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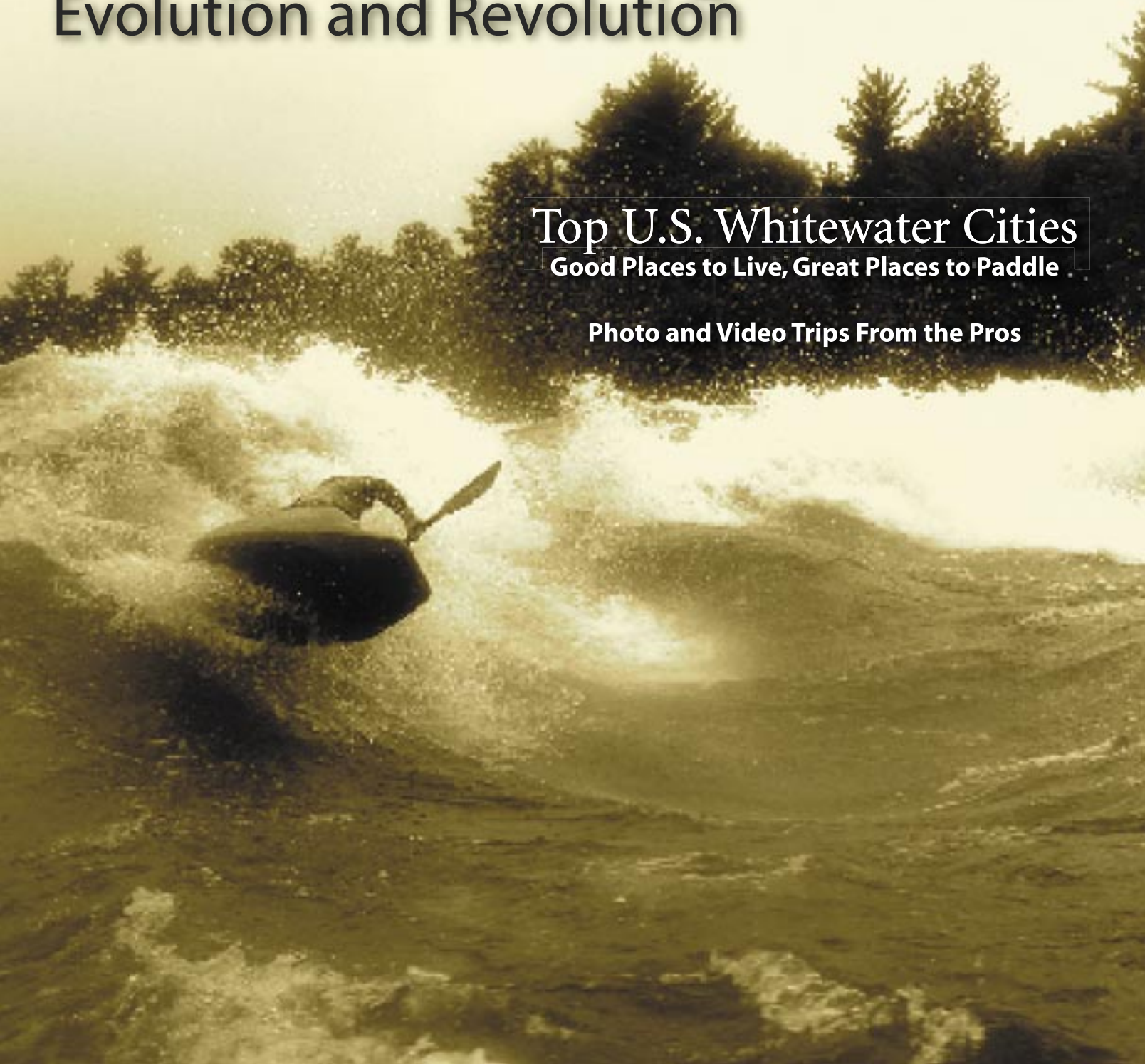
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July/August 2006

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# AMERICAN WHITewater

A VOLUNTEER PUBLICATION PROMOTING RIVER CONSERVATION, ACCESS AND SAFETY

American Whitewater Journal

July/August 2006

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Marlow Long freestyling on the Mini Bus, Ottawa River

Photo by Tanya Shuman



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# Purpose American Whitewater

## River Stewardship: An Integrated Approach

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

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

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

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

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

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

**EDUCATION:** AW shares information with the general public and the paddling community regarding whitewater rivers, as well as river recreation, conservation, access, and safety. This is accomplished through our bi-monthly AW Journal, a monthly e-news, americanwhitewater.org, paddling events, educational events, and through direct communication with the press.

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

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



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# Executive Director The Journey Ahead

## Public Outcry Over Chattooga Headwaters Ban

By Mark Singleton

After 11 years of political wrangling to gain Chattooga Headwaters access, AW filed suit against the US Forest Service on May 18th 2006. Traveling up and down the chain of command in the US Forest Service for over a decade and having the American Whitewater ticket punched each step of the way, it became apparent that resolution of this issue would require the attention of a federal judge. Our lawsuit is aimed at strengthening an otherwise collaborative relationship with the Forest Service. American Whitewater values the agency as a partner on River Stewardship issues across the country. However, this case is such an anomaly that legal action was necessary.

The Forest Service is breaking several landmark legislative acts that are essential to nationally consistent management of whitewater treasures protected by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and the Wilderness Act. Both of these key conservation acts were designed to protect and enhance enjoyment of special places for wilderness compliant users. The following endorsement of our action ran in the *Asheville Citizen-Times*:

Open up the Chattooga - published May 22, 2006 *Asheville Citizen-Times*

Lawsuits should be like war — a last resort after all other options have been exhausted. Having said that, we approve of the lawsuit recently filed by several whitewater recreation groups and individuals to have the headwaters of the Chattooga River opened to paddlers.

The Chattooga starts in the mountains around the Cashiers/Highlands area and flows south to form the border between Georgia and South Carolina.


American Whitewater, which bills itself as the nation's leading non-profit whitewater

river conservation organization, has taken the lead in attempting to overturn a 1976 ban on public paddling on the uppermost 21 miles of the Chattooga. For more than 10 years, American Whitewater has pressed the Forest Service for access to these waters. Forest Service officials have not been able to produce any evidence that private hand-powered watercraft, such as kayaks and canoes, threaten the river corridor, yet the 30-year-old ban remains in place.

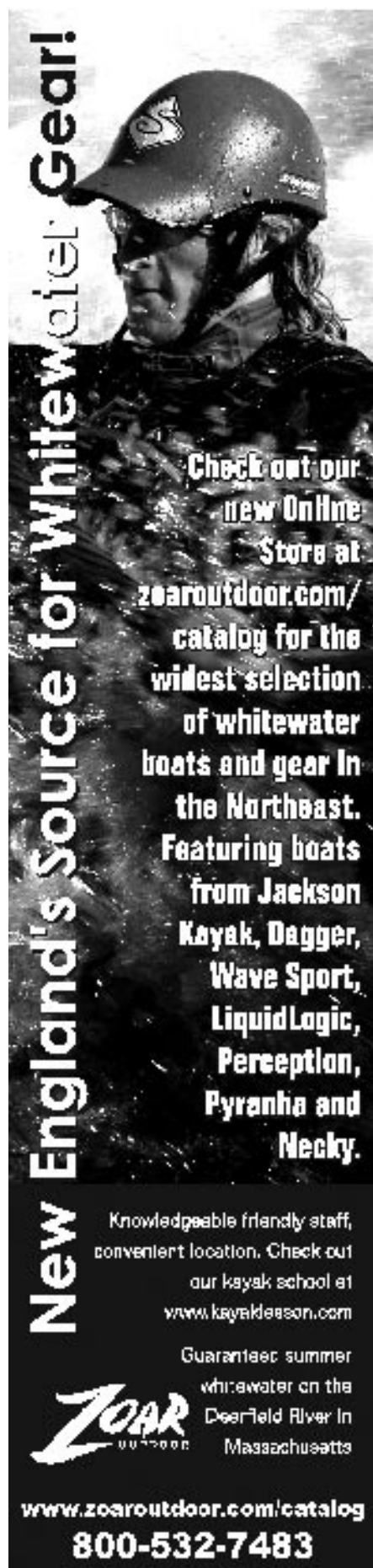
The lawsuit challenges the ban on the basis that it violates federal law, such as the Wilderness Act and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Both of these provisions support the public's right to float rivers in protected wilderness areas.

Terry Seyden, a spokesman for the Forest Service in Asheville, said the Forest Service is currently studying the ban, with a final decision expected around April 2007.

Given the provisions of the Wilderness Act and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the closure of these portions of the Chattooga seems arbitrary — and illegal. We hope this issue can be resolved without a costly courtroom fight and paddlers can explore this pristine 21 miles of water without further obstacles.

At the time of this writing, a hearing date for the lawsuit has not yet been set. American Whitewater is confident that we have a strong rational case based on legislative record that will lead to a favorable ruling. Once all wilderness compliant users share equal access to this special resource we will work closely with the Forest Service to identify management practices for balancing all users access with the carrying capacity of the Chattooga Headwaters. 

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# Safety First

## Learning from an Accident

By Charlie Walbridge

Over 30 years ago, in 1975, I encountered the first river death of my career. The popular Icebreaker Slalom race was held each October below the East Sydney Dam near Unadilla, New York. Even though the shallow rapids on this little creek are barely Class II it was the final event of the season and no one wanted to miss this last chance to see their friends before the cold set in. I was a member of the Philadelphia Canoe Club and we had 58 of our 73 members in attendance.

The best part of the course was a nice breaking wave underneath a bridge. I was doing a practice run when I saw a commotion down there. Ropes were flying and people were clearly upset. Even from a distance I could sense trouble. I beached my boat and ran down to the wave. There I saw a flash of yellow under the dark water. They told me someone was caught down there and I remember thinking, "oh my god, I have absolutely no idea how to help him".

But neither did anyone else. Several guys jumped into the water and tried to grab him as they floated by. It was a gutsy, but ineffective, effort. Then about 30 of us tried to create a human dam, sitting down in the river to divert the flow. The moment the water backed up we quickly lost our footing. Someone sent a runner up to the dam and eventually the water was shut off. I remember watching as a lifeless man was pulled from the river and carried to a pickup truck. People were doing CPR on the truck bed as they drove away.

Like the rest of the racers, I was in a state of shock. All the river accident reports I'd ever read about involved inexperienced people who made obvious mistakes, like running a dam or not using a life vest. I was sure that trained paddlers who had the right equipment and good training were almost accident proof. As I talked with other racers I learned that the man's name was Gene Bernardin. He'd been paddling stern in a C-2 when his boat flipped. His partner swam to shore but

he'd stayed with the boat.

O.K. Goodwin, the long-time safety chair of American Whitewater, said that this was a fluke accident; I couldn't believe that someone could die in Class II whitewater for no good reason and kept asking questions. A man who helped pull Mr. Bernardin out of the river said that his foot was caught underneath a rock at the base of the ledge. He thought that the current had just sucked his foot down there. Later someone else said that they had seen Mr. Bernardin wrestle his boat ashore before he washed over the Ledge. He was last seen standing in the creek above the ledge. These were critical observations. We had all been told it wasn't a good idea to stand up in a river because you could sprain your ankle. But lots of experienced paddlers stood up during self-rescues and no one thought you could die as a result.

As a teenager I hiked all over the White Mountains. I joined the Appalachian Mountain Club and became a regular reader of accident reports in their journal *Appalachia*. Remembering them, I wrote a similar report for the *AW Journal* describing what happened at the Icebreaker Slalom. I emphasized that you should not stand up in fast-moving water. After the article was published people wrote describing two very similar accidents that occurred in the Southeast during the past year. A year later, in an article written for *Canoe Magazine*, I used the term "foot entrapment" for the first time. The word spread quickly, and nowadays novices are

routinely warned not to stand up in fast moving water. It all seems so obvious now, but it certainly wasn't back then.

People sometimes ask why we report whitewater accidents in the *AW Journal*. The accounts are not easy reading, but the lessons we learn from them can be invaluable. Back in the 50s the need for life vests and the danger of dams was not appreciated. In the decades after Unadilla we learned that you can drown while wearing a life vest and that rock sieves are not easily spotted, even by elite paddlers. Accident reports have altered equipment design. Manufacturers switched kayak foot brace styles from bars to pedals in the 70s, then from pedals to bulkheads in the 90s to reduce entrapment risks. We've even learned to teach people to stand up safely in fast water without trapping their feet by focusing on wading techniques that improve balance.

We'll never eliminate the danger from whitewater paddling, and I'm not sure we'd want to. Taking calculated risks is central to the sport and it's good fun until someone misses something or goes too far. To maximize the pleasure we get from our sport, American Whitewater will continue to look at paddling tragedies with open and honest eyes. We'll learn what we can, then spread the word to the rest of the paddling community, so that we can all paddle just a little bit safer. [www.americanwhitewater.org](http://www.americanwhitewater.org)



Unadilla Accident Site 30 years later

photo by Charlie Walbridge

# AW News & Notes

## Back in Action at Reno's Truckee River Whitewater Park

By Betsy McDonald, RKPR Inc.

It's May and the sun is shining brightly on the Truckee River Whitewater Park in downtown Reno, Nevada and the crowd of nearly 20,000 spectators attending the 3rd annual Reno River Festival. As the festivities take center stage in what has quickly become one of the top whitewater festivals in the country, it's hard to believe that just four months ago this setting was under more than three feet of water.

A warm New Year's Eve storm in the Sierra Nevada brought higher than expected flows to the Truckee River, causing the river to flood. The Truckee peaked at 16,000 cfs (maximum channel capacity is 12,000 cfs), and overflowed its banks, depositing debris and sediment within the park itself. The sudden rise in water level filled the 11 pools at the Whitewater Park with almost 7,000 cubic yards of debris as the waters surged beyond the river banks and into Wingfield Park. Typical water flow during this time of year is 1,450 cfs. The City of Reno responded to the situation and quickly took steps to restore the park to its previous state. Fortunately, when engineers designed the park in 2002 they took into account the possible effects of flooding and both the freestyle and slalom courses were restored within three weeks of the flood waters receding. By creating "soft spots" in the Truckee's riverbed, park designers allowed room to accommodate the heavy equipment required during reconstruction without damaging any existing park features. These "soft spots" are simply parts of the park that were not altered or cemented in place for maintenance purposes. Because the park is divided into two channels by an island, crews are able to block one channel while repairs are made and then easily move to the other channel.

"The rise in water flow happened so fast

*Tanya Faux, Nikki Kelly and Ruth Gordon celebrate women's boatercross*

photo courtesy of Reno-Sparks Convention & Visitors



and created so much movement that we knew a lot of sediment would be stirred up, but this was something we were prepared for when we built the park," said Jim Litchfield, one of the park's designers and a lead advocate for its development. "We've learned from past experiences and knew certain things. We knew that the island would create a blockage and we anticipated that the bridges and pools would start collecting debris and filling the pools in the park. Fortunately the City of Reno was prepared and, because of their support and the value they place on the park, they never doubted that the efforts would be worth it. And here we are four months later with our most successful Reno River Festival event and everyone is having a great time. Kudos really do go out to the City for all they did."

Thanks to the City's initiative, advance planning and the course's design, the Truckee River Whitewater Park was ready for its largest event, the 3rd annual Reno River Festival. And there's a lot to be grateful for including the increased flows from the tremendous winter snow pack in the Sierra. The final competition was moved from Hole Three to Two to accommodate the increased river flow. More than 60 athletes turned out for some of the fiercest competition this season.

Eric Jackson brought his whole team to compete, including Reno local Jay Kincaid, Canadian Ruth Gordon and both of his kids, 12-year-old Dane and 16-year-old Emily, who was the one to watch after her second place finish at last year's Festival. Nikki Kelly took the women's boatercross finals, while EJ swept both the men's boatercross and pro invitational freestyle competitions. Tanya Faux cleaned up in the women's pro freestyle competition, Jud Keiser took home first in the men's open freestyle and Devon Barker won it for the women.

Here is how the competitions ended up:

### Men's Invitational Freestyle

- 1 - Eric Jackson
- 2 - Stephen Wright
- 3 - Jay Kincaid

### Women's Invitational Freestyle

- 1 - Tanya Faux
- 2 - Nikki Kelly
- 3 - Emily Jackson

### Men's Open Freestyle

- 1 - Jud Keiser
- 2 - Corey Volt
- 3 - Josh Matsell

### Women's Open Freestyle


- 1 - Devon Barker
- 2 - Lizzie English
- 3 - Christie Glissmeyer

### Men's Boatercross

- 1 - Eric Jackson
- 2 - Bryan Kirk
- 3 - Jay Kincaid

### Women's Boatercross

- 1 - Nikki Kelly
- 2 - Tanya Faux
- 3 - Ruth Gordon

In addition to live kayaking action, the Reno River Festival featured live music, great food, tons of vendors and lots of beer to keep crowds entertained during the day. At night, revelers could choose from VIP parties, 24-hour gaming, live shows, hot clubs and the world premiere of *Burning Time II*, Scott Lindgren's new 16mm adventure film. 

For more information on the 2006 Reno River Festival or for details on next year's event, log on to [www.RenoRiverFestival.com](http://www.RenoRiverFestival.com) or call 800-FOR-RENO (800-367-7366). For more information about Reno-Tahoe, America's Adventure Place, visit [www.VisitRenoTahoe.com](http://www.VisitRenoTahoe.com).

# Events

## Northeast USA Festival Season

*By Cheryl Robinson*

Spring paddling is upon us in the Northeast. Because winter arrived late and provided only a sprinkling of snow, it appears the paddling will be less fruitful than in years past. We shouldn't despair, though; the Northeast has a whole host of dam releases to whet your appetite and ensure kayaking every weekend through late October. Another highlight is the abundance of whitewater festivals throughout the season, guaranteeing numerous paddlers celebrating the kayaking lifestyle. Without further introduction, here are my favorite Northeast festivals:

### Deerfield Festival (MA) July 29-30, 2006

The Deerfield has the most consistent whitewater in New England, consisting of two runs, the Dryway (III / IV) and Fife Brook (II / III). This river has something for everyone.

While the Deerfield Festival lasts for two good days of paddling, the actual festival is held in Charlemont, Massachusetts on Saturday evening. A good variety of vendors attend the show. Better yet, it is an American Whitewater event, and their silent auction has always been a favorite of mine. It is usually hard to walk away from the Deerfield Festival empty handed with all of the free loot and great paddling goodies available.

Zoar Outdoor does a great deal to make this festival what it is. Not only do they provide instruction and rafting, they put on a couple of competitions at the Dryway's Dragon's Tooth. The spirit of these competitions is less about winning than fun, as pirates and clowns always seem to be the favorites. The Deerfield Festival is all about friends, family and fun.

### Beaver Festival (NY) September 2-4, 2006

If you like creeking, BeaverFest—as it's known to locals—is absolute heaven. No fields full of vendors, just hoards of paddlers coming together on a rare release weekend.

Four releases on two different rivers are guaranteed for this weekend. The Beaver river has three runnable sections. It releases Saturday on the Taylorville section (III-IV), Sunday on the Class IV Moshier (the only time the Moshier releases all year) and Eagle (V) sections, and Monday on both the Taylorville and Eagle sections. To top it all off, the nearby Raquette River's Stone Valley section (IV-V) releases Saturday and Monday.

This is one of my favorite weekends of the year. It provides three full days of adrenaline rushes, whether it's paddling the Class III rapids on Taylorville or pushing your limits on the Eagle. While the three sections on the Beaver are similar in feel and only vary in technicality, the Raquette provides something altogether different. The first rapid, Colton Falls, is eye popping all by itself and it's followed by another six rapids that are as equally as daunting.

While there is no festival field for paddlers to enjoy, the Beaver river campsite at Soft Maple more than makes up for it. The campfires provide a great place to mingle, meet new paddlers and share stories and beer. If the rain gods are generous there is an abundance of other creeks in the area, making you spoilt for choice.

The Beaver Festival is all about pure creeking and camaraderie.

### Gauley Festival (WV) September 22-25, 2006

While not exactly in the Northeast, Gauley Fest is one of the biggest whitewater festivals in existence. No festival guide would be complete without a mention of American Whitewater's GauleyFest. Each

year around 8000 paddlers descend on Summersville, West Virginia to enjoy great paddling and an even better party.

The Gauley River has three sections. The most famous is the Upper Gauley (IV-V), a spectacular section full of holes, waves and challenging big water moves. Most paddlers avoid the Class III+ Middle in favor of the stretches above and below, but it can be great for beginners. The Lower Gauley (III-IV) is a great introduction to the unique flavor of the Gauley and is definitely the most playful section.

