapid. We hit the drop and caught the eddy on river right. So far so good. We split Chicago and Detroit rocks and headed under the railroad bridge.

Coming up on Lower Railroad, Sean told me that he was going to surf the wave above the drop. He informed me to go right or left of him. I went a little too far left, bounced down a couple rocks and flipped at the bottom. I rolled up and waited for Sean, who was still surfing at the top.

The roll felt good and my confidence increased as we worked through the Warm-ups. Sean stopped at Ender Wave to surf and visit old friends. I saw some of my paddling bud-

dies there and we watched some awesome rodeo boating. With the three Keeney rapids lurking around the bend, I could have stayed at Ender Wave for a few more minutes or even hours, but Sean said it was time to face the music.

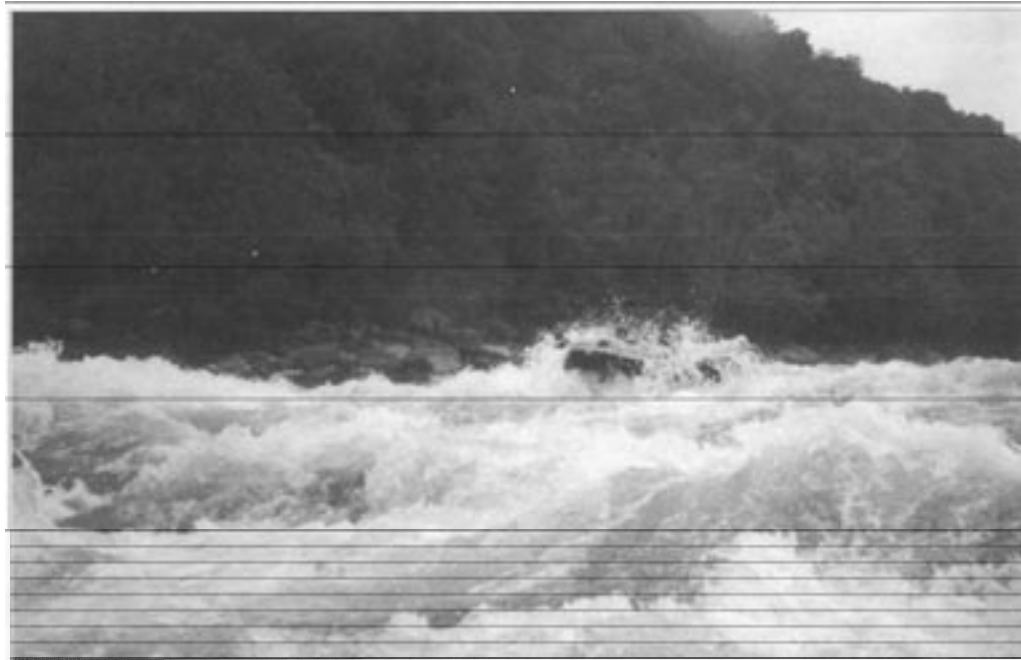
Sean and I eddied out behind Whale Rock at Upper Keeney. Looking downstream, I could see only a horizon line and the big calm pool below. My anxiety stemmed from what I knew lurked in between. Sean told me to follow him, and if I lost sight of him, to follow the green water through Middle Keeney. I followed his line but never saw one bit of green water anywhere down the rapid! I paddled aggressively, braced a couple times and sailed into the peaceful pool at the bot-

tom. Next came the main reason for my sleeplessness the previous night, Lower Keeney.

I had hiked down to the Keeneys the evening before to look at the rapids at this water level. Although I had rafted the gorge many times, I never paid a lot of attention to the rapids and I hadn't seen any of them since I began kayaking. I had hoped that scouting would ease my mind. Wrong! Every time I closed my eyes that night, I could see the steep drops, huge waves, and house-sized boulders and hear the thunder of the three successive drops. My usual Friday night feast of a large pizza AND an order of breadsticks turned into three tiny pieces of pizza, that I had to force myself to eat.

I had seen Jayne and her paddling partner Cindy a couple times since we began and they had rejoined us above the Keeneys. Queuing up for Lower Keeney, Sean went first, followed by Cindy, Jayne, and then me. I tried to follow their line with the same right angle, but the first large wave turned me sideways. I dropped into a trough completely sideways and got sidesurfed for an instant that felt like ten seconds. This was a rush all by itself! It was an amazing feeling having that much water rushing under me while maintaining my kayak's edge and my composure. I slowly came up the next wave's face, squared up and finished the run.

My anxiety was gone and my confidence was soaring! I crept into an eddy so I could look back up at the rapid. What an incredible feeling! What a beautiful river! And to think, it had been all along.



