



AMERICAN WHITEWATER

Conservation • Access • Events • Adventure • Safety

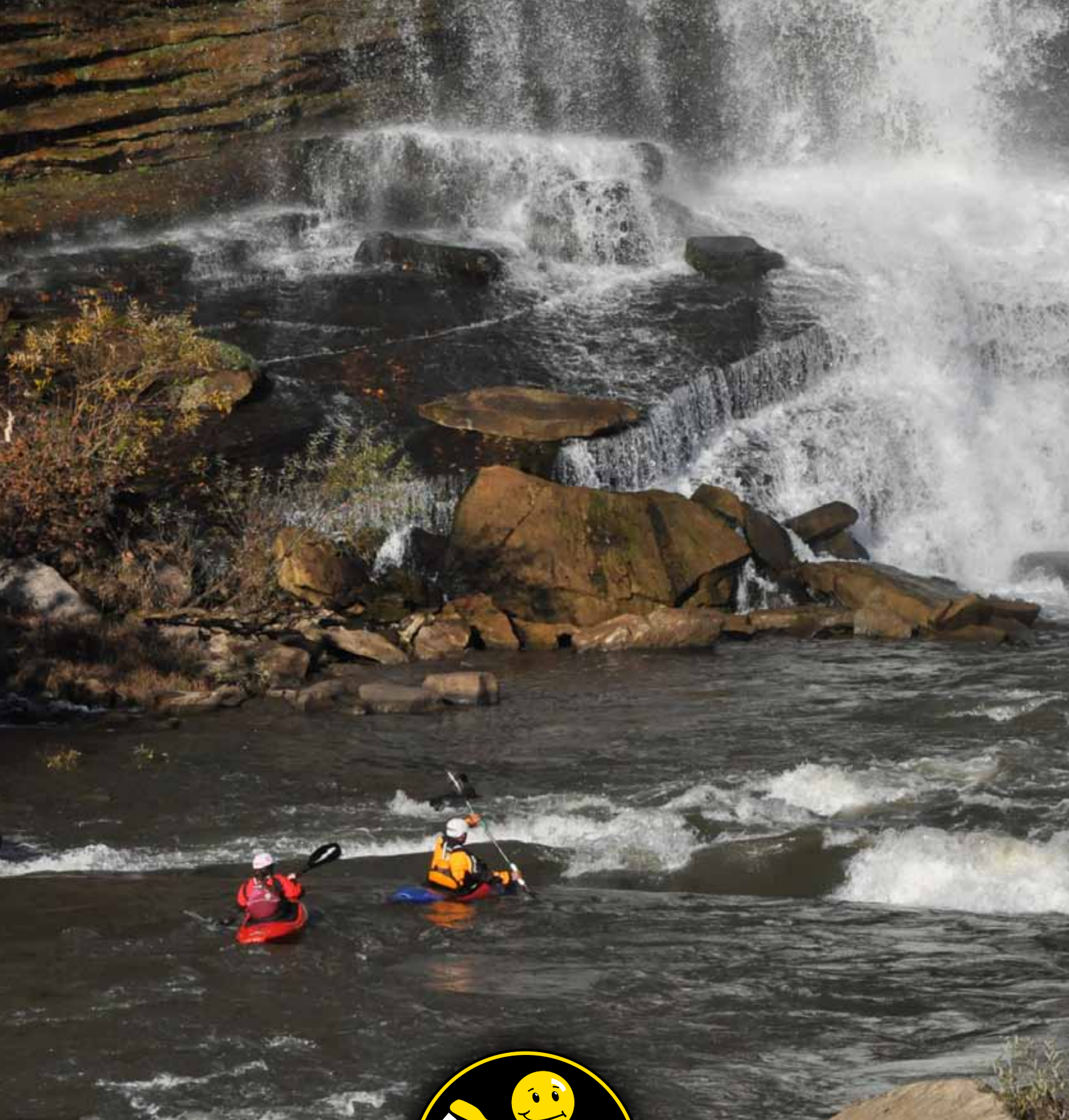
BY BOATERS FOR BOATERS
Sep/Oct 2013

NEW NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA PROPOSED FOR THE MOUNTAINS TO SOUND GREENWAY

SLATE CREEK IN SPRING

SET UP FOR LOVE WHERE YOU'D LEAST EXPECT





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AMERICAN WHITEWATER

A VOLUNTEER PUBLICATION PROMOTING RIVER CONSERVATION, ACCESS AND SAFETY

American Whitewater Journal Sep/Oct 2013 – Volume 52 – Issue 5

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Dawn Meekhof and Victor Kress paddle the North Fork Snoqualmie River (WA) at the base of Mt. Garfield. This run, and many other great stretches of whitewater are part of the Seattle-area Mountains to Sound Greenway, which has been proposed as a new National Heritage Area.