The Gauley Festival, held on Saturday night, is huge. Like the paddlers, the vendors come en masse and a whole range of paddling and whitewater toys can be found: it's goodies galore. AW and its many volunteers do a great job organizing the event. Everything about it is huge, from the great bands providing live entertainment to the Wavesport big air ramp competition on the river.

Parties can be found in every corner of the festival site, and probably most of the local hotels as well. Also available locally is the New River Gorge, probably one of the most scenic rivers I have paddled, and in good flows, a monster big water run. With all the action and excitement, GauleyFest just screams "fun, fun, fun!"

### Moose Festival (NY) October 14-15, 2006

MooseFest is the most famous northeastern festival. It is uniquely identified with one group of paddlers—those who like to run the gnar—although a few of us less ambitious beings go along for the atmosphere and the hope that something else in the area will be running.

The event's focus is the Bottom Moose, a classic Class V run, with every type of drop imaginable. While it's not the Green Narrows, the Moose above six feet can make anyone tremble (even spectators). The Bottom Moose is really a show in and of itself; it attracts a large number of spectators because of the easy access and the huge entertainment factor. The



technicality and popularity of the Bottom Moose make it a guaranteed carnage fest.

If you're not up for running the Bottom Moose and the Rain Gods have provided, there is an abundance of other rivers, including the Middle (III) and Lower Moose (IV). Other rivers in the area are the Independence (II-V), Otter Creek (III-IV) and the Class III-IV Black River in Watertown, which has a special release on the same weekend.

In the last few years, changes have been made to MooseFest's evening events. Last year saw an Old Forge Bar Crawl, which was a huge success. On Saturday night in the Festival Hall, the vendors were a bit scarce ... but being almost the end of the season MooseFest means great bargains can be found and I have never left there empty handed.

Northeast's best ... MooseFest.

If this list isn't enough for you, or if you'd rather head further north, check out these popular Canadian river festivals:

Kipawa River Festival - June 25-26, 2006  
Gatineau WW Festival - Aug. 26-27, 2006  
Ottawa River Festival - Sept. 2-3 2006



## Corrections

We want to apologize to Ben Edson for incorrectly crediting his photo of Stacy Heer on page 29 of our May/June 2006 issue. Sorry Ben! The photo credit should have read: Ben Edson-downstreamphoto.com



We also wish to apologize to Bruce Cowie for failing to give him credit for the photo of his wife and son on page 52 of our May/June issue. The caption should have read "Janet and William post maternity spray skirt."



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# Field Notes

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## Farm for the Future

By Clay Wright

The future of freestyle kayaking starts right now. You don't need a special boat, you don't need a panel of judges—you don't even need sponsors, stickers, or fans. Just do what you love on the river.

*Retro-cool: savoring the simple surf on Rapid #2, Zambezi River*

photo by Chris Emerick

Get creative with the river's flow. Try using features other than the water: rocks, trees, debris, other boaters. Impress your buds with a new line, push through an old one at a new level, challenge yourself to find something you've never done before in a place you've been 100 times. Anywhere. While you are at any level. That's freestyle kayaking, and it's accessible to everyone.

I bet thousands of years ago some Inuit slid off an iceberg and into the water in an early kayak. So those of you imagining the ender as the oldest trick in the book might just rethink that notion. When did the first river runner get stuck in a hole ... and like it? Who first decided to paddle upstream to ride the face of a wave? Were these pioneers just ourselves in a previous life or were they passed down through an oral tradition or DNA?

It's all history at this point, important only for where we are now. While it is respectful to remember and honor the Snyder's and McDonough's of the sport, let me suggest that it is more important to recognize that the people making the biggest mark are simply the most creative people who are

constantly chasing a new style of fun. It is hard to train for inspiration: the harder you try, the more elusive it becomes. Fun, on the other hand, is like wine, coffee or chocolate; the more you indulge the greater your lust for indulgence.

If setting up the tripod and working your tricky-woo inspires you to watch more TV, remember everything you've done in a kayak and strive daily to do just one thing differently. You can start by finding a new channel or running rapids backwards. Move on driving up on rocks, banging through slots, and melting into a few holes. Borrow an old/long or new/short boat; test out some hand-paddles, or try and find the most indirect line through every rapid and challenge your friends to follow. You might even try doing tricks on a wave, in a hole, or on the way down a rapid. It's the roots of Freestyle kayaking you are digging, and from them some amazing inspirations have grown. In the garden of ways to move creatively with river, some things are fresh, some out of season, and some just taking root. Sample the produce. Better yet, grow your own. **AWW**

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# History

## Whitewater and the Paddlesports Industry

By Sue Taft

According to the Outdoor Industry Association's recent participation study for 2004, whitewater kayaking enthusiasts (i.e. those who participate more than three times per year) number about 222,000 compared to 1.8 million non-whitewater enthusiasts (Canoeing enthusiasts number 3.6 million but OIA doesn't break-out whitewater from non-whitewater—there just aren't many of us whitewater canoeists out there any more).

*Tom Johnson and his River Chaser*

photo courtesy of Tom Johnson

While it would seem from these numbers that the whitewater segment of the market would have little influence on the overall kayak market, this belies its earlier influence on the development of the overall paddlesport industry.

In the 1960s, kayaking was a very small piece of paddlesports and was predominantly made up of folding kayaks and home-built composite kayaks (mostly for whitewater) which circumvented the "market" altogether. Kayaking paled in comparison to canoeing, which was dominated by Old Town and Grumman. Many felt that TV coverage of slalom in the '72 Olympics would launch whitewater as it did for skiing in earlier Olympics. While

the popularity of whitewater did increase after 1972, it was really not attributable to the Olympics but rather to two other coincident whitewater events during the same summer—the release of the movie *Deliverance* and the publication of Walt Blackadar's story of his solo descent of Turnback Canyon by *Sports Illustrated*. Both whitewater canoeing and kayaking got a boost but it was kayaking that ultimately made the biggest gains.


To meet what was perceived as a growth market for whitewater kayaks, Hollowform (a California-based rotational molding company) introduced the first plastic whitewater kayak in 1973. The River Chaser was designed by Tom Johnson, a long-time paddler and advocate for slalom racing. It was affordable and relatively non-destructible and therefore provided for greater accessibility for the growing interest in whitewater. In 1978, Perception entered the plastic whitewater kayak market and in four short years, solidified its position as the market leader at 33% overtaking Hollowform at 25% of the market. Whitewater kayaks made up an estimated 75% of the overall kayak market with plastic kayaks making up three-quarters of the total whitewater kayaks. The increased availability of plastic whitewater kayaks not only eliminated the need for home-built kayaks but also greatly expanded the market potential for whitewater kayaks. Now anyone could get into whitewater and many people did.

The availability of plastic whitewater kayaks in the market also had another impact—it short-circuited the fledgling composite kayak industry, much of which was based on whitewater. Phoenix was the only major non-plastic player in the kayak market (with about 15% of the kayak market up against Perception and Hollowform's combined 58%), producing mostly whitewater kayaks with a few non-whitewater kayak models thrown into the mix. While Phoenix ultimately shifted its composite production away from paddlesports altogether, a few others including Eddyline and Easy Rider, shifted their product lines away from the whitewater market to the emerging touring/seakayak

market. However that segment of the industry also came under fire when the owner of Perception, Bill Masters, expanded Perception's plastic kayak line to include first, river-touring kayaks and soon after, seakayaks under the Aquaterra brand leveraging his already formidable dealer and marketing network established for whitewater. While the initial reaction on the part of the composite manufacturers might have been dismay and *deja vu*, again the affordability of plastic sea-kayaks ultimately contributed to the increase in the overall market.

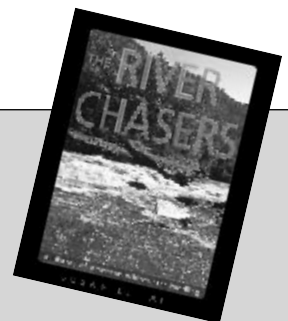
Even the recreational kayak market has its links to whitewater. Ann Dwyer, who initially introduced the Minnow in composites around 1980 (and which was the basis for almost all that followed), designed the Minnow as a short, entry-level river running kayak with an open cockpit. This style of kayak was less intimidating to her entry-level students than a traditional (at that time) 13-foot closed cockpit whitewater kayak. Rec kayaks were soon produced in volume in plastic by whitewater manufacturers. Perception produced a plastic version, the Keowee, followed by Hydra (the whitewater kayak manufacturer who picked up Tom Johnson's designs after Hollowform folded) who produced Dwyer's own Minnow version (Dwyer wrote *Easy Waters* of California focusing on the Class I-II rivers. She owned California Rivers, which introduced the Minnow in composites, and later, Kiwi Kayaks, who produced her rec kayaks in plastic after Hydra folded. She also paddled one of her Kiwi kayaks down the Grand Canyon, at the age of 65, as a testament to their versatility).

Thanks in part to whitewater, kayaking in all forms now comprises roughly half of overall paddlesport participation.

Not only do the newer (and larger) non-whitewater kayaking segments owe part of their popularity to the earlier experimentation in manufacturing, distribution, and marketing practices established by earlier whitewater kayak manufacturers, but also for establishing the viability and acceptance of plastic kayaks with the consumer in the first place. 

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Sue Taft is the author of *The River Chasers*, *The History of American Whitewater Canoeing and Kayaking*. If you have a topic or question you would like answered, e-mail it to [editor@amwhitewater.org](mailto:editor@amwhitewater.org) and look for its answer in an upcoming issue.



# Locals' Favorite

## St. Joe Drainage

*By Todd Hoffman*

Truly a piece of God's Country, the St. Joe watershed is a rare gem tucked into a remote corner of Idaho's Panhandle. Lying just north of the massive North Fork of the Clearwater basin and just south of Interstate 90, the Joe's drainage is unique in many ways. It contains an unusual concentration of rivers and creeks in close proximity, all with good access, long, predictable seasons (by Idaho standards), and unbelievably clean water. Nowhere else in northern Idaho will you find such a great diversity of quality whitewater for paddlers of all skill levels. Despite the Joe's proximity to major population centers,

and easy access, it still holds country as wild as any in Idaho.

The hub of paddling activity on the Joe is the tiny timber town of Avery, where several of the river's major tributaries converge about 60 miles upstream from the river's mouth at Lake Coeur d' Alene. Access to Avery is via the historic town of Wallace, located on Interstate 90 to the north. The winding dirt road that connects the two towns, snaking over Moon Pass, usually opens just as run-off begins in the early spring. Access is also possible from St. Maries, Idaho for those coming from

the south. At Avery you can get expensive gas, cold beer, haircuts on Wednesdays and not much else. It's an example of the dying resource-based communities and culture of Idaho's backcountry. The locals are all friendly, and greatly appreciate your patronage.

As you drop over Moon Pass from Wallace, you'll encounter the North Fork, the Joe's largest tributary, known to locals as the Little Joe. Starting from the small parking area at the Loop Creek Bridge for 10 miles down to Avery, the Little Joe gradually builds from a swift, shallow Class II

*Simmons Peak in the Headwaters of the St. Joe*

*photo courtesy of Charles Pezeshki*







*The Skyline of the Headwaters of the St. Joe*

photo courtesy of Charles Pezeshki

stream to a bouncing series of long, winding, Class III-III+ rapids, dropping around 65 feet per mile. Flows range from 500 to 1,500 cfs, which qualifies as a creek by Idaho standards. The North Fork makes a nice introduction to Idaho creeking for intermediate level paddlers or more adventurous novices. There is great camping on the North Fork throughout the boating season.

Just 15 minutes down the main St. Joe from Avery is Marble Creek, the second largest tributary of the Joe, dumping in on the south side. Marble is definitely a couple of notches in difficulty up from the North Fork with gradient ranging from 50 to 140 feet per mile, a significantly more constricted streambed and slightly less volume. With its consistent steep gradient and fast water, this creek is one of my favorite runs anywhere. It is a nice mix of half-mile long Class III+ rapids that wind around tight slalom bends, linked by a few standout Class IV drops to make things interesting. Make no mistake about the difficulty of this run; while it's straightforward read and run cruising, taking a swim would be quite dangerous given the scarcity of eddies and the high gradient.

You can make Marble Creek into a short, non-stop, high-speed run by putting in at Marble Creek Camp and bombing down to either the Boulder Creek Bridge or to the interpretive center at the confluence with the main Joe. This gives you the option to squeeze in a couple runs. If you want an all-day wilderness type run, you can put in at Camp 3, roughly 15 miles up from the confluence. Either way you're sure to have a grin on your face at the end of the day, and that warm fuzzy buzz from running continuous whitewater. Paddlers new to the area often have a hard time adjusting to Marble's clean, clear water, as they see the river bottom whizzing by at high speed with a mesmerizing clarity not found east of the Continental Divide.

For those wanting to venture into the

Class V realm, the Joe has something to offer as well. Just five minutes down river from Avery, Slate Creek dumps in on the north side out of a completely hidden slot canyon (which is why you won't find it in any of the guidebooks). Slate Creek has a completely different character from other Panhandle creeks. Instead of Idaho's typical continuous, non-stop gradient, Slate is a tight, pool-drop run over big bedrock ledges and slides. Also, instead of the typical Batholith Granite of most Idaho steep creeks, Slate Creek has a polished slate bed filled with clear, bubbling, turquoise water reminiscent of the Canadian Rockies.

The run starts four miles above the confluence with the Joe at the ruins of an old miner's cabin and quickly builds to into Class IV slides and ledges as the canyon and walls rise and constrict. Near the end of the run the gradient picks up significantly as the river drops over a massive series of broken, walled-in Class V ledges in tight sequence called Triple Drop. The lead in can be difficult at low water, and the ledges are all must make boofs over powerful reversals that have delivered more than one Idaho rodeo.

Once you've had a chance to sample the Joe's creeks you might want a nice intro to medium volume river running Panhandle style. Just a 40-minute drive upstream from Avery is the Tumbledown section of the Main St. Joe. Tumbledown is a mellow III/IV at medium flows (under 5,000 cfs) jumping up to a very solid, big-water Class IV at high flows (5,000 to 8,000 cfs). The run starts off easy and gradually builds into nice long rapids with tall crashing waves and easy but consequential moves around sizable holes. Giant mossy cedars and hemlocks make up the scenery in this shadowy canyon, and nice camping is plentiful during the early season, but fills later on. Tumbledown can be run all the way down to 500 cfs late into the summer for a creek, low-flow run when everything else in the area has long since dried up.

If you're still starving for adventure after Tumbledown, you're only an hour's drive away from the crown jewel of the St. Joe drainage, the Headwaters. The 18 miles of the St. Joe from Heller Creek to Spruce Tree is completely roadless, and is part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers system. The character of the run is typical Idaho headwaters type boating, requiring skill in spotting and avoiding sweepers and logs. With gradient topping out at 118 feet per mile (averaging around 50 to 60) the rapids are a mix of long Class III and IV. The section is runnable with flows between 500 and 750 cfs, but runoff happens early and quick. Access is a major challenge on this run since the only roads to the put-in run over high altitude passes, leaving an extremely short window where the roads are clear of snow and the river is still high enough to run. For more predictable access you can pack your gear in on horseback from Red Ives ranger station. Plan on at least two or three days for your adventure and be prepared for wilderness conditions.

While I've given a taste here of my favorite rivers, I haven't really touched on the reasons why they're my favorites, and why I chose to write about them. Seems kind

# Locals' Favorite

of strange, broadcasting your own secret uncrowded boating playground to all paddlers across the nation, especially when everything is already in place to keep them a secret for years to come. Only the most vague descriptions have ever been put down on this area in the guidebooks, some runs escaping them all together. Well, the reason I love the Joe doesn't have as much to do with river running as it does with the place itself; the place is the reason I want to share the secret. The St. Joe River cuts through one of the largest National Forests in the lower 48, and it also forms a piece of one of the largest unprotected roadless areas in the contiguous US. It's hard to appreciate what this means without seeing it, and there is probably only one place to absorb it in a single view.

On the way into the Upper Joe, an old road breaks off to the right, gradually turning into a trail, leading to Needle Peak. Topping out at just over 6,300 feet, its summit is one of the only places that gives a complete view into the hidden 2,500-foot deep tree-lined gorge of the upper Joe. It is also one of the only places in the US, outside of a designated wilderness area, where you can gaze in every direction of the compass, to the edge of the horizon, and not see a single road or clearcut or any sign of human existence. Thousands of acres carpeted in thick green forests form a rolling sea of mountains, extending miles and miles to the north, south, east and west. The Mallard Larkins and the distant ranges in the Clearwater poke up on the southern horizon and the jagged white peaks of Cabinet Mountains and the Selkirks fence the northern skyline.

As a child, I grew up rambling through




*Boaters camp on the North Fork of the St. Joe*

photo courtesy of Todd Hoffman

the St. Joe's mountains and playing in her streams, taking their beauty, their comforting solace and their very existence for granted. As an adult, I left this sleepy paradise and was thrust into a suffocating world full of too many people with no wild places. It was only then that I truly appreciated the profound significance of Joe's wild country, and also understood how rare such an appreciation is. I realized that the St. Joe country was not only my own spiritual guidepost, but that it was also a benchmark from where the shortsighted stupidity of human progress could be measured. As long as the Upper Joe remains wild and intact, I'll know there is some hope for us.

Unfortunately, this vast wild country of the Upper Joe is an extreme contrast to the rest of the Joe. The headwaters of Marble Creek, Slate Creek and the North Fork remain barely intact and mostly wild, but they are cut by too many roads and surrounded by the handy work of a hundred of years of logging that can only be described as cataclysmic in scale. Satellite photos of the Joe's southern flank reveal a gigantic checkerboard, every

other section of land, one square mile each, completely clearcut, every other section not yet clear cut, heavily logged. It's not too hard to guess which sections are private land and which sections are public land. Every year this destruction marches closer to the wild headwaters of the Joe and every year permanent protection seems more unlikely and improbable.

I seriously doubt that the economic impact of recreational uses like whitewater boating will ever outweigh the demand for the St. Joe's timber. However, I do believe that recreation is at least one vehicle to help reveal that the true value of the Upper St. Joe, and other rare places like it, is a function of their wildness. Unless we make this priceless value understood there is little hope for protection. Ironically, despite the many urgent threats to the St. Joe, I believe boaters need the St. Joe more desperately than the St. Joe needs boaters. Boaters need to see the wild country of the Upper Joe in order to understand that water and land are one, and that wild canyons and free-flowing rivers are the soul of river running. This soul can never be replaced by artificial whitewater courses or negotiated dam releases or by compromises. We need places like the Upper Joe in order to recalibrate our understanding of what rivers really are and to know how we should leave them for our children. Please come and enjoy this local's favorite. 



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# River Voices

## Thanks Dave!

By Scott Bortree

Over the last few years, I've read some interesting and wonderful articles written as tributes to folks who helped others in their early paddling years.

Every time I read something like this, I always think about the guy who helped me get started, and I say, "I ought to write something thanking Dave while he's still helping other young paddlers."

Many years ago, I was an Explorer Scout in Post 32 in State College, Pennsylvania. That was the first time I paddled the Lower Yough in Ohio. I'd been practicing and learning for a couple of years in pool sessions and on local rivers like the Red Moshannon, West Branch of the Susquehanna and Spring Creek, all to get ready to run the mighty Yough. We drove down in Dave's old VW Microbus, and I've always wanted to thank Dave for the ride. It started me on a lifetime of river fun and adventure.

Dave Kurtz (DK) was and still is the guy in central Pennsylvania who is involved in getting kids in boats and showing them about paddling. In 1960, I was 10 years old and couldn't wait until I was 11 so I'd be old enough to go to Boy Scout camp and take the canoeing classes from Dave. My older brother was already in the Explorer Scout Post, led by DK, and he was paddling whitewater! It was such a big deal back then. The sport was still being invented, and DK was the guy. I joined the Boy Scout troop as soon as I was old enough, and Dave always opened summer camp with an Indian dance and fire lighting ceremony that enchanted

all the young scouts. Most campers' first exposure to paddling was Dave's canoeing class, where we paddled Grumman's and learned the basic strokes and safety. After that introduction I was hooked. Dave was the leader of State College's Explorer Scout Post for older scouts, where he taught us how to run and race on whitewater, rock climb, camp and be good citizens.

Besides Scouts, Dave was involved in all aspects of the new sport of whitewater; and he was a very busy man. Back then, you couldn't just go to the store and buy a kayak. You had to build your own from a mold. Dave figured out how to build kayaks and decked canoes, bringing in a guy from the former Yugoslavia to help make the molds and find the materials. He built most of the molds himself, and then he taught anyone who was interested how to build their own boat. At age 14, I spent several months in my parents' back room building my first kayak, the Bat Boat, from Dave's mold.