Middle Keeney Rapid at 2 ft

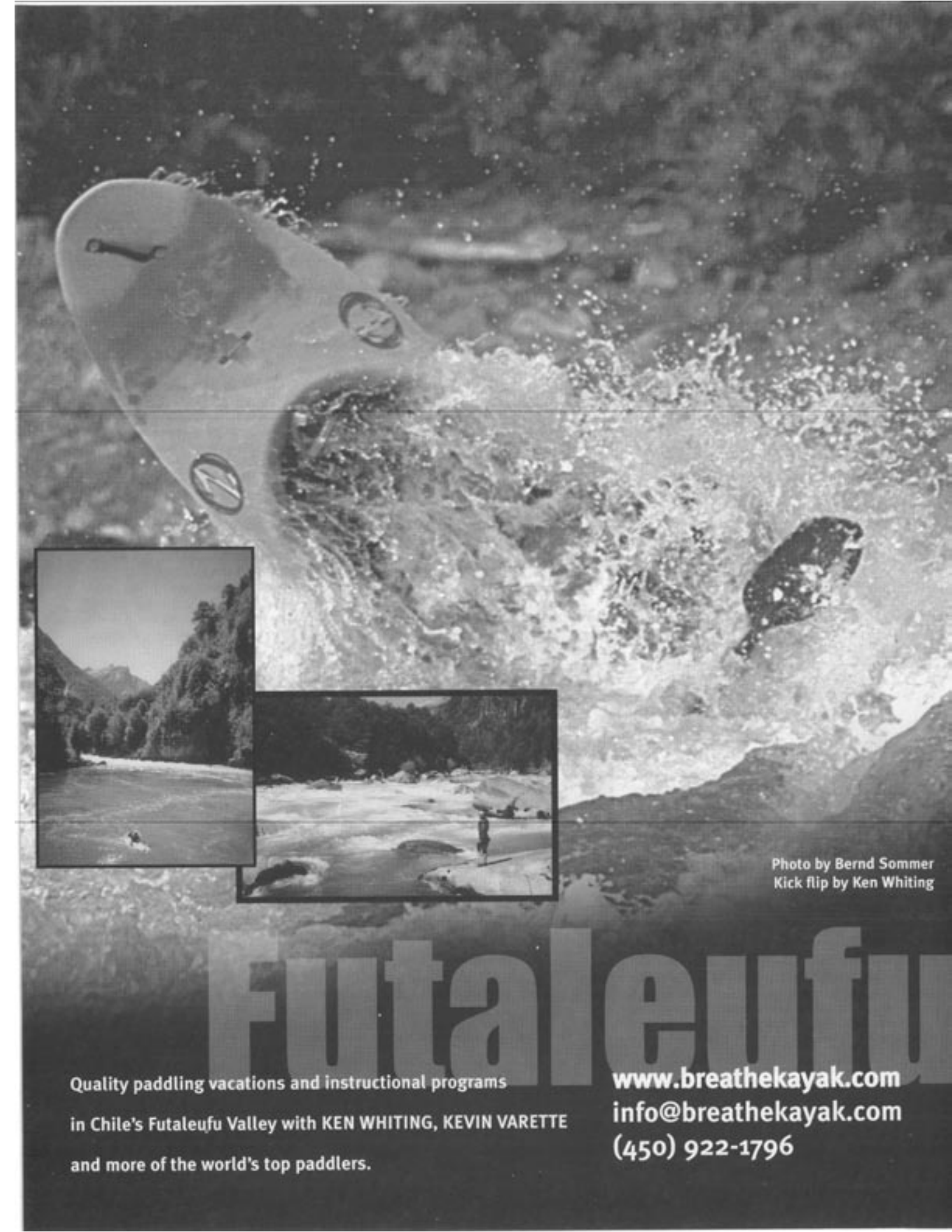


Photo by Bernd Sommer  
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# Remember Your First Time?

By: Tony Malikowski

Everyone remembers their first time - sex and whitewater kayaking share that distinction. I love to listen to other people's stories of their first experiences, and as a kayak instructor I have enjoyed being a part of that first time for many people (whitewater kayaking, that is, not sex). I've kayaked well over two thousand days during the past nineteen years; I've been kayaking on four different continents; I've even done a couple of first descents; and yet I still count my first time in a kayak on a river as my most vivid kayaking memory. I was young and stupid back then, and that is really the only reason I'm still in this sport today. My friends would agree that many things in life have come pretty easily to me, but whitewater kayaking was definitely not one of them.

**I had the good fortune to grow up in Mountaintop, PA, which is only ten miles away from the Lehigh River Gorge, one of the most popular beginner whitewater runs in the United States.**

The popularity of the Lehigh stems from its location, not from its excitement factor. Located at the extreme southern edge of the Pocono Mountain region of northeast Pennsylvania, over twenty percent of the population of the entire United States is within a three hour driving radius from the Lehigh. Even though it is only a Class II-III run, it has been the starting point and training ground for many accomplished kayakers, because the Lehigh lends itself to learning - it has easy, clearly distinguished lines in every rapid, and when you get bored with those it has numerous difficult slot moves and attaining moves which can challenge the jaded. It is a shale-bed river, so the rocks are fairly smooth, and the drops are gradual, making it very forgiving of errors. At high water it becomes awe and hole surfing paradise, and when it is flooding its tributaries offer at least ten solid creek runs, including several Class IV-V beauties. It is dam controlled, which ensures a long paddling season. Truly, a good place to grow up boating.

However, I didn't even know that this river existed until I was fifteen years old. My best friend in High School, Larry Sklaney, and his next door neighbor Glen Lamson decided to become river guides after participating in a church youth group trip on the river when they were both fourteen. That spring I remember hearing a little bit about Larry's weekend adventures guiding for Whitewater Chal-

lengers, but it didn't really excite me so I didn't pay much attention. It wasn't until the following March that I had the idea of guiding imbedded into my brain by the infamous Guide Manager for Whitewater Challengers, Marc S. Brown. Larry had dragged me to a pool session, and I had no sooner put my butt in a boat than Marc S. approached me and asked me if I wanted to be a guide. When I said that I didn't know if I was going to like kayaking he told me that kayaking skills were unnecessary, because they had decided to train in-raft guides that year. He said that I should look at it as getting paid to do something fun, which had to beat flipping burgers at the local McDonalds. I agreed to give it a shot. I was sixteen years old.

My first time down the Lehigh in a kayak did not come until my second year as raft guide.

**During my first year of guiding as a young punk, the lure of the easy money was too much for me. I felt like I couldn't afford to take time out to "play around" learning how to kayak when I could be making thirty dollars a day pushing rubber.**

Two pressures were to push me into kayaking during that first year of work on the river. First, I began to resent my role as an unpaid guide trainer. Because I was one of the first in-raft guides to be trained and the last of that first crop to stick around and remain in-raft, by default I soon became the most experienced in-raft guide in the company. On the Lehigh River, in-raft guides do not paddle in-raft with customers; they paddle with a partner and usually pick up the pieces from the sweep position in the back of a trip. (Guides act more like mobile sign posts and life guards on the Lehigh, which is why kayak guiding is so popular with the companies there). By the fall of that first year of working, every weekend I was getting stuck with the weakest trainee-graduate from the training trip of the week before as my partner. Sometimes, this meant I was paddling a raft by myself with up to 200 pounds of dead weight. Sometimes, it was even worse, and up to 200 pounds of muscle were actively opposing my efforts to keep the raft where it needed to be. This was a good incentive to move on to kayaking, but more importantly, I couldn't help but notice that the kayakers seemed to be having more fun on the river than the rafters they were guiding. The boats looked cool, surfing on

waves and in holes looked cool, and being able to go wherever you damn well pleased on the river looked exceptionally cool. After my last day of work in the fall, I vowed to get into a kayak the following spring.

