THE ENERGY DEPARTMENT WANTS TO DAM YOUR FAVORITE RIVER

PROTECTING HEADWATER STREAMS –
THE WOTUS RULE AND THE CLEAN WATER ACT

HISTORY
AW’S EARLY STEWARDSHIP WORK
GETTING COOL ON THE GRAND CANYON
FIRST DESCENT OF THE MIDDLE SAN JOAQUIN
Where will a Jackson kayak take you next?

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Headwaters all around the nation, like this alpine reach of the Middle Fork San Joaquin (CA), could be ensured Clean Water Act protections if a new rule by the EPA and Army Corps of Engineers is implemented. If it’s not, the question of what qualifies as a WOTUS might remain murky for years or even generations (see pg. 6 for details).

Photo by Darin McQuoid
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 bimonthly 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 Americas 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.
OVER THE ARC of American Whitewater’s 60-year history the Journal has seen many changes. But through the years and the changes both, one thing remains: our Journal is the longest running whitewater paddlesports publication in the US. It has chronicled the development from kayaks that were primarily imported from Europe, to homemade glass layups, squirt boats, the rise and fall of play boats, to our current croup of ckees suitable for high gradient exploration; it has covered the evolution of rafts from army-surplus rubber tanks to today’s self-bailing, high tech, whitewater worthy craft; and, of course, the Journal has seen the trusty aluminum canoe replaced by a host of performance canoes and C-1s and C-2s, each specific to its intended use in whitewater rivers. Our Journal has also documented the exploration of amazing whitewater runs that decades ago only lived in the realm of fantasy. If we can take anything away from this amazing 60-year trajectory, it is that our exploration of rivers and wild places where water flows downhill is always changing.

And so it is at American Whitewater that one of the changes in the wind is the balancing of our digital resources with traditional print media. As many of you are aware, American Whitewater is working on launching a new website to serve the organization for the next decade and beyond. While not yet complete, the process is moving forward and we’re looking forward to being able to bring you the same important river information and stewardship updates through upgraded and improved online platforms. Part of what makes our current website special is that it brings the whitewater community together by allowing members and volunteers to contribute content to our river pages. It’s important to us that this tradition continues, and we believe that the upgrades and improvements we’re making will make it easier for users to update stream content.

Some parts of our current website are over 15 years old, and so we’re completely rebuilding it from the ground up to meet the challenges of today’s Internet, and take advantage of new web technologies. This has certainly been a very big project for American Whitewater. Throughout the process, we’ve made a point to use common open source technologies whenever possible, while also taking advantage of reasonably-priced third-party services or solutions. This approach will ensure that our new website can be easily improved in the future and maintained in a cost-effective way for years to come.

The new website has been a major project for us in many ways, including financially. While we have reached out to the website user community to solicit funding for the project, we are also balancing expenses on the print side. To that end there will be one fewer Journal in the production schedule. Not to worry, the Journal that you know and love will still be published five times this year. The usual November/December issue will be combined with the January/February issue to create a winter issue. Truth is we have not had the advertising support to cover the production of those Journal issues for many years. And, in all honesty, the Journal is subsidized by your membership to American Whitewater (advertising revenues do not come close to meeting costs for production and mailing). Yet, the Journal is a very important tool in communicating outcomes of our stewardship project successes that are making a real difference for rivers and local communities, while providing flows for recreation and habitat.

As we look to the future, we continue to appreciate the importance of rivers and their role in supporting the health and well-being of the paddling community. We remain committed to giving back to these special places and have a great, 60-years-in-the-making, story to tell. We will use both digital and print resources to communicate our stewardship project successes that are making a real difference for rivers and local communities, while providing flows for recreation and habitat.

If you are reading this publication and you are not a member, please consider supporting this work. If you are a member, thanks for your support, pass this issue on to friends and let them know what we are doing. There has never been a better time to support American Whitewater!
CLean WATER IS something that’s important for a lot of reasons, not the least of which is the fact that sometimes water goes in and comes out of places it wasn’t intended to. Everybody swims, right? And even if you usually don’t (because I can hear some of you out there protesting now), you’re most certainly being completely encompassed by the river at some point in your adventures.

If you’ve been able to enjoy a river without much concern for the quality of its water, you can send some thanks to the Clean Water Act for that. The Clean Water Act actually needs to get a little love these days. Over the last eight years, there’s been increased controversy and confusion about whether certain wetlands and headwater streams are protected under the Act. This summer, American Whitewater is supporting a proposed rule from the Environmental Protection Agency and Army Corps of Engineers that strives to settle this confusion. The agencies are taking public comment until October 20th, 2014.

Since 1972, the Clean Water Act has been vitally important for cleaning up and protecting the quality of our nation’s waterways. Protections for water quality are given under the Act to “waters of the United States” (also known as “WOTUS”). At first glance one might be inclined to think that if it’s wet, it’s a WOTUS. But as most things go in the world of legislation, defining what a water of the U.S. is can be tricky and contentious business. This is an important thing to make clear, though, because how you define a WOTUS tells you what’s covered by the Clean Water Act. Only things that are covered receive protection from the Act.

Congress didn’t define what a WOTUS is when it passed the Act back in 1972. Instead, it left that task up to the agencies that implement the Act—the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Army Corps of Engineers.
If this waterfall that feeds the South Fork Salmon River in Idaho only flows after it rains, should it be protected under the Clean Water Act? State and federal staff haven’t been certain since 2006, but a new proposed rule would clarify the answer.

Photo by Kevin Colburn

Engineers. Although many a court case has been fought over what a WOTUS is, exactly, the Act was applied fairly consistently until the early 2000s. Up until that point, certain waters, such as wetlands and headwater and intermittent streams, were covered.

In 2001 and 2006, two Supreme Court cases muddied the proverbial waters quite a bit. (Those of you who are interested in learning more should look into the Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County v. Army Corps of Engineers of 2001 and Rapanos case of 2006. Both cases applied to whether certain kinds of wetlands were covered by the Act.) In Rapanos, the Court handed down five different opinions and two different tests for how to decide whether a water body is a WOTUS or not. Not a single one was the majority.

Needless to say, there’s been a lot of confusion for state and federal agencies since then as they’ve tried to sort through whether a body of water should be afforded Clean Water Act protections. A lot of unnecessary time, energy and money have been spent muddling through without clear guidelines, and there have been a lot of delays and frustration for businesses in the process. And because as humans we tend to gravitate towards what’s easier and clearer first, those waters in question—mostly wetlands and headwater streams—sometimes got moved to the back burner.

What’s the impact on the ground? The fate of millions of miles of headwater streams has been uncertain for the last eight years. This is especially troublesome when you consider that one in three people rely on these systems for their drinking water. (You can find out if you’re one of them at water.epa.gov/type/rs/drinkingwatermap.cfm.) Also, protection for millions of acres of wetlands has been in question, and the outcome hasn’t been good. Between 2004 and 2009, there was a 140% increase in the loss of wetlands over the rate of loss from 1998 to 2004.

What to do? The time for clarification about what a WOTUS is and what it isn’t is long overdue. Earlier this year, the EPA and Army Corps released a draft rule that does provide such clarity. The agencies have relied on over 1,000 peer-reviewed scientific papers to craft their rule to ensure that what happens upstream won’t harm the quality of the water in rivers downstream. Some have questioned whether certain wetlands and headwater streams actually do have an impact on rivers downstream, and the science shows that, in fact, they do. The science also shows that these waters are important for recharging groundwater, improving the capacity of rivers to handle the pollution that does enter into them, containing floodwaters, and providing habitat for fish. So, let’s protect them.

Contrary to some reports, the rule does not broaden the historical reach of the Act. No new waters are covered. Additionally, all of the activities that have historically been exempted from the Clean Water Act still are. What it does do is create “bright-line” categories of what is protected and what is not.

What happens in the headwaters affects a river all the way to the ocean, and the limbo created by the Supreme Court cases in the past decade affects us all. If implemented, the new rule will save a lot of time and money, and give everyone some additional peace of mind about the quality of the water they use for drinking water and agricultural and business uses. It will also give us all more certainty that we’ll be able to safely paddle, fish, and swim in our nation’s waters.

American Whitewater has been involved in efforts to clarify Clean Water Act protections since the Rapanos decision, and we support the proposed rule. It will save a lot of time and money while also protecting the headwater streams and wetlands that are so critical to the health of every WOTUS. The deadline for public comment is October 20th, 2014. Stay tuned to www.americanwhitewater.org for more about information about weighing in and supporting clean water!
T

HIS SPRING ENERGY Secretary Ernest Moniz set an ambitious goal—work with hydropower developers to double this country’s hydropower production, adding 65.5 Gigawatts (GW) of power, by 2030. Meeting this goal means building a lot of new dams. A lot.

We’re talking about damming over three million river and stream reaches across the country, destroying an astounding number of freshwater ecosystems. The qualities that make rivers great for whitewater recreation also make them ideal for hydropower production, and if the Energy Secretary meets his goal, over 1,700 whitewater runs would also be ruined. Chances are high that the Energy Department and hydropower developers have their sights on constructing another dam or two on rivers that you know and love.

The Energy Department basically wants to dam every river. And you thought the era of dam-building was over.

Secretary Moniz announced his goal in May 2014, as the Energy Department released an assessment by the Oak Ridge National Laboratory of the potential to develop new hydropower across the U.S. The report, New Stream-reach Development: A Comprehensive Assessment of Hydropower Energy Potential in the United States, (or the “Assessment”) has a long list of rivers from every major U.S. watershed where a new dam could be built, and finds that the greatest potential for new hydropower exists in the Pacific Northwest, Missouri River Basin, California and other western states.

The list covers a wide scope and no region is immune. The Deerfield in the Northeast, the Tuckaseegee in North Carolina, the Arkansas in Colorado, numerous tributaries to the Colorado in Arizona, the Wenatchee in Washington, the Smith in California—just to name a few.

Perhaps most offensively, the list includes numerous reaches where federal, state, and local governments, in concert with local communities, have invested millions of dollars in recent years to remove dams and restore river systems, including the Kennebec and Penobscot Rivers in Maine and the Rogue River in Oregon. It also includes reaches in the Pacific Northwest that are protected from hydropower

When William Mulholland (1855-1935) visited Yosemite Valley he was struck by the majesty of the park, and had a vision for it. He said if he were in charge, he’d hire the best photographers in the world to take pictures of the entire landscape for a full year, capturing the colors, the waterfalls, the snow, and especially the Merced River when it roared in the early summer. He’d take those pictures and publish them in thousands of books and send them to every library, and hang them in every gallery and museum. “And then do you know what I would do?” he asked. “I’d go in there and build a dam from one side of that valley to the other and stop all the goddamned waste!” (Adapted from Mark Reisner’s Cadillac Desert. Emphasis added.)
development by a regional council under the Northwest Power Act, like the Deschutes River in Oregon and South Fork Skykomish River in Washington. Realizing the Energy Department’s goal means gutting this program and numerous other river protections.

And the Assessment provides temptation for gutting even more.

Since the Assessment was primarily an exercise in engineering feasibility, it also includes some rivers that have been given the highest forms of protection. It notes that we could do much more than double hydropower production if projects are also developed on rivers in National Parks and Wilderness Areas, like Yosemite Creek in Yosemite National Park and several rivers in Olympic National Park; and on Wild and Scenic Rivers like the Chetco and John Day in Oregon, the Chattooga in the Southeast, and the Middle Fork Flathead in Montana. The list even includes some of the original Wild and Scenic Rivers, like the Lochsa in Idaho and the Middle Fork Feather in California.

Although the Assessment says that these rivers are off limits to hydropower development (because it’s illegal to build dams on the rivers that we, as a country, have chosen to protect permanently), they might as well be waving a cookie in front of a child’s face and saying “you can’t have this.” Keeping protected rivers on the main list adds fuel to the fire already under the bellies of those who would like to see Wild and Scenic River protections gutted or another dam in Yosemite to “stop all the goddamned waste.”

**Does It Even Make Sense?**

The Assessment only considers the physical characteristics of each river and stream, and acknowledges that not all of the rivers on the list “will be practical or feasible to develop for various reasons.”

Indeed.

Water supply issues, water quality concerns, fish habitat, recreational use and protected areas are all factors that require careful consideration. Meeting the Energy Secretary’s goal would require gutting the Clean Water Act and Endangered Species Act and allowing the federal government to seize privately held water rights for hydropower, among other things. The truth of the matter is that this goal of doubling hydropower production through new dams just isn’t realistic or at all feasible.