Photo by Thomas O'Keefe

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PURPOSE

RIVER STEWARDSHIP: AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

whitewater rivers, as well as river recreation, conservation, access, and safety. This is accomplished through our 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 America's whitewater resources and enhancing opportunities to safely enjoy these wonderful rivers.

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



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THE JOURNEY AHEAD

WOW, GAULEY FEST turns 30! Dropping more than 668 feet through over 26 miles of rugged terrain, the Gauley River's energetic rapids and scenic quality combine to make the Gauley (WV) a classic eastern whitewater run. Largely protected by the National Park Service, the river flows through a beautiful forested canyon and among massive house-sized boulders. The Gauley, and its sister river the New, have become the economic backbone of an otherwise rural region of West Virginia. Paddlers fought hard for protection and wise management of the river since the first descent in 1968. This year, Gauley Fest, the event celebrating the derailment of a hydroelectric project that would have disrupted flows on the Upper Gauley River, is having its 30th anniversary.

American Whitewater remains active today in the management of the Gauley River; we lease the Legg family field, above Mason Branch, from a local landowner to provide parking for private boaters. In partnership with the Gauley River National Recreation Area (part of the National Park Service), a shuttle is provided on busy weekends from the river corridor to the Legg field parking area.

Gauley Festival (WV) - September 20 & 21

Over the last 30 years Gauley Fest has grown to become the largest river festival in the world. The festival is a showcase for American Whitewater and top whitewater vendors in the boating community. All proceeds from the festival support American Whitewater's national stewardship work. Gauley Fest features live entertainment, a whitewater marketplace, raffle and a silent auction where you can pick up some awesome outdoor gear. Gauley Fest is also the largest membership drive for American Whitewater and your support feeds our national river stewardship effort. Come out and join us with your friends on September 20 & 21 (Gauley Fest is always the third weekend of September) for a weekend of great paddling, exciting camaraderie, live

entertainment, killer boat raffles, and the American Whitewater membership drive.

Feather River Festival (CA) - September 27-29

Over a decade ago, the first recreational releases took place on the North Fork Feather (CA) as a requirement of a new hydroelectric power license that was being applied for by the utility. The staff and volunteers of American Whitewater, Chico PaddleHeads and Shasta Paddlers spent more than five years and thousands of hours negotiating through the hydropower relicensing process to make recreational releases happen on the Feather. Now the boating community has a great river to enjoy. You can start at the top of the North Fork Feather and run the whole section or you can just do a couple of laps on the part that best suits your skills and interest.

The annual Feather River Festival will be held during scheduled releases September 27-29. The fundraiser event for American Whitewater will be hosted once again by local paddling club Chico Paddleheads. The benefit event will be held at "Indian Jim School" campground located two miles upstream from the small town of Tobin and one mile upstream from Tobin Vista. Free camping and ample parking will be available. This year's Feather Fest will continue the tradition of a film festival on Friday night, featuring winners from the National Paddling Film Festival and the latest films from local paddling filmmakers.

Saturday's festivities will include a free Class II slalom course appropriate for all skill levels, ages and for a variety of craft; and a downriver race on the Tobin stretch. That evening there will be a benefit party with live music, food and beverages, complete with raffle prizes, race prizes and silent auction items. The Rock Creek/Tobin releases will occur between Saturday morning and noon on Sunday. The Rock Creek reach is a Class III run appropriate for rafts, IKs, and kayaks and the Indian Jim Campground is the perfect take-out. Below the campground is the Class V Tobin

reach followed by the Class IV "Lowbin" reach. There are also flatwater and Class I/II sections available all weekend long. Bring the whole family to enjoy, celebrate, and support the work American Whitewater has done to ensure regular, recreational whitewater releases on this amazing, classic California river!