He was huge in the racing scene, and not just in Pennsylvania. He created and perfected the national ranking system for paddlers, finding a way to weigh each race by its river difficulty and racer quality. Every year, he'd spend hours doing statistical calculations to maintain the national ranking system for slalom and wildwater racers. He started and ran many local Pennsylvania whitewater races, founded the Wild Water Boating Club for racers in State College, and got the site

on Spring Creek in Bellefonte for our permanent slalom practice course.

Dave won a national championship in whitewater slalom, and at least four of "his" Explorers also became national slalom champions. Dave hauled dozens, if not hundreds, of boys to run and race on rivers around the Eastern United States and Canada. He drove from Vermont to West Virginia to Canada, hauling the Explorer Scouts and the boats so we could paddle. Often, there were so many boats stacked on Dave's VW bus that we'd have to stop at low bridges and untie the boats to fit through. Plus, he was a grad student busy with his own life of attending and teaching classes at Penn State.

And what's most amazing is that this guy started doing all of this in the early 1960s, and he's still doing the same stuff today. If you are a kid in State College, Pennsylvania and you want to learn to kayak, it's DK who is still teaching, lending boats and gear, driving to the races, and on and on and on. He is the real deal. Who's been coaching kids longer in State College: Joe Paterno or Dave Kurtz? Dave got me, and many others, started on a lifetime of boating.

I get to spend a lot of time in my boat now on my home river, the Yough. It's where I feel most at home. And there are a lot of days as I'm slipping through the slot in Railroad Rapid, I whip into an eddy, look around and say to myself, "Thanks, Dave."



Dave Kurtz receiving the Youth Leadership Award at the 2005 Junior Olympics at South Bend, Indiana

photo by Scott Savage

## Anticipation

By Richard Styron

The wind picks up. The skies grey. A chill moves into the populace, displacing sun-warmed cheer with drear and lethargy. The barometer drops. But as mountain bikes are taken down off roof racks and garaged, scattered heads across the state begin to rise, ears start to prick. A storm is brewing. Communication pulses through lines of a long dormant network before the first drops hit the ground, and the Arkansas boating community once again establishes itself ephemerally. "Where will the rain fall?" emails question. "What rivers will run?" telephones ask.

Sitting at a desk, it's impossible not to turn and watch the view undulate through the sheet of water flowing down the window. How long has it been since you've paddled? The percussion of rain hitting the glass increases in cadence and intensity, raising your heartbeat. Coming home, you check the roadside, looking for the formation of key puddles. The puddles grow, spill, join, and suddenly there's movement in the ditches, in the rivulets and streams. The creeks begin to flow, and over dinner you ponder the next day. What needs to be done? What obligations can be moved, skirted, overlooked? More importantly, where is it raining, and how hard? You get online, check the river gauges even though you know it's too early in the storm. Click on the radar animation. The two minutes you spend waiting for it to load seems to take longer than the five hours of weather recorded, but eventually you see the green turn to yellow, then orange ... a burst of red. Pack your gear bag: its constituents are scattered and decimated from the last storm cycle. Where the hell is that helmet liner? Why do you have two left booties? The last radar frame is loaded, and the storm grows and resets in endless repetition. It looks like Newton County is about to get pounded. But will it? You've been burned before. Sleep is elusive, hiding behind mental movies of the boof at Crack in the Rock.


Darkness dissipates and the hills and sky differentiate. The night's thunder has

passed, moved eastward into the Delta. Masses of cloud slide between the ridges, wash through the trees, eddy out in the valleys. The streams are bank full; leaves and branches picked up in the night are set down, marking high water, as the flow slowly starts to wane, even this early. The hollers resonate with the crackle and pop of rocks and water.

The Internet stream gauges have updated. Richland Creek's there but low; not what you were hoping for. It's running, however, and that's a lot more than could have been said for yesterday. Your breakfast is hot, filling, hurried; you're starting to buzz with anticipation. The three cups of coffee you pound while waiting on your paddling buddy do nothing to help. Highway 16, heading east. A bluebird sky is perforated by bursts of cloud, rising as the air warms. Horizontal bands of vertical cliff faces—resistant bedrock layers of limestone and sandstone—rise sharply above the soft grey covering of the leafless oak and hickory. Your elation rises with elevation as you climb up the spine of the landscape. Ridges, ribs of the plateau, fall away to either side—the wide valley of the Arkansas on the right, the mighty Buffalo's gorge on the left.

Boating. Sparks of sunlight fly from the pulsating water. The fluidity of the creek is matched by your body's movement; hips, shoulders, arms, eyes synchronized.

Your brain commands wordless action, primitive, animalistic and perfect. Adrenaline makes the senses sharper, enabling you to take in the sensory overload. Inhale. See the little tributary on river left spill a hundred feet off a bluff into the trees. Quick, turn upstream and catch the wave. Surf. Spin. Grin. Exhale. Knucklebuster is fast and boney as you bounce your way down. When was the last time you laughed this much? Your ecstasy is countered by the butterflies in your stomach as you pull up to scout Lower Screw-up. Your hands shake as you get back in your boat and put on your sprayskirt, and as you line up for the boof at Door No. 2 (count your strokes and make them count) you suck in a ragged breath. You launch over the horizon line, the rest of the rapid comes into view, and you can't help but let out a little yip; you know you styled it.

The cold night is starless. Heat and light are limited to a small radius around the campfire, populated but quiet in contented exhaustion. The movement of the flames is like the movement of waves; always repeating but never exactly the same. Few comforts rival a hoodie sheltering chilled and worn muscles against a falling mist. Soon, the rain picks up and you head to your tent. Peals of thunder tell of tomorrow. You're swept into sleep by thoughts of high water. 

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# River Voices

## The Mysteries of Skookumchuck

By David Stentiford

“Who’s up?”

The wave is free and I peel-out into the current, lineup with the pile, slide into the trough. My back hits the pillow; it’s always unexpectedly hard, like someone pushing you from behind. I skip out onto the green, blinking and shaking the salty water from my face. Digging in a left edge I leave foam for green. I extend a rudder stroke and lean into it, scoring the shoulder with my blade. I’m at the top now, looking down at the bowelled-out green water. I release my edge to haul down the face, hop, bounce, air.

Back in the eddy, I line up and hold my place with one hand on the rock-ledge, trying not to shove my fingers in a sea anemone. Two friends chat in front of me. One is on the bank holding out his digital camera, the other sits in his boat.

“Check out your Pan-am dude, I think I got some really good shots of you.”

“Yeah? Is the tape rolling?”

Taking a break I talk to some of the crowd gathered to watch.


“Is it going to get any bigger?”

What is it that these people want to see here; then I realize: I’m no less a tourist than them. Hell, that’s why I came—to see it get big.

What goes on at Skookumchuck?

Some boaters describe this phenomenon as a spiritual experience. The name comes from Chinook Jargon—a language synthesized between the tribes and European traders. The name comes from

the term “Skookum”: supernaturally dangerous. The literal meaning of the compound, “Skookum chuck” means “powerful water.”

Exhausted, I snug on my hat and adjust my headlamp. Man I wish the car were close. Paddling past spears of orange light thrown from the industrial gravel quarry I enter the next dark cove of the inlet. The small wake that piles up on my bow illuminates with white flashes. Agitation alarms these phenomenal sparks. How many had passed below me, in streaming sun and water, unnoticed? Each stroke sends whirls of light away from me. I employ my hand into an agitated cluster lading out a few to watch them fade. Floating on a star filled sky. Light emitting from internal sources, whole light, drops of light, radiating in every direction, I can only see it partly from my perspective. I’ve forgotten the wave, the car, dry clothes, and burritos. Reluctant to leave. 

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*Dylan Davidson surfing the mysterious Skookumchuck Wave*

photo by Tanya Shuman



# River Voices

## Exploring Mexico's Copper Canyon

By Rocky Contos

Getting out to scout, Tom Diegel and I saw that the next rapid consisted of a two-meter sloping falls into a short pool, followed by a six-meter clean vertical drop into a deep, massive emerald pool. They were clearly runnable, even reminiscent of amusement park rides, but we decided to wait until morning to take the plunge, since campsites looked harder to come by downstream.

The place was enchanting. Just downstream, overhanging vertical walls lay only ten meters apart and squeezed the river as it exited the pool. Black streaks of desert varnish were painted on the tan sandstone. Conifers, shrubs, and grasses grew profusely along the canyon sides upstream of the falls. The main riverbed was free of any type of brush, scoured clean by the floods that periodically sweep through. Pine-forest odors mixed with the smells of the tropical thorn forest wafting up the canyon; agaves and cacti were just beginning to make appearances near the river. Canyon wrens solemnly trilled their characteristic down pitching notes as distant crackling thunder echoed down the gorges. We were still within an open bedrock section of the river that coursed around two huge loops known as the Incised Meanders.

We were only four kilometers into our seven-day, 135 km journey through the Copper Canyon (Barranca del Cobre in Spanish), but already we were ecstatic to be descending one of the grandest and deepest canyons on the planet. Tempering our enthusiasm was the pitifully low water level, and the treacherous high gradient sections downstream where we were certain to encounter unknown numbers of portages. Up to this point, most of what we floated through had been Class II-III, with the exception of one Class V bedrock falls we had portaged due to the low water. We settled in for a cool September night just above 1600 m (5200 ft) elevation on a flat sand beach, I in my tent with a bed sheet and Tom in his bivy.



*A view down Barranca del Cobre from a point near Divisadero*

photo by Rocky Contos

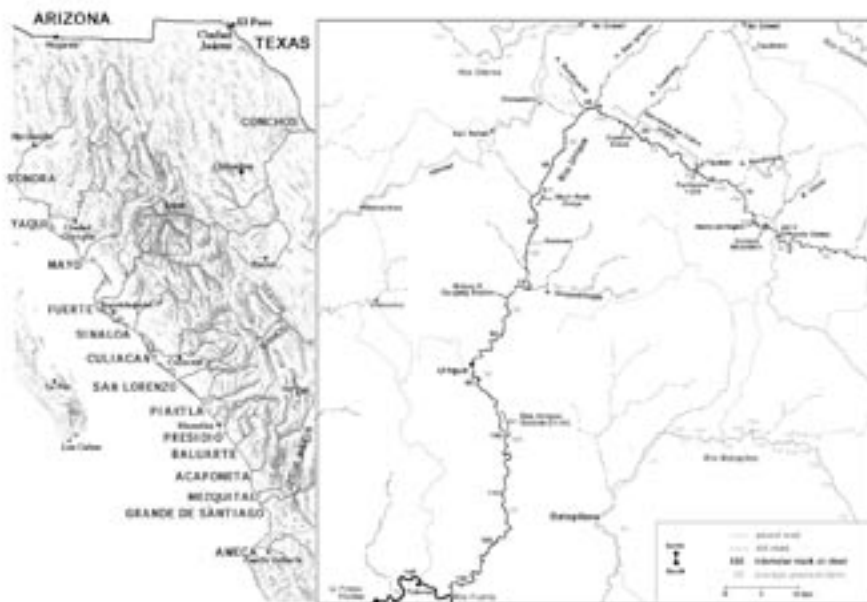
The Barranca del Cobre is close to the US, yet so far away in the minds of paddlers. Almost nothing has been written about the river and few paddlers have heard of it. Say the words "Copper Canyon" in the right company and you might come across someone who knows that it's deeper than the Grand Canyon or a person with knowledge of the Copper Canyon Train, which traverses 700 km from Topolobambo by the Sea of Cortéz to the city of Chihuahua in the middle of northern Mexico. Riding the train can be an all-day affair, with multiple stops, including one at Divisadero on the rim of the Copper Canyon. There, amidst the native Tarahumara women selling their colorful woven creations, one can peer 1300 meters down to the canyon bottom and just barely glimpse Río Urique below. Although this is the extent of the train rider's encounter with the Copper Canyon,

in another section toward the coast riders have a much more intimate experience with the canyon country. There the train passes along Río Septentrión for its entire length, yielding exquisite views of the river and its gorges. Although smaller and steeper, this river looks mostly runnable with innumerable Class IV-V drops, and would make any ogling paddler wonder about the larger river in the nearby famed canyon. So, exactly who has floated Río Urique before, and why aren't hordes of paddlers flocking to it?

According to Tom Robey, author of *A Gringo's Guide to Mexican Whitewater*, John Cross led the first descent of the 41 km Barranca del Cobre stretch from the Umirá bridge to the trail that leads up to Divisadero in 1963. Although their initial attempt was aborted, they later returned to finish the trip in inflatable kayaks. In



Overview map of the Sierra Madre Occidental (left) and more detailed map of the Copper Canyon area (right). The detailed region is boxed on the left. Río Urique (pronounced "oo-ree-kay," "oo" as in "boot," and accent on "ree") flows through the Barranca del Cobre and Barranca Urique before joining Río Fuerte. Kilometers along the river from the Umira bridge are shown in black. Additional gray points along the river are where 100 m contour lines cross the river, and the average gradient between these is indicated in feet per mile (fpm; italicized in gray). Paved and dirt roads are shown in light gray, and the railroad in gray with tick marks.



1971, John Cross led a descent down the next 47 km to the town of Urique. Robey's guide also states the geologic nature of the canyon (rhyolite, silicic tuff, and granodiorite), the average gradient of the various sections and their difficulty: the upper 41 km section to the Divisadero trail is very difficult (Class V), the middle 47 km section to the town of Urique is Class IV, and the lower 35 km to the confluence with Río Fuerte is also Class IV, but easier than the upstream section. He cross-references Jim Cassidy and Dan Dunlap's book, *World Whitewater*, where the lower Urique is described as having a lengthy portage about ten miles downstream of Urique at a place called Dos Arroyas [sic].

I had been yearning to paddle the river for years, but realized from the nature of other rivers I knew in the region, the descriptions I had read, and the gradient of the run (averaging ~30 m/km (>140 fpm) for the ~12 km past the Incised Meanders) that it would be extremely challenging and dangerous, especially with the possibility of wildly fluctuating water levels. These reasons, including the lack of accurate descriptions, are no doubt why this canyon has remained relatively obscure to paddlers.

Like most of my paddling expeditions in the Sierra Madre Occidental, I planned to do this trip sometime during the rainy season summer months. Although mean flows at the Umirá Bridge from July to September are 25 cms (800 cfs), there are often rainless periods when the flow can

drop to 1 cms (30 cfs), or deluges that can push flows up to 200-300 cms (7000-10000 cfs). Although I paddle many rivers solo, I wanted support and better photo documentation for this one. My friends Tom Diegel and Mike Hobbs had come down the previous year for a descent of Río Mezquital (described in *American Whitewater* July/August 2001) and were keen to float some more of Mexico's rios. Tragically, Mike passed away the previous winter due to a heart problem. Tom was still game, though, and managed to make it down in early September 2001.

Tom is one of the best paddling friends I can imagine. Born and raised in the Portland, Oregon area and now living in Salt Lake City, he's a technically competent Class V kayaker who's paddled all over the US and Canada as well as in Chile, Ecuador, Norway, and India. He's always excited to do a new run, and undaunted by the lengthy sections I suggest. He judges rapids well, knows his limits, and portages when the danger factor is too high. Tom is a great team player, as evidenced on the numerous Grand Canyon descents we've done together. On one Canyon trip, we had a raft float away in the night; Tom let me sleep in and went in hot pursuit at 4 am, tied up the errant raft five miles downstream, and ran back up the canyon in time for breakfast! He's does all he can to rescue others on a river, even to the point of endangering himself. I would probably have drowned in a recirculating undercut eddy below Triple Falls on the Kern if Tom had not taken quick action to swim across



# River Voices

the river and give me a life-saving hand when I popped up. In 1994 when I met Tom on the Kern, he worked at Patagonia, where he helped design and produce some seminal paddling shoes, which, not surprisingly, we were wearing on this trip to Mexico. He continues to design gear in the business he currently runs. Since Tom works in the outdoor industry, he is also a great resource to connect with others. I have him to thank for introducing me to many of my paddling friends.

Arriving in Creel via train from Chihuahua, Tom greeted me with a hug and a baritone “Mumm-blay” (his nickname for me is Mumbly). After we provisioned our seven-day trip, my chauffeur, Neche Chávez, accompanied us in my truck to the put-in at the Umirá bridge. There had been good water levels in local rivers for most of the previous five weeks, but at this point rains had ceased, and we were disappointed to find only ~80 cfs in the river (about 10% of the mean flow for early September). On the bright side, we thought, we may not necessarily want high flows when going through the toughest sections in the first few days anyway. We put in late in the afternoon in the rain, and made it to the six-meter falls in a couple of hours.

“Wheeeewwoooooee,” Tom exclaimed after hucking the falls. We felt as fortunate as the German archaeologist in *Raiders of the Lost Ark* when he opened the ark and said, “It’s beauuu-ti-fullll!” However, just another kilometer past the Incised Meanders, the riverbed became clogged with house-sized boulders and we remembered that shortly after opening the ark, the archaeologist summarily found the angels inside were actually angels of death!

This section was described previously by Robert Gedekoh, former editor of *American Whitewater*, who authored a chapter in M. John Fayhee’s book, *Mexico’s Copper Canyon Country; A Hiking and Backpacking Guide*. In the chapter titled, “Umirá Bridge to the Incised Meanders of the Urique River,” Bob described a four-day backpacking trip at very low water where they arrived at Río Urique

by descending Arroyo Umirá, arriving approximately 7 km downstream of the Umirá bridge. From there, they day-hiked downstream several kilometers, and then made their way upstream through the Incised Meanders. He had this bleak account of the river:

Being ardent kayakers, we evaluated the Urique as a potential run. All agreed that it would be a technical nightmare. The river flows under rocks as much as around them. At high water, the river would be ripe with undercuts and siphons. Portaging would be a logistical horror show.

We did portage many times in this section, strenuously lifting our loaded boats up and over, sometimes going under a boulder, and sometimes ferrying to the other side where portaging would resume. However, the two kilometer stretch to Arroyo Umirá wasn’t all portages, and we enjoyed running several Class IV-V rapids. Overall it took us about three hours to get through. Would we call it a “nightmare?” Sure. However, as part of a lengthy expedition through this wild chasm, it was a small entrance fee to pay.

Below Arroyo Umirá, pool-drop Class IV-V rapids continued for over five kilometers to just past Arroyo Basihaure, where we camped on a huge beach. In this section we only had a couple of portages due to the low water. About a kilometer upstream of our camp, we filled our water bottles at what Tom dubbed the “Whiz Wall,” a warm spring where a little stream of water shot horizontally out of a rock wall. From camp, I wandered into a cave and noted a stick fishing pole left there by a local. As Bob Gedekoh comments, this part of the river is a difficult place to get to, and doesn’t see many visitors. However, that’s probably not as true for the Tarahumara people who inhabit this region. They are noted for their foot travel all over the barrancas, spotting trails where others could not and not giving second thoughts to the sketchy climbs, traverses, or swims that are often necessary for progress. They also are known for their long distance

running, and many can go more than 100 km in a day.

Near the end of the following day, after paddling through innumerable rapids, we peered downstream to see what looked like an eerie apparition wavering along the river-left shore just below the next rapid. After running the Class IV-V drop, which we dubbed Fantasma Falls, we realized the “ghost” was actually water pouring from a cave in the wall, about two meters above river level. Sunlight and wind playing on the aerated whitewater made it waver and flicker like a spirit.

Not far downstream, we arrived at the Barranca del Cobre proper, where copper mining took place centuries ago. We wandered up to explore some ruins, finding them overgrown with weeds. Around here trails ascend up ~1000 meters to the rim on both sides of the canyon and another also continues downriver. At one time, this trail was part of the historic Camino Real, on which the silver, gold, and copper from Batopilas, Barranca del Cobre, and other mines were hauled up toward Chihuahua via Tejabán at the rim. A few of the Tarahumara still mine here, and have been known to sell their white gold nuggets for life’s essentials. On this trip, we saw nobody around, but the small arroyo just downstream carried red silty water, indicating recent mining activity. After finding another fine beach to camp on, we turned in for the night. The lower gradient and trail along the river downstream were good indicators that we would probably not encounter many more portages.

Starting our fourth day in bright sunshine, we found that the canyon had a more open feel, and there were many enjoyable Class III-IV rapids for the 10+ km past Arroyo Cusárare. This arroyo flows over a scenic 30-meter falls up on the mesa closer to Creel and is a primary tourist attraction in the area. Past this arroyo confluence, the gradient picked up again, and the walls closed in. Huge boulders again cluttered the riverbed, and Class V rapids came one after another.