The value that these hydropower projects would provide is also questionable.
Hydropower brings value to the electric grid because it can help provide a base load of power when, in the case of solar or wind, the sun stops shining or the wind stops blowing. Many of the projects envisioned by the Assessment would produce relatively small amounts of power, and just would not fulfill this value. Additionally, in the Pacific Northwest in particular, hydropower projects produce the most power during winter and spring storms when there is minimal need for additional power. These projects are also usually on shaky ground economically. The Pacific Northwest has already been a hotbed of activity for proposed hydropower projects in recent years, where thirteen preliminary permits were either surrendered or cancelled in 2012 and 2013, many of which just didn’t pencil out financially.

Those projects that are built have a large environmental footprint despite their small production numbers. Although the Energy Department describes hydropower as both “clean” and “sustainable,” American Whitewater and the paddling community understand all too well just how destructive hydropower dams are to rivers. While hydropower produces less carbon than coal fired power plants, there’s nothing clean or sustainable about it. American Whitewater doesn’t believe that our energy future should hinge on destroying freshwater ecosystems or recreational resources that are the backbone of local and regional recreation economies across the country.

So why is the Energy Department still pushing to dam every river by 2030? American Whitewater pushed back within days of the report. As we’re going to press for this issue of the AW Journal, we’re beginning to see signs that the Energy Department might be shifting their rhetoric, thanks, in part, to our efforts. We hope that by the time you’re reading this they’ve abandoned this destructive path altogether. In the meantime, hydropower developers are heeding this as a rallying cry to get to work, and we’re taking this very seriously.

The Path Forward
Is damming every river really the best solution to meeting our energy needs or a smart way to meet an “all of the above” energy strategy? We think not. We actually
believe that we don’t need another single new dam. Not one. We do understand that hydropower plays an important role in our current energy portfolio, and we see several ways that we can increase our nation’s hydropower production with the dams we’ve already got. As key participants in negotiations to relicense hydropower dams across the country through the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, we’ve seen the great potential to improve efficiency and effectiveness through upgrading existing dams. Also, there are thousands of dams that currently do not produce hydropower. In 2012 the Energy Department studied the potential for adding power generation to existing non-powered dams, and found that we can increase hydropower production by 12 GW in this way. Let’s look to these solutions before we even begin to entertain the idea of damming another river, let alone setting a goal of damming them all.

As the Energy Department affirms its intent to work with hydropower developers to advance the goal of doubling hydropower production with new dams in this country by 2030, American Whitewater affirms our intent to stay focused on our mission, work to protect what’s left of our nation’s free flowing whitewater and to restore all of the river reaches we can. While hydropower generation can increase in our country, the river miles impacted by hydropower should not. This is where American Whitewater draws the line. For 60 years we’ve worked to protect and restore freely flowing rivers, and have a long history of minimizing the huge impact that dams have on our nation’s rivers through removing dams and restoring flows. You can be sure that we’ll continue to do so, because if we have anything to say about it, the era of dam building is over, and we’ll keep on working until the modern-day Mulhollands see that freely flowing rivers are so much more than a goddamned waste.

Now is a critical time for whitewater enthusiasts everywhere to defend the rivers they love. We’ve got our work cut out for us.

*If you’d like to take a closer look at the report and see whether your favorite rivers are on the list, visit: nhaap.ornl.gov/nsd*
AMMO TO USE IN FIGHTING FOR CALIFORNIA’S WILD RIVERS

BY STEVE LA PRADE

This article, reprinted from American Whitewater’s Nov/Dec 1977 issue, is a great example of the kind of conservation work that American Whitewater was doing in the 1970s. While the organization did not yet employ any paid staff, let alone a dedicated Stewardship team, it did represent the interests of paddlers and whitewater rivers by alerting its readership to the potential effects of the two-year drought that California was suffering through—specifically that of opportunist politicians using the drought to justify damming more of the state’s free-flowing sections of rivers.

The political push for new dams on California rivers in 1977 parallels our own time remarkably well. In both cases, severe drought was raising fears of a meltdown in California’s massive agriculture sector, and in both cases new dams were being proposed that would not help address the issue at hand. For instance, in response to California’s current drought, legislators are proposing to build new dams for water storage throughout the state. In addition to a new dam proposed on the San Joaquin, there’s also an off-channel storage project proposed on the Sacramento, and efforts to increase storage capacity by raising the height of the New Exchequer Dam on the Merced and the Shasta Dam. American Whitewater continues to work to educate the public, agencies and elected officials that building new dams will not change the reality that California’s water supplies are over-allocated, and building new or taller dams will not make it rain more.

Of course, not everything in this drought is the same as 1977. One big difference is that today California farmers are more likely to reduce production on their farms due to the lack of water. The Central Valley Project, a massive federal water project providing mainly irrigation water from the north of the state to farmers in southern California announced in March that because of the drought it would not deliver any water to the Central Valley this summer. That could have a significant impact on California produce and affect food prices across the country. Furthermore, the full reservoirs that Steve LaPrade points to in the article below are mainly conveyance reservoirs, basically extensions of the canals that connect them, and not capable of storing significant amounts of water. Still, LaPrade’s conclusion that building new dams on California rivers is no solution to the drought holds just as true today as it did in 1977, though the effects of today’s drought are, if anything, even more severe.

CALIFORNIA RESIDENTS ARE in such desperate straits as the result of drought that it is necessary to abolish the state’s wild river system and dam these free flowing streams: the Eel, Smith, Klamath, Trinity, Lower American and Van Duzen.

That is the claim state senators from the Central Valley and Southern California, headed by Ruben Ayala of San Bernadino, are making (see American Whitewater, July/August 1977).

One of the largest storage reservoirs in the state, Lake Oroville on the Feather River is below half its storage capacity in mid June, as this issue goes to press.

Photo by Dave Steindorf
But two recent publications—the Wall Street Journal for Aug. 29, 1977, and Outdoors for July (published by Mercury Marine, an outboard motor firm), have revealed ammo river runners can cite to defend their wild waterways.

And the threat from Ayala’s forces is real. The May 1977 Sierra Club Paddler’s News Bulletin quoted the club’s chief lobbyist in Sacramento as saying, “It’s a real threat. The pressures are very strong.”

Ayala is head of the state senate Committee on Agriculture. The implication is that farm production is dropping along with lake and reservoir levels due to the drought. That is supposed to be the reason why the wild river system, established in 1970, must be abolished. The theory is the rivers must be dammed to provide needed water.

But let’s look at the facts reported by the Wall Street Journal.

The article reported no sharp drop in crop production. In fact, record cotton and grape crops were reported along with crops of many fruits, nuts, and vegetables that exceeded 1976 production levels.

The California Department of Food and Agriculture reported crops by the end of the year will be near or above 1976 levels.

And all this production occurred, the Wall Street Journal reported, even though there was a major drought and agriculture accounts for 85% of California’s water use.

The article reported total planted acreage was down only 3% over 1976. Drops of up to 10% had been anticipated.

Crops needing heavy supplies of water showed some decline. Rice production dropped 18% as farmers switched to less thirsty crops. But, the article reported, rice production was so good worldwide that if California farmers had stuck with rice, they might have encountered a sagging market for their goods.

The article reported that farmers countered the drought by shifting crops, digging new wells and using more efficient irrigation systems.

So California’s farmers showed they have the spunk and pluck to counter drought without damming the state’s wild river system.

Now pardon me while I get on my soapbox.

If the bill to kill the river system fails (and let’s pray it does), the failure will come largely because farmers—the state’s biggest water users—showed they could get by without the proposed dams. So conservationists need to reward these hardworking tillers of the soil.

Conservationists must urge the legislature to enact special farm legislation. For example, if a farmer changed to a more efficient crop watering system or drilled new wells, he should be exempt from all state income taxes next year and should be allowed to deduct all costs of the improvements from his 1979 state income taxes.

Conservation groups should offer one-year free memberships to members of farm families. The Sierra Club might consider allowing discounts on its wilderness outings for members of California farming families.

Conservation groups should urge support of opening crop trade with foreign countries, even Russia, to encourage that farmers will have a good market and a fair price for their wares.

Finally, California river runners should buy only local fruits and vegetables instead of nationally advertised brands.

Now I’ll get off the soapbox and back to the Wall Street Journal. In the same issue mentioned above, another article showed urban California residents could meet the drought challenge.

When San Francisco residents were asked to cut water usage by 25%, they astounded...
city fathers by reducing consumption 40%.

Sales of toilets using less water jumped from 13,000 in 1976 to an expected 55,000 this year. And, the article reported, 12,000 sets of toilet dams, to reduce water used, were sold in a six-week period.

In addition, the story reported, business has coped with the drought by hiring consultants to determine most efficient water use.

At this point, Ayala and his allies may cite declining lake and reservoir levels as reasons for damming wild rivers.

But Outdoors, the Mercury Marine publication referred to earlier, has an article in the July 1977 issue showing the lake situation isn’t all bad.

The article reports that Lake Almanor in Plumas County is so full as to set water level records unreached since the 1950s.

Eagle Lake in Lassen County was reported to have been rising in past years because the lake has no outlet. Why isn’t Ayala examining this lake as a source of water?

The article reported of Lewiston Lake in Trinity County that there is “no water shortage here.”

The water level of Thermalite Forebay and Afterbay in Butte County was expected to remain high through summer.

And Trinity Lake in Trinity County was reported to have large quantities of water for pleasure boaters.

Copco Lake in Siskiyou County was reported in the article to have high water levels in mid-summer.

You may have noticed Copco Lake is in the same county as part of the threatened Klamath River. And you may also have noticed that Trinity and Lewiston Lakes are in the same county as parts of the Eel, Trinity and Van Duzen rivers. But Ayala has made no move to draw water from these lakes.

The Outdoors article indicates some lakes are available as relatively unused water sources.

After all, why dam a wild river to form a lake when you already have a lake?
When this item first appeared in American Whitewater in 1984 it probably didn’t seem as significant to readers as it might today. In reviewing 60 years’ worth of Journals, for this year’s anniversary, we did not come upon many articles with such significant implications for the future of river stewardship, especially not one with such a modest tone. The agreement outlined below was one of the first times American Whitewater intervened with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to win favorable whitewater release schedules for paddlers. Today, the FERC dam relicensing is one of the most effective ways AW can win positive change on behalf of the recreational users of America’s rivers.

The second point that needs to be stressed here is that the author of this piece, though he gives credit to other volunteers, himself deserves many accolades for his river stewardship work. In his active period with American Whitewater, Pete Skinner left as big an imprint on the organization as anyone before or since. Skinner’s work on the Bottom Moose was just the tip of the iceberg in ways that even he probably didn’t realize when he wrote this article. While we could write pages and pages here recounting the volunteer effort Skinner gave to paddlers across the country, we’ll instead settle for summary here: Pete Skinner made it possible for American Whitewater to become what it is today. He ultimately led AW to be a crucial player in dam relicensing across the country in ways that are 100% relevant to the organization’s current stewardship work.

Paddling the “Bottom” Moose from Fowlersville to Shibley Road for the first time has always been a significant experience for whitewater paddlers. It separates the women from the girls, men from the boys. The descent of its falls gives new perspectives to whitewater paddlers who get vertical over and over in its three miles of froth.

It is fitting, then, that an agreement recently hammered out by a coalition of paddlers and environmentalists formed to protect it set a similar precedent-setting standard for paddling protection.

The fight was joined in 1982 when Long Lake Energy Corp. released its preliminary engineering plans for the Agar’s Falls project. This project planned to remove water from one mile of this magnificent fallway to generate 15 KW of electricity. Five spectacular drops would have been lost to paddling and the scenic corridor desecrated by the original design. Swinging into action, a coalition of concerned paddlers and others began a strong effort to obtain proper recreational releases and scenic protection.

Many letters and meetings later, success was achieved. The massive head works were reduced to an innocuous, adjustable and runnable weir atop Agar’s Falls. Much of the penstocks will be placed underground. A minimum of terrestrial disturbance will be occasioned by construction. Whitewater access, a riverside trail and camping facilities will be provided.
Most startling, however, was the agreement to shut off the generators 20 days each year to permit paddling. Ten of these will be scheduled ahead of time and 10 will be provided on a request basis given three days’ warning. Perhaps most amazing is that Long Lake’s FERC application features kayaks on its cover!