Both the Gauley and North Fork Feather represent significant milestones in river conservation and stewardship for American Whitewater. Each fall, AW and our friends come together to celebrate these two rivers at Gauley River Fest and Feather Fest – we hope to see you there! Wherever your boating adventures take you this fall, remember that American Whitewater's river stewardship program is made possible through your membership support. We continue to appreciate the importance of rivers and their role in supporting the health and well being of the paddling community. At American Whitewater, we remain committed to giving back to these special places through river stewardship.

See you on the river,



Mark Singleton
Executive Director

P.S. On your way to the Gauley please know that the local Summersville police department takes their speed limit seriously. Drive at or below the limit through Summersville and be safe out there.

WHITE SALMON RIVER - THE WORK DOESN'T STOP AFTER THE RIVER RUNS FREE

LOCAL CITIZENS PREVAIL IN PROTECTING THE LANDS AND WATERS AROUND THE WILD & SCENIC WHITE SALMON RIVER FROM RURAL SPRAWL.

BY MEGAN HOOKER

Boaters enjoy a celebratory float on the White Salmon through the former Northwestern Reservoir site in 2012.

Photo by Thomas O'Keefe.



THERE HAVE BEEN many reasons to celebrate on the White Salmon River in Washington over the last two years. While the world knows about the removal of Condit Dam and the restoration of a freely flowing river, this summer an important legal victory came down for the local community and the river that also deserves a bit of fanfare.

As a hole was being blown into the base of Condit Dam in October 2011, and later as it was chipped away piece-by-piece, local citizens were in the midst of a legal battle over the future of the farm and forestlands along the banks of the White Salmon River. In 2009, Klickitat County moved forward with a proposal to allow increased residential development on over 1,000 acres in and around the rural communities of BZ Corner and Husum, located just upstream of the former dam site and along the Wild and Scenic portions of the river.

Under the new zoning scheme, development in these communities would have increased

ten-fold, bringing hundreds of new water wells and septic systems along the river and its tributaries. Shallow interconnected aquifers in the area feed the numerous seeps, springs and tributaries that flow into the White Salmon, making it a "gaining river." This special hydrology is a key part of why the White Salmon was designated as a Wild and Scenic River in 1986, and provides cool, clean water that will be critical for the recovery of trout and salmon throughout the system. Wells and septic systems would tap into these shallow aquifers, threatening the water quality and quantity of the seeps and springs.

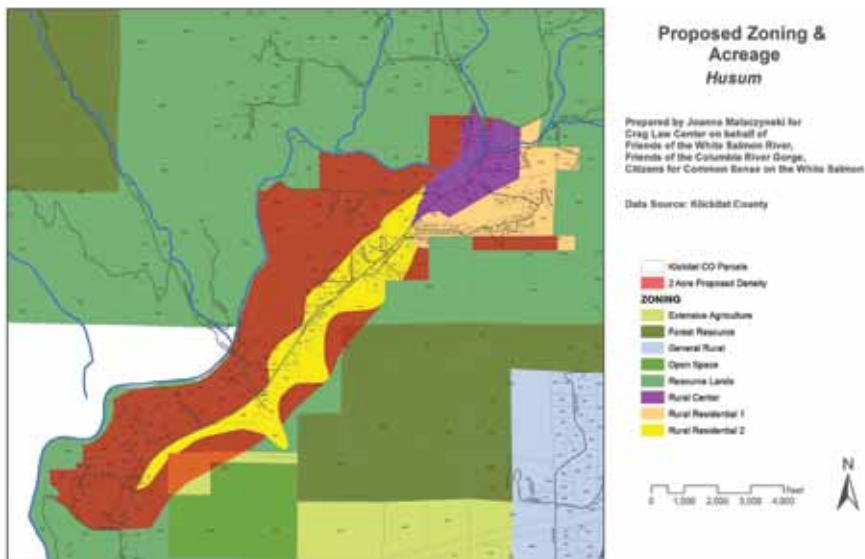
Despite serious concerns about how rural sprawl would impact wildlife and water supplies, and strong opposition to the plan from the public, state agencies, the Yakama Nation, the Forest Service and conservation groups, the county forged ahead with its decision to rezone. Local citizens kept their eye on continuing to protect the White Salmon River for current and future generations, and felt they had

no alternative but to stand up and challenge the county's short-sighted plans in court.