**I made sure to go to all of the roll sessions that our company offered during that winter at the local Holiday Inn.**

By the end of the winter, I had a solid paddle roll on both sides, and a pretty good hand roll too. I felt pretty confident about my survival skills, so becoming a kayak guide seemed like it would be a piece of cake. After all, my best friend Larry had survived his initiation runs and was still paddling after two years, even though he had initially received no formal training whatsoever. His first experience in a kayak was being given a boat at the put-in, and then literally being pushed out into the current, only to flip and hit his face on a rock because nobody took the time to teach him how to tuck (he still has the scar). If that didn't stop him from learning how to kayak, then surely I could handle formal kayak training when I already knew the river.

**And so on April 7, 1982, I found myself at the put-in for the Upper Gorge, section I of the Lehigh, young, cocky, and raring to go.**

A spring cold front was moving in from Canada that day and the temperature at put-in was a breezy 42 degrees, but this would drop to well below freezing by the time we reached the take-out six hours later. The water temperature was around 40 degrees, water level around 1,000 cfs, and a light blanket of snow was still on the ground. The cold never seemed to affect me much back then when I was young and stupid, and so I was wearing my customary minimalist rafting outfit. This garb consisted of: a pair of beat-up old ProKeds with K-mart variety white cotton athletic socks; a highly inflexible, blue Henderson rental wet suit with full length sleeves (compliments of Whitewater Challengers); and underneath it all a white cotton pair of Fruit-of-the-Looms and a cotton T-shirt. No gloves; no mittens; no pogies; no wool; no polypro. A black Cooper hockey helmet, a blue nylon spray skirt, and a purple full-length Seda canoeing vest topped off my apparel. My boat for the day was a Tupperware-white, company-owned Perception Quest, and my paddle was a red and white, 214 cm, flat-bladed Norse "war club" (company owned as well). I was ready for action with the state of the art beginners equipment of the day.

**I felt a little bit nervous as I tried to seal my spray skirt with cold finger tips. The wind whipped spray off of the waves next to the put-in eddy, which made the job a little bit tougher.**





Finally I got my skirt on, and tentatively paddled out into the current of the first rapid, appropriately named Initiation. My first peel out was a little bit shaky, but I stayed upright and paddled off down to the first eddy. What a breeze. The first eddy turn was even shakier, but I didn't fall over. No sweat. Soon, the entire training trip was gathered together in the eddy. After a brief talk, Marc S. peeled out, followed by most of the others. Before leaving, Keith Williams stopped to surf an itty-bitty wave next to the eddy. It looked like fun. It looked pretty easy. Hell, Keith made it look as natural as breathing. And so, I tried it.

I'm willing to bet that every whitewater kayaker remembers the first time they flipped on a river against their will. For the vast majority of us, the memory is not a pleasant one. In absolutely no time whatsoever, the nose of my boat was pushed off the side of the wave, I turned sideways, and the current flipped me upstream. As soon as I flipped over, I forgot everything that I had learned over the long winter about rolling a kayak. Brownish water raced past my face at an alarming pace. The shock of the cold water pouring up my nose sent my brain into a Full Gonzo Blind Stinking Panic. I forgot to tuck. I forgot to pull the grab loop. I forgot to hold onto the paddle. Rocks bounced off my helmet as I frantically clawed my way out of the plastic prison that my legs were in. I gasped for

breath when I hit the surface, pulling a half mouth full of cold water into my lungs as my head crashed through a wave. Coughing and sputtering, I began to calm down a little when I realized that I was still alive. Lucky for me, swimming rapids was nothing new; the previous year over several weekends I had made it a point to swim every rapid on both sections of the gorge from top to bottom. (Like I said before, young and stupid). Grabbing my boat and my paddle, I side-stroked for the nearest eddy on the shore.

When I got there, I pushed the boat up onto some rocks, then tried to stand. I quickly realized that somewhere during The Panic, I had lost one of my shoes. I looked in the boat, but it wasn't there. So I dumped the 70 gallons of water out of the boat, and climbed back in, sneaker first, then sock. I pushed off from shore, and paddled directly out into the current.

**This time, I flipped upstream a little bit more slowly. I had enough time to perform one of the all-time classic, most totally useless beginner maneuvers found in kayaking. I took my hand off of the paddle and attempted to push off the water with my hand to stop myself from flipping over.**

Needless to say, it didn't work, and I soon found myself reentering the Full Gonzo Blind Stinking Panic. This time, The Panic did not last as long, and I even remembered to tuck a little as I clawed my way out of the boat. I floated glumly down the first section of the first rapid, gasping for breath in between waves, boat and paddle in tow. Pride led me to refuse the offers of help from the other kayakers at the bottom of this riffle, and in a huff I swam to shore, and once again dragged the boat up onto the rocks.

Apparently, the River God liked the look of my ProKeds, because he took my other shoe during this swim, and he never gave either of them back.

Another round of dumping the boat, another climb in, another sealing of the spray skirt with numb fingers, and I pushed tentatively out into the calm water of the pool. I had traveled no more than a third of a mile downstream from the put-in. I hadn't even gotten to the bottom of the first rapid, and already I'd taken two swims. It looked like learning this kayaking thing was going to be a little bit harder than I had first thought. I floated in the calm pool for a few moments, and tried to rethink my situation.