Much of the credit belongs to Karla Matzke and Mike Pesavento who spearheaded the drive to recruit membership and research the original Long Lake proposals. Environmental attorney and paddler, Doug Ward, donated his time to facilitating compromise and perspective.

An entrenched and intractable developer would not, however, have responded as did Long Lake. The chief officers of Long Lake, Paul Elston and Don Hamer, are committed environmentalists. Paul, for instance, served in high level posts in both the New York State and United States environmental agencies. Their recognition of the unique nature and great value of the Moose’s recreational potential played an important role in the development of this plan.

The plan does more than assure availability of recreation on this magnificent stretch of river. It puts FERC and other small hydro developers on notice that whitewater paddlers are a force with which to be reckoned. It shows some designs and operating regimes of small hydro can be consistent with the whitewater sports.

Hammering out this arrangement was not without bitter sweet sentiments. Twenty days per year is not 365. A trickle usually won’t replace a torrent. Recognition, however, must be given to the limited consideration governmental agencies, especially FERC, affords the whitewater sport. Likewise, the Moose’s challenges limit the spectrum of users to experts whose numbers, although growing, are still small compared to, say, skiers or deer hunters. Instead of people power, however, the Coalition exercised aggressive compromise to achieve what may be a first—a FERC license whose terms authorize releases and design elements specifically for paddling.

Much work remains to be done, such as monitoring construction and arranging release dates and communication formats. Downstream, Georgia Pacific must be convinced to adopt a consistent plan for their Kosterville and Shibley Road facilities. This should, however, not be impossible given the upstream arrangements now in place for the Agar’s Falls Project. Finally, FERC will have to be convinced of the overall efficacy of this arrangement.

Armed with a success like the Moose, paddlers should sally forth and confront the many-headed Hydra of small hydro developers without fear of failure.
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Do they hit the rock?
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I doubt anyone has ever analyzed the contents of all the American Whitewater Journals that have ever been published to determine the river that has been written about the most often. But if they had, I strongly suspect the Grand Canyon of the Colorado River would be the runaway winner. So of course it deserves a spot in our 60th anniversary retrospective.

But there is another reason the following story from the May/June 1991 issue deserves to be highlighted: It’s a great story. The author, Chris Koll, edited this magazine from 1987 until partway through 1993 when he turned it over to the capable hands of Bob Gedekoh.

In those six-and-a-half years, Chris did more to change the tone, style, and fortune of the Journal than anyone ever has. As you can read in the story below, Chris introduced a sense of humor to the magazine that was simply better than it had ever been before. Also, in ways that are more difficult to discern from this example, Chris brought an edginess to the Journal that certainly hadn’t been there before. But it was more than that. Chris also brought the experience of a professional journalist to the magazine (definitely visible here) and laid the groundwork for the Journal to be a successful, avidly read publication well into the 21st century. If it hadn’t been for his herculean efforts both in editing and laying out the magazine’s content, but also writing a significant portion of its material, the Journal may have gone extinct before the first George Bush sat in the White House.

Chris brought an excitement to the Journal that engaged a generation of paddlers who knew that what they were doing was cool, but couldn’t find an acknowledgment of that fact anywhere else. Certainly for me, reading the Journal as a teenager, I thought it was a little bit counterculture, really funny, and totally cool. If it weren’t for Chris Koll, none of that would have been true.

I haven’t really mentioned my personal relationship with Chris, mainly because there simply isn’t room here to do it justice. Suffice to say that when I finally started paddling with him in my mid to late teenage years and he referred to me as a “snot-nosed kid” I felt pretty cool too.

Finally, as you enjoy this great story, please note that the photos are from a much more recent Grand Canyon trip which included none of the same people as the story it accompanies. We hope that the photos give a sense of the laid-back vibe of the kind of Canyon trip this story describes. Oh, and the scenery is OK too!
I was already 28 years old when I first slipped into a kayak.

It was an old Phoenix Cascade, I recall, on a Class I section of Pennsylvania’s Clarion River. The damn thing wouldn’t go in a straight line and flipped repeatedly for no reason whatsoever. I swam a total of 17 times.

Before that fateful day, I was just your basic small-town Pennsylvania boy. Life was simple-yet-varied and followed the cyclic rhythm of the seasons.

In the spring I stalked brook trout, casting four-pound test through tangles of mountain laurel into crystal pools of tumbling brooks. Or I chased lusty gobblers, crashing through the still-dark woods to gain a favorable position before the turkey came off roost.

Summers meant town-league softball, played with the ferocity of a Tong war. French fries and fireworks at the Fireman’s Carnival or riding in the back of a pickup over 10 miles of dirt road for draft beer and hamburgers (blended with poached venison) at a backwoods bar.

And then there were autumn hardwoods ablaze in yellows and reds; grouse hunting behind a white dog; college football on Saturday afternoons and scouting for deer.

It seems now that there was so much to do—and even more remarkably, the time to do it.

That all stopped when I started kayaking. I bought my first boat soon after that disastrous day on the Clarion. My rifles, fishing poles and softball gear languished in the closet while I started the mindless pursuit of whitewater proficiency.

No sooner than I had negotiated Class II rivers there were Class III streams beckoning. And when Class III grew familiar there were always runs of increasing difficulty to challenge.

Even after I was satisfied with my level of ability, there were always new rivers or old runs at different levels that I just had to get on. Whitewater was an obsession. Life was a frantic race to get on the water.

For 10 years, from March until December, every weekend was the same. Speeding through the hills of West Virginia on mist-shrouded spring mornings. Bumpy rides down rocky roads in search of put-ins. Chasing rumors of water over the next ridge after summer thundershowers.

Whitewater had become a lifestyle disorder. Like eating meat at every meal. Or drinking four Diet Cokes before 10 in the morning. A cigar after dinner. After a while, you don’t even think that passing up a friend’s wedding or a relative’s graduation in order to catch the Moose at six feet is abnormal—you just do it.

So I had to get away from whitewater. I had to go someplace where suddenly throwing my boat up on the truck and racing at breakneck speed to the nearest put-in was not an option.

I went to the Grand Canyon.

Let me explain. It is possible for a whitewater addict to boat the Grand Canyon without suffering withdrawal symptoms.

For example, a Colorado River boatman related the following anecdote regarding a raft-supported kayak canyon trip chartered by a group of 30 Germans from the Alpine Kayak Club.

Well, it wasn’t exactly a raft ... at least not how Easterners picture a raft. It was a 20-foot pontoon rig powered by an outboard motor. The Germans would run a rapid—more than once if it was rated better than a five—then immediately tie up behind the motor-rig. Then the boatman would cruise at top speed through the flatwater with the Germans hanging on for dear life until they reached the top of the next drop.

This process went on for 179 miles before culminating at Lava Falls. Here one intrepid German ran Lava endlessly until he was forced to chase a boat downstream after a swim by one of his countrymen.

The German was incensed. Confronting the swimmer, he shouted, “Becuss uf you, Heinrich, I vass unly able to run Laffa 57 times!”
“Becussuf you, Heinrich ...” That was exactly the kind of attitude I was trying to escape. But there didn’t figure to be any Teutonic types on my Grand Canyon trip—at least except for me. I figured this would be a pleasant diversion from the frantic boat-until-you-drop nightmare my world had become.

I was right.

Friends of the River is a West Coast river conservation organization sort of like the AWA except it represents a broader constituency that advocates all free-flowing water...not just the kind with heavy duty gradient.

And in conjunction with a number of progressive Western outfitters, FOR has developed an ingenious fundraising program: it organizes whitewater excursions on Western rivers from within its membership. In return, the outfitter who charters the trip contributes a portion of the proceeds back to FOR. Everyone’s a winner.

Lee Miller first experienced the Grand Canyon during a FOR raft-supported kayak trip several years ago and since then she has reserved two weeks every season to guarantee time on the Colorado.

In fact, the last several seasons, she’s helped lead FOR kayak trips through the Canyon.

I’m still not sure why Lee called me to ask if I’d like to help her run safety for an October FOR 14-day trip. She couldn’t have known that, deep down, I needed two weeks away from whitewater.

Of course, being from California, Lee would probably claim that it was karma, or some sort of other metaphysical nonsense. But in reality, I figured she just wanted a token Eastern boater to balance the normal contingent from the West Coast.

Whatever the reason, I wasn’t in a position to refuse. I needed a break.

Shuttles in West Virginia are seldom soothing.

Usually you’re trying to negotiate a twisting mountain road while simultaneously reading obscure directions from a guidebook, all the while anticipating an out-of-control coal truck to come careening around a corner.

So it was an unexpected pleasure to stretch out in the reclining seat of a chartered SceniCruiser, beer in hand, watching through the window as Southwestern vistas unfolded in hues of brown and red.

Our gang had met in Las Vegas. There were Dave and Linda—two boaters from Alaska—
and their friends Randy and Patty who had come along to ride the rafts. Similarly, Lee had brought fellow Californians Dennis and Kirsten to ride rubber.

Also from California were boaters Mark and Jim and Jim’s wife Robin who preferred to experience the Canyon from a seat in an inflatable.

The rest of the rafts were to be filled by Carol and Karen from Texas and Morica from Switzerland.

And finally, thank God, there was Ed, another Eastern boater. I had figured Ed would be my lifeline in a sea of western weirdness, but looking around the bus, I wasn’t so sure. Everybody appeared surprisingly normal—at least as normal as river people ever look.

Sure, the coolers were loaded with as many fruit seltzers as Budweisers. And some of the people in the back were gnawing on apple cinnamon rice cakes, but all in all it seemed like a pretty good bunch.

But I should have known from the start. This wasn’t your basic bus of tourists from Milwaukee. Everyone on the trip was presorted, as it were, by virtue of membership in FOR. Whiners and complainers need not apply.

Still, there was a difference. Cram a load of whitewater diehards into a bus and you’d have a continual barrage of one-upmanship. Tales of death runs on the Green, high water on the Watauga, newly discovered creeks at better than 200 feet per mile. Plenty of “Becuss uf you, Heinrich ...”

But on this bus, the typical whitewater jousting was absent. There was little talk of rapids to come. Everyone was too occupied gawking out the window.

To be honest, I couldn’t figure what they were staring at. My first impression of the Southwest was that it must have served as the testing ground for Agent Orange. I thought I was trapped in the world’s largest strip mine.

But as the bus rolled uphill from Vegas (and the beers rolled downward) even I was able to relax and, for the first time in years, savor the moment. Our bus cut through the narrow cleft carved by the Virgin River, skirted the spectacular Zion National Park and climbed back into the pine forest atop the plateau of the Kaibob National Forest.

By the time we approached Lees Ferry, the sun had slipped into the West, painting the escarpment known as the Vermilion Cliffs in shades of scarlet and red. My first day without whitewater was done. I had no regrets.

Our first day on the river, however, started suspiciously like any other paddling trip. There were boats to load for the two-mile shuttle to the launch site. There were drybags to stuff, gear to collect and equipment to sort.

And the scene at the launch ramp was practically as hectic as a gauley put-in. Motorized fishing boats tooled up the Colorado’s emerald water toward Glen Canyon Dam in search of trophy trout. Rafters from a pair of private trips milled about in last minute preparation under the watchful eye of a pair of National Park rangers. And boatmen from three outfitters organized their groups with practiced efficiency.

With everyone hustling to get on the river, I was half afraid this excursion would quickly disintegrate into whitewater madness before it started. The classic safety talk. Water battles in the first eddy. “When do we get to the first Class V?”

But instead of launching into a Vaudevillian introduction, our head boatman simply kicked the tubes of the nearest raft and said, “You kayakers try not to get too far out in front. You might miss a campsite. I know it sounds funny, but if you have
to pee, be sure you go in the river or the wet sand. Same when you stop for lunch. Let your crumbs fall in the water. Keeps everything clean. O.K.? Well, let’s go.”

And we were off.

Looking back on the ensuing two weeks, it’s difficult to recount specific events on the river. I’m not usually like that. I recall certain high water days on the Big Sandy where I remember every move. But somehow the two weeks kind of slipped by.

The days were wonderfully similar. I’d wake slowly in the gray of the morning, roused by the clanging of the coffee pot as an unlucky boatman fulfilled breakfast duty. The mornings were cool in October, and I’d linger under my sleeping bag, listening to the desert wrens and watching the sky brighten to blue.