Two local non-profit groups signed onto the case. The Friends of the White Salmon River and the Friends of the Columbia Gorge were represented by the Crag Law Center, a non-profit law firm based in Portland, OR in their challenge to the county's decision. In June 2012, as Condit Dam continued to come down, the groups moved to file suit in Washington Superior Court. Local residents testified about how the rezone personally threatened their private property and water supplies. The Crag Law Center also retained experts who explained how the river, its tributaries and the fish and wildlife that depend on the river would be impacted by increased rural sprawl. The groups alleged that the county had violated state environmental laws and constitutional protections for private property.

This summer, the court held that the county's extensive rezoning plan was unconstitutional, illegally giving individual

STEWARDSHIP



White Salmon Zoning Map: Klickitat County's proposed zoning and acreage for the rural community of Husum. The areas in red represent where the county sought to increase development ten-fold. The plan was struck down this summer.

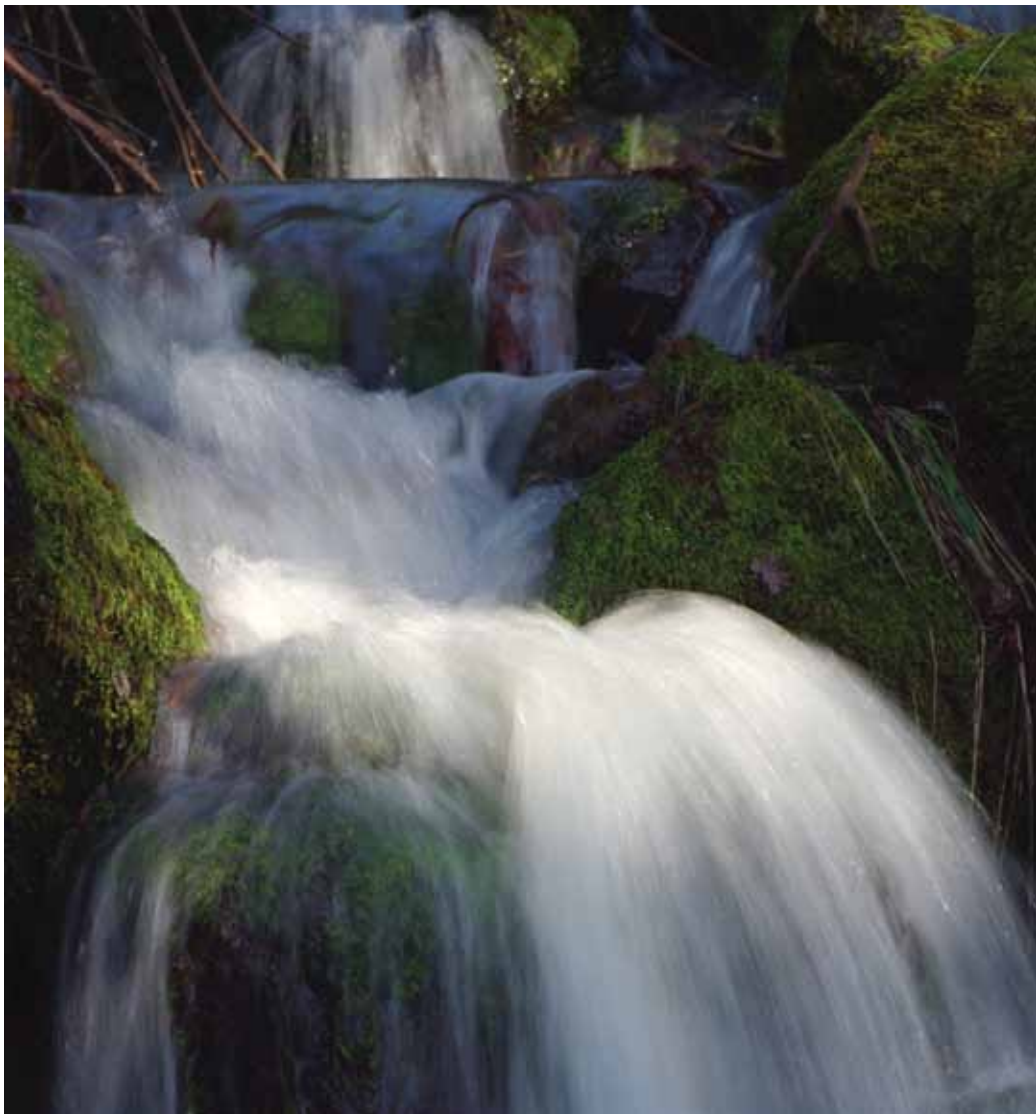
Map courtesy of Crag Law Center

landowners the right to increase development densities on their land. The court also held that the county failed to disclose the zoning scheme's significant impacts on fish, wildlife, and water supplies. The Court ruled that the county must prepare an Environmental Impact Statement consistent with Washington law and consider alternatives that are consistent with the Wild & Scenic character of the river.

As the river and the community begin to heal, the seeps, springs and tributaries that make the White Salmon such an amazing place are protected. For now. Unlike the removal of Condit Dam, which is permanent, this victory unfortunately does not necessarily spell the end of the work for those who seek to protect the White Salmon. As we go to press, Klickitat County is deciding whether to appeal this loss or restart the public process and involve the community in creating a sustainable future for the area.

Springs like this one are protected—for now—from increased development.

Photo courtesy Crag Law Center



STEWARDSHIP

NORTHEAST STEWARDSHIP UPDATES

BY BOB NASDOR

Contoocook River Access