One of the initial Class Vs ended in a

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*Tom in a scenic vertical-walled section between  
Arroyo Cusarare and Arroyo San Ignacio*

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photo by Rocky Contos



mandatory portage around a sieve. In the first drop of this rapid, I pinned briefly and handed my paddle to Tom as I pushed myself off with both hands. Tom ended up backward in the second chute, breaking a paddle and flipping in the mayhem. He rolled up, but seeing that he was floating quickly toward the sieve with a broken paddle, exited the boat and swam to shore. We managed to pull the boat out, but the broken paddle and his valuable camera went under and we never saw them again (hence, the lack of exceptionally nice photos to go with this story!). Fortunately, we had a spare paddle, and Tom recovered quickly from his loss and slightly damaged ego. This “Disaster Sieve” was followed by two more boulder-choked rapids we called Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. After a few more Class Vs that could have used more water, we floated through an unmistakable four-meter bedrock sliding falls at the confluence with the large Arroyo San Ignacio. This arroyo also descends from the mesa by Creel and hosts the soothing Recohuata Hot Springs. As we later learned, the springs are more easily accessed from the mesa than from the river.


We continued down some Class II-III to a beach by one of the arroyos that descend from Divisadero. It was only lunchtime, but we decided to camp there and spend the rest of the day ascending to the rim, about 10 km and 1300 meters up a trail above our camp. Hiking up the arroyo was pleasant, with a clear stream of cool water gurgling over rocks beneath a canopy of trees. We saw tadpoles and small fish scuttering in the limpid pools as we climbed up various falls. In one pool we took a refreshing swim, cooling off from the 90-degree heat. Unfortunately, after two hours we still hadn’t found the trail and eventually came to a high 20-meter falls that was too sketchy to ascend, so we were forced to turn back.

We spent two more leisurely days paddling the 46 km down to Urique. It was all runnable, and generally Class III-IV. We encountered one exception about 12-15 km downstream of Ojo del Cañon in the fun Class IV-V Cañada Calavera section (Skull Rock Gorge). The name derives from a four-meter-high piece of bedrock coming out of the river that looks just like a skull staring at the other side of the river. At high water, the skull would probably be drowning, and you’d only see the eye sockets and nose. Another six kilometers downstream we approached a dark and scenic high-walled narrows that had us shivering at the sight of house-boulders, which seemed to clog the way. Fortunately, we found a paddling route through a cave underneath one of the boulders, and though this route probably wouldn’t be available at normal summer flows, I verified that portaging up and over on the right would be possible.

At the town of Urique, we beached near a flirtatious local named Rosa, who was swimming in the rio. Another friendly resident watched our boats as we enjoyed a celebratory meal of pollo, tortillas and beans in one of the local restaurants. Tom wasn’t too thrilled about continuing on the river down to Río Fuerte and then across 50 km of reservoir to the train station, so he looked into getting back to Creel from Urique. Since it was a holiday in the town (Fiesta de la Virgen), the bus wasn’t running, compelling Tom to spend

several hours on the road for a ride, but to no avail.

We settled in to camp on the beach by the town that night, albeit with nerve-wracked insomnia due to loud voices of partying borrachos and firecrackers, which went off periodically. At one point, some puerile kids lobbed a watermelon at us, which splattered nearby and scared the scat out of us. Fortunately, the following morning Tom found a ride with some guys in a truck. I paddled the remaining stretch of Río Urique without portaging and eventually hitched a ride back up to Creel, up the tortuous roads, arriving only to find the World Trade Centers topple on 9/11.

Would I go back and float the Copper Canyon again? You bet! Preferably with a healthier water level, and with time to do many of the hikes that I missed on this trip. Overall, this is a stretch of river that should definitely be on paddlers’ to-do lists. The drivable proximity to the US, challenging rapids, canyon grandeur, astounding side hikes, and wild solitude make it an excellent choice for a summer adventure. I look forward to the day when more than a few kayakers have experienced the magical qualities of this profound defile in the earth. 

*For additional information, visit  
[www.sierrarios.org](http://www.sierrarios.org) or e-mail the author  
([rocky@sierrarios.org](mailto:rocky@sierrarios.org)).*

# The State of Freestyle



*Risa in the freestyle groove*

photo by John Clements

**Editor's Note:** When I started kayaking there was no such thing as "freestyle" in whitewater paddlesports. Occasionally you would stop at prescribed playspots to catch an ender or sidesurf, but that was really just "playing"—something a child would do. No one I paddled with at the time ever took play very seriously. Perhaps that's the biggest difference between now and then. Maybe giving it a cool name that conjures up snowboarders throwing inverters in a half-pipe has given freestyle kayaking and canoeing the street cred that makes it what it is today. Or maybe it's the huge advances in boat design, paddling technique and the advent of park 'n play boating that's made the difference. Whatever you attribute it to, there's no denying that the evolution from ender to air loop has been dramatic. Since we at the *AW Journal* don't feel entirely qualified to tackle this topic, we decided to ask some people who are eminently qualified.

## What will become of Freestyle?

*Risa Shimoda*

That depends.

As a discipline or area of expertise, perception and participation will depend on whether or not participants, including spectators at an event, understand freestyle and think it is fun and exciting. For those at the helm (including land managers, municipalities, event producers and manufacturers or service providers promoting athletes and products), this means a responsibility to help create opportunities for the masses of paddlers who have not yet converted to the sport, and a need to help newcomers understand some basic realities of whitewater paddlesports.

Whitewater courses and parks, designed for easy access and a friendly paddling environment, are providing ever more exposure for freestyle play and competition. There are three dozen or more in the ground or on their way toward construction in the US. They range wildly from modest one-drop, 100 cfs (peak flow) venue in Breckenridge, Colorado and the super friendly, low-key park in Salida, Colorado, to the sophisticated engineering phenoms at the Upper Ocoee's Olympic course (TN), the Adventure Sports Center International in western Maryland and the super park at the US National Whitewater Training Center in Charlotte, North Carolina. They are each (or soon will be) bringing whitewater access to town, ready to sample for those who are cramped for time and will never have the desire to chase rain.

Those who will advance the personality of the sport include:

- Event producers who are bringing freestyle (and whitewater sports in general) to the public.

- Products that both allow more paddlers to find a playboat that fits, and offer river-running boats that incorporate many freestyle capabilities.

- Videos, online tutorials and grassroots or retailer-based clinics taught by paddling experts that maintain accessibility to the pros, new techniques and promoted products.

The not-so-good news is that the technical prowess of today's elite athletes is so far from attainability for average paddlers that freestyle promoters must manage risk—the risk of elitism and irrelevance. Many unschooled spectators of freestyle can tell that a paddler is doing a hard move is if he/she gets big air, does something that looks complex or elicits cheers from his/her competitors. They might find the moves and grace of these professional athletes demoralizing because they realize that they will never be able to attain the same level of sophistication in the sport.

The good news is that this risk can be turned into exciting opportunity when the moves and techniques these paddlers have developed are exposed, taught in classes and clinics, are the subject of articles and depicted in video and at competition as fun, not edgy.

In addition, knowledgeable competition announcers, authors and video producers who explain what is being performed, make freestyle friendly. Seeing a colorful boat powered by a skilled, yet down-to-earth (i.e., doesn't make me feel guilty for not having been to the Nile, Ecuador or Nepal lately) paddler never fails to make newcomers (and even me!) want to learn and have fun with freestyle paddling.



# HybridLife

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Pretty much everything has changed since I first started kayaking in 1995. From boat design to competition to the exposure and emphasis of the sport—the best part is everything has changed to my favor.

*by Tanya Shuman*

I started paddling in a boat that was designed with a one-size-fits-all mentality. The boat I paddled was the same one used by a 300-pound guy and 70-pound kid. Now the market has discovered the necessity of not only boats for different purposes and levels, but also boats for different body sizes and shapes. We have boats that are made specifically for creeking, river running, and freestyle. And within freestyle designs some boats are more geared to waves and some more to holes. Even better, today there are boats designed for all levels—for the beginners just learning to roll and for the advanced pros who are trying to push the envelop of freestyle kayaking. Most importantly, sizes ... we now have kids boats, big/tall guy boats, and boats specifically made for me, a woman. Love it!!

# The State of FREES



As for competition, there really aren't very many these days. The design of boats has caused freestyle to move away from holes and onto waves and it's hard to find a venue that really depicts the new advanced freestyle moves. Yes, you have competitions like Teva Mountain Games and the Reno River Festival but freestyle kayaking is happening on waves now and the paddlers pushing the sport are performing on big waves not in holes.

Back in the Golden Age of Kayaking, there was a posse of paddlers—a big family—that traveled throughout North America competing at different hole-oriented venues each weekend. The circuit started in April on the West Coast and ended in October on the Ocoee River in Tennessee. The competition was run by American Whitewater and funded by sponsors like Teva. The

joy and camaraderie between paddlers was phenomenal. In the future I hope to see a circuit that encompasses waves as well as a platform for young kids to compete—a junior and collegiate league.

I foresee two series forming: one will be a World Cup series which will be held on waves, and another will involve man-made courses throughout North America, like Reno and Vail. I would hope for a World Cup series on waves to emphasize the progression and level of freestyle kayaking and show where the new moves are going. The circuit on man-made courses would have more of a festival atmosphere and would bring more people into the sport with a competitive circuit for juniors and newcomers to showcase their skills.



*Tanya Shuman surfing the Winnipeg Wave*

Photo by Marlow Long

STY E



# The State of Freestyle



by Andrew Holcomb

First off, I think it is important to recognize that the nature of freestyle competition hasn't changed that much. Competition, at its heart, is still just that: a competition. At its basic level, it is still paddlers competing and being judged on the moves they do against everyone else.

What have changed are the moves, the focus, and the drive. For the last couple of years, competition has not been the driving force behind freestyle. What I mean is that competitors no longer have as much interest in throwing unlimited

ends in a hole. Furthermore, the focus of freestyle is on waves and the moves being done there. Because so few competitions are held on waves, the participation in freestyle competitions has dropped.

As a result of these factors, the focus of playboating has shifted from competition to big wave surfing. Will competition be able to shift to reflect this change in the future? I think so. The judging system is catching up to the moves, there are a few competitions on waves—it's a positive sign that Worlds of 2007 is all set to be held on a wave.

Andrew Holcombe going for broke on the Garberator Wave (full) ; freestyling off the water too (above)

Photos by Tanya Shuman and Jennings Steger

All these elements could combine to reignite the interest in competition again ... or it might not. That's the bottom line; competition hasn't changed. The focus of playboaters and the public has changed and if we want competition to regain its footing then it has to reflect this change of focus.



by Clay Wright

Freestyle kayaking advances really made kayaking the sport for me. I first paddled the Ocoee in a fiberglass "Klepper Minor" in 1979. By the time I was in high school, I was digging my short little Dancer, and then totally awe-struck by my "Phoenix Arc" early squirt design.

How could you not be inspired to paddle at every opportunity when each summer we were finding new tricks or new places to do old tricks? Just as tackling the Tellico became old hat, the Arc showed me a whole new world of possibilities to be had, from double-enders at Bounce Off Boulder to meltdowns off Baby Falls and stern-squirts on every eddy line. The river, which was becoming grey to me in my Dancer, was suddenly re-invented in Technicolor.

I took squirt boating down into the Shred Bigfoot era, then jumped back into creek boating just as the Freefall redefined "steep" and "technical" creeking. But from those days in squirting, the creeks offered up lots more than just boofs. By the time the Micro 230 came out, we were rock spinning, looping, splatting, and surfing down every river we paddled. Each river became a fairgrounds. And the fair offered new rides every couple of years as the free-style boats shrunk towards squirt, then added planing hulls, then puffed back up into spuds with slicey ends.

Where will it go next? Everywhere, if this "generation next" has half the passion we did. I can't wait to see what they come up with. There is a lot more to the future of freestyle kayaking than just big waves and big waterfalls ... and it's all just swirling around out there, eagerly awaiting the right mind to come along and discover it. [www.whitewaterhelmet.com](http://www.whitewaterhelmet.com)

Clay Wright free-forming off Bald River Falls (right) and soul surfing (above)

Photo by Kristine Jackson and Chris Emerick

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# Video Tips from the Pros



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*John Grace filming on a zip line above Gorilla and infamous "Notch" as Toby McDermott Rides the Lighting*

**Photo by Nate Elliott**



## From Footage to Finished Film

By John Grace

So you have the camera, all your friends are doing retarded stunts in their kayaks and you are building a healthy library of mini DV tapes. Now you want to put it all together and see if you can make the cut for the next LVM Top Shelf Film. How do you get from here to there?


The first thing you need is an editing platform. By this I mean an editing program and a computer to run it on. There are many program options out there but if you want the best quality for the best price, two programs stand out. If you own a Mac, Final Cut Pro is your best bet. If you have a PC, Vegas Video will be your program of choice. I have used both, and each has its pros and cons. As for the computer, it is important to understand that editing video is processor- and memory-intensive. Most of today's newer computers have the power necessary to edit video, but if your computer is more than five years old it will more than likely be useless as a video editor. As a general rule you need a 2 gig processor and at least

512 MB of RAM. The more computing power you have the quicker the editing process will become.

Now you have to get your video from your tapes to your computer. This process is called capturing. Capturing is a feature of your editing software that takes the data from your tape and stores it on your computer as a digital file. It is time consuming and there are a couple of different ways to go about it, but overall it is a simple process. The most important part of capturing is organizing your clips so you know what they are and where they are stored on your computer.

Now it is time to start editing. The process has many steps, ranging from graphic development all the way to the finished product, and each step takes time to learn. Everyone who tries their hand at editing will find their own strengths and weaknesses. The two golden rules of editing are: write down on paper what you want to show on the video (this is

called scripting); and always start with your audio track first and build the video around it.

Film production requires a lot of time-consuming work, but can also be very rewarding. With today's technology, anyone can produce a decent quality product with minimal monetary investment. My best advice is to give it a shot and see if you enjoy the work. If you do, try to pursue some type of formal training to expand your skills. Even if you don't love it, you will always have something you can look back on and say to yourself, "Man, my friends were a bunch of idiots!" See you on the river. 

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# Photo Tips from the Pros

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## Still Photography Tips

By Nikki Kelly

I will always remember this valuable quote from Shelley Furrer, owner of Werner paddles: "It's about being out there in the right places." She meant that if you are on the river amongst the action you are going to get good shots.

My quality camera sat at home for the first two years of my paddling career before I felt comfortable doing two things at once—meaning I felt challenged enough just making my way down river. So don't rush to take photos; sooner or later the time will be right to add photography to your journey down stream. The nice thing about photography is that looking for photo opportunities makes you slow down and take in more of your surroundings.

One of the classic photography (and video) rules of composition is the Rule of Thirds. I've heard it explained (with a math equation!) as the most appealing setup to the human eye. Basically, you want to focus your subject (in this case, usually a boater) not in the middle of the picture, but at the intersection of imaginary lines that divide your picture into thirds horizontally and vertically. Whatever the reasons, the Rule of Thirds is a good tip for making balanced photos. For beginning whitewater photographers, a good way to start using the Rule of Thirds is to think: a third scenery, a third boater, a third whitewater.

My own style wavers towards more scenery. I get a lot of shots with lots of the environment and just a tiny kayaker. What I need to do is to share scenery shots with close ups, so I try getting shots with the kayak taking up a lot of the photo. Face shots are nice but I don't manage a lot of them. If you feel the same way about your photos, get close to the drop—wherever you think the kayaker will make a dynamic move.

Vary your angles: get high up—a bird's eye view is all good—or, to make rapids look big, set up down low, at the bottom of the drop.


Digital photography makes learning very quick, because you can assess the quality of your photos straight away.

I am envious of slide photographers, because slides produce the best quality, but I still do not practice enough to trust myself with slide film.

Especially with new, fancy digital cameras, it's easy to use a pre-set or semi-automatic setting—don't. Learn exposure and aperture combinations; don't sit on the automatic setting—it doesn't work so well for whitewater anyhow. Experiment....

Take the plunge; carabiner the camera to your boat (between the legs is my favorite) and get out there.

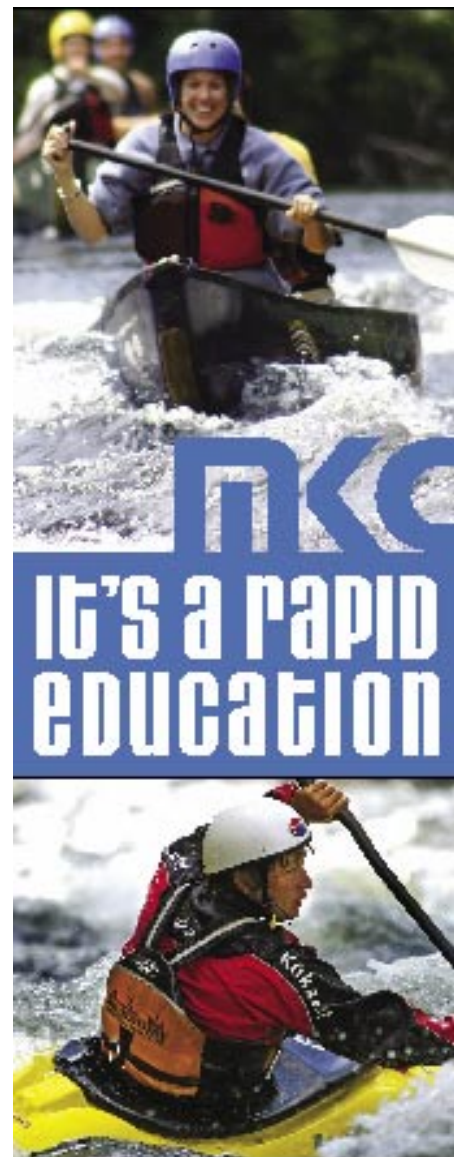
Ask knowledgeable people questions, always learn more and never think you have it sussed. Be critical of your photos, ask questions, always try to improve, but at the same time, remember to give yourself credit.

Enjoy capturing the memories. 

Tanya Faux, Onot River Siberia, Boofing Bitch Falls

Photo by Nikki Kelly

[www.americanwhitewater.org](http://www.americanwhitewater.org)



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American Whitewater  
July/August 2006



# Photo Tips from the Pros

by Johnnie Kern

When I first started taking pictures of whitewater, I loved it but I hated it. I hated it because I got back from my first few big trips with a camera and the grim reality set in . . . a majority of the river shots were terribly over-exposed. I was confused since most of the scenic shots were fine, but when I looked through the pictures that I had taken on the river, I was consistently disappointed. The thing that bummed me out about most of my early river pictures was that the water looked too bright and didn't have any detail in them. Whitewater is obviously called WHITEwater for a reason . . . ahh yeah, it looks pretty white most of the time and was looking way too white in my pictures. The simple fact is that it is hard to expose pictures of whitewater properly. It is hard because that white is always so damn white. I have learned a lot over the last several years and just so you know, would by no means

ever call myself any kind of professional photographer. I have never had any formal training and have thrown away thousands of terrible pictures. I have a few things that I try to keep in mind when I am taking pictures of people kayaking and hopefully a tip or two here might be helpful to at least one person who reads this.

The first thing that I always remember is to bring lots of film or memory since the more you shoot, the more you learn and the better your odds are of coming home with something worthwhile. My motto is when in doubt, hammer on that shutter release button.

The second thing that I always try to ask myself . . . (and it always annoyed me when it was someone else's advice to me, but I understand now) . . . is what exactly do I want a

picture of . . . what is the subject here? I try to imagine how the finished image is composed in my head before I ever take a picture. The exact framing matters because it will help you determine what should be included and often more importantly, what can be left out.