After an hour, people around the camp would start to stir, filtering down to the beach from behind the clumps of tamarack where they’d pitched their tents or simply thrown down a sleeping pad. The sand spits where we camped were spread against the canyon walls and shadowed until nine in the morning, but by the time breakfast had ended, the sun would have already layered a band of red across the top of the cliffs. And by the time all the gear had been packed and loaded back on the rafts, the sun had reached the water and the air was warm.

Every day continued like it started. Bright sun on our backs in the morning and in our faces during the afternoon. There was a cloud one day, but I was ahead of the group when I saw it. By the time they had rounded the bend so I could point it out to them, it was gone.

I’ve passed through some of the most breathtakingly beautiful places in the East while boating: the Taureau section of Quebec’s Jacques Cartier; New York’s Bottom Moose; West Virginia’s Big Sandy, Blackwater and Glade Creek. The problem was—I never seemed to notice the scenery until I was eating lunch on shore or shouldering my boat around an unrunnable drop.

Once I was on the water, the scenery always took a back seat to the rapids. While my attention was riveted to hydraulics, boulder sieves, or undercuts, natural wonders passed by unnoticed.

But it was impossible to ignore the Grand Canyon. Every mile produced more sheer granite walls, more side creeks tumbling into the gorge, more caves and passages sculpted from rock.

Consequently, a lot of good whitewater passed under my hull while I gawked and stared at the sights.

But there were some days when the rapids were impossible to ignore—even when surrounded by the majesty of the Canyon. The sixth and seventh days were cases in point.

According to my guide book, we passed through Unkar, Hance, Sockdolager and Grapevine rapids and a bevy of smaller drops and riffles on day six.

And after a stop at the Phantom Ranch the next morning, we tackled Horn Creek, Granite and Hermit.

But looking back, I’m hard pressed to describe the whitewater portion of those rapids—some of the most significant drops of the river. Instead, I recall the dark, glassy waves of Grapevine rising 10 feet high between the dark gorge walls at twilight… or the white of the waves ricocheting from the red walls at Granite…and the open expansiveness of Hermit where the river rolled downstream almost out of sight in a field of undulating water.

Back East river guidebooks often rate the quality of whitewater found in a given run, then include as a footnote a second rating for the aesthetics of the scenery. But the two conditions seemed to blend. The rapids were part of the scenery and vice-versa. It seemed ridiculous to judge them separately.

So I stopped trying.

“Becuss uf you, Heinrich…” Actually, that could describe a lot of the people I paddle with back East.

They’re … I mean we’re … kind of possessed.

It isn’t like we’re … snobs. I mean we paddle with people we don’t know …if they have the right kind of boat, and if we’ve seen ‘em before on the Upper Yough or the Gauley.
And we don’t even mind if a person swims. Heck, we like it. Gives us an opportunity for some good-natured abuse. Just so long as it doesn’t happen very often.

But in reality, I can’t remember the last time I boated with a novice paddler. It’s a situation I’m not real proud of. You get used to boating certain rivers at certain levels with certain people....

And we get pretty picky where and when we choose to boat. Not only does a river have to be Class IV or above but there better be plenty of water, mister!

We didn’t think in those terms on the Colorado.

First of all, there was the matter of those Western ratings. Or rather, the Grand Canyon ratings—the only place in the world where rapids are graded from 1 to 10.

I wondered if there was some formula to convert the unfamiliar system to a normal way of judging rapids. Maybe add two then halve the total. Take the square root and add pi. But after a day or two, we stopped even trying.

Oh, we’d try to keep track of our position, tracking our progress on Belknap’s waterproof guidebooks. And we could anticipate approaching rapids by breaks in the canyon walls where side creeks had flushed obstructions into the river.

But unless a boatman was handy, we were never quite sure what awaited us.

It usually didn’t matter. The rapids ran deep and clean—long series of steep waves sweeping down the center of the river. From the crest of the waves, you could occasionally see a tell-tale line of froth that spoke of an approaching hole, but despite the size and power of the water, the rapids seemed more enjoyable than intimidating.

Which was appropriate because our group was a delightful mix of experience.

Lee, Mark and Ed were already strong boaters who reveled in the drops from the start. Dave and Jim were enthusiastic intermediates who lacked confidence for the first several days, but were flashing down rapids with the best of us by the end of the first week. Even Linda, who professed from the start to be unsure of her abilities, ended up boating much of the river and looking good in the process.

Even the rubber riders got into the act, taking turns in an inflatable duckie through many of the rapids. And Dennis and Kirsten proved to be real troopers, sliding into a hardboat for the first time.

Sure, experimenting in boats resulted in some swims, but it didn’t seem to matter. We’d just haul em’ to shore—or finish the rapid with a passenger perched on the back deck of our boats.

Since the rafters were open minded about trying, who were we not to periodically board an inflatable (especially during flat sections when beer was available)? Morica and Randy frequently relieved the boatmen at the oars while Ed—who had previous oar-rig experience—piloted a raft through several rapids.

Ed and I even spent an afternoon in the two-man cruising through several easy sets before pulling to shore just above Dubendorff.

The rafts and other kayaks had gathered below to watch the show. Belknap’s claimed that Dubendorff was between a 5 and 8 and I was still trying to figure the square root before adding pi when our little inflatable slid down the smooth tongue on the left and into the first set of waves.

We bounced off the second wave and eddied on the right. Over our shoulders, we could see an ominous hole waiting below. Our options were to ignominiously sneak down the far left or attempt to ferry across the wave train just above the heart of the hydraulic ...

We made the move. And we were already whooping it up coasting through the run-out left when we tumbled into a final unseen hole. We high-sided, but to no avail, and finished Dubendorff bumping our butts over the rocks on the right shore.

Now who would have thought one of the rapids remembered best—from the smooth ferry to the laughter as we skinned our butts—was a drop in a duckie?

Ed and I safety boat for a raft company in New York. We hang out weekends with a lot of people who commercially pilot rafts. So I figured we’d fit in right away with the five boatmen from Moki Mac Expeditions who were in charge of shepherding our little group down the river. Esprit de corps and all that.
I was mistaken. At first I thought the Canyon boatmen were a little, well, aloof. But after a few days, I realized that they were simply different from the guides of my acquaintance.

You can tell a lot about the nature of the Eastern guides by examining some of their nicknames. I know a Psycho, Johnny Abnormal, “Make ‘em Swim” Mike, Manchild, Bob Berserkowitz, Bugzy....

Not surprisingly, there’s nothing laid-back about the Eastern whitewater experience. During a typical five-hour day trip, the guide remains center stage throughout, using every second of his limited time to make a lasting impression. Consequently, many guides take on a manic persona that borrows equally from Geraldo, the “Pathological Liar” character from SNL and Charlie Manson.

When you only have five hours on the water, there’s no time for drifting, fer Chrissakes. Every available minute better be taken up with rapids, water battles, outrageous jokes, or preposterous lies. A lot of “Becuss uf you, Heinrich ...”

Many of the guides I know get caught up with the image. Hell, I do, too. You can’t turn it off just by shucking the final boat onto the trailer.

So the same spirit of weirdness often spills over into the night: spawning on barroom floors, slam-dancing and loud communal bonding.

In anticipation of similar raucous behavior around a campfire on the floor of the Canyon, I stowed a considerable quantity of a favorite Adirondack libation—a powerful concoction known simply as “Paddler’s Punch” that’s downed in quick shots.

I figured, even if the good folks from FOR wouldn’t partake in Paddlers, the boatmen would prove thirsty. But the punch lay buried in my duffle for five days.

With 14 days between put-in and take-out, the boatmen do everything slow. They don’t go after the quick punch line, the easy laugh, or the one-liner, but preferred to draw out the experience.

They even talked slowly. I’d ask our lead boatman Matt a question, and he’d look up from the book he’d been reading to the people on his raft, contemplate for a moment then reply, “Wellll (pause) that’s Esplanade Sandstone, down there.”

The accent and the slow pace drove me crazy at first, but after three days I’d catch myself saying, “Well, I’m goin’ to go surf that wave, down there.”

The other boatmen, Tom, J.P., J.R. and Dirk were similarly subdued. Each possessed a sharp, quirky sense of humor, but they preferred to play off the people, contributing to the interaction rather than dominating it.

Naturally, the folks from California reveled in the laid-back atmosphere. But I confess it took me a while to appreciate its value.

At night we’d gather around a blaze of driftwood built in the firebox and listen to Matt read stories by Patrick McManus,
recite river poems, or recount the legends of the Anasazi, the first residents of the Canyonlands. Matt’s slow rhythm would often lull me to sleep, but it didn’t matter, because I’d wake up before he got to the punch line.

And after the fire had burned down to embers, I’d hunker down in my sleeping bag and listen to the boatmen quietly celebrate the end of another long day. They’d cluster down on the rafts, drifting on anchor, take a long pull from a bottle of bourbon, then blow across the top of the neck. The resonant sound would echo up the canyon walls and the last thing I’d hear before falling asleep would be Matt saying, “Well (pause) nice tone, there, Tom.”

The punch came out of the duffle the night after we’d passed the Little Colorado. Before then it seemed out of place, but we’d stopped at the mudflats where the silt-laden tributary meets the slower water of the big river and deposits its sediment in a thick layer of muck.

I anticipated what was coming and maneuvered my kayak out of range during the ensuing mud-wrestling championships. But Kirsten outwitted me. I thought I had escaped when we arrived at our campsite a few miles downstream, but she had preserved an ample quantity of the sludge in the bottom of a bail bucket and slopped the load over my head.

One display of childish behavior, I reasoned, deserves another. It was time for the punch.

To my surprise, with sufficient lubricant, the Western boatmen could hold their own with the best from the East when it came to outrageous lies and preposterous jokes. Well, almost....

And the FOR crowd could shed the mellowness and prove as raucous as the best—or worst—of the East.

But as we surveyed Lava Falls from a rocky overlook high above the river on the right, I suffered a relapse.

The river was in a low cycle, but even at 5,000 cfs, the route through the center right of the channel was mined with intimidating waves that surged up before breaking into piles of foam.

I scrambled back to my boat, quickly tucked in my sprayskirt, and paddled out onto the glassy tongue leading into the heart of the drop.

As my boat rose high over the crest of the opening wave, I pivoted to the left to miss an apparent hole, then cruised back to the right, surfing across the run-out waves to eddy behind a house-sized boulder in position to spot the rest of the party.

I know I ought to have stayed there. But this was Laffa, and I couldn’t see anyone else coming. I’d have time, I reasoned, to ferry over to the left, drag my boat over the rocks and run the drop again.

So I did. But midway through the portage, I glimpsed a flash of yellow as Mark’s Infinity crashed through the lead waves.

I wasn’t really worried about Mark’s safety as I raced across the remaining...
rocks and launched my boat. He was a fine paddler, I figured, and certainly would experience no difficulty. But still I felt deeply embarrassed—I wasn’t where I was supposed to be.

Seconds later, I felt even more humiliated. For my second run through Lava, I chose a route farther left and failed to identify a low breaking wave for what it really was—a lightly covered pour-over rock.

My boat plunged over the lip and penciled straight down over the far side with my bow lodging beneath a downstream rock. Water poured over my back as I sat there, firmly pinned. My skirt popped and my boat filled with water before I was finally able to rock sideways and dislodge my kayak.

Lee didn’t say anything as I paddled over to the eddy—she only glared. But her look spoke volumes.

Tom the boatman was less merciful: “I guess this proves you’re a heckuva kayaker ... You’re probably the first kayaker in history to pin himself in Lava.”

I just ruefully shook my head and examined the nose of my Reflex. The front three inches of the boat had been bent upward at a 90 degree angle with a long half-moon smile sliced through the hull.

The smile seemed to be laughing and saying, “Becuss uf you ...”

Maybe I finally learned my lesson at Lava, but the last two days of the trip were two of the most enjoyable.

There weren’t any more major drops—but there were plenty of smaller rapids with smooth waves perfect for surfing. My newly customized Reflex was suited for the task, its upturned nose less likely to dive, and I soon claimed that I had pinned it on purpose.

We shared the site with another group of rafters waiting for the ride. They were a friendly bunch of Rotarian type and their wives on a six-day tour from Milwaukee. Camped side-by-side—we realized that our group was special...or at least a little different.