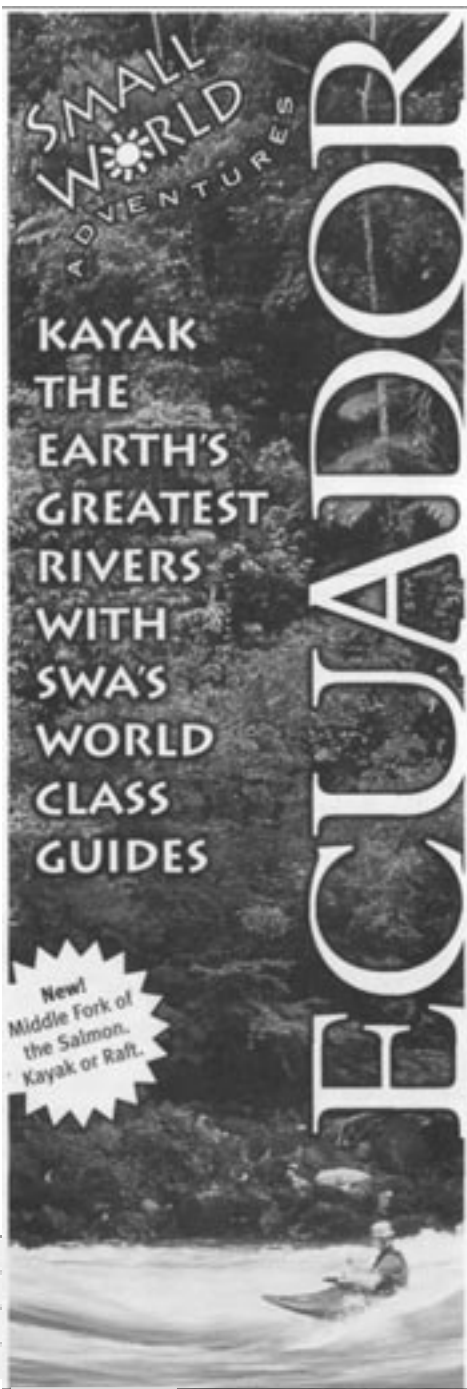
The previous evening somebody had told me that paddling forward was a good thing to do when you didn't know what else to do in a rapid, because that way you're actually help-

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ing to brace yourself by adding an extra point of contact with the water. I've since repeated this bit of sage wisdom hundreds of times while teaching kayak clinics. It sounded like a good plan, so I told myself to keep paddling forward all the way down that second section of the first rapid.

Imagine my surprise when I pulled myself under the water with my sixth or seventh forward stroke. (Paddle angle combined with an upright paddle stroke and a strong follow through, as I recall). I remember having enough time to scream a loud curse as I slowly curled under the frigid water for another lesson in wet-exiting. This time I remembered to tuck before I went all the way over, so when the rocks hit me they only brushed harmlessly off of the back of my life jacket. Still, it did shake me up a little, and I clawed my way to the surface as quickly as I could manage. As my head broke into the air I experienced my first ever ice cream headache from paddling, which took about a half a minute to subside as I bobbed through the rapid. This time I did not refuse a little help from Keith in dragging my soggy butt to shore. Another 70 gallon dump, and I shoved my freezing stocking feet back into the boat.

**Somehow, I made it through the last section of Initiation rapid without flipping, and pulled gingerly into the eddy at the bottom. One rapid down, thirteen to go.**

At the bottom of the rapid, Marc S. had the other kayakers practicing ferrying back and forth across the current. Not wanting to miss out on an opportunity to learn something, I joined the line.

"Hey Tony, you remember how to bow rescue?" Marc S. said.

"Sure." I replied.

"If you fall over here, try to roll once, and if it doesn't work then go ahead and bang on the bottom of your boat, and I'll be there." He paddled away, then turned around and said "Just remember that this only goes for when we're stopped; if you fall over in the rapids then feel free to swim."

And so the pattern was set for the remainder of the day. When the training trip worked on peel-outs, I'd try a few, flip a couple of times, make some bad attempts at rolling, then bow rescue. When we worked on eddy turns, I'd try to make the move, flip more often than not, blow my roll, and bow rescue. When we tried to surf a wave, I'd flip, fail to roll, and bow rescue. When the whole training trip went up to do cliff dives (seal launches) in their boats, I went up the cliff, got pushed off, flipped, screwed up my roll, and bow rescued. And when we paddled down the rapids, half the time I'd make it, and half the time I'd end up swimming. Pure Polish stubbornness kept me coming back for more abuse. Besides, the thought of walking out a few miles in the snow on the railroad bed in my socks was even less

appealing than the icy nasal enemas I was receiving.

My mood and the weather both got progressively more miserable as the day moved on. Eventually the wind was howling down the gorge in twenty mile per hour gusts, and icicles were forming on the branches of the shrubs at the edge of the water. My mind became numbed with exhaustion as the deadly rinse cycle repeated itself over and over and over again. My sinuses were so full of water that I must have made audible sloshing noises whenever I turned my head.

Finally, a couple of hours later on the clock and decades later in subjective time, we reached the take-out. I'd taken ten bruising swims, and been bow rescued more than forty times. In order to exit my boat for the final time that day someone had to help me pull the grabloop on my sprayskirt, because by then I'd lost all feeling in my fingers. The temperature had dropped to around 25 degrees; there was a thin layer of ice on my life jacket which cracked when I rolled down the extra ring of flotation from around my waist. My now gray socks slapped on the snow-covered steps of the take-out as I dragged my boat up the hill. I was beat, both mentally and physically. My body began shivering uncontrollably, and I dropped my paddle, which slid noisily back down the steps and into the water. I started to go after it, then gave up caring about the stupid thing, and continued my trudge up the hill.

At the top of the steps, Marc S. stood and watched my sorry progress with a big grin on his face. When I reached him, he stopped me and said "Tony, I only have one thing to say."

"I'll go back and get the paddle in a second." I said while I stood there and shivered.

"No, it's not that. Brett just picked it up. I repeat, I only have one thing to say to you."

"What is it?" I mumbled out through blue and quivering lips.

**He paused for effect, then shook my hand, and slowly said "I can honestly tell you ... that it absolutely ... does .... not ... get ... any worse ... than this."**

He was right. It hasn't.