*continued on page 40*

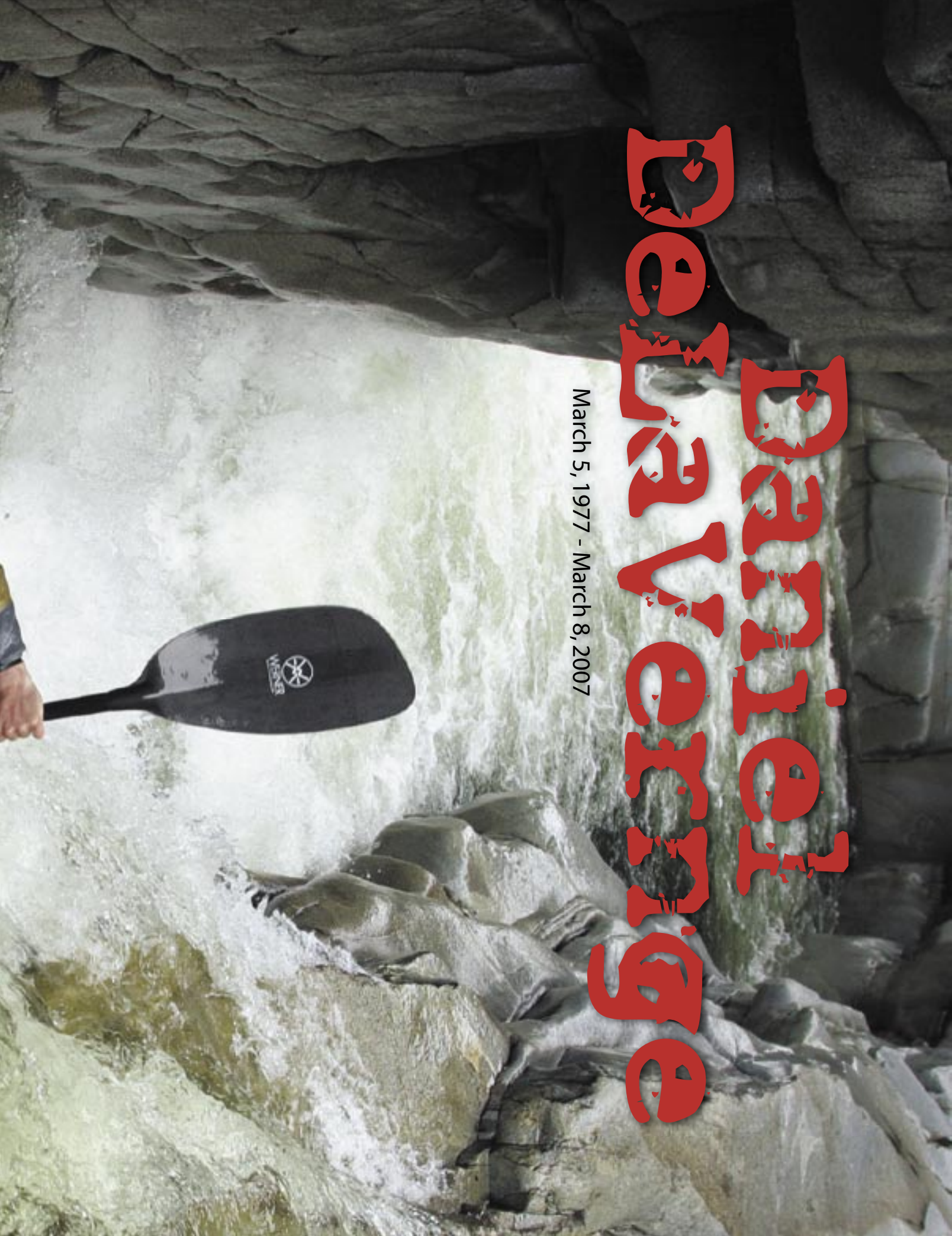


Photo A (Photo B is inset)

Photos by Johnnie Kern

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Daniel DeLaVergne our close friend and fellow kayaker, was an advertiser, advisor and contributor to just about every AW magazine in recent history. As an avid expedition kayaker, Daniel fully understood the importance of support.

Whether carrying extra supplies, bucking up for the gorge scout, figuring out logistics, or soliciting the sponsorships necessary to fund the dream, Daniel was a key member of TDub and it's LVM-documented exploits. He was also an avid supporter the goals and dreams of American Whitewater.

Daniel's support for AW will continue through his business, Penstock Productions and Lunch Video Magazine, under their new management. Remember Daniel as you support his creations. Remember Daniel as you support the people that make our sport what it is while continuing to dream of what it could be.

*words by Clay Wright - photo by Johnnie Kern*

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# Photo Tips from the Pros

The light in river environments makes taking a properly exposed picture even more complicated because it is often shady deep down in the canyon or maybe the trees are blocking the light that you want on your subject. Squint your eyes and take a look around . . . What's bright? Where is most of the light coming from or what is it reflecting off? What is dark? Is there any place in your ideal frame where light and dark are next to each other? These initial observations are crucial in deciding what the final frame should look like and how you should expose.

Take these two pictures of action figure John Grace running a healthy 60 footer in Mexico. Both pictures are taken on the same day of the same spine risking descent. Photo A is framed and exposed with more emphasis on the setting, specifically pulled back to include the rainbow and the cool green moss on the cliffs. Photo B on the other hand is zoomed in, exposed (spot metered) to reveal the detail in the water and place emphasis on John and how silly he is. The two different

pictures are of the same basic thing, but tell different stories. You have to make choices and Photo A decides to sacrifice detail at the bottom of the falls in order to capture the whole setting . . . the entire place. In Photo B you can see more detail in the water below the falls, but since it was exposed for the WHITEwater and cameras are not as good as the human eye at picking up all the subtleties, you will lose any detail in the cliff next to the falls. So, if you take the time to ask yourself what is the most important thing here . . . what am I really trying to take a picture of, you'll have a better idea of how to expose that specific picture properly.

A third thing that has helped me expose properly when shooting whitewater on a sunny day . . . I shoot a third of a stop under and then plan on bumping it up (add more light) slightly in post-processing. Now I am not what some might call a traditionalist . . . I do not believe if you use Photoshop or any other software to organize or post-process your images, that you should go

to hell. Some do and I respect them, but I'm here to take and look at good pictures and if I can improve an image by knowing what technologies I have available later on . . . then I will. I also try to increase my odds of coming back with a winner by bracketing whenever possible. On most decent cameras you can adjust your settings to take three pictures instead of one. One shot would be with the proper exposure, the next a third or half stop over-exposed and the last a third or half stop under-exposed. Like I said earlier, the more pictures you take the better your chances are, right?

So yeah, I guess I'd remind every one out there that taking properly exposed pictures of whitewater is not necessarily easy. My best advice would be to take a close, discriminating look at what you want to see in the final image and compose your picture and adjust exposure accordingly. Figure out what you want to see or remember when you get home- what's important- and expose after you've decided what the picture will be.

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Thomas Roggenmoser, Vanessa Rhotz, Italy Photo: Tanya Shuman



# Video Tips from the Pros

## Professional Video Tools and Techniques

By Ammen Jordan

As video cameras become more compact and more affordable, it is becoming more and more common to see them on the river. And, with modern computer technology, it is becoming ever more feasible to edit and produce paddlesport videos.

There are a ton of video cameras on the market, and though some may seem attractive due to price or size, carefully compare your options to learn their specific strengths and weaknesses with regards to resolution, settings, and white balance. Remember, as your skills and interests as a videographer change, so will

your equipment needs. So invest in a video camera that will allow your technique to evolve.

Look for a video camera that has a 1/6-inch or larger CCD (Charged Coupling Device—a digital camera's light sensor) with a minimum of 340,000-pixel resolution. If you have an interest in publishing your work, look into three-chip (3-CCD) video cameras. Though slightly more expensive, 3-CCD cameras generally have a higher resolution (690,000-pixels or more), which results in richer colors and better low-light sensitivity. But, regardless of the camera you have, there are ways to utilize the settings to maximize the quality of your footage.

Initially you will probably find it convenient to use the "Automatic" exposure and focus settings, which are

standard on most cameras, but as your skills develop so will your interest in having "Manual" controls that will allow you to fine-tune your footage qualities.

That said, there are several general camera techniques, including "The Rule of Thirds," "Angles," and "Lead Room," that most would agree make for more quality footage.

The Rule of Thirds is the most important principle of good composition. To practice this, imagine a tick-tack-toe pattern over your viewfinder that creates four intersection points. Place your subject where the lines intersect, instead of in the center of the frame. Putting the subject off-center often makes the composition more dynamic and interesting. Remember, the most important part of the shot (the person, playspot or kayak) should not be







centered in the frame.

Remember also to be aware of the action. Always allow a little space between your subject's head, or the river action, and the top of the frame. This is called "head room."

And, when you're filming a moving subject, always allow some extra space in front of it as it moves forward. This is called "lead room."

Another good technique is to shoot from different angles. Changing angles provides a fresh perspective, and makes for more interesting footage. Try kneeling, or putting the camera on the ground; film




from a high point so you're above the action.

Also, combine a variety of shots including wide (river and surrounding scenery), medium (whole boat and paddler), and close-up shots (details, spray from the boat, whites of their eyes). It is also good to practice zooming between different shots so that you can avoid jerky motions, which make the shot look homemade.

Here are some techniques you can use on the river to help you keep your sanity when it comes time to edit: Always include narration—you won't believe how much you can forget between shooting and editing. At the beginning of every shot,



remember to introduce your location and perhaps tell why you are there and what you are doing. This helps later if you want to log your footage, find that certain shot, compile a trip report, or produce a travelogue.

Remember that video is an art form and what looks good to you is all that matters. So, above all, have fun with the camera, find your own personal shooting style and work to develop it. Try to stick to the rule of thirds for good composition, but remember: what you shoot, and how you shoot it, depends on your style. Like in life and in paddling, the more you put into videography, the better the result! 

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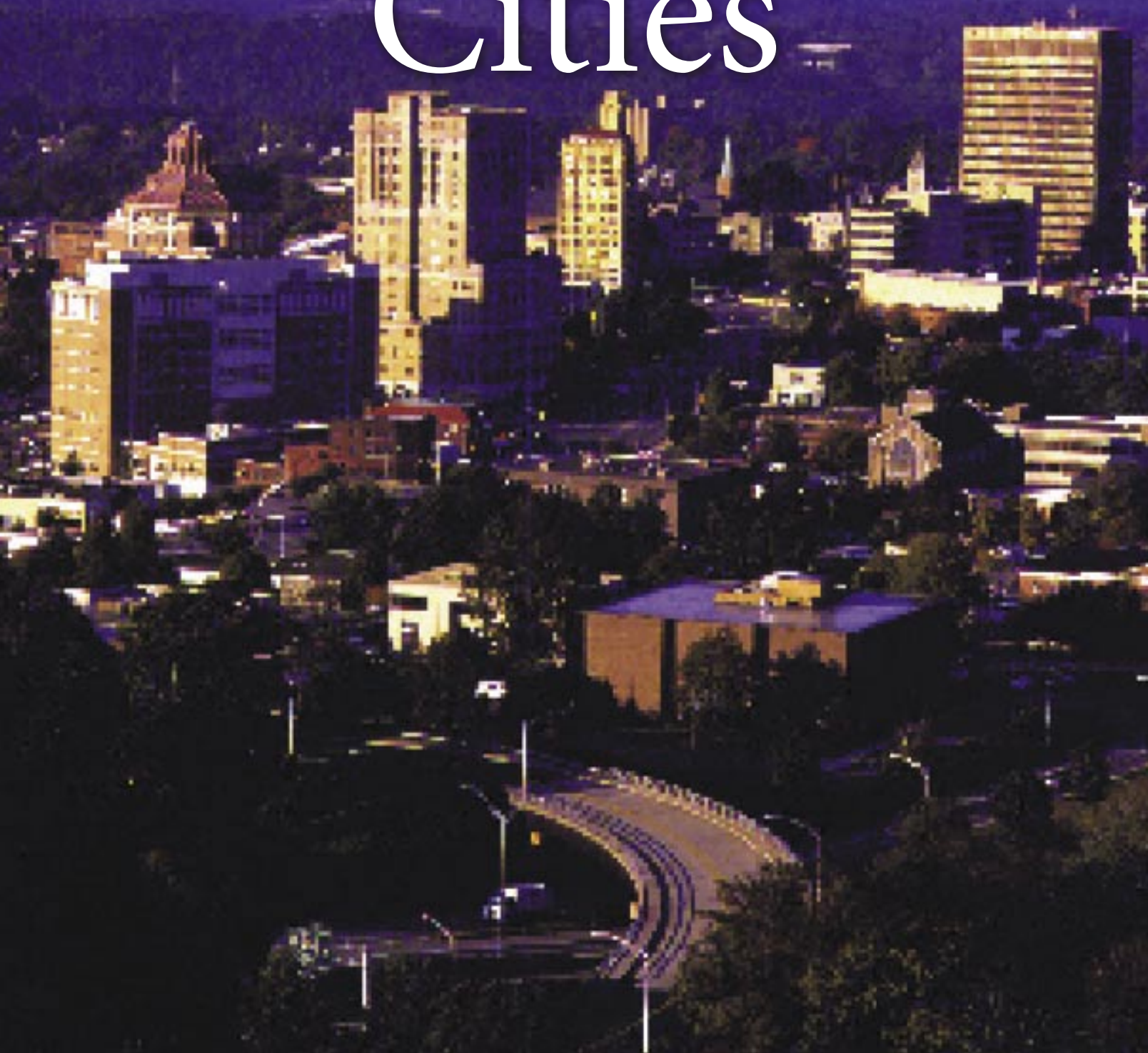








# Top U.S. Whitewater Cities





## Asheville, North Carolina

By Christie Dobson and Dixie Marree Prickett

Asheville is a hip, cultural, mountain town that is located at the confluence of the Swannanoa and French Broad Rivers. Its weather is typically cooler than the rest of the southeastern U.S. due to its elevation. With rainfall typically between 80 and 100 inches per year and mountains over 6,000 feet, western North Carolina has arguably the best whitewater in the United States.

Asheville is a busy little city with a fairly low cost of living. While you're waiting for the rains to kick in, there are 70,400 people to get to know, according to the 2004 Census. The town has been listed in various magazines, including *Rolling Stone* and has been voted as one of the top 10 places to live. The open and accepting character of the city is evidenced by the many lifestyles and beliefs that coexist peacefully here. The art and music scenes are especially active and Asheville has become a Mecca for potters, painters, musicians and outdoor enthusiasts. Other specialties can be found in the mountains, including some good ol' fashioned moonshine.

Asheville is home to the University of North Carolina at Asheville, a liberal arts college of about 3500 students in North Asheville. Asheville is also home to Warren Wilson College, located in the community

of Swannanoa about four miles east of the Asheville city limits.

When you start to think about paddling in the greater Asheville region, the first thing you should do is pick up a copy of Leland Davis' *North Carolina Rivers and Creeks* guidebook. This book is the "tell-all" guide to running any level of whitewater in the region. Within a short drive of Asheville there is a ton of Class II-V whitewater that is easy to access and runs year-round.

The classic Green Narrows boasts over 200 days a year of solid Class IV-V rapids in a remote and beautiful gorge just minutes from Highway 26.

The resident paddling community in Asheville is something to note as well. You have kayak legends and boat builders living here, like Shane Benedict and Woody Calloway (both R&D Specialists at Liquidlogic Kayaks) and Robert Pearson of Wavesport. Filmmaker John Grace



"All the art of living  
lies in a fine mingling  
of letting go and  
holding on."

Henry Ellis—  
English Explorer

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# Asheville, North Carolina

lives in town in between expeditions with North Carolina legend Al Gregory (aka Green River Al or just Al G). Waterfall seeker Pat Keller grew up on the rivers of Asheville and other extreme kayakers like Buffy Bailey Burge, Andrew Holcombe and Tommy Hilleke call Asheville their home. There is a great representation of influential whitewater women living in Asheville as well, including *Yoga for Paddlers*, Andria Baldwin; *Girls at Play* producer, Anna Levesque; World Class Academy's principal, Whitney Lonsdale; Maria Noakes of Needmore Adventures from Bryson City; and local girls Katie Hilleke, Jennifer Cribbs and Molly Malone who are always looking for a fun float on the French Broad or a raging trip down the Green.

No matter what your skill level is, Asheville has something to offer. Most of the runs are rain dependent, so knowing how to use the gauges is critical to getting on a good river. The outfitters in town know the gauges and often post them in their stores. Diamond Brand and Black Dome can let you know what's running as well as having all the gear you'll ever need (don't forget the guidebook!).

Within an hour and a half you can reach the following Class III runs:

Pigeon  
French Broad  
Lower Green  
Nolichucky

If you like some good hearty Class IV, some of our favorites are:

Big Creek  
Watauga  
Nolichucky (at high water)

If Class V is your forte, favorites of the local extreme crowd are:

Linville  
Raven's Fork  
Green River Narrows  
Toxaway

After the day is done, you can hear great music at the Orange Peel Social Club most every night. Hungry? Asheville is a great place to find good healthy food. With two big natural food stores in town,

Earthfare and Greenlife, you can shop for a meal or a week. If eating out is more your thing, check out this list of our favorite restaurants:

Mamacitas – Mexican burrito shop, excellent but cheap fresh food, veggie

friendly, \$1 PBRs, Margaritas available, free parking, \$4-8

Doc Cheys – Chinese-Asia style food with good ambiance, full bar, veggie friendly and always hopping, \$6-8

Salsas – Cribbean-Mexican style, really unusual but good dishes, very fresh, small

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Jack of the Wood – bar food, tons and tons of beer (micros), full bar, sandwiches, good burgers, \$5-12

Five Points – diner / grill, mainly for breakfast, super cheap, \$3-6

Thai Express – Thai / Asia food, in West Asheville, good food, big servings, not in downtown, \$5-10

Zambras – Tapas bar with great food, light meals and great drinks, more upscale but casual, great atmosphere, \$10-30

Old Europe – coffee and dessert, really good and all homemade, full coffee bar, small place with cozy atmosphere, \$3-10

All of these runs are within two hours of Asheville. The Gauley is only three and a half hours away. 

NF French Broad

WF French Broad

EF French Broad

Eastoe Creek

Tucker Creek

Upper North Fork

Looking Glass Creek

Davidson River

Courthouse Creek

Catawba

NF Catawba

EF Doe

Doe

Big East Fork

Little East Fork

WF Pigeon

Middle Prong of West Fork

Wilson Creek

Linville River

Watauga River

Elk River

Pigeon River

Big Creek

Hurricane Creek

Whitewater

Horsepasture River

Toxaway River

Tuckaseegee

Oconoluffnee

Bear Creek

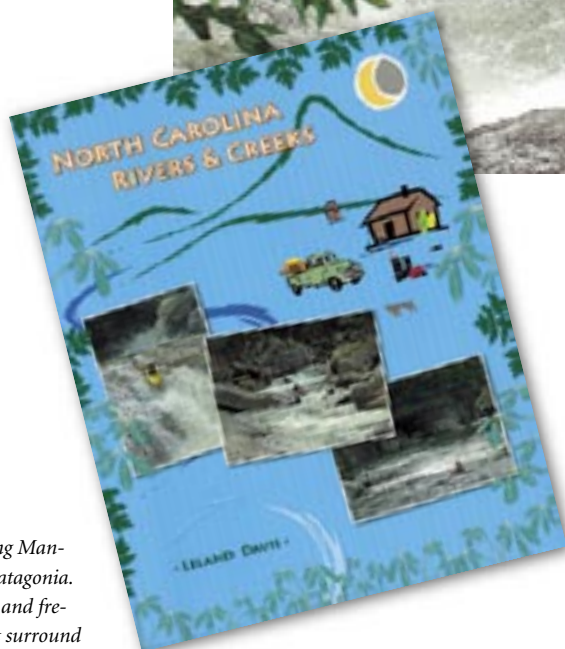
Silver Fork

West Prong



Above: John Pilson on Lower Big Creek

Photo by North Carolina Rivers & Creeks



North Carolina River & Creeks by Leland Davis  
available at [NCCreeks.com](http://NCCreeks.com)

Christie Dobson is Werner Paddle's Marketing Manager and Dixie Marree Prickett is a rep for Patagonia. Both ladies live in Asheville, North Carolina and frequent the Appalachian rivers and creeks that surround their home. They can often be found (together) on the Green River, their favorite local run.



# Washington D.C.

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## Premium Whitewater in the Nation's Capital

By Steve Schaefer

It is still dark at 5 am on a Wednesday as Eric pulls into the gravel parking lot at Angler's Inn, Maryland. As he drives down to the lower parking lot, the headlights of his jeep illuminate zombie-like figures loading boats and gear. By 5:30 these zombies will be transformed into energized kayakers doing cartwheels and enders on the Chutes of the Potomac at sunrise. After a couple of hours of surfing Eric is off to work, ready to tackle another day lobbying on Capitol Hill. Scenarios like this occur regularly on a ten-mile stretch of the Potomac River just upstream from Washington, DC (population 572,000).

Washington offers residents the amenities and benefits associated with living in a large east coast city. It offers a booming economy, a lively entertainment scene, and an extensive assortment of dining options. But what sets DC apart from other cities as a great place to live is the excellent access to year round premium whitewater.

As the nation's capital, the District draws a diverse group of people, businesses, and organizations that provide a vast array of competitive employment opportunities. The unemployment rate for the metropolitan area has remained under the national average with many counties in Virginia and Maryland enjoying unemployment rates below 3%. The cost of living continues to rise, but appears reasonable when compared to other east coast cities. Low unemployment and competitive salaries help offset the high cost of living and leaves residents with enough extra cash to enjoy entertainment, dining, and boating.