Maybe the Rotarian types simply hadn’t sufficient time to surrender themselves to the experience, but they clung to trappings of normalcy, pitching their tents as neatly as if they were doing an overnight in the neighborhood KOA, discreetly washing and grooming out of sight before trooping down for dinner in fresh shirts and shorts.

Our people were barbarians by comparison, throwing our sleeping pads down under the stars at the first convenient dune, stripping buck naked to bathe in the river and then donning the same river shorts that had survived the previous two weeks. After 14 days, behavior was dictated by what was easy, comfortable, or natural.

But after we spotted two of the older gents, hiding behind some bushes, watching Lee and Kirsten bathe in the river, I felt a little sorry for the other group. Maybe they should spend more time in the Canyon. Or join FOR.

I think I’d like to do both.
It’s hard to know where to begin with this story.

One way to introduce it would be to state as a matter of fact that California contains the hardest whitewater of any state in the contiguous United States and then reveal that this next piece, published in the Jan/Feb 1985 issue of the AW Journal, describes the first descent of one of its most famous stretches of river, the Devil’s Postpile section of the Middle Fork San Joaquin. This run begins just outside Devil’s Postpile National Monument, near the resort town of Mammoth Lakes on the east side of the Sierra Nevada range. The run drops over 4,000 feet in just over 30 miles, ending in the remote reservoir of Mammoth Pool, accessible only from the west side of the Sierra Nevada range. In between lie countless Class V and V+ rapids, including one steeply walled in, forbidding whitewater stretch aptly named The Crucible. First descent of this section using early 80s gear? Gutsy.

Of course, a completely different way to introduce this would be to say that the following article is remarkable in part for the story it doesn’t tell. Though it’s brief, it remains one of the only (perhaps the only) report on the great California First Descent War, “fought” between two rival gangs, ever to be published in the Journal. Throughout much of the 80s, Reg Lake’s hybrid crew of intrepid kayakers/rock climbers, including Doug Tompkins (co-founder of both The North Face and ESPRIT), Royal Robbins (founder of his own eponymous clothing company), and Yvon Chouinard (founder of Patagonia) raced Chuck Stanley and Lars Holbeck’s team of kayakers to achieve stunning Sierra Nevada first descent after first descent. While paddlers associated with these two teams respectively account for the first descent of most of the classic Class V and V+ sections of whitewater in California’s formidable Sierra Nevada range, the two groups jealously guarded their future expedition plans to prevent the other crew from scooping their next run.

The fact that more stories about this period in California whitewater history were never told is dumbfounding. Perhaps the principal actors in the tale preferred paddling to writing, and almost certainly they all worried that time spent documenting a past run was giving the rival gang time to get to the next one before them. In any event, while this context is mostly absent in the following tale, the plain account of the run itself is worthy in its own right. Perhaps someday the grander story will emerge for all the world to appreciate.
It’s always a special thrill to be one of the first boaters to run a wild river. Maybe that’s why I let myself get talked into kayaking the upper Middle Fork of the San Joaquin in 1980. I went with a couple of experts, Royal Robbins and Doug Tompkins, who were better known for their climbing feats. Royal was the first to climb Half Dome and to solo El Capitan, among other achievements, and Doug has scaled peaks all over the world, including Mount Fitzroy in Patagonia. We had just kayaked the Bio-Bio in Chile, and right away we started talking about comparable adventures here in California. The next thing I knew, we were in Doug’s plane over the Sierra Nevada, scouting the South Fork Merced and the Middle San Joaquin by air.

We thought we could do the South Fork Merced in two days. It took us four days and cost Royal a dislocated shoulder. (He was ready to go again the following week.) So we approached the upper Middle Fork of the San Joaquin much more cautiously. And why not? In the 25 miles from the put-in above Devil’s Postpile to the top of Mammoth Pool Reservoir, the river drops 4700 feet. Some stretches have gradients above 400 feet per mile as the river plunges over huge granite aprons.

We took climbing gear, sleeping bags, five pounds of food (dried fruit, nuts, chocolate bars, and tea), and almost nothing else. The trip totaled six days, a couple more than we had planned, so each of us ate only about four ounces of food per day. At one point I found a nice camera not far from one of the rare trails, but I left it behind because I didn’t want to make my kayak three pounds heavier.

When we started, we had no idea whether we could really finish the run. Time after time we had to portage by lowering our boats on ropes and carefully climbing down after them. I would have been glad to take

The whitewater on the Middle Fork San Joaquin is no joke. Neither is the scenery.
out at the Cassidy foot bridge, where a trail crosses the river, but Royal and Doug wanted to press on through Balloon Dome Gorge. We agreed that if necessary, we would abandon the boats and climb out of the canyon—assuming we could find a way up the 3000-foot walls. I felt we were flirting with forbidden dangers, doing something we shouldn’t be doing, but Royal and Doug simply refused to believe we couldn’t find a way down. Every move, whether in the boat or on the rock face, was made with more concentration than I had ever mustered. All the little details, from the grain of the granite to the color of the water, stood out more sharply than usual.

When we emerged from the gorge, we knew we were going to make it. But the trip was tough all the way to the end. Difficult rapids continued to the reservoir, then we had to paddle six miles against a 30 mile-an-hour wind. After that we hiked two miles, hitched a ride to the nearest phone, and waited several hours to be picked up. At last we sat down to a fine midnight dinner at Royal’s home in Modesto. An hour later, just when I was about to relax, Royal reached into a drawer and pulled out a stack of maps. “Can you keep a secret?” he asked. He was already planning our next first descent: the headwaters of the Kern.

Like the best of the High Sierra rivers pioneered during the early to mid-80s, the Devil’s Postpile run takes paddlers through intensely beautiful gorges.

Given all the challenges the Middle Fork San Joaquin presents paddlers, it’s impressive to imagine the courage necessary to attempt its first descent— even before considering the antiquated paddling gear used by Reg Lake and his co-conspirator.
AW STAFF IS currently working with our web contractor, Confluence Corporation, on a redesigned website to meet the needs of its membership for the next decade. While the current americanwhitewater.org has served millions of users in its 15+ years, the organization recognizes that it needs a more powerful, dynamic, professional web interface to best serve its members in the future. Building on a site that currently accounts for over 800,000 page visits per month, the new website will include, among many other things, a more professional design and greater ease of use for site developers and visitors both, an underlying structure that can be easily expanded in the future, a mapping interface allowing users to explore river data, an easy-to-use interface for volunteers to contribute to and edit certain content, and in a world in which users continue to access the web from a greater diversity of devices, a responsive design that works well across screens of various size.

One of the great things about the forthcoming website redesign is that it is targeted at addressing the concerns about our current website raised by you, our site users who responded to a 2011 survey. Among the survey suggestions addressed by the new site will be improved mobile device access and better mapping of river reaches to go along with existing river descriptions and flow data. While American Whitewater is pursuing a pragmatic approach to the redesign that prioritizes the quality of the finished product and the organization’s financial investment over the speed of the work, we are excited that in the relatively near future this new site will be coming to an Internet compatible device near you!

American Whitewater is investing in a redesigned website because we recognize the obvious trend toward digital media in our society and the value that our site offers the paddling community. Of course, our investment in the new website is not being bankrolled by a new source of funding for the organization. Instead, we are revising our media budget to help pay for our sizeable investment in a new web presence. One of the strategic trade-offs American Whitewater is planning to offset its investments in the new website is a shift of the Journal to a five issues per year format. Starting in 2014 the Journal will combine the November/December and January/February issues into a single winter issue. This efficient redistribution of resources and member benefits will best serve the organization in the rapidly evolving 21st century media landscape.

These changes also present new opportunities for American Whitewater to experiment in delivering content traditionally only available in its print magazine electronically to best serve its members and to reach the broadest possible audience of whitewater enthusiasts and river conservationists.

American Whitewater is excited to unveil its new website—because of both the use and functionality it will provide the paddling community and possibilities it will provide to reach a larger, more diverse audience and to share with that audience the work AW does on a daily basis “to conserve and restore America’s whitewater resources and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely.”
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The thrill of the paddle—and a yearning to extend my boating season—has brought me many times to the constant warmth and abundant moisture across Mexico, Central America, Venezuela, and as far south as Bolivia.

Throughout it all, whether canoeing or kayaking in these steamy, sodden, and buggy settings, I’m often rewarded with a sweet and satisfying experience. But sometimes, through no fault of my own, I’ve found myself an unwilling actor in a rainforest junk show, making me wonder if I shouldn’t have ever left home.

It was last December when I hooked up with a loosely led outfitted expedition in the Mexican state of Chiapas, near the border of Guatemala. Our goal was to explore the rarely run and whitewater-laced Río Lacanjá, an 86-kilometer willowy tributary of the mighty Río Usumacinta. We would then continue down the Uso itself, which was once considered one of the ultimate rafting journeys in the world.

Our route on the Lacanjá snaked through the Reserva Montes Azules, the largest remaining sub-tropical rainforest in southern and central Mexico. Watched over by the native Lacandón people, it is one of the few intact old growth forest areas remaining in Central America. The sprawling reserve is home to jaguars and other rare and wonderful wildlife species, as well as a number of important Mayan archeological sites.

The Río Lacanjá I knew not at all. But this wasn’t going to be my first rodeo on the Uso, the iconic “Sacred Monkey River” of the Maya. In April 1995, my small rafting party was a day behind another group of American rafters who were robbed and shot, two critically. When word of the ambush reached the authorities, the Mexican military swooped in with helicopter gunships and commandos to “secure the river.” We were glad they did. Otherwise, there was a good chance that our group would have been assaulted next.

That incident was the straw that broke the Uso’s back when it came to river running. In the ensuing years, no one risked boating in this lawless frontier forming the Mexico-Guatemala border. I, for one, never thought I’d be returning to this wild part of the world, thinking once was enough. But an invitation by my friend, Larry Laba, owner of SOAR Inflatable Canoes, to join a December 2013 trip he had organized to celebrate his 60th birthday and his company’s 20th anniversary, was too beguiling to pass up. Especially when I learned that the leader was hard-core river explorer James “Rocky” Contos, someone I thought I’d like to know.

Fluent in Spanish with a PhD in neuroscience, Contos, 42, is the founder and director of the non-profit river conservation organization Sierra Rios. Not one to stay put in his San Diego home for very long, he has somehow managed to kayak nearly every river in Mexico, including several hundred possible first descents. He solo kayaked the entire run we were about to do in early 2010. And in 2012, he cemented his reputation as an extraordinary explorer/adventurer when he discovered the most distant source of the Amazon and made the complete first descent of the entire river and all the headwater streams.

But even a swashbuckler like Contos can encounter rough patches that can’t be smoothed. It’s that Murphy’s Law thing: If anything can go wrong it will. And on
this foray deep into the Emerald Forest of Chiapas, Murphy took pleasure in kicking some serious ass. Heavily loaded with gear and provisions, our blue inflatable canoes were the perfect choice for the job, but capsizes and swims besieged us right from the start as we catapulted over a series of travertine ledge rapids up to 12 feet high. We were not exactly a crackerjack team of seasoned whitewater pros.

Besides Rocky and his coterie of five Norte Americano clients, all of whom were approaching Social Security age, there was Morgan Arnaud, 22, our fearless French safety kayaker. Plus, we had with us three locals. There were Sunción Lopez, 36, and Melgar Lopez, 19, two eager guides-in-training with less than a year of river running under their belts, both from the border town of Frontera Corozal, a mostly Ch’ol community located on the banks of the Río Usumacinta across from neighboring Guatemala. There was also Mario Chambor, 28, a member of the Lacandón tribe, one of the contemporary Maya peoples. Their population now numbers only around 600.

Mario’s long, straight black hair and angular face looked like the ancient Maya portrayals of themselves in murals and relief carvings. Brave and nimble, he had agreed to be our local Lacandón guide as stipulated by the tribe, even though this was to be his very first wilderness river trip.

Dawn ushered in clear skies instead of the monsoonal rain that pelted us throughout the night. And even better than the welcoming sunshine, we heard the extraordinary news that Laba had made a miraculous recovery, perchance due to the handfuls of ibuprofen he had ingested. Though still sore, he proclaimed that he felt well enough for the jungle show to continue. He grinned sheepishly when we told him that that the ledge drop that nailed him would from now on be known as “Laba Falls.”