THE CONTOOCCOOK RIVER (the “Took”) is a whitewater gem in Henniker, New Hampshire that is a favorite for paddlers looking for a Class III/IV river that runs often, has nice play features and is within 90 minutes of the Boston area. American Whitewater has been involved with the Took in past years, as we have been actively engaged with efforts to protect, restore and enjoy the river. American Whitewater has worked with New England FLOW, AMC, and Merrimack Valley Paddlers to restore this section of the river, which in 2004 resulted in the removal of the West Henniker Dam. The removal extended the whitewater section by $\frac{3}{4}$ mile.

This spring, American Whitewater, along with MVP and other local boaters, spearheaded an effort to secure permanent access to the Class III/IV section by purchasing a 10-acre parcel that has been used as an informal put-in for many years.



Seth Kallman leads Bob Nasdor and Curt Crittenden through Freight Train rapid on the Contoocook River.

Photo courtesy of Associated Press/Jim Cole

After securing nearly \$50,000 in donations, American Whitewater was able to enter into an agreement to purchase the parcel from the estate of the prior landowner. We plan to create a conservation easement on the property with Five Rivers Conservation Trust that will permanently protect boater access to this section of the river. The Town of Henniker has been supportive of

the project, and once we complete the purchase and create the conservation easement, we plan to donate the parcel to them. MVP and local paddlers spearheaded the project in memory of Cliff Eisner, who was a kayaker and local teacher at John Stark Regional High School who died in a kayaking accident on the Saco River in 2006.



Connecticut River Relicensings

AERICAN WHITEWATER, ALONG with New England FLOW and AMC, is involved in the relicensing of five hydropower projects on the Connecticut River. The projects, which are operated by FirstLight and TransCanada, have an impact on whitewater boating opportunities along the Vermont/New Hampshire border and down into Massachusetts. Of particular interest to paddlers are the rapids at Sumner Falls below the Wilder Dam, as well as the bypass reaches located at Bellows Falls, VT and Turners Falls, MA. Sumner Falls, also known as Hartland Rapids, contains a series of ledges, waves and chutes. At Bellows Falls, the bypass reach is a deep gorge that has the potential for significant play features, and the Turner's Falls bypass reach likely contains a range of paddling possibilities over a 2.7 mile run before the Connecticut and Deerfield rivers merge. Recognizing the potential for whitewater boating in these areas, FERC, along with American Whitewater, FLOW and AMC, have requested that both FirstLight and TransCanada study the potential for whitewater boating in these areas. The licensees have agreed to