*Thank you to all of the folks at Whitewater Challengers who gave me pointerseveryweek-end back when I was starting out (Larry Skinner, especially). A special thank-you to the kayakers on that training trip: Marc S. Brown, Brett Kalish, Keith Williams, Mike Buyarski, Karen Rodgers, and Ernie Balajthy. Without your bow rescues that day I would not be the paddler I am this day. And finally, a thank you to Larry Sklaney, for pushing me to be my best, and to Glen Lamson for pushing Larry into guiding.*



# Always Above Lava

By: Joe Hayes

Dukie, Jose and AJ were encased in three small river kayaks with spray skirts sealing them into their boats. Their battered helmets leaned together, in a seething river eddy behind a boulder, just yards below the huge madness of Lava Falls. They had just run Lava, the defining monster rapid of the Grand Canyon, after inexorable weeks of approach. Their small group of private river runners had floated through hundreds of miles of the Colorado River to reach this day. The kayakers watched upstream for the four rafts of their party who were, still scouting, still adjusting their raft rig and their personal mojo before pulling away from shore to find their fate in this passage through one of the greatest hydraulic displays in North America. The kayakers in the eddy were the scouts, point men, and safety boaters for the rafts above, in a symbiotic group dynamic which had become strained in recent miles.

The kayakers were in a rush of spirits, giddy with leftover adrenaline, joy, relief, trying to reconstruct what had actually happened to them and their crafts in the powerful water just moments before. Like a pack of overeager hounds they talked at the same time, contradicted and affirmed each others account, leaned onto each others' boats to corral themselves and formed a single floating pod in the swirling eddy.

"My entry was way off, but my patented fear-crazed correction stroke saved me."

"I followed your line, but I should have known better."

"You have to move right before the Ledge Hole attraction force overcomes the downstream gravity, and it eats you."

"That second wave buried me so deep it got dark and the stars came out."

"Well, boys, we're Below Lava and still breathing" said AJ, in one of his longest unprompted statements of the trip.

Jose broke in. "No way. Not really below. Once you're committed to Grand Canyon, you are never below Lava again. We're all still Above Lava, but on our next cycle."

"Always above Lava," said Dukie softly, and he directed their attention upstream with a nod as the first raft of their group floated into view on the horizon line and approached the rapid.

Simultaneously, the three clicked to attention, adjusting paddle grips and shoulder muscles, silently releasing their grips on each others cockpits. They focused on the raft and wildwater above them. After so many

river miles together they had formed a mind-melded water organism, able to communicate strategy with nods, eyebrows, and intuition. Surfing river waves was their reason for being, but safety-boating for the rafts at big rapids was the one responsibility of the trip they took seriously. This was partly because they all knew what it was like to be near drowning in a big rapid, and partly because of the potential for their second favorite river activity, swimmer chase and rescue.

**Lava Falls was always serious. With complex, variable hydraulics and abundant power, it was the Grand Canyon river trip's exclamation point and the boatman's final exam after 179 miles of steadily escalating preliminaries.**

**Lava created more adrenaline than Heinz created ketchup. Today it was moderately huge, roaring with 23,000 cubic feet per second of water, making the central Ledge Hole a sick pit large enough to hold a school bus. On the right, where the kayakers had just run, and where rafts usually ran in low water, the hole forms a flipper wave of certain raft disaster.**

The lead raft was entering the left side, trying to slip between the hazards of the middle Ledge Hole and the hydraulics formed by shoreline boulders. It is a tricky entry, because the sharp drop at the head of the rapid keeps all but the spray invisible from upstream. You simply scout from the shore, trying not to become hypnotized and cowed

by the deep pulsing gravity and roar of the Ledge Hole and climb in your boat. Pulling out requires faith in your memory, as you follow the mythical, semi-visible line of bubbles which form on the smooth tongue of water at the top of the rapid, and lead to the ideal entry over the lip. "Follow the bubbles, they know where they're going," boatmen tell each other.

Unexpectedly, they saw that it was Goat's raft running first, with the Goat Boatman promoted from his trip-long place as last raft/sweeper to become the Lava Probe. The Goat, a Texas prodigy who was the kayakers' sole remaining ally among the rafts, was the right choice, for beneath his sleepy drawl he had an unerring sense of river hydraulics and raft trajectory. The remaining boatmen and passengers watched anxiously from the scout rocks above, trying to memorize his series of oar strokes and his approach angle. The Goat crested the first ripple and for an instant gazed benignly down upon the glory of Lava Falls, looking like a farmer trying to decide if it may rain. AJ's girlfriend was visible hunched in the front of the raft in full raingear. Their boat bucked once and disappeared from the view of the kayakers below behind a white standing wave.

## Ugly When It Happens

In truth, the kayak squad in the eddy and the Goat Boatman had become virtual outcasts in camp in the last few days before Lava, as a virus of social recrimination had swept the group. After a long, sunny, laughter-filled early trip, differences between the rowdy males and a Kitchen Monitor group of wives had ballooned into a rift, and the group had drifted into a twilight zone of dissension. Differences in scouting and rigging pace, preferred food, sugar and alcohol intake, and camp work/shirk ethics all took on expanded importance in the absence of any real disasters. Like every river trip, their group was a tribal microcosm, and their tribe had become ill. It didn't help that Christine, the trip leader, permit-getter, and trip planner, was a non-rowing passenger, a woman who had once rowed the Canyon, but had backed off from the boatman's role and now focused on strict control of the kitchen and food rations as a replacement for her energies. Several of her girlfriends were on the trip, all childless women of a certain age, and they normally



formed a mature, cheerful and resourceful feminine cabinet. It seemed they underwent a gradual transformation into a cabal of Kitchen Ladies, who united in some kind of synchronized menopausal rage against the freeloading males of the group, in a display that had erupted after 14 days at Olo camp. So, it came to pass that the wrath of the Kitchen Ladies had been visited upon the unworthy element of their group, the self-christened Team Goat.