The bustling entertainment industry showcases seemingly endless options for music, sports and the arts. Music venues include intimate blues and jazz clubs on U Street, dance clubs in Dupont Circle, the National Symphony Orchestra at the Kennedy Center, and almost everything in between. With the myriad collegiate and professional athletic teams within the metropolitan area there is an enormous selection of top-notch spectator sports to choose from all year. And DC is a premier city for the arts with a throngs of museums, galleries, and theatres, the centerpiece being the museums that comprise the Smithsonian Institution.

Choices of restaurants in the city are almost as plentiful and diverse as the DC residents themselves. Diners enjoy cuisines from the four corners of the world, with prices ranging from dirt cheap to incredibly expensive. Whether it is Malaysian or Korean, Ethiopian or Moroccan, Brazilian

or Salvadorian, Afghani or Indian you'll find what you are looking for to satisfy your taste buds. One of our favorite stops after an afternoon on the Potomac is Cactus Cantina, where weary paddlers can find a few margaritas and some good Mexican food. To help navigate through the huge list of restaurants in DC, consider buying a restaurant guidebook like Zagat, which lists and ranks all the restaurants by cuisine and other helpful categories.

A strong job market with plenty of diverse entertainment and dining options help make Washington a great place to live, but it is the access to year round premium whitewater that will attract the paddler to the DC Metropolitan Area. The Potomac River is big and broad as it runs along the southern border of DC. While it is a hotbed of activity for rowing teams, sea kayakers, and motorboats it provides little interest to the whitewater enthusiast. The placidity of the Potomac in DC gives no indication of the whitewater challenges and beauty that will reward the individual who ventures a few miles upstream.

In approximately a ten-mile stretch of the Potomac from Great Falls to Little Falls the river has something to offer each whitewater paddler regardless of interest or skill level. This section of the Potomac begins with the impressive and intimidating Great Falls (Class V+) then flows through Mather Gorge (Class I-IV) and on past several access points to the river before culminating at Little Falls (Class II-IV) and ending in the tidal Potomac. Typically, paddlers don't run the entire ten miles, but instead utilize the many put-in and take-out options to customize their trip.

In the three decades since Tom McEwan, Wick Walker and Dan Schnurrenberger made the inaugural run down the majestic and unforgiving Great Falls, the Falls have lured thousands of top paddlers from around the country to test their mettle on

*Time to skip out for a park n' play session on the Potomac  
and be back before the filibuster's over*

Photo by Bobbette Schaefer





# Washington D.C.

what are considered the steepest and most spectacular fall line rapids of any eastern river. The falls, which drop about 76 feet in less than half a mile, are so beautiful and awe inspiring that they attract millions of visitors each year to the observation decks of Great Falls National Park, Virginia and the C & O Canal National Historic Park, Great Falls Area, Maryland. Numerous lines have been run through the falls, each offering their own unique way to punish, pummel, bruise or break the unwary paddler. Any paddler considering a run down Great Falls should first familiarize herself with the various dangers presented

as well as the guidelines for running the falls. Unfortunately, Great Falls has been the scene of two kayaker fatalities in recent years. Great Falls is merciless to the paddler who finds herself off line, so it is critical that any individual considering a run down the falls accurately assesses all perils presented by the rapid as well as their ability to avoid these hazards.

Below Great Falls, paddlers are in for a treat as they enter the sheer cliffs of Mather Gorge (Class I – IV). The gorge itself is only about two miles long, but it is the most popular and busiest part of the Potomac for whitewater paddling. Besides challenging the intermediate river runner with surging and boiling eddies, strong crosscurrents, and big waves, the gorge also offers some of the best squirt

and play spots on the Potomac. A few of the abundant play spots present park n' play options including O-Deck, Rocky Island, and the Chutes which is at the end of Mather Gorge. The Chutes, the main play spot on the Potomac River, is the home to the Maryland Chute-Out, a series of freestyle competitions held the last Thursday of the month from April through September. After the Chutes, the Potomac eases up a bit while still providing some good surfing and squirting opportunities on down to the Lock 10 take-out.

From Lock 10 to Lock 6 the Potomac is mostly flat water with a deadly river-wide low head dam thrown in for good measure. Consequently, this section of the river is not frequently paddled. Most paddlers running Great Falls or Mather Gorge will

*DC boaters have a variety of whitewater in their backyards*

Photo by Bobbette Schaefer



take out at Lock 10 or at one of the many access points further upstream, while those interested in running Little Falls generally access the Potomac from Locks 5 or 6. Individuals who decide to run this section of the river need to stay alert for the upcoming dam and must portage around it. Several paddlers, apparently unaware of the dangers presented by the dam, have perished here in past years. News reports indicate that a raft remained stuck in the hydraulic below the dam for over a week before being removed by boaters ... not a place you want to be.

Just below the low head dam paddlers enjoy nice Class II-III wave trains and surf waves that lead up to Little Falls rapid (Class II-IV). This is the last significant drop on the Potomac before the river flattens out along the DC border on its way to the Chesapeake Bay. The difficulty of this rapid is not only determined by the water level and chosen line but also by the tides as the rapid dumps into the tidal Potomac.

Lock 6 is the most popular spot to access Little Falls and it also happens to be the location of a whitewater slalom course. The slalom course is on the feeder canal, which is directly below the low head dam on river left. This is an excellent training ground for the horde of competitive racers who call DC home and is a great place for novice and intermediate paddlers to develop their skills and build confidence.


The majority of paddlers access the Potomac from Maryland. There are at least seven commonly used access points for the Potomac in Maryland. All of these access areas provide ample free parking, with the exception of the two National Parks at Great Falls, which charge entrance fees. The Maryland side of the Potomac also provides the paddler with access to the C&O Canal that runs alongside the Potomac for 184.5 miles from Georgetown, DC to Cumberland, Maryland. By taking advantage of the canal, several sections of the Potomac can be run without need of a shuttle. Simply complete a loop by way of the river, canal and the accompanying gravel towpath.

As you make your first run through Mather's Gorge you will get a glimpse of how much Washingtonians enjoy their outdoors. You'll share the towpath with cyclists, joggers, hikers, fishermen, picnickers, and wildlife. Although you're only a few miles from DC, it is a rare day on the water when you don't happen upon a great blue heron, eagle or deer. Now that you are in the gorge don't be surprised if you are not alone. Besides the other boaters, you may be sharing the gorge with hikers enjoying the trails that run along the top of the gorge while rock climbers work the gorge walls.

Those willing to brave the winter cold may want to check out the artificial whitewater course at the Mirant Power Plant in Dickerson, Maryland about 45 minutes from the District. The whitewater course provides paddlers with a little respite from the cold; the water in the course comes through the power plant where it is warmed by the coal-fired generators before leaving the outflow canal at the top of the course. The turbulent eddys and sticky holes are also used as a training ground for whitewater slalom racers and to prepare river runners for challenging rivers like the Upper Youghiogheny and Big Sandy (Class IV+, about three to three and a half hours from DC). To utilize the Dickerson Whitewater course you must register with the Bethesda Center of Excellence, which oversees and manages access to the site.

Every year the robust paddling community gathers to showcase the grandeur of the Potomac River at the Potomac Whitewater Festival. The festival hosts numerous races and events, the grand daddy of them all being the Great Falls Race that kicks off the festival. Spectators on the observation decks are treated to impressive displays of skill, speed, and courage, as some of the top kayakers in the country appear to effortlessly navigate the various terminal obstacles encountered on the way down the regal falls. In addition to the Great Falls Race the festival also hosts squirt and freestyle competitions, as well as slalom, attainment and down river races. And no festival would be complete without an awards ceremony and party on Saturday

night. This year's festival is scheduled for July 15 and 16.

When weighing options on where to live, we're usually left with balancing between an urban lifestyle or enjoying the benefits of the great outdoors. Fortunately, for those of us who have ended up in the DC metro area we've found the best of both worlds. For year round accessible whitewater close to a major city center, the Potomac River and DC are unmatched in the United States. Washington has a booming economy with low unemployment, plenty to keep you entertained and enough restaurants to keep you well fed. I have merely scratched the surface in describing the city and the Potomac. To get the full picture, you'll need to become a local yourself. 



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# Chico/Oroville, California



By Dave Steindorf

Ten years ago it was unlikely that northern California cities Chico or Oroville would have popped up on a list of great paddling towns. Chico was known as home to one of the best party schools in the country and Oroville was on the map mostly for having the tallest dam in the US in its backyard. Beer bongs and big dams are not typically related to great whitewater. However, even ten or 20 years ago the runs out the backdoor of these two cities were the stuff of California whitewater legend. Two of the crown jewels of California whitewater are the Bald Rock Canyon (Class V+) and Devils Canyon (Class V, multi-day) sections of the Middle Fork Feather. Any boater who owns, or has browsed a copy of the Lars Holbeck & Chuck Stanley boating Bible (*The Best Whitewater in California*) has read repeatedly the accounts of the epic first descents on these runs. The granite scenery and bedrock rapids are

an amazing spectacle for any who have ventured through these canyons. However, these are only two of many jewels in the crown.

Only a stone's throw away is the North Fork Yuba with the classic Goodyear's Bar run (Class IV) and the boutique creeks of Pauley (Class V upper and IV lower sections) and Lavezzola (Class IV). Pauley Creek offers boaters a perfect introduction to running clean waterfalls. Another stone's throw to the south, you will find the South Yuba with the classic 49 to Bridgeport section. This run is nothing short of Class V heaven, with a multitude of clean, fun rapids. North of Chico you will find the multi-day lava canyons of Deer and Mill Creeks. These are remarkable journeys from high up in the Sierra/Cascade Mountains, all the way down to the Sacramento Valley. All of the

runs listed here are extremely high quality and, best of all, they're less than an hour and a half from Chico or Oroville!

With gas at three bucks a gallon maybe an hour and a half is too far to drive. Need something a little closer to home? Butte Creek is less than 30 minutes from downtown Chico and the lower section offers one of the prettiest Class II/III runs in the state. If you need more gnarr than that, the Upper Butte Creek run is a 35-minute drive to the put-in and offers not only Class V whitewater, but also has one of the largest spring salmon runs on the west coast. Need more runs that can be done in time to catch the early show? Check out one of the many sections of the West Branch of the Feather. The early river explorers missed this amazing drainage in the 1980s. In the early 90s the first ill-fated trips down the West Branch ended in

Photo by Eric Petlock

character building, poison oak encrusted hikes out of the canyon at high water. After further exploration and the discovery of better take-outs, the Naked Lady Run (Class IV), named for a sculpture of a nude woman carved in the rock near the put-in, has become a staple for area locals. In 1997, after scouting the lowest run on the West Branch Feather on foot, Arn Terry and I made the first descent of what has become known as Ben and Jerry's Gorge. This relatively short four-mile run contains hard Class V rapids and two vertical-walled gorges. This unique canyon is where the Cascades and the Sierras meet, giving rise to an amazing array of geologic features such as beautiful green serpentine.


Several other runs have been uncovered in the West Branch drainage, including Big Kimsheew Creek, a big waterfall run that was knocked off by Scott Lindgren and the Kerns in 1998. These runs have drawn the likes of Alex Nicks, Taylor Robertson, Dan Gavere, Tanya Shuman and Rusty Sage. In fact, both Taylor and Rusty found the paddling to be so good in the Chico / Oroville area that Rusty came to Chico State to get his Engineering degree and Taylor lives here when he is not off on other paddling adventures around the world—more proof that Chico and Oroville are two of the best whitewater cities in the country.

The only problem is that by July, even in the wettest of years, the water is all gone. This is why boaters in California get that crazed, "too many rivers, not enough time" look every spring. Until five years ago, the only options for paddlers in the Chico/Oroville region were dreaming of next year's runoff or long drives to the South Fork American or Trinity Rivers. To be a truly great whitewater city, you must have year round whitewater. A few frantic months of whitewater—even if it is some of the best in the world—is not enough to get people to think of your town as a whitewater destination.

All of that changed in 2002 because of the releases negotiated by American Whitewater on the North Fork Feather. The Feather, unlike most California

Rivers, had boatable flows all year long before the many dams were built along its length. By returning some of this water to the river once a month, AW has brought year-round whitewater back to the Feather. The Cresta run has the granite domes and great Class IV rapids that are hard to find in the summer months in California. The Tobin section of the Rock Creek reach could be one of the best miles of whitewater anywhere, with more than twenty rapids in a single mile. These smooth granite drops are the stuff that California dreams are made of and with the higher base flows as part of the new license Rock Creek is boatable 24/7. Need more? In the next few years the Belden and Poe reaches of the Feather will be coming on line to add to the summer boating opportunity, all less than an hour's drive from Chico and Oroville.

Still not convinced these are great paddling towns? Last year AW conducted flow studies on the South Fork Feather as part of South Feather Water and Power's relicensing of their projects (see "Another Jewel on the Feather River," May/June 2006 *American Whitewater*). One of these reaches below the Little Grass Valley Reservoir is a quality class IV/V run that has boatable releases every fall. Just to cap it all off, as part of the Oroville settlement agreement, AW and other groups will study the possibility of building a whitewater park in Oroville that would likely be the longest in the world. What else could you possibly want in a whitewater town? How about good cheap beer? Turns out we have that too. Sierra Nevada Brewery is right here in Chico. One of their cold and frosty ones is a great way to punctuate an outstanding day of paddling.

California granite, classic year round boating, good beer ... so what are you waiting for? Living and paddling in Chico and Oroville has always been good—now it may be the best anywhere! 





# Johnstown, Pennsylvania



*Rafters enjoy an exciting trip down the Stonycreek, just minutes outside Johnstown.*

Photos by Johnstown Convention & Visitors Bureau

*By Dave Hurst*

A few years from now, you'll be wishing you had moved to this southwestern Pennsylvania community in 2006.

You'll regret you didn't move here before the Stonycreek River became recognized as one of the outstanding paddling spots in the East, when all those well-situated homes were purchased at jaw-dropping prices by your more-perceptive friends.

Johnstown's been on paddlers' itineraries for years as a great place for late-winter and early-spring action. Here there's an

ala carte menu of water choices: Best known is the Stonycreek River, which flows through a five-mile, Class III-IV upper gorge and a six-mile, Class III-IV canyon before dropping off the Allegheny Plateau and emptying into the Conemaugh River another ten miles downstream. But, depending upon the day and the flow, the Stony's tributaries—Benscreek, Clear Shade, Dark Shade, Paint, Quemahoning, Roaring Fork and Shade Creeks—offer water ranging from Class II to V. Altogether, there are 10 rivers and streams, ranging from class I to V, within 20 minute's drive of Johnstown. Within 90 minutes' drive, your whitewater choices include the Cheat, Big Sandy, Little Sandy, and Youghiogheny (Top, Upper and Lower) Rivers.

Greenhouse Park, just south of the city,

is becoming boater-central. For four years now it has been the festival site for the Stonycreek Rendezvous, which draws hundreds of paddlers annually for races, a freestyle competition, rafting and good times. But by the end of 2006, Greenhouse will also be the place for enthusiasts wanting to "park and play" in Stonycreek Whitewater Park, a 300-yard series of rapids slated to be built this fall.

Efforts also are underway to arrange for regular, weekend water releases from the Quemahoning Dam just a couple of river-miles above the Stonycreek Canyon. The 12 billion-gallon Que originally was a water supply for Bethlehem Steel Corp., which sold the 900-acre reservoir to the Cambria-Somerset Authority in 2000. Now Quemahoning Lake quickly is becoming an outstanding public



*Visitors to Johnstown's Inclined Plane can ride a trolley-style car to a vista more than 500 feet above the city*

recreation facility, and if financing can be arranged to install release mechanisms (and a synergistic hydroelectric generator), regular releases could be guaranteeing excellent whitewater in the canyon year-round within a couple of years.

Paddlers and outfitters are sure to follow—and they should find a warm welcome. The local Benscreek Canoe Club has spent the past quarter-century enjoying Johnstown area waters and boasting area attributes to the national paddling community. The BCC is the group developing the whitewater park and is working with several organizations on the weekend-release project. The Siamese-twin communities of Benson and Hollsopple, situated between the dam and the canyon, already are preparing for water-recreationists with community

planning, guided by the Conemaugh Valley Conservancy and planners from Ball State University in Muncie, IN. Home improvements are being made and property values already are rising—just in anticipation.

Beyond the diverse paddling opportunities it offers, the reason Greater Johnstown belongs on this list of the best whitewater cities can be described in one word: “opportunity.” Here, you have the opportunity to paddle where you live and to live where you work. Your put-in is within 15 minutes of your driveway. So is your place of employment. A robust Defense subcontracting sector and a growing biotechnology community are providing good-paying jobs for qualified people in engineering, information-technology and the biological sciences.

If you’re an entrepreneur, this is a community redefining itself; which means opportunities to fill needs that are just becoming recognized.

Property here is not only readily available but incredibly reasonable. Scores of suburban ranches on spacious lots within 15 minutes of the Stony Canyon can be purchased for less than \$150,000. Land within the Stonycreek River valley can be found for less than \$4,000 an acre. If you’re creative and handy with a hammer, older fixer-uppers in the river towns are priced well-below \$50,000. The core City of Johnstown is seeing old upper-level office space converted into \$100,000 lofts, while an adjacent neighborhood is becoming home to a biotechnology complex and an artists’ district.



# Johnstown, Pennsylvania

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Some quick facts:  
The Johnstown  
MSA (Metropolitan  
Statistical Area)  
totaled 232,000  
in population,  
ranking 155th in  
the 2000 Census.  
Its geographic area  
comprises Cambria  
and Somerset counties  
on the Allegheny  
Plateau, which  
divides southwestern  
and south-central  
Pennsylvania.  
Scenically beautiful  
with rugged,  
hardwooded ridges  
and tableland farms,  
this is an area rich in  
natural and cultural  
heritage.

Seven Springs, a nationally known, four-season resort, is nearby. So is a portion of the Great Allegheny Passage, a rail-trail running 125 miles from Pittsburgh, PA, to Frostburg, MD. The 70-mile Laurel Highlands Hiking Trail extends from Johnstown to Ohiopyle. Forbes State Forest is home to dozens of mountain bike and cross-country ski trails. And there's also a network of themed on-road bicycle trails.

A look at Johnstown's history explains this opportunity. The community first flourished as a port on the Pennsylvania Main Line Canal—it was actually the put-in/take-out for canal boats lifted over the Allegheny Front on an elaborate system of motorized inclines. Visitors can learn about that 19th-century engineering feat at the Allegheny Portage Railroad National Historic Site.

The canal, and the Pennsylvania Railroad that replaced it, led to the development of iron, steel and coal industries that tapped the region's rich mineral resources. A heritage discovery center in Johnstown and a coal heritage center in neighboring Windber tell those stories. Likewise, a growing network of transformed rail-trails are interpreting the region's history while offering spectacular river-valley scenery to bikers, runners and hikers. One example is the Path of the Flood, currently being developed, which follows the Little Conemaugh River valley through the Staple Bend Tunnel, the first railroad tunnel in the United States.


Even 125 years ago, this area was a natural playground. Andrew Carnegie, Andrew Mellon, Henry Clay Frick and other Gilded Age industrialists all owned summer retreats on the mountain above Johnstown. It was their South Fork Fishing and Hunting Club dam that failed and caused the infamous Great Johnstown Flood in 1889, killing more than 2,000 people. Today, you can experience that dramatic story at the Johnstown Flood National Memorial and the Johnstown Flood Museum.

Between the 1870s and the 1970s, Johnstown traded its verdant charm for economic well-being. Hungry mills drew immigrant workers, consumed natural resources and poured out steel products and waste. Coal mines dotted the landscape, feeding America's industrial machine, attracting immigrants to little

patch communities, fouling the landscape and its streams. By the 1980s, however, the community's manufacturing base had crumbled. While that meant massive unemployment and hardships for the local communities, it also meant renewal for the natural environment.

In the 25 years since, Johnstown has struggled to redefine itself. Through the influence of a local congressman, U.S. Rep. John P. Murtha, Defense-related companies and biotechnology firms have located or emerged here. Local groups have harnessed public and foundation funds to improve water quality in streams, create land and water-based trails, and develop river-based recreation initiatives.

Johnstown is returning to its natural roots and redefining what quality of life can mean in a rust belt community: small, friendly, and family-oriented; offering competitive salaries in growth industries, a low cost of living, ample amenities, a variety of recreational opportunities and—very soon now—excellent year-round whitewater boating.

Now you know. And don't think that a few years from now we won't say "We told you so." 