We hastily hacked out tent sites in a tangle of wet, nearly impenetrable understory. Serenaded by the roaring calls of howler monkeys in the treetops overhead, we gloomily crawled into our hot and humid nylon shelters, dreading what lay ahead.

One drop after another lay ahead, waiting to trip us up. At the fifth or sixth of the sheer travertine ledges, no more than three kilometers from our put-in on the Lacanjá, there was a mishap. Laba and his bow partner, Marty, went airborne, then hit the water hard. Laba bent over in his seat and wrapped his hands around his neck. He was in excruciating pain. We helped him to shore and had him lie down. The acute whiplash had rewired his upper body’s nervous system; numbness radiated from his neck to his shoulders, arms, and hands. Would a year’s worth of planning be derailed on the first day of our trip?

Laba was a tough guy, but with tears welling in his eyes he said there was no way he could continue. An emergency evacuation the next morning was deemed necessary. Rocky soberly stated that it would be a hellish portage of boats and gear through trackless forest to get back to the Lacandón camp where we had started.

With scant daylight remaining, we hastily hacked out tent sites in a tangle of wet, nearly impenetrable understory. Serenaded by the roaring calls of howler monkeys in the treetops overhead, we gloomily crawled into our hot and humid nylon shelters, dreading what lay ahead.

As we pushed off into the current through tight, twisty drops, river-wide ledges, and blind, brushy channels we encountered a series of mystery doors. Take the correct one, smooth ride; take the wrong one, get spanked.

My bow partner and almost-wife, Fran, one of the first female firefighters in Denver, Colorado, not to mention the only female on this trip, watched anxiously as did I when Morgan, then Rocky, reached the horizon line of yet another unknown, intimidating drop and vanished out of sight. Nosing up to the lip ourselves, we each took one last

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Here the author is trying to be a good-will ambassador by taking “selfies” of himself with the throngs of curious children in Arroyo Jerusalén, a poor, isolated Mexican settlement of a couple hundred inhabitants, where we spent a long day and night navigating the inter-cultural craziness.

Photo by Larry Rice
hard paddle stroke before plunging straight over the vertical 12-footer...directly into an ugly keeper hole.

The boat tilted to the right, caught a side tube, and over it went. We both got sucked into the boiling, recirculating turbulence, but Fran, being farther downstream, managed to break free and get washed out. Me? Not so lucky. Once, twice, maybe five times, I got pulled deep into the vortex, unable to do anything except catch the briefest gulp of air when I bobbed to the surface. “Well, this is it, this is how it’s going to end,” my brain flashed red, when I didn’t think I could hold my breath any longer. Just then I popped to the surface again, but this time I found myself right at the edge of the hole. Somehow I managed to scream, “Help!” and swam for dear life. When Morgan scooted in, I caught the grab loop of his kayak and hung on tight as he towed my nearly limp carcass to shore.

“That looked pretty sick,” Rocky said, as he pulled alongside. He said he had capsized too, but didn’t go for a hole ride. “Sick?” I wheezed in reply. “Let’s say after some 40 years of canoeing it was one of my top two worst swims.” To cheer me up, our leader told me that from now on the drop would be known as “Rice’s Hole.” Laba and I both were now immortalized on the map.

The next day, and each ensuing day, there was rain. There were more Class III-IV travertine ledge rapids, more swims, more drenched, hacked-out campsites, more no-see-ums, ants, chiggers, and more mosquitoes. More of everything.

But there was also indescribable beauty: the magical, pristine forest; iridescent-blue Morpho butterflies the size of dinner plates; scarlet macaws, parrots, and toucans flying and squawking overhead; and spider and howler monkeys making a ruckus from high in the trees as we drifted beneath.

Also mind-bending were the nameless, completely unrestored Maya ruins along the river known only to Mario and his people. He led us to several of them, by baffling bushwhack through forest so thick that we had to stay right on his heels to avoid losing him. Pointing out intricately carved rock staircases and walls abandoned to the jungle for hundreds of years, he explained that these long-forgotten ruins are probably more extensive and larger than Bonampak, the sprawling ancient Mayan city that lay a day or so downstream.
Bonampak is renowned for its well-preserved murals that depict scenes in great detail of angry Mayan gods, human sacrifice, costumes, musical instruments, and the weapons of war. Mario stated that our band of voyageurs would be among only a handful of modern-day people who have ever arrived at the site by river. “And after what we’ve been through, I think you know why,” he added, lighting up the forest with his infectious smile.

After five hard days we came to Cascada Reina, a thundering 30-foot-high waterfall pinched in a rocky escarpment. Directly below the maelstrom, a Class V+ according to Rocky, was a long, chaotic cataract, an imposing Class IV+. There was only one way to get past all this explosive fury: a heinous half-kilometer portage that required schlepping boats, a tonnage of gear, and our motley selves.

Like a train of leaf-cutter ants, back and forth we struggled with our ungainly payloads up and over the rough terrain. Other than our familiar litany, “I’m a celebrity, get me the f____ outta here!” our march went well. Except for a spectacular, death-defying fall.

Marty, a retired NASA engineer from California, lost his balance while hauling one of the canoes and took a header off a rooftop-high crag. Down below, Laba and I watched in disbelief as he fell to the soft ground and landed with a sickening, loud thump. Running to his motionless body, we expected him to be busted up, or worse. We were flabbergasted when he sat up, dumbly shook his head, and reported that he was all right. “Marty, do you know how damn lucky you are?” shouted Laba. He pointed out the sharp rocks a foot to the left and right from where our friend had alighted.

In the meantime, young Morgan, who had joined our group at the last second when he had a chance meeting with Rocky, shocked everyone except Señor Contos when he announced that he was going to run the

Mario Chambor, 28, a member of the Lacandón tribe, one of the contemporary Maya peoples whose population now numbers only around 600, getting a helping hand from Morgan, our fearless kayaker. Brave and nimble, Mario had agreed to be our local Lacandón guide as stipulated by the tribe, even though this was to be his very first wilderness river trip.

Photo by Larry Rice

It was full-on machete whacking, stumbling, and cursing from beginning to end. The footing was treacherous. The forest bed was a minefield of slippery downfalls and ensnaring roots and vines. Every step and handhold had to be carefully taken; non-retractable, flesh-burying spines were the penalty for carelessness.

One of the first travertine ledges nearly ended our expedition before it had begun.

Photo by Larry Rice
waterfall from top to bottom. Never mind there was no safety, we were light-years away from medical aid, and that he was in the beginning stages of some enigmatic tropical fever.

In the pool above the fearsome waterfall, Morgan wiggled into his kayak, took a few strong paddle strokes, and over Cascada Reina he went. Peering through my camera viewfinder, I thought for sure I was going to watch our intrepid Frenchman die, but he blasted through with only one flip and a lightning-fast roll, thus becoming, according to Rocky, the first to make this bold—some might say foolhardy—descent.

With the portage finally behind us, the next day we focused on bashing through a flat, featureless section of the Lacanjá besieged by blow-downs, boat-stopping brush, and a maze of confusing, sometimes dead end, channels.

Sunción, who had never run a river until a January 2013 Río Usumacinta trip led by Rocky, demonstrated his prowess with a machete as he whacked a navigable path through the spider’s web of vines and branches. Slowly, very slowly, we inched our way toward the Río Lacantún, one of two big and wide rivers forming the even mightier Usumacinta.

In a masochistic sort of way, all the drama, all the arduous physical labor, was kind of fun—the type of rousing challenge I had expected from a river journey deep within a Mexican rainforest. What wasn’t amusing, or expected, was the rapid onset of jungle rot affecting my feet and the feet of more than half our team. Common in tropical climes, this crippling disease is often a result of continuous exposure to damp, unsanitary conditions—exactly what we were experiencing from day one. If neglected, this medical condition can extend through the muscles and tendons and even reach the bones.

I had been plagued by jungle rot many years before when I was part of a trekking expedition to replicate Spanish conquistador Vasco Núñez de Balboa’s 1513 crossing of the Isthmus of Panama’s wild and dangerous Darién Gap. My feet had turned into an ugly, inflamed mess of red, weeping blisters and open sores. The same conditions were afflicting them now. Walking was unbearably painful, akin to stepping barefoot on broken shards of glass.

The only cure for jungle rot is to keep the feet clean, warm, and dry. Not a chance of that happening until, after eight days in the boonies, we finally reached Frontera Corozal, Sunción’s and Melgar’s home town, which was perched alongside the rain-swollen Río Usumacinta.

On the outskirts of Frontera, which is the stepping-stone to Yaxchilán, a jungle-shrouded Zona Arqueológica that protects one of the most mythical and classic Maya cities in the Usumacinta region, we found some low-end cabañas. Here, we five battered gringos, who were actually paying good money for all this merriment, hoped to rest and recover. In the meantime, Rocky and Morgan headed back to Palenque, a sweaty, humdrum city about a three-hour drive away. They needed to spend a day food shopping for our upcoming Usumacinta trip, and also pick up nine clients who were flying in from the U.S., Canada, and Mexico City. The newbies, some of whom were friends of mine, had no idea what we’d been through already. And, like us, they had no idea of what lurked downriver....

For two nights, the four of us Lacanjá refugees afflicted with foot rot moved very little. Fran, who somehow avoided the fungal in the jungle, scurried back and forth to the local farmacias to buy anti-fungal ointments, antibiotics, and a bleach rinse to help vanquish the creeping crud.

Other than fighting boredom and watching our lesions slowly heal, we castaways were good. There was a small, deeply average restaurant within hobbling distance. The
thatched roofs on our cramped bungalows didn’t leak from the daily rains. And the too short but otherwise comfy beds cloaked with mosquito netting beat the hell out of foam pads on the spongy forest floor.

Did I say “comfy?” It was still pitch-black outside during our second and final night in Frontera when I suddenly heard Fran shriek from the other bed. Caught in the light of her headlamp, a Titanic Norway rat scurried across the concrete floor and darted under my bed. Fran flung a sandal at the wood plank wall and shrieked some more, but the rat didn’t budge from its secure hiding place.

“No big deal,” I sleepily muttered, trying to slip back into what had been a pleasant, mildly erotic dream. But my tryst with a Victoria’s Secret model came to a screeching stop when I felt something small and furry brush against my infected, pustulated feet. In a panic, I threw off the covers and shone my headlamp at the foot of the bed. Now it was my turn to shriek loudly enough to rattle the thatch roof. Curled up in a small, squirming pile, sharing the mattress with me, were four bright pink baby rats! No doubt mama rat was still in the room, desperate to be reunited with her wriggling and squeaking brood.

Later at breakfast, after packing up in order to meet Rocky and the others who would be arriving from Palenque, I told the others about my unwelcome bedmates. Stan, the carefree, good ole’ boy from Texas, said, “Cool! Show me. I gotta get a picture!” Laba said, “Thanks for ruining my breakfast. I think I might hurl.” Only Marty displayed

Top: Only three kilometers from the put-in our expedition nearly ends with a back injury.

Photo by Larry Rice

Middle: Búfalo, the captain of our motorized gunboat escort, holding an iguana he had caught.

Photo by Rocky Contos

Bottom: The four rat babies in my bed!

Photo by Larry Rice
any type of sympathy. “I hope you got a good supply of Doxycycline with you. Rats are common transmitters of leptospirosis, a disease you definitely don’t want to get.”

After Rocky arrived, it took almost the entire day before our new group was ready to embark on the Río Usumacinta. Our flotilla had now ballooned to three oar rafts, seven inflatable canoes, and Morgan in his kayak. Big group. Big river.

Flowing swiftly between thickly forested banks, the Usu was almost unrecognizable compared to what I remembered from nearly 20 years earlier. Then, apart from the shooting of two rafters and the dramatic military show of force, there was warm, clear green water. There were enormous sand beaches, appealing campsites, a number of fun, low-stress Class II-III rapids, and perfect sub-tropical weather.

And now? With the river still rising to flood stage levels that Rocky and Sunción had never seen before—30 to 40 vertical feet above normal flows—the water was soupy brown with massive whirlpools and unimaginably large and powerful eddies. Finding a campsite for our large group was going to be a huge problem. All the beaches were inundated and the river was spilling into the shoreline trees.