Team Goat was composed of Dukie, AJ and Jose, the three man kayak squad, and the Goat Boatman. The Goat Boatman and Dukie, the lead kayaker, were the former river pros of the group, and when the shit came down or looked like it might, their abilities anchored the group safety. The rest of the time, Team Goat concentrated on researching and solving the multi-variant Grand Canyon Fun Maximization equation. Their research work included seeking hidden side canyon places of outstanding beauty, catching trout on dry flies, and climbing to likely Anastazi shelter ledges to visit with their ancestors. The team members were all pushing 40, and veterans of many river campaigns, youthful excesses, and strong personal experience. They were free for the moment of their accumulated responsibilities as fathers, husbands, wage earners, and they reveled in their river escape. Together they cackled drunk by the evening fire, drifted far behind the group on slow river stretches and took extended backcountry climb/hikes upside canyons that brought them into camp late. In their gravest transgression, they paid too much attention, with no real intent on seduction, to the nubile high school female in the group, daughter to one of the other boatmen. The kitchen ladies had their husbands along, and felt that an example must be set regarding younger women. Sharp words had been exchanged in recent days, on topics ranging from beer hoarding and candy bar hogging to more hurtful accusations. Team Goat withdrew from social interactions, sulked among themselves, and crafted Anastazi split twig figurines twisted into mountain goat shapes. In an inspired retaliation, Jose began to rig the group toilet in ever more distant, hidden and precarious billy goat locations. The tribe members had all become overly in touch with their inner child.

The kayakers had reinforced all common prejudices against their kind by shamelessly surfing to exhaustion on perfect river hydraulics, fly fishing, sponging beers and candy bars from rafts all day, power-shirking camp chores, and generally striving to exceed the daily fun ration. On the water, the kayak squad's harmony was enviable. They would arrive at a rapid, or better, a surfing wave with a return eddy, and assess the fun potential like trained shepherd dogs. They cruised into independent stations around a desirable

surf wave, popping in and out of eddies, crisscrossing each other's tracks and timing one's charge onto the waveface with another's stylish endo off of it. They seemed to communicate without set signals or speech, operating in the roar of spray. Led by the deft wave touch, sure paddlework, and insane laughter of Dukie, they had formed a three headed river dolphin pack, which had made AJ's and Jose's boating skill levels rise like spring runoff. Early in the trip after a raft flip, the kayakers had set a Z-drag and effected the rescue of the wrapped raft. That boosted their stock for days, but since then they had neglected their group politics, ogled the young girl, and overshirked and understroked the Kitchen Management. Their natural allies, the Boatmen-With-Wives Along, could not save them now without sacrificing themselves, and could only exchange sympathetic glances after episodes of petty bickering or recrimination in camp. They had rested too long on their laurels, and they were ripe for designation as Team Goat when the river miles eroded away the veneer of polite behavior.

## Lava Washes Away All Sins

The Goat Boatman nailed the entry to Lava Falls. His raft fit just between the bad neighborhoods at the top of the rapid, edged past the ledge hole, and crashed straight on through the middle and lower waves. Goat's raft swept by, shedding water as he struggled with his heavy raft to catch the lower eddy a quarter mile downstream. He made it and waved a salute to the safety boating kayakers as they reclustered behind their rock.

Waiting again in the eddy, the kayakers now began to shiver and their chatter dropped off, as the adrenaline of their own runs faded from their systems. The remaining rafters continued to scout, distantly visible on prominent rocks upstream.

**"They've officially gone beyond power scouting now. They must have fallen under the spell of the Ledge Hole,"** said Dukie.

**"Please do not eat me, O great and terrible river god,"** intoned Jose, a former altar boy.

**"Remember, if these rafts flip, save the beer,"** added AJ.

Finally, the power scouters waved a signal to the kayakers, and disappeared back to their rafts. After a long absence, a raft suddenly appeared at the river horizon moving toward them, and dropped off the end of the world into the rapid. It was the father-daughter team, and they almost hit it perfect. Their boat was perhaps one-half boat width too far

to the center, and caught just the very edge of the Ledge Hole, the outside edge of the great depression in the river surface that was the most fearful liquid real estate in the Colorado Plateau. The lip of the powerful backwards hydraulic stopped their forward momentum, and they hung poised in mid rapid for an instant with the raft surfing on the cusp between two downhill surfaces, one leading downriver and one leading sideways into a snarling pit. As the boatman threw himself forward in a push against both oars, still planted deep in the river, the raft bounced in place one time, skipping on the speeding water surfaces beneath it. The kayakers were alarmed and all emerged into the current, out of the protection of the eddy rock. They were suddenly arrayed in downstream tailwaters in chase position, waiting for the outcome. A second later the raft burst free, shooting away from the Ledge Hole, riding on the downriver velocity stream, and slamming into a series of overhead standing waves. The shock of the waves threw the boatman out of his seat sideways, but he clung to his oar handles like handrails in a train wreck, and he stayed in the raft. His daughter disappeared beneath green water in the front of the boat, and then waved as her dripping head reappeared with a huge smile and the raft swept passed the kayakers, past the lower eddy and quickly around the bend downriver.

The Goat Boatman in the eddy below gave the second raft a double thumbs up as they swept by, and rowed his raft back into position a pistol shot distance below the rapid. The kayakers struggled a hundred yards back upstream on the river's margin, and finally regained their position behind the boulder at the top of the eddy. The eddy was bubbling like a soup pot, and simply bracing and waiting in the water of the eddy required constant adjustment. The kayakers had been waiting in the eddy for over an hour now, and they were becoming chilled. As they waited for the last rafts and shivered, morally superior attitudes about overscouting, their cellular-level need for dozens of candy bars, and about the elevated physical and mental commitment required to survive in a kayak began to surface in their minds. Suddenly, the remaining two rafts of their group appeared on the river above, close together and moving in quick succession toward the brink at the top of the rapid.

The first raft held Christine, head of the Kitchen Ladies, with her husband rowing. Their raft was well away from the Ledge Hole, but too far away. They dropped over the lip and immediately hit the lead wave on river left formed by a submerged boulder. Their raft was wrenched sideways and jumped as if cuffed from below by a dragon's tail. Both of them were launched out of the boat and disappeared in the river.

"Two swimmers!" cried Jose, as the



kayakers' eyes popped and their boats began to scramble out of the eddy. The kayakers had been clustered together and their paddles clashed for a moment in haste, one bonking another's helmet, as they went into full ignition. Three strokes brought the kayaks streaming out of the eddy and into the racing water in chase formation, banking downstream turns as the velocity jumped and the direction of water beneath them reversed. The final raft was now entering the rapid above, the swimmers had not surfaced anywhere, and Christine's empty raft was charging down on them, upright and rudderless. The kayakers burst into this fluid, ecstatically uncertain scene in fierce chase, tracking multiple converging and diverging objects and assuming separate responsibilities. In another two seconds, the two swimmers had bobbed to the surface in the maelstrom, one each on opposite sides of the river and moving swiftly downstream. The empty raft was upon them, splitting the group and riding down Jose's kayak like a bright yellow inflatable rubber freight train. Jose braced with his paddle, trying to block and capture the oncoming raft with his kayak bow. His upstream paddle was pinned against the side of the raft, and then he was over, flipped downstream by the blunt nose of the raft.