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# Boise, Idaho



By Ambrose Tuscano

Boise is no big city, but residents could be forgiven for thinking of it in that light—especially when you consider how far you would have to travel to find a bigger one.

With nearly half a million people in its metro area (and growing—fast!), Boise has most of the benefits of a city (entertainment, higher education, jobs, diverse eateries) without all the crime

and traffic.

In recent years, Boise has consistently been ranked as one of the top US cities by several independent magazines and websites. These rankings take into account the cost of living, job opportunities, safety, climate, and other indices that make a city a good home. However, Boise has one attribute that most of the rankings fail to note: its fantastic whitewater resources.

Within an hour of downtown lies the paddling Mecca known as The Payettes. Together the branches of the Payette River (South, Middle and North) form one of the most exciting and diverse year-round paddling locations in the country. Within an hour and a half of Boise, paddlers can reach such classic sections as the South Fork Canyon (IV), the Staircase section of the South Payette (III-IV), the Main

*The warm water of Lake Cascade provide flows for the North Payette (Carbarton and North Fork runs) and Main Payette all summer long*

Photo by Megan Seifert

Payette (II-III), the Cabarton section of the North Payette (III+), and the North Fork (V). This is by no means a comprehensive list, simply those sections of river that have reliable flows ALL SUMMER LONG.

The epicenter of this whitewater madness is Banks, Idaho, a sleepy little town on a very busy two-lane highway. Banks serves as the take-out for the North Fork (Lower Five Run) and South Fork Staircase section and also the put-in for the Main Payette. Therefore, on any summer weekend you're likely to find a collection of paddlers meeting friends or fishing for shuttles at

the Banks Store or in the large parking lot across the river from Highway 55. The only problem is, it can be hard for newcomers to guess who might be looking for a playful run down Staircase, a mellow day on the Main or a white-knuckle marathon on the North Fork—sure proof that you can't judge a boater by her/his gear.

Because of all this easily accessible and diverse whitewater, Boise is a great location for people looking to get into the sport to learn, practice and perfect their abilities. For first-time paddlers, there are a couple of lesser-known runs, the Lower Middle Payette (which does dry up late in summer), Swirly Canyon of the South Fork and the Lower Main which make for an excellent progression from low volume Class I-II to bigger water Class II to high volume Class II. Paddlers who build their skills on these easier runs can later transition to the Main Payette, the Cabarton and Staircase.

By the time paddlers have tested themselves on the South Fork Canyon, and the Deadwood and Middle Fork Payette sections during spring runoff, they may be at an impasse. Surely the biggest gap in difficulty that the whiteners provide is between these runs and the North Fork. This is not to say that the Canyon doesn't have its share of hair-raising Class IV (especially at spring flows), the Middle Fork isn't great creekin' and that the Deadwood isn't, well, woody, but rather that there are few runs anywhere that prepare one for the North Fork. My guess is that some of the only people moving out of the Boise area today are Class V paddlers fleeing the psychological pressure that comes from knowing this run is thundering away less than an hour from their doors. I have never met anyone who has run the North Payette and doesn't hold the river in high regard, bordering on outright fear.

Outside of the Payettes, Boise residents can check out the forks of the nearby

Boise River, featuring primarily Class III runs. Further afield, there is the wild (and scenic) Salmon River drainage. The main difference between this mighty river and the Payette is that the Salmon runs free of dams and, therefore, its flows are determined almost entirely by snowmelt. Fortunately the forks of the Salmon drain some high, broad mountain ranges, and flows on the Middle and Main Salmon often remain boatable into September.


Other runs present smaller windows of opportunity, but many are worth springtime pilgrimages. Perhaps the best example is the remote South Salmon drainage, a three and a half hour drive from Boise. This area contains several gems, including the Secesh, the South Salmon Canyon—a multi-day Class IV draining into the Main Salmon, and the East Fork of the South Salmon—at high water, the closest thing to the North Payette I've ever seen.

Of course, the Middle Fork of the Salmon, running through the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness, is perhaps the best multi-day river trip outside the Grand Canyon. For residents of Boise, this stunning remote river is only mildly inconvenient to set shuttle for—but it's always worth it. Whether it's the exciting Class IV whitewater, the beauty of the its remote canyons, or the plethora of hot springs along the way, the Middle Fork is not a bad river to have in your extended backyard. And for those looking to mix some creekin' into their wilderness experience, there are a handful of alternate put-ins for the Middle Fork that offer more technical whitewater that eventually drains into the Middle Salmon. These runs include the Rapid River (V), Loon Creek (V), Camas Creek (V), Monumental Creek (III-IV) and Big Creek (IV). There is probably no other drainage in the lower 48 that boasts so many unique multi-day trips as the Salmon River.

While residents of Boise are certainly

as blessed with whitewater as anyone in the country, the city itself is not half bad either. Boise boasts Boise State University, a lively, rejuvenated downtown, many job opportunities in both the public and private sectors and a ruggedly beautiful desert setting. In the winter, residents can ski and ride just 20 miles outside of Boise at Bogus Basin Mountain. In the spring, summer and fall there are fantastic cycling opportunities, both on and off pavement, just beyond the city limits. In addition to physical activities, the city of Boise offers a series of free outdoor concerts running throughout the summer. Boise also possesses several museums, a zoo, an opera and its own orchestra.

Boise is unequivocally a new city. While it has a rich history—from the Paiute and Shoshone who lived in the area before white settlers arrived, to the gold miners who came in 1863—as recently as 1960, the population of Boise was only 34,000. Boise has been the capitol of Idaho (then a territory) since 1865, but only recently have people begun to flock to the city in substantial numbers.

I have met lifelong residents of the city who wistfully recollect the small-town Boise of their childhood. While I am sympathetic to the shock they must experience at seeing their city grow by an order of magnitude during their lifetimes, I also think that if *Forbes* only knew how good the whitewater opportunities in Boise were, it'd be ranked the best city every year. 



# Stewardship Updates

By Tom O'Keefe

## Providing Water for Fish and Paddlers on the Green River, WA

American Whitewater is working with Friends of the Green River, local affiliate clubs, and business partners to implement a Settlement Agreement signed in 1995 to address recreation and water conservation issues associated with construction of a new water supply pipeline on the Green River. Water began flowing through the pipeline this past fall and with it implementation of the Settlement began.

The Settlement includes a number of provisions to benefit the Green River and whitewater paddlers, including implementation of conservation

measures, improved and additional boater access, assistance with improving flows for fish and boating, and funds to study flow needs and benefits of river recreation on the Green River.

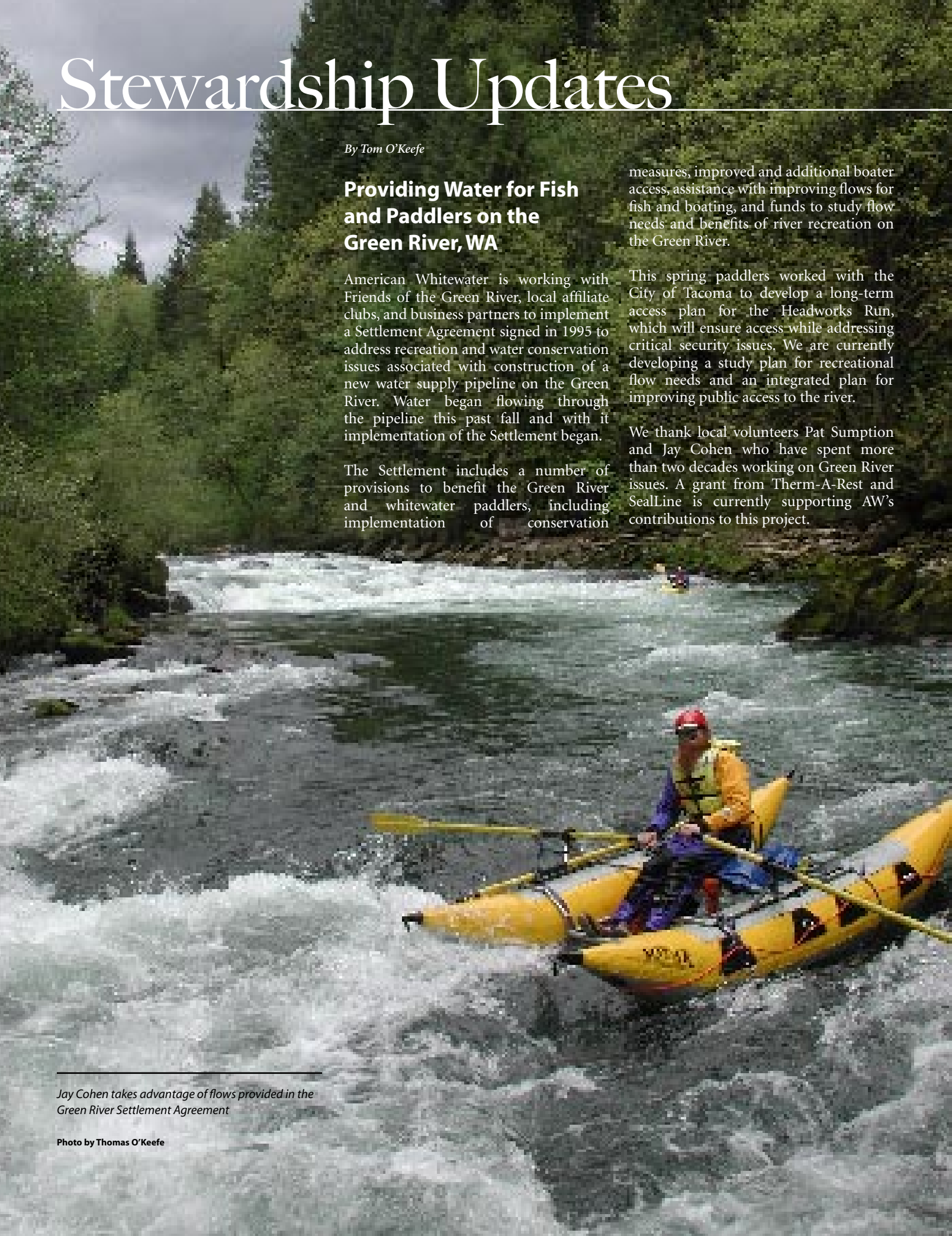
This spring paddlers worked with the City of Tacoma to develop a long-term access plan for the Headworks Run, which will ensure access while addressing critical security issues. We are currently developing a study plan for recreational flow needs and an integrated plan for improving public access to the river.

We thank local volunteers Pat Sumption and Jay Cohen who have spent more than two decades working on Green River issues. A grant from Therm-A-Rest and SealLine is currently supporting AW's contributions to this project.

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*Jay Cohen takes advantage of flows provided in the Green River Settlement Agreement*

Photo by Thomas O'Keefe



## Supreme Court Issues Unanimous Ruling: Hydropower Dams Must Obey Clean Water Act

By Thomas O'Keefe


In a 9-0 decision, the Supreme Court upheld the ability of states to protect water quality under the Clean Water Act at hydropower dams. SD Warren, a South African company with dams along the Presumpscot River in Maine, had attempted to circumvent the state approval process required under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act. They attempted to make the absurd argument that water released from a dam did not constitute a discharge and their dams were therefore exempt from state certification.

In a simple common-sense opinion delivered by Justice Souter, the Court held:

The issue in this case is whether operating a dam to produce hydroelectricity “may result in any discharge into the navigable waters” of the United States. If so, a federal license under §401 of the Clean Water Act requires state certification that water protection laws will not be violated. We hold that a dam does raise a potential for discharge, and state approval is needed.

Congress passed the Clean Water Act to “restore and maintain” the integrity of our nation’s waters to achieve “water quality

which provides for the protection and propagation of fish, shellfish, and wildlife and provides for recreation in and on the water.” With the Court’s decision, the Clean Water Act will remain one of the key tools in our toolbox to help restore rivers for fish, wildlife, and paddlers on rivers impacted by hydropower dams.

AW made a significant contribution to the “friend of the court” brief explaining the technical basis for how dams impact water quality. We give a big thanks to David Mears at the Vermont Law School who was lead author on our brief and the more than four dozen organizations who signed on. Many of our members stepped forward with significant contributions to fund our efforts and got on the phone to help us rally critical support for this case. 

*Paddlers at the put-in for the Cresta Run on the North Fork Feather, a river that was restored through the hydro relicensing process*

Photo by Thomas O'Keefe





# The Sate of Freestyle

## My Son is Learning the McNasty???: Playboating in Our Backyard

By Susan Doran

It all started when I was watching “The Food Guy” on our local TV station. He was preparing an elaborate picnic lunch and gave a few suggestions for local picnic areas. One included a secret path to the Whitewater Park in Pittsford, New York. There, he said, you could be entertained as you ate. I skipped the fancy menu directions, slapped together a few sandwiches, grabbed my boys and headed off for a picnic.

Who knew that there was a whole new world right around the corner from where we live? The Lock 32 Whitewater Park turned out to provide great entertainment for a lunchtime picnic ... and much more. My oldest son, Danny, age 10 at the time, was instantly intrigued. Not being from a big “sports” family, I was surprised when he said, “Where do I sign up?”

Three years later, our family schedules our lives around kayaking. I would have never thought I would be happy knowing that my son was learning how to do something at the age of 13 with the word “nasty” in it. When I pick him up from Lock 32, he jumps in the car and says, “Yeah ... great night! Paul did a Phonics Monkey, the McNasty, and a Bread n’ Butter. Andy did the coolest Loop and Kurt was cart wheeling forever.” I don’t even flinch anymore when he says his dream is to learn the McNasty. He is more comfortable with the college age guys at the lock than he is with his classmates at school.

I thought that you needed a big river or ocean nearby to get into kayaking. Not so though. Located in Pittsford, just five



13-year-old Danny Ooran, cartwheeling in Horton’s Hole

Photo by Norman Deets II

minutes from our house, Lock 32 is an artificial whitewater park constructed on a spillway off the Erie Canal. The course itself has a set of squirt lines, two waves and two holes. The final hole, Horton’s Hole, enables lots of vertical moves and loops (front flips). Best of all, there is no need to call the gauges or pray for rain the night before you kayak because Lock 32 has consistent water all summer long (I laugh as I type this because, even though I don’t paddle, I actually understand all this terminology).


I am amazed at the camaraderie among paddlers of all ages. I have gone to pick up Danny and found Norm and Tony with all their tools out adjusting Danny’s boat; they spend hours teaching him tips on this or that. We have gotten emails from Andy with photos attached telling him to lean forward more to throw a better loop. When he wanted to buy his first boat, one of the Lock 32 regulars offered to pick it up at the Deerfield Festival and drive

it back early so Danny could use it that weekend. Everyone helps anyone ... show up without your paddle and someone will pull one out of their truck and hand it to you.

As a mother, I couldn’t be happier that Danny has found this passion and also such a great community. Every night you can find the regular characters at the lock along with a few others who have heard of it by word of mouth. Andy, the lock manager, fits in the paperwork when he’s not working on the course or perfecting his shake n’ bake. Norm defies all laws of physics and rules of kayaking by fitting his big boned body into a not-so-big kayak. He is able to stay in the hole under almost any conditions. Paul is crazy enough to try just about anything, and of course, Danny is a kid who is striving to learn everything from everyone. To see all ages from 10 to 66 years old enjoying playboating together is a riot (no pun intended); no one is too young, old, or inexperienced to fit in at Lock 32.

I can honestly say that not a day goes by that my son doesn't mention something about kayaking. Whether it is actually boating, checking the online message board, writing a school report, figuring out how to earn money for his next boat or getting a new Wavesport video in the mail. Recently Danny wrote in a paper for school:

Lock 32 is not just "that place where I kayak," it is like my home. In the summer I probably spend more time on the water of Lock 32 than I do in my own bed. Three years ago I was just a kid that had a normal life, with normal friends, and a normal sport. After I started one day at the Lock, I was hooked. Now, my life revolves around kayaking.

Kayaking is unlike any sport because you rely on yourself. Lock 32 is the perfect place to learn and push yourself as far as your abilities will limit. The Lock has the perfect combination of everyday water, waves, holes, eddies, and ...most of all, people. 

*This year the Lock 32 Whitewater Course will hold the Second Annual Lockapalooza on Saturday August 19th. Last year's event was a smashing success with 25 participants and 100 spectators and several generous sponsors. This year we'll make the party even bigger and better.*

See these websites for more information:  
<http://www.flowpaddlers.org/users/andy/lkplza/lkplza.htm>  
<http://www.americanwhitewater.org/rivers/id/4034>

## Wet House

*Reviewed by Mike Hoffman*

The new paddling film, *Wet House*, is a refreshingly introspective movie that focuses on the lives of its characters rather than the names of the rivers they run. In fact, one of the first things you notice watching this film is that no rivers are identified. Granted, it is easy to pick out some of the more obvious locations, but I think producer Ammen Jordan left the names out so that viewers can focus on the boaters and the stories they tell. The film mates great whitewater shots with intriguing interviews and soliloquies, from both the boaters and their family and friends.

*Wet House* takes you inside the lives of some of the big name boaters you have seen in whitewater videos for years (Nikki Kelly, Jimmy Blakeney, and Steve Fischer, to name a few) as well as some new huckers. After a nifty bit of camera-work takes you through the opening credits, the film opens with one of these young guns, Bryan Kirk. I haven't seen this guy before, but after watching him throw some of the biggest, cleanest wave moves ever put to celluloid, I can tell you he's going to be showing up in videos for a long time to come. More than once I actually shouted out in disbelief, "NO WAY!" as Kirk looped into orbit and brought it down smooth. The mellow tunes in the background perfectly match the focused, controlled motions on the screen; this guy is style personified.

While it's great to see the new faces, the majority of the film focuses on folks you have seen for years. Nikki Kelly is the first lady of big water boating, and it's great to hear some of her female "mates" talk about how she inspires them to keep pushing the boundaries of what women—or anyone—can do in a boat. However, Ms. Kelly also makes a perceptive and humble statement about knowing your limits and recognizing that walking a rapid when you're not feeling it is an integral part of kayaking at the highest level (or any level for that matter).



Steve Fischer echoes this statement later in the movie, and by the end of the film I realized that *Wet House* is a delightfully mature film. The soundtrack doesn't have any heavy metal or hard-core rap; instead, a good combination of mellow and punchy tunes backs up the gnarly drops and huge waves. As for some of the other players, I remember seeing Jimmy Blakeney and Tanya Shuman in Wave Sport videos nearly ten years ago, and it's great to see these guys continue to set the standard in whitewater kayaking as the boats get shorter, and the drops get bigger. Steve Fischer sums up the attitude of all these seasoned veterans in a statement that closes the film: "I'm not spending my 20s to 40s working for my house and my car, I'm spending [that time] working for the best life I can have." Hopefully we can all embrace this attitude to some degree, because all the boaters in *Wet House* look like they are leading very rich lives indeed.

As for DVD extras, *Wet House* has plenty. If you were missing the rap and metal from the soundtrack of the main feature, rest assured that the LVM highlights section will serve up equal amounts of hard-core music and hard-core whitewater. Add in two other appealing movie previews and a handful of *Wet House*-specific extras, and you have a DVD that offers up a great mix of liquid entertainment.



# Corporate Sponsors



Each day American Whitewater faces new challenges that threaten our whitewater rivers. To aid us in this fight, we rely on support from members, donors, foundations, and partners in the industry.

Companies throughout the whitewater and outdoor industries are stepping forward to support AW's River Stewardship work.



American Whitewater urges you not to make purchase decisions blindly. When you buy your next piece of outdoor gear there are many factors to consider: quality, dependability, comfort, safety, and fashion. American Whitewater hopes you will add one more consideration to this list: corporate responsibility.

Support companies that support your rivers



The company now known as Kokatat was started in 1971 by a college student named Steve O'Meara with an eye towards making innovative outdoor gear, such as the world's first GORE-TEX® bivy sack. With Steve still at the helm, Kokatat continues to dedicate itself to his original intent: offering the industry's most extensive line of watersports wear and enjoying a well deserved reputation for product quality and a commitment to watersports.

Kokatat remains one of AW's strongest allies by continuing support of AW's Membership and River Stewardship programs. By providing American Whitewater with valuable membership and donation incentives, Kokatat supports the ongoing stewardship of North American rivers.



In 2005, and again in 2006, NRS will show their commitment to river stewardship through encouraging AW membership at river festivals nationwide.



Immersion Research led the whitewater industry in corporate responsibility. IR was American Whitewater's first industry supporter of river stewardship and remains a friend and ally today.



Clif Bar's annual Flowing Rivers campaign that provides funding to AW's affiliate clubs for river stewardship projects is now in its fourth year.