But, on the upside, at least this go-around it was highly unlikely we’d be molested by banditos. At Laba’s insistence, Rocky had hired a “gunboat” to be our escort as far as the Gran Cañón de San José. The captain of the motorized lancha was a burly, badass hombre named Búfalo. He and his crew of three moonlighting Guatemalan soldiers, always at the ready with rifles and shotguns, would make any desperado think long and hard before assaulting us.

After “camping” at an abandoned Guatemalan military outpost—the only dry ground we’d come upon—we made a lingering stop at Yaxchilán. Downstream of here, it was highly unlikely we’d see any more day-tripping tourists. Which was why we had recruited Búfalo and his gunboat.

The next two rainy nights we took refuge at a secluded Mexican ranger station, the only place we found to pitch our tents without fear of having them wash away. We then let the beefy current take us to El Porvenir, a forlorn, no-frills Guatemalan army garrison about 40 kilometers downriver from Yaxchilán. Not a single soldier was there at the moment. Instead, the facility was overseen by two lonely, elderly caretakers who graciously allowed us to set up our tents in the vacant, disheveled barracks.

After the Cascada Reina the Lacanjá became flat and brush choked. Photo by Larry Rice

The author and his bow partner, Fran Rulon-Miller, boof yet another ledge. Photo by Rocky Contos
A few kilometers upriver of the garrison, reached by a muddy forest footpath, was Piedras Negras, an exotic, unrestored, and largely unvisited Maya archeological site. Guided by the caretakers, we spent a full day hiking to the ruins, which were still as hauntingly enchanting and mystical as I remembered them. Backed by dense rainforest vegetation, this remote place was the perfect spot to watch for all types of critters, from crocodiles at river’s edge to howler monkeys up high in the trees. On the rain-soaked trail, we even observed the fresh, easily recognizable pugmarks of a jaguar.

Our original plan had been for all the clients to be in inflatable canoes the whole seven days and 142 kilometers on the Usu, while Rocky, Suncion, and Melgar would row the rafts with most of the gear. But we decided that because of the increased high water risks—as evidenced when Mitch and Dean, the two Canadians, got sucked into a medium-sized whirlpool that flipped their boat—at this juncture only the rafts with six “volunteer” hitchhikers from the canoe group and an ailing Morgan in his kayak would continue through the Gran Cañón de San José. Lying in wait within the canyon’s narrow confines would be giant whirlpools and at least four big rapids. “A very bad place to flip and swim,” said Rocky.

The rest of us, Laba and myself included, would pile into Búfalo’s gunboat and be ferried 10 kilometers upriver to Arroyo Jerusalén, a dirt-poor, isolated Mexican settlement of a couple hundred inhabitants. Here we would somehow arrange for minibus transport back to Palenque, where we’d eventually rendezvous with the others. A couple of hours after breakfast, the jam-packed rafts shoved off on the still-rising river and disappeared around a broad, sweeping bend. Trailing behind them in the gunboat was Búfalo and his homeboys, providing protection as far as the head of the canyon, 25 kilometers away.

Waiting for the lancha to return, the rest of us passed the time playing cards, reading, and bird watching. All was peaceful as I swayed in a hammock near the river, daydreaming of spicy tamales, ice-cold cervezas, and a rat-free bed back in Palenque, when my placid world abruptly turned upside down. The two caretakers came running past me, followed closely by a platoon of heavily armed, rucksack-carrying, camo-garbed Guatemalan soldiers who looked like they had just been humping the bush for a couple of days.
Speaking in rapid-fire Spanish, of which I could only understand bits and pieces, Fidelino, one of the caretakers, breathlessly conveyed there had been a gun battle between the soldiers and a large band of banditos—“en el bosque,” in the forest, “no lejos de aqui,” not far from here.


Just then four more soldiers came hustling by, no more than 10 feet from me. Between them, they were carrying a crude litter holding a gravely injured man. Attired in blood-soaked civilian clothes, the man was moaning pitifully, obviously in great pain. As the litter-bearers passed, the injured man reached his arm out to me as if begging for help. His terrified eyes looked straight into mine. I knew this man would soon be dead.

The soldiers jostled the stretcher down the steep bank to one of two tied-up lanchas. There, they brusquely dropped their human cargo into its hold. Then the entire platoon, along with the caretakers, piled into the lanchas, fired up the 75-horse outboards and sped away, heading upriver. We eight unarmed, clueless turistas were the only ones left behind to guard the fort.

We hustled down to the shoreline, bewildered and frightened. “What the hell just happened?” we all wondered. The unnerving thought crossed our minds that the bad guys were still at large and might be headed here right now, thirsty for revenge. Someone said it was like being in a bad Hollywood psychological horror movie, except this was real and we didn’t know when or how it was going to end.

Sandwiched between the wide, swift river and the dark, forbidding forest, our options for a hasty exodus were severely limited. All the inflatable canoes were deflated and rolled up, awaiting transport by Búfalo. Furthermore, the hand pumps to inflate them had gone with the rafts. “Well, then,” said Dean, one of the Canadians, “if these bandito characters show up, I guess we’re royally screwed.”

I was scanning the forest for a place to hide, a hole to crawl into, when Búfalo and his posse returned and pulled up to shore. In my broken, survival Spanish, I quickly explained what had transpired while they were gone. Big bad Búfalo’s eyes lit up, as did his mates’. He commanded us to get into his gunboat and leave all the canoes and other boating gear behind. Before we were even seated, the lancha was already in mid-river struggling against the swift current, our destination Arroyo Jerusalén.

After yet another day and night of, by now, routine mayhem spent navigating the intercultural craziness in Arroyo Jerusalén, we were finally able to rejoin the others in Palenque. Only then did we learn from Rocky, via Búfalo, that the soldiers indeed had been in a firefight with banditos only a few kilometers behind the garrison, and that their wounded prisoner did die from his gunshot wounds.

As unsettling as was the news, at least we all survived, in relatively good health—with an incredible story to tell friends and family back home—even though this entire trip had been so bizarre that no one was likely to believe it.

It was the German existentialist philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, who said, “That which does not kill us makes us stronger.” Well, after this second river adventure to the Chiapas region, after enduring banditos, Rice’s Hole, mangled feet, rats in my bed, floodwaters, and banditos again, oddly enough I do feel stronger. But I can’t help wondering what I’d done to make all those Mayan gods so damn mad.
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It was early June and we had a month off between work and grad school. It was the perfect time in our lives for “the road trip.” My fiancée, Kristen, and I had been dating five years and boating together four. Vermont boating couples are few and far between. In fact, I am confident there are fewer than five in the entire state.

There is a double-edged sword to kayaking with your significant other. When Kristen is paddling well, and it is sunny, the satisfaction is great and we absolutely love paddling, but when a beat-down occurs on a long, committing river, along with a thunderstorm, the gratification is significantly less.

Our shuttle vehicle, or shall I say “home,” had us riding in comfort and loaded from top to bottom. We had a GMC Yukon XL outfitted with a wooden platform bed we constructed in the back. It was elevated high enough to slide coolers and gear under, and we topped it with a futon mattress. On the roof we strapped to the 78” crossbars two creek boats, two play boats, a Dynamic Duo, and a ski box. Riding in comfort when you’re living out of your vehicle makes a huge difference in your (and especially her) happiness!

We left Vermont in early June with our 10-year-old dog, Zoey, a German shorthair pointer. She travels well and truly enjoyed the adventure. A quick stop at Niagara Falls as we passed through New York and we were on our way. In two very long days on the road we were in Colorado. Planning when to stop, cook a reasonable meal, use the restrooms, and get enough sleep is essential. Fast food and no sleep will lead...
Our first taste of cold Colorado whitewater began at the whitewater park in Golden. We then headed to the mountains and had a downtown play boating session in Vail. The tourists made us feel like Olympic athletes with all the pictures they took and cheering they did! Moving south, we hit the Arkansas Valley, including the Numbers, Browns Canyon, Buena Vista Play Park, and the Royal Gorge. The Arkansas Valley is one of the best places to visit as a paddling couple. Remember those sunny days I mentioned before? Of those runs, the Royal Gorge is perhaps my favorite and a must-do for any boater. Running the raging river in a tall canyon with your significant other is a memorable experience.

From the Arkansas Valley we made our way to Gunnison, up through the Taylor River, and onto Crested Butte. The play park in Gunnison was entertaining enough, but the Crested Butte creeks had just dropped the week prior. However, the Taylor River did not disappoint. Aspen gave us a treat when we hit the Slaughterhouse Section of the Roaring Fork in the Duo with some locals. Having read the guidebook ahead of time, I remembered hearing something about a waterfall. The locals with us told...
me, “This next one you want to be two feet off the left wall.” I knew this meant a falls, however, my leading lady up front in the Duo had not heard this. A few moments and screams later we landed in the pool with style!

While in Aspen we went to the local YMCA for a hot shower. After almost two weeks of “the river is my shower,” Kristen decided a few dollars for a towel and continuous hot water was well worth it. In Glenwood Springs we spent the morning on the play wave, the afternoon at the local hot springs, and the evening on the Shoshone Section of the Colorado. If there is a better way to spend a day I do not know it. Following this, we had low water in Steamboat and ended up tubing with Zoey.

After two weeks in Colorado, Jackson Hole was our next destination. It is not a bad drive and the Green River near Rock Springs, Wyoming provides some play boating to keep you sane. The Snake River outside of Jackson Hole is the main attraction so late in the season. This is a great place for a paddling couple with mixed abilities because it has straightforward Class III rapids in a beautiful setting, warm temperatures, and one of the finest surf waves you will find anywhere. Mornings in town, hiking and seeing the sights during the day, followed by evening surf sessions at Lunch Counter was the norm for the next 10 days. Most days I surfed as Kristen tanned; however, some locals convinced her to do some surfing from time-to-time. A few tries (and rolls) later she had the biggest surf of her life! We spent 10 days there but had to leave in order to save enough time to see the parks to the north before heading back East. Going through Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Parks on our way to Bozeman, we hit the Gallatin River in the Duo. It’s a great river with a difficult shuttle to jog.

Before we knew it, the time to head back to Vermont had come, but not without a detour to the Ottawa River.

Remember that beat-down and thunderstorm I described before? Kristen and I are now married, and I figure if we can make it through the beat-downs on the river and spend more time paddling on sunny days, then our marriage should be a simple read-and-run. In total, our road trip lasted 29 days, went through 16 states and two provinces, and covered 7,320 miles. Our next road trip is planned for the Pacific Northwest in July 2015, this time with our new GSP puppy, “Denali.” She is now five months old and can be seen tagging along next to Zoey with us on rivers in Vermont and throughout the Northeast.
24TH ANNUAL
FEATHER RIVER FESTIVAL
SEPTEMBER 26-28, 2014
A BENEFIT FOR

Friday
Paddling Film Festival at
Indian Jim School

Saturday
Releases from Rock Creek Dam
Chico Paddleheads Class II slalom Races
Tobin Downriver Race
Benefit Party! Bands, Beer, Dinner,
Raffle, Silent Auction, 6pm

Sunday
Releases from Rock Creek Dam
<table>
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<td>French Broad River Festival, Watershed, Pyranha, Down River, Yakima, Star inflatables, Werner, NWRC, SealLine, Adventure Technology, Immersion Research</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Become a member of the American Whitewater Enduring Rivers Circle, created exclusively to honor and recognize people who have helped to continue our river stewardship efforts through a gift to American Whitewater in their estate plans.

For more information about making a bequest to American Whitewater CONTACT Carla Miner: 1.866.262.8429 or carla@americanwhitewater.org
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 less than 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://americanwhitewater.org/content/Membership/join-AW/, 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
Join or Renew Form

Name ____________________________________________________________

Address ________________________________________________________________________________

City, State, Zip ____________________________________________________________________________

Email ________________________________________________________________________________

Phone ___________________________ Member Number: ____________________________

*Note: AW will never share your information with others

Membership Level

☐ $35 Standard

☐ $25 Member of Affiliate Club

   Club: __________________________

☐ $25 Student

   School: __________________________

☐ $50 Family

☐ $75 Affiliate Club

☐ $100 Ender Club (Shirt Size: ________)

☐ $250 Platinum Paddler

☐ $500 Explorer

☐ $750 Lifetime

☐ $1,000 Legacy

☐ $2,500 Steward

For current member rewards go to: americanwhitewater.org

Donation

☐ Donation of $____________

Additional Subscriptions

☐ $30 Kayak Session Magazine - 4 issues per year (KS donates $5 to AW!)