Automatically, Jose set up in roll position underwater, swept with his paddle, and rolled towards the surface on the upstream side. Instead of surfacing as he had a hundred other times, he struggled upside down for a long nasty moment, unable to complete his Eskimo roll and reach air, trapped under the bottom of the raft. The front of the raft had ridden over his kayak and was preventing his head from surfacing. He probed at the raft belly with his paddle from underwater, and fought back a sudden urge to spear and claw at the smooth rubber underside of the raft, to force it aside, to shred it with his fingernails. It sat anchored between him and the atmosphere he sought, rushing downstream with a placid uncaring weight. Still underwater, he struggled against the current back to the starting position for a roll and retucked his head. Like a switch hitter changing batting sides in baseball, he mentally reversed his muscle movements, gathered his confidence, and reversed his paddle position for an offside roll. He felt the first surge in his chest of involuntary lung contractions, as his brain cortex tried to command him to take a breath. Suppressing a mounting sense of urgency, he made one calm smooth paddle sweep guided from deep within. He rolled up downstream, against the current but out from under the raft roof, slowly emerging with his kayak T-boned like a hood ornament across the front of an empty raft still sweeping through Lower Lava Falls. He sucked in a lovely breath of Arizona air. Though he felt

he had been gone a long time, they had only raced on 50 yards downstream.

In front of him, the other two kayaks had caught up with Christine and corralled her between their boats. Her bobbing head was barely visible at the water surface but her hand was gamely clutching the front end loop of Dukie's boat. AJ and Dukie looked over from their kayaks, openly relieved to see Jose surface from beneath the raft. Jose grasped the bowline of the raft that had bulldozed him, and swiveled his head searching for Christine's husband, the other swimmer. He saw him just downstream, being pulled into the Goat's raft, which had popped out of the lower eddy as the swimmer floated past. Although the whole group was still sweeping through the lower rapids, everyone was accounted for. Jose began to relax, and took another wonderfully deep breath of air.

## Lava Beach Party

Jose pushed free of the raft, holding it's bowline, and paddled over to Goat's raft as the whole group swung around the bend to Tequila Beach, on the big slow eddy below Lower Lava. He handed the line off to Goat, and saw the final raft coming down to join them in the eddy.

"Not Baaaaaa!" bleated the Goat, in his trademark line.

**"I found this raft floating unattended. Any idea who it belongs to?" said Jose, with his heartbeat still pounding in his helmet and water draining from his sinuses. "It looked like you were trying to mate with it underwater there, amigo. Don't you know the drain hole is in the back of the boat?" said Goat, smiling.**

**"A periodic inspection of the raft floor is good practice," answered Jose with a weak smile. "Nice job on the swimmer rescue, Goat."**

"Well, nice job throwing yourself in front of a runaway train, Jose! It could have been a long chase down to Lake Mead after an empty raft."

All four rafts and three kayaks now regrouped and pulled to the beach together, with much backslapping, catcalling and hullaballo. The tribe poured out of their boats, as Christine released her grip on the kayak end-loop and emerged dripping from the river. As her husband hugged her tight at the water's edge and the boats were tied off, an earnest search for all the remaining beer supply was begun on the rafts. After a noisy round of toasts and cheers, lunch was broken out and the people began to gulp down sand-

wiches. A great bubble of euphoria and joyful noise radiated upward from their beach. The three kayakers and the Goat sat sprawled amid the group, their spray jackets peeled off and their underlayers drying. Jose looked around at the cast of happy characters, and felt the undercurrents of tension dissolving, replaced by relief, buoyant good will and shared celebration. He realized that he had a profound affection for all these people, that each of them was part of what had made the trip work. He felt deeply tired, aware of his blessings, serene and happy to be alive. He took a bite of salami and bagel, the sharp taste of mustard on his tongue like a blessing, with a sip of beer as an Amen.

Christine approached them, carrying an ammo can marked "Spices." She opened it and ceremoniously poured it in front of them, spilling out a bounty of hidden chocolate candy bars, in fresh unsullied wrappers. Recognizing the honor of the peace offering, the team whooped, pawed the candy, then joyfully bowed in rough unison in the sand at Christine's feet like demented Muslims, crying "We are not worthy!"

Christine shook her head and looked at them tolerantly. "That's true enough."

She looked vulnerable, still wet and disoriented from her swim. She hesitated and then said with a shy smile, "You guys made a big difference today."

She glanced at Dukie and AJ and took a deep breath. "I was so glad to see your boats coming after me when I finally surfaced. Your beautiful kayaks. Hey, why did you both come after me, and not after Jerry?"

"Yeah, good question!" hollered her husband good naturedly from his raft with his arm in the beer bag.

They glanced at each other and smiled. AJ reached for his beer. Dukie released a full lopsided grin. "Because you know where the candy bars are hidden," he replied, but his grin said different.

Somebody yelled, "Let's carry back up and run it again!"

Someone else reached for the river guidebook, "Hey, where are we camping?"

Team Goat clinked their beer cans together with a howl, and cried out to the Anastazi ghosts of the Colorado Plateau,

**"Always above Lava!"**

# Creek Trek

by Robert Martin

## Sulu: Captain, we're coming to an island at a bend in the river.

## Kirk: Eddy up Mr. Sulu and lets have a look.

*At the head of the island the river bends to the right. Looking down the inside channel you can see only house-size boulders choking the stream. By following the gap between the tree tops you can see where the island ends and the two channels rejoin. The river drops 20-30 feet in about 1/8 mile. The outside (left) channel disappears around the bend and out of sight.*

**Kirk:** Spock, what do you make of this.

**Spock:** Captain, both channels of the river drop the same distance going around the island. The left channel, however, is longer, thus the gradient will be less severe.