Fortress International Watches is new to the scene and new to supporting American Whitewater. Through creative fundraising strategies Fortress will help AW seek the funds needed to advocate for all whitewater rivers.



As part of Jackson Kayak's focus on environmental responsibility, they are supporting AW's work by encouraging membership growth in the organization.



In turning the pages of *North Carolina Rivers & Creeks*, it's easy to see how many fantastic rivers AW has had a hand in opening up to paddling. We support AW in hope that there will be more great rivers to tell about in future editions, and more river lovers out there working with AW to preserve the rivers we all love!



Kayak Session helps American Whitewater increase membership, fund river stewardship work, and get our message out to readers here and abroad. KS is proud to provide AW members a discounted subscription rate.



Chaco helps set the standard for industry responsibility by supporting causes near to their hearts with 3% of after tax profits.



We love donating to river conservation organizations like AW. Being partners with American Whitewater allows each of us to do what we do best; AW is a leader in river conservation and Werner Paddles can focus on being the leading kayak paddle manufacturer.



Stahlsac helps AW make sure our lifetime members are satisfied by providing all of our lifetime members with their paddler duffel.



Girls at Play donates \$.50 to AW for each Girls at Play DVD sold and actively promotes AW membership to participants of the Girls at Play Summer Tour. Anna Levesque, the founder of Girls at Play, is proud to be an AW Athlete Ambassador.



In 2006 Keen's contributions will aid American Whitewater in its quest to restore ecological health and recreational opportunities to the Catawba River watershed in North and South Carolina.



Wavesport donations help AW have the resources it needs to conserve and restore our whitewater resources.



Throughout the history of the natural world, water sources have been the centers of life, providing habitat and sustenance for animals and plants alike. Patagonia is proud to support groups like American Whitewater that work to reverse the destructive effects of damming, development and pollution.



Outdoorplay is proud to support American Whitewater's river stewardship work and has done so for three years now. Outdoorplay.com, along with many other retailers nationwide, provides discounts for American Whitewater members on their website.



In 2004 Teva named American Whitewater as their river stewardship partner and has been one of our strongest supporters of river access and conservation since.



In 2006 Smith Optics continues its support of American Whitewater's river stewardship work and membership.



# Join



## AMERICAN WHITEWATER

# Today!

American Whitewater has been extraordinarily fortunate in our ability to leverage a strong grassroots, base—members and other volunteers—to assist our limited staff with many whitewater river conservation and restoration efforts.



Over the years, American Whitewater volunteers have participated in numerous hydropower meetings as well as instream and recreational flow studies; filed comments and assisted with an uncountable number of filings; appeared as expert witnesses; lobbied; worked to fight new dams, remove existing dams, deny licenses, and improve public access to rivers and streams. In nearly every river stewardship issue AW has been involved with, the outcome has been favorable to paddlers. Not only has AW secured favorable decisions for the paddling community, but we are the only national organization representing paddlers as these decisions are being made.

A growing membership base is crucial to our ability to continue with our work. Some studies show that there are currently over 100,000 whitewater paddlers in the U.S. American Whitewater currently has 6,300 active members. When considering the amount of whitewater river miles that AW has had a direct impact on, this membership number is unimpressive. We need all paddlers to join American Whitewater. If you are a member, please

be sure that everyone you paddle with understands the work AW does, and how you, as an AW member, value that work.

Membership support is what will determine our ability to continue our river stewardship work in the years to come. Individual Annual Memberships are only \$35. If you are a member of your local paddling club and your club is an Affiliate Club member of AW, join as a Club Affiliate Individual for \$25. This is a tank of gas or an inexpensive night out. This is certainly not too much to pay to have a national organization representing your paddling interests all across the country.

Join on-line today at <http://www.americanwhitewater.org/membership>, call 1-866-BOAT4AW (866-262-8429), or fill out the form on the back of this page and mail it to:

Membership  
P.O. Box 1540  
Cullowhee, NC 28723



P.O. Box 1540, Cullowhee, NC 28723 • 866-BOAT-4AW

## Membership Application

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Club Affiliation \_\_\_\_\_

### Individual Membership Levels

\_\_\_\_ \$25 Junior/Senior (under the age of 18)

\_\_\_\_ \$25 Individual for Affiliate Club Members (SAVE \$10 if you are also a member of an AW Affiliate Club)

\_\_\_\_ \$35 Individual One Year

\_\_\_\_ \$45 Family (immediate family members excluding children over the age of 18)

\_\_\_\_ \$65 Two Year Membership

\_\_\_\_ \$100 Ender Club\* (Receive AW's annual Ender Club T-shirt FREE)

\_\_\_\_ \$150 Five Year Membership

\_\_\_\_ \$250 Platinum Paddler\* (Receive AW's exclusive Patagonia Platinum Paddler Hooded Sweatshirt FREE)

\_\_\_\_ \$750 Lifetime Membership (Receive AW's Lifetime Membership Stahlsac Paddler Duffle FREE)

\_\_\_\_ \$1,000 Legacy Membership\* (Receive AW's exclusive Kokatat Gore-tex PacLite Paddling Jacket and Pants FREE)

\* A portion of your contribution may be tax deductible. If you would like information about the tax deductibility of your contribution please speak with an AW Staff Member.

### Organizational Membership Types

\_\_\_\_ \$75.00 Affiliate Club (Join our growing network of paddling organizations across North America)

### Additional Donation

\_\_\_\_ \$5.00 \_\_\_\_ \$10.00 \_\_\_\_ \$25.00 \$ \_\_\_\_ Other

\_\_\_\_ \$24.99 Kayak Session subscription (Add Kayak Session to your membership at a 40% discount)

### Amount

Membership subtotal \$ \_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Do NOT Mail me the AW Journal. I will read it on-line.

Donation subtotal \$ \_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Do NOT share my name with like-minded groups.

Total \$ \_\_\_\_

Ender Club and Platinum Paddler indicate shirt size (S, M, L, XL, XXL). We will mail gift certificate for Kokatat gear.

### Transaction Type

\_\_\_\_ Cash \_\_\_\_ Charge \_\_\_\_ Check# (payable to American Whitewater)

Card Type: MC Visa Discover AMEX

Card Number \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Name as it appears on card \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_



# Affiliate Clubs

# AW's Original Purpose

by Carla Miner

The Affiliate Club Program lies at the very heart of AW's existence. AW's original purpose since 1957 has been to distribute information among its Affiliate Clubs. AW's relationships with local clubs have provided the backbone for the river conservation and access work it accomplishes. Over 100 clubs are now AW Club Affiliates and they are all doing great work on your behalf. If you don't belong to a club consider joining one.

This is the fourth year that Clif Bar makes possible the AW / Clif Bar Flowing Rivers grants. Paddling clubs must be current AW Affiliate Clubs to be eligible for these \$500 grants. Clubs across the country have embarked on many wonderful programs as a result of this program (See Nov/Dec 2005 *AW Journal*). Make sure your club is an AW Affiliate Club and encourage them to apply for this grant for a local project important to paddlers in your area.

AFFILIATE CLUBS, we want to know what you are doing. Send your events to us at [ben@amwhitewater.org](mailto:ben@amwhitewater.org) and we will include them in the Journal.

The AW Journal Club Affiliates by State:

## **Alaska**

Fairbanks Paddlers, Fairbanks

## **Alabama**

Birmingham Canoe Club, Birmingham  
Coosa Paddling Club, Montgomery  
Huntsville Canoe Club, Huntsville

## **Arkansas**

Arkansas Canoe Club, Little Rock

## **California**

Central CA Canoe Club (C4), Nevada City  
Chico Paddle Heads, Chico  
Gold Country Paddlers, Lotus  
River Touring Section, Angeles Chapter  
Sequoia Paddling Club, Windsor  
Shasta Paddlers, Redding  
Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter, San Jose

## **Colorado**

Avid4Adventure Inc., Boulder  
Colorado White Water Association, Englewood  
Grand Canyon Priv. Boat. Assn, Englewood  
FiBark Boat Races, Englewood  
Pikes Peak Whitewater Club, Colorado Springs  
Pueblo Paddlers, Pueblo West  
Rocky Mountain Canoe Club, Englewood

University of Colorado Kayak Club, Boulder

## **Florida**

Project Challenge Inc., Miami  
North Florida Whitewater Assoc., Ocala

## **Georgia**

Atlanta Whitewater Club, Atlanta  
Georgia Canoeing Association, Atlanta  
Georgia Tech Outdoor Recreation, Atlanta  
Paddlers4Christ, Ellijay

## **Idaho**

Idaho Whitewater Assoc., Boise

## **Illinois**

Chicago Whitewater Assoc., Chicago

## **Indiana**

Ohio Valley Whitewater Club, Evansville

## **Iowa**

Iowa Whitewater Coalition, Des Moines

## **Kansas**

Kansas Whitewater Association, Mission

## **Kentucky**

Bluegrass Whitewater Association, Lexington  
Viking Canoe Club, Louisville  
Bardstown Boaters, Frankfort

## **Maine**

AMC/Maine Chapter, Portland  
Penobscot Paddle & Chowder Society,  
Topsham

## **Maryland**

Greater Baltimore Canoe Club, Kingsville  
Mason Dixon Canoe Cruisers, Smithsburg

## **Massachusetts**

AMC Boston Chapter, Lunenburg

## **Minnesota**

Boat Busters Anonymous, Stillwater  
Charlie Sawyer, Maple Plain

## **Missouri**

Missouri Whitewater Association, St. Louis  
Ozark Mountain Paddlers, Springfield  
Ozark Wilderness Waterways, Kansas City  
Kansas City Whitewater Club, Kansas City

## **Montana**

Beartooth Paddlers Society, Billings

## **Nevada**

Sierra Nevada Whitewater Club, Reno

## **New Hampshire**

Ledyard Canoe Club, Hanover  
Mt. Washington Valley Paddlers, Franconia  
Merrimack Valley Paddlers, Merrimack

## **New Jersey**

The Paddling Bares, Milltown

## **New Mexico**

Adobe Whitewater Club, Albuquerque

## **New York**

ADK Schenectady, Schenectady  
FLOW Paddlers Club, Rochester  
Housatonic Canoe & Kayak Squad, Ossining  
Town Tinker Tube Rentals, Phoenicia  
Whitewater Challengers, Old Forge  
Zoar Valley Paddling Club, Dunkirk

## **N. Carolina**

Carolina Canoe Club, Raleigh  
Mecklenburg Regional Paddlers, Indian Trail  
Warren Wilson College, Asheville  
Western Carolina Paddlers, Asheville  
Watauga Paddlers, Boone

## **Ohio**

Columbus Outdoor Pursuits, Columbus  
Keel Haulers Canoe Club, Westlake  
Outdoor Adventure Club, Dayton  
Toledo River Gang, Waterville

## **Oregon**

Oregon Kayak and Canoe Club, Portland  
Oregon Whitewater Association, Beaverton  
Willamette Kayak and Canoe Club, Corvallis  
Lower Columbia Canoe Club, Portland

## **Pennsylvania**

AMC Delaware Valley Chapter, Sugarloaf  
Bens Creek Canoe Club, Johnstown  
Canoe Club of Greater Harrisburg, Mechanicsburg  
Conewago Canoe Club, York  
Holtwood Hooligans, Lititz  
Lehigh Valley Canoe Club, Lehigh Valley  
Philadelphia Canoe Club, Philadelphia  
Three Rivers Paddling Club, Pittsburgh  
Pine Creek Valley Whitewater Association, Jersey Shore  
KCCNY, Philadelphia  
Lehigh Valley Whitewater Club, Lehigh Valley

## **S. Carolina**

Foothills Paddling Club, Greenville  
Palmetto Paddlers, Columbia

## **Tennessee**

Appalachian Paddling Enthusiasts, Gray  
Eastman Hiking and Canoeing, Kingsport

E. Tennessee Whitewater Club, Oak Ridge  
Memphis Whitewater, Memphis  
Tennessee Valley Canoe Club, Chattanooga  
University of Tennessee Knoxville, Knoxville  
Chota Canoe Club, Knoxville

#### **Texas**

Bayou Whitewater Club, Houston  
paddletexas.com, San Antonio  
Houston Canoe Club, Houston

#### **Utah**

University of Utah, Salt Lake City  
USU Kayak Club, Logan  
Utah Whitewater Club, Salt Lake City

#### **Vermont**

Vermont Paddlers Club, Jericho

#### **Virginia**

Blue Ridge Voyageurs, Reston  
Blue Ridge River Runners, Lynch Station  
Canoe Cruisers Association, Arlington  
Coastal Canoeists, Richmond  
Float Fishermen of Virginia, Roanoke  
FORVA, Roanoke  
Richmond Whitewater Club, Mechanicsville

#### **Washington**

Outdoor Adventure Club, Redmond  
Paddle Trails Canoe Club, Seattle  
Spokane Canoe & Kayak Club, Spokane  
University Kayak Club, Seattle  
Washington Kayak Club, Seattle  
Washington Recreation River Runners, Renton  
Whitman College Whitewater Club, Walla Walla  
Venturing Crew 360, Snohomish

#### **West Virginia**

West VA Wildwater Assoc., S. Charleston  
Friends of the Cheat, Kingwood

#### **Wisconsin**

Badger State Boating Society, Waukesha  
Hoofers Outing Club, Madison  
Pure Water Paddlers, Eau Claire  
River Alliance of Wisconsin, Madison  
Sierra Club / John Muir Chapter, LaCrosse

#### **Wyoming**

Jackson Hole Kayak Club, Jackson Hole

#### **Canada, British Columbia**

Vancouver Kayak Club, Vancouver

#### **Canada, Ontario**

Madawaska Kanu Camp Inc., Ottawa

## **Discounted AW Memberships for Affiliate Club Members**

*by Carla Miner  
Membership Coordinator*

In the recent past, AW has been offering discounted AW memberships to whitewater enthusiasts who are also members of one of AW's Affiliate Clubs.

We now have the ability to offer this discounted membership online! For each club, AW will create a unique URL that will automatically offer the discounted membership and/or we will provide a coupon code that is specific to your club that will allow individuals to receive the discount on the normal AW Membership Page.

Both options work equally well and help make life easier for members of your club.

Several clubs have already set up the program and their members are enjoying the benefits of joining AW for only \$25!

If you are interested in learning more about this program, please contact me and I would be happy to help your club set up this program. I can be reached at: 866-BOAT-4AW or [membership@amwhitewater.org](mailto:membership@amwhitewater.org).

## **Join American Whitewater as a Club Affiliate!**

### **10 Reasons to Join AW as an Affiliate Club**

1. Receive the *American Whitewater Journal*, the oldest continually published whitewater magazine.
2. Join the list of Affiliate Clubs noted in each bi-monthly *AW Journal*.
3. List club events in the *AW Journal*.
4. Your Club's members can become AW members for \$25. A \$10 savings!
5. Have technical expertise for your Club conservation and access committees 'on tap.'
6. Have access to technical and onsite assistance for your Club's event planning.
7. Enjoy VIP benefits for "Joint Members" at AW events.
8. Participate in exclusive AW Affiliate Club promotions.
9. Post Club information on the AW Website to help paddlers find you.
10. Eligible to apply for a spot in the AW 2006 River Stewardship Institute.

**For more information,**  
contact Carla Miner at  
[membership@amwhitewater.org](mailto:membership@amwhitewater.org)  
or sign-up on-line at:  
[www.americanwhitewater.org/membership](http://www.americanwhitewater.org/membership)



# 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).

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 or electronic, digital photos, 300 dpi tiffs, Photoshop or high res jpegs minimum 3"x5." 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. The better the photos the better the reproduction.

American Whitewater feature articles should relate to some aspect of whitewater boating. Please do not submit articles pertaining to sea kayaking or flat water.

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 II, III & IV rivers as well. Feature stories do not have to be about a specific river. Articles about paddling techniques, the river environment and river personalities are also accepted. Pieces that incorporate humor are especially welcome. Open boating and rafting stories are welcome.

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, please don't send it in! Because of our deadlines you will not be able to review the editorial changes made prior to publication.

American Whitewater is a 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.

Send your material to:  
Journal Editor  
P.O. Box 1540  
Cullowhee, NC 28723  
E-mail: [editor@amwhitewater.org](mailto:editor@amwhitewater.org)

## Deerfield River Festival July 29th, 2006

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TOTAL COMMITMENT...



Bryan Kirk, Team NRS, Salmon River, Idaho. © Josh Davis/NRS



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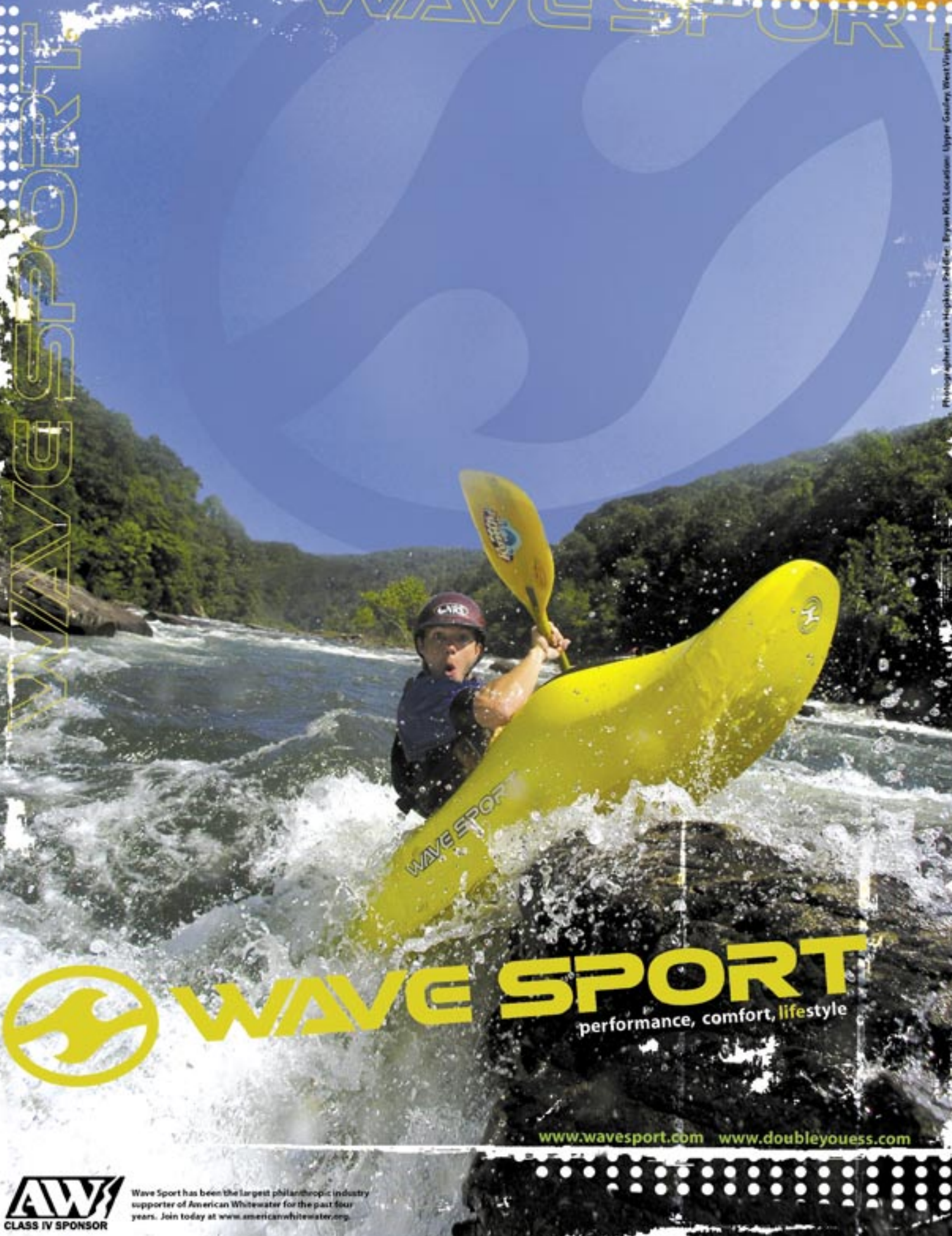
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*Provide your code: 0604 to receive a free paddlesports catalog, and directions to your nearest NRS dealer.*





WAVE SPORT

WAVE SPORT

Photographer: Luke Hopkins Paddler: Bryanna Location: Upper Gaffney West Virginia



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[www.wavesport.com](http://www.wavesport.com) [www.doublinguass.com](http://www.doublinguass.com)



Wave Sport has been the largest philanthropic industry supporter of American Whitewater for the past four years. Join today at [www.americanwhitewater.org](http://www.americanwhitewater.org)