Journal Options

☐ Do NOT mail me the AW Journal, email it to me <- Saves AW money, and trees! :)

Auto-Renew (No Renewal Notices!)

☐ Auto-renew my membership each year on the credit card below

Payment

☐ Credit Card ☐ Cash ☐ Check #________

Card Number: ___________________________ Exp. Date:___________

Name on card: ___________________________

Signature: ___________________________

July/Aug 2014
LETTER TO THE EDITOR
BY BOB WOODWARD

TO AMERICAN WHITEWATER,

I can’t thank Richard Montgomery enough for his remembrance of Bill Stanley in the March/April edition. It was befitting of a wonderful person whom I sadly had lost contact with and was unaware of his untimely passing.

I first met Bill when I ran the retail operations for Berkeley-based outdoor gear and apparel maker, Sierra Designs. The store was located two blocks from Aquatic Park and over a period of months in late 1975, I got to know the group that was training flatwater in hopes of making the 1976 Olympic Team. There was Bill, Carl Toepnner, Chuck Lyda, Marietta Gilman, Joe Bruger, Leslie Klein, etc.

They helped me hone my meager paddling skills and I paid them back by helping some of them with their cross-country skiing skills.

And then there were the Fenton’s expeditions where I proved the ultimate wimp in the ice cream eating arena.

Most of the Aquatic Park gang raced the big citizen XC races that winter and come spring the annual ski-bike-paddle Tahoe Triathlon. Thanks to Bill’s paddling coaching, I was able to muster a top ten finish among the likes of Gunter Hemmersbach.

Bill encouraged me to build a boat and helped me put together a Franconia down at Whitewater West under the watchful eye of owner Gwen Kleeman.

In the summer of 1976, Bill asked me to join the Aquatic Park gang on a trip north to Sunriver, Oregon for a series of canoe races and an exhibition of flatwater and whitewater boating.

Impressed with the Central Oregon area, I moved to Bend with my family in May 1978.

In June, Bill came to spend a week with us. For the first three days of his visit, we worked on marathon canoe techniques on the upper Deschutes. Then we spent three days at the First Street Rapid, minutes from our house. There, for five hours a day, Bill drilled me on catching eddies, ferry gliding, surfing, you name it.

When Bill left, he headed to Sundance on the Rogue to teach kayaking for the summer and soon was famous there for making the Wild and Scenic run solo in several hours whenever he had a day off.

That September, Outside Magazine sent me down to do a story on Sundance. Bill again worked with me on technique and he and I and four others did the Wild and Scenic run in monsoon-like weather to top off the week.

Thanks to Bill I became a decent paddler with a modest whitewater career that included being a driving force in getting the sport established in Central Oregon.

The morning after reading Richard’s moving tribute, I went to my garage and pulled out the Swedish made, wooden downriver paddle Bill gave me 36 years ago. I plan to use it this summer by way of honoring him.

I thank Bill for his enthusiasm, teaching ability, good company just as I thank Richard Montgomery for his fond farewell to “Moptop.”

NEW AMERICAN RIVER GUIDE BOOK!
BY ROGER GROGHAN

THE AMERICAN RIVER Insider’s Guide to Recreation, Ecology, and Cultural History of the North, Middle and South Forks has just been published by Protect American River Canyons (PARC). This 3rd edition has been completely updated and improved over the earlier editions. For river runners, hikers, mountain bikers, equestrians, or anyone who enters the canyons, old-timer or newcomer, all will find the 416-page soft cover guidebook an informative delight.

Whether beginner or expert, kayakers, canoeists, and rafters will enjoy the detailed maps and mile-by-mile descriptions of over 70 miles of runs on the South, Middle, and North Forks of the American River. Easy-to-read, updated directions for river access, shuttle routes, and river camping are very useful. The new Confluence to China Bar and beyond to Rattlesnake Bar run has been
It's Easy to Support AW!

American Whitewater is proud of the work we have accomplished in our stewardship program but we need your help to sustain our success. Your support through membership and donations enables our staff to be active and engaged in the process of river stewardship. Donations don't have to be large; each person doing a small part makes a noticeable difference. Many donors fail to take full advantage of federal tax incentives specifically intended to encourage charitable contributions. Such incentives often enable a donor to make a larger gift to AW at little or no additional cost. For more information about maximizing your gift visit the IRS website dedicated to charitable organizations.

American Whitewater is a national non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, EIN# 23-7083760. To learn more about the Giving Options below, contact us at 866-BOAT4AW or visit the “Donate” link under “Support AW” on our website at www.americanwhitewater.org

- Donate online today!
- Monthly Giving: Contribute a minimum of $10 via credit card or electronic transfer from your bank account.
- Bequests: Include AW in your will or living trust. Bequests to AW are generally exempt from federal or state inheritance taxes, and subject to an unlimited deduction.
- Combined Federal Campaign: Federal employees including federal civilians, military personnel and U.S. Postal Workers can donate to AW through the CFC a once a year charitable fund raising program. Look for AW (Agency #11351) in the official CFC listing of eligible donors.
- Charitable Remainder Trusts: Convert a highly appreciated asset (such as real estate or stocks) into a lifetime income while minimizing income and estate taxes.
- Employer Matching: Many employers will match your donations to non-profit organizations. This includes membership payments, as well as additional contributions. Check to see if your employer has a matching program.
- MissionFish: Sell your items through the MissionFish program on eBay and the proceeds come directly to AW.
- Other Assets: A gift of real estate to AW qualifies you for a tax deduction based on the property's fair market value. If it is not a river access point, AW will sell the property and use the proceeds to protect access and restore rivers. Acceptance of property is subject to certain conditions. You may also be eligible to receive tax benefits for gifts of real property. Art and jewelry are examples of personal property items that may be eligible. Interested donors should check with your financial and tax advisors and AW on the feasibility and tax considerations of such gifts.
- Securities: Donating appreciated stock to AW benefits both the donor and whitewater rivers. The donor receives two tax-related benefits. First, the gain on the stock is not subject to capital gains taxes. Second, the donor can deduct the value of the stock as a charitable contribution.
- United Way: All federal campaigns, and a few of the local campaigns will allow you to donate to AW. AW's UNITED WAY member # is 2302.
- Vehicle Donations: Turn that extra car, truck, or RV into a tax deductible donation benefiting AW.
The Affiliate Club Program lies at the very heart of American Whitewater’s existence. American Whitewater’s original purpose since 1954 has been to distribute information among its Affiliate Clubs. Our relationships with local clubs have provided the backbone for the river conservation and access work we accomplish. We have over 100 current AW Club Affiliates and they are all doing great work on your behalf. If you don’t belong to a club, consider joining one.

Our Affiliate Club Spotlight this issue is on the Toledo River Gang, an outstanding Affiliate Club, and long time supporter of our mission to conserve and restore America’s whitewater resources and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely.

The Toledo River Gang (TRG) is a paddling club based in Northwest Ohio. The Club’s members include a diverse group of people who share a common interest: to have fun and paddle. The skills of Club members vary as greatly as their personalities: from experienced to novice. There are beginner programs for folks just getting started on the water or join their expert sea kayakers on a scenic excursion to an unpopulated area of the Great Lakes.

At TRG you won’t need pavement to explore – all you’ll need is a kayak and a destination. Several river trips are planned each year plus other outings such as symposium events, film festivals, biking, cross-country skiing, and moonlight paddles. Members also receive a great deal on pool sessions in the winter to keep up on skills. Membership is an affordable $10 a year. Check out the Club’s website for additional information on membership and club activities http://www.toledorivergang.com/home.html.

A big thank you to the Toledo River Gang for their continued support of American Whitewater and our mission to conserve and restore America’s whitewater resources and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely!

The AW Journal Club Affiliates by state:

**Alabama**
Birmingham Canoe Club, Birmingham
Coosa River Paddling Club, Montgomery
Huntsville Canoe Club, Huntsville

**Arizona**
Grand Canyon Private Boaters Assn, Outdoors Unlimited, Flagstaff

**Arkansas**
Arkansas Canoe Club, Little Rock

**California**
California Floaters Society, Cameron Park
Chico Paddleheads, Chico
Gold Country Paddlers, Lotus
Nor Cal River Runners, Chico
RTS Sierra Club Angeles Chapter, Durate
Sierra Club Loma Prieta Paddlers, San Jose

**Colorado**
Colorado Whitewater Assn, Denver
Friends of the Arkansas River, Canon City
Pikes Peak Whitewater Club, Colorado Springs
San Miguel Whitewater Asso, Telluride
Western Association to Enjoy Rivers, Grand Junction

**Connecticut**
AMC - Connecticut Chapter, Waterbury

**Delaware**
AMC Delaware Valley Chapter, Oaks
Wilmington Trail Club, Newark

**Georgia**
Georgia Canoeing Asso, Atlanta
Paddlers4Christ, Ellijay

**Idaho**
Backwoods Mountain Sports, Ketchum
North Idaho Whitewater Boating, Post Falls
Idaho Whitewater Association, Boise

**Illinois**
Chicago Whitewater Assn, Chicago

**Iowa**
Iowa Whitewater Coalition, W. Des Moines

**Kentucky**
Bardstown Boaters, Bardstown
Bluegrass Wildwater Asso, Lexington
Elkhorn Paddlers, Lexington
Viking Canoe Club, Louisville

**Maine**
Penobscot Paddle & Chowder Society, Troy

**Maryland**
Blue Ridge Voyageurs, Silver Spring

**Massachusetts**
UConn Kayaking, Amherst
UMass Outing Club - Whitewater Kayaking, Amherst
Zoa Outdoor, Charlemont

**Minnesota**
SCSU Outdoor Endeavors, Saint Cloud

**Missouri**
Missouri Whitewater Assn, St Louis
Ozark Mountain Paddlers, Springfield
Ozark Wilderness Waterways, Kansas City

**Montana**
Beartooth Paddlers Society, Billings
Butte-Anaconda River Runners, Butte

**Nevada**
Sierra Nevada Whitewater Club, Reno

**New Hampshire**
AMC New Hampshire Paddlers, Raymond
Merrimack Valley Paddlers, Nashua

**New Jersey**
AMC Delaware Valley Chapter, Oaks
KCCNY, Flanders

**New Mexico**
Adobe Whitewater Club of New Mexico, Albuquerque

**New York**
ADK Schenectady, Schenectady
AMC NY/NJ Chapter, New York
Colgate University, Hamilton
FLOW Paddlers’ Club, Rochester
Hamilton College, Clinton
Housatonic Area Canoe & Kayak Sq., Ossining
KCCNY, Flanders
Zoar Valley Paddling Club, Buffalo

**North Carolina**
Base Camp Cullowhee, Cullowhee
Carolina Canoe Club, Raleigh
Davidson Outdoors, Davidson
Landmark Learning, Cullowhee
Mecklenburg Regional Paddlers, Charlotte
Triad River Runners, Winston-Salem
Western Carolina Paddlers, Asheville

**Ohio**
Columbus Outdoor Pursuits, Columbus
Keelhauler Canoe Club, Cleveland
Toledo River Gang, Toledo

**Oregon**
Eugene Kayaker, Eugene
Lower Columbia Canoe Club, Portland
Northwest Rafters Association, Roseburg
Oregon Kayak and Canoe Club, Portland
Oregon Whitewater Association, Beaverton
PD<Kayaker, Portland
PNWKayakers.com, Portland
Willamette Kayak & Canoe Club, Corvallis

**Pennsylvania**
AMC Delaware Valley Chapter, Oaks
Braddock County Canoe and Kayak Club, Sayre
Canoe Club of Greater Harrisburg, Harrisburg
Conewago Canoe Club, York
Holtwood Hoogkans, Paradise
Philadelphia Canoe Club, Philadelphia

**S. Carolina**
### DISCOUNTED AW MEMBERSHIP FOR AFFILIATE CLUB MEMBERS

**By Carla Miner, Membership Manager**

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

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

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

### JOIN AMERICAN WHITENAME AS A CLUB AFFILIATE!

**10 REASONS TO JOIN AW AS AN AFFILIATE CLUB**

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

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

### Affiliate Clubs

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$35 Cheaper than anything in your gear bag, twice as important.
americanwhitewater.org/join
Contribute your text and photos to American Whitewater

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

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

americanwhitewater.org > Library > AW Journal

Photo © Darin McQuoid, Illinois River, OR