**Kirk:** Ohura, Contact the lead vessel and tell them to take the left channel.

**Ohura:** Lead vessel reports it has already committed to the right channel and cannot turn back.

**Bones:** Dammit Jim! We can't support each other in that rock maze. It could be a trap! We could end up with both vessels in trouble. For God's sake Jim tell the lead vessel to pull off and carry over to the left channel.

**Kirk:** Ohura, inform lead vessel that we are going left and will meet them and the bottom of the island.

**Bones:** Dammit Jim! This violates every regulation in the book. We're paddling a Class V steep creek we've never seen before, in high water, and you're splitting up the fleet!

**Spock:** This creek was given a Class V rating because of the cascades above where we put on. The rest of the creek, though it is quite high, is tight, technical Class IV. If you break the creek up into 1/8 mile sections, which is the length of the island, then it should be no more difficult than a dozen other creeks that we run all the time.

**Bones:** Can't you get it through your Vulcan head, we're breaking the karma? Mutually supporting vessels work together, build up confidence levels and increase safety.

**Kirk:** Mr. Sulu, take us down the left channel, steady as she goes.

**Sulu:** Aye-aye captain.

*As the vessel proceeds left around the island, the crew soon discovers a rock bluff overhanging the river left bank. The main channel sweeps under this bluff, over a drop and into an undercut. The undercut can be avoided by staying to the right over the drop. As they near the undercut a grave danger exposes itself. A treefall on the right side of the channel with one big limb pointing up stream and to the left, directly into the undercut.*

**Sulu:** Captain, there seems to be a small line between the end of the limb and the undercut. If we approach at the correct angle and velocity we should be able to duck under the edge of the undercut and not get impaled by the limb. It will require a strong ferry move and split second timing.

**Kirk:** Engine room?

**Scottie:** Aye Captain.

**Kirk:** We're going into an undercut. We'll need full impulse power. Prepare for evasive maneuvers.

**Scottie:** This isn't a creek boat captain. And it dinna help stayin' up till the wee hours of the mornin' drinkin whiskey and tellin' lies either. My arms are shakin' like a leaf! Our power levels are down 30%. We'll give you the best we can but a canna make any promises.

*As the vessel enters the river left undercut it is angled right, ready to sprint to river right as soon as it passes the limb. Unfortunately the crew becomes mesmerized by the limb, pointing menacingly at the vessel and like victims of the sirens, are drawn directly to it.*

**Kirk:** Sound general quarters! Prepare for collision, all engines stop!

**Sulu:** Captain, at this rate we will impact with the limb AND get swept into the undercut.

**Kirk:** We've...got... to stop this vessel! Engine room! Let go of the paddle with your right hand and grab the limb!

**Scottie:** Aye Captain. I'll pu' a death grip on tha' limb like was me last bottle of single malt scotch whiskey!

*Somehow the crew is able to hold on against the powerful current, turn their bow upstream, let go of the tree, grab the paddle and ferry away from the undercut as the vessel blows down stream, into the unknown, backwards.*

**Sulu:** Captain, we're coming up on a horizon line. The line is river left, looks like about a 6 foot pourover....there are no eddies above the drop.

**Kirk:** Proceed Mr. Sulu. Keep the stern downstream. We don't want to risk broaching. Keep looking for an eddy.

*The vessel runs the drop successfully but fails to find any eddies big enough to turn its 11.5 foot frame around in.*

**Bones:** Jim this is madness! Get this vessel to shore, before it's too late!

**Spock:** Actually, we have practiced paddling backwards several times and have been quite successful, and might I remind you that our escort vessel is meeting us below this island. Our rendezvous with them is our primary mission.

**Bones:** Staying alive is our primary mission. You green-blooded freak!

**Kirk:** Steady as she goes Mr. Sulu.

*The next drop is a four foot drop into a steep hole. As the vessel's stern prepares to make the drop, the crew breathes a sigh of relief. Below the drop is a rock which houses an eddy, big enough to turn around in. As the vessel drops over the pour-over the stern slams against rock, causing the vessel to pin.*

**Kirk:** Damage Control. Scottie what's our situation.

**Scottie:** We're pinned from stern to bow Captain, but we're right side up and able to

breath. At least we're no' gettin' trashed in that hole.

*At that moment the bow slides sideways and the vessel gets sucked into the hole and begins recirculating violently.*

**Kirk:** Sulu, start combat roll sequence!

**Sulu:** We can't captain. The paddle is not in setup position!

**Kirk:** Scottie, why aren't our paddles in set up position?

**Scottie:** We're doin' the best we can Captain, but we're being slammed against the bottom ever time we recirculate. We just blew our skirt and are taking on water!

**Kirk:** Abandon ship! Beam the crew to shore and begin boat recovery operations.

*The crew makes it to shore, with vessel in hand. They look up stream to see the pour-over and hole for the first time.*

**Spock:** That appears to be a Class III drop into a small hole. Well within our ability. That IS odd.

**Bones:** Odd! It's more than odd! This entire crew is suffering from physical exhaustion and mental fatigue. Jim, this crew is finished. As ship's doctor I insist that you take-out as soon as possible!

**Kirk:** You're right Bones. We'll proceed to the rendezvous and inform our escort that we will take-out and hike to the road.

*It is a short distance to the bottom of the island and the rendezvous with the escort vessel. The S.S. Mann is anxiously waiting. The S.S. Mann has taken their decent in a single drop through the rock maze.*

**Kirk:** Ohura. Open hailing frequencies to the SS Mann and put it on screen.

**"Robert....Robert! Are you all right?"** Richard asked as I paddled up to him in the eddy below the island. "Yeah, there were a couple of good drops. How about you?"

Richard's eyes got big and he understated, "Man, this is kinda hairy!" I said, "Look Richard, I think I've had enough fun for one day. I'm going to take out here and find Gurkin." Gary Gurkin, being an open-boater, had opted to follow us down the road that parallels the creek in his truck. Richard replied, "Yeah. We can catch it tomorrow at a sane level.....and who you callin' Ohura?"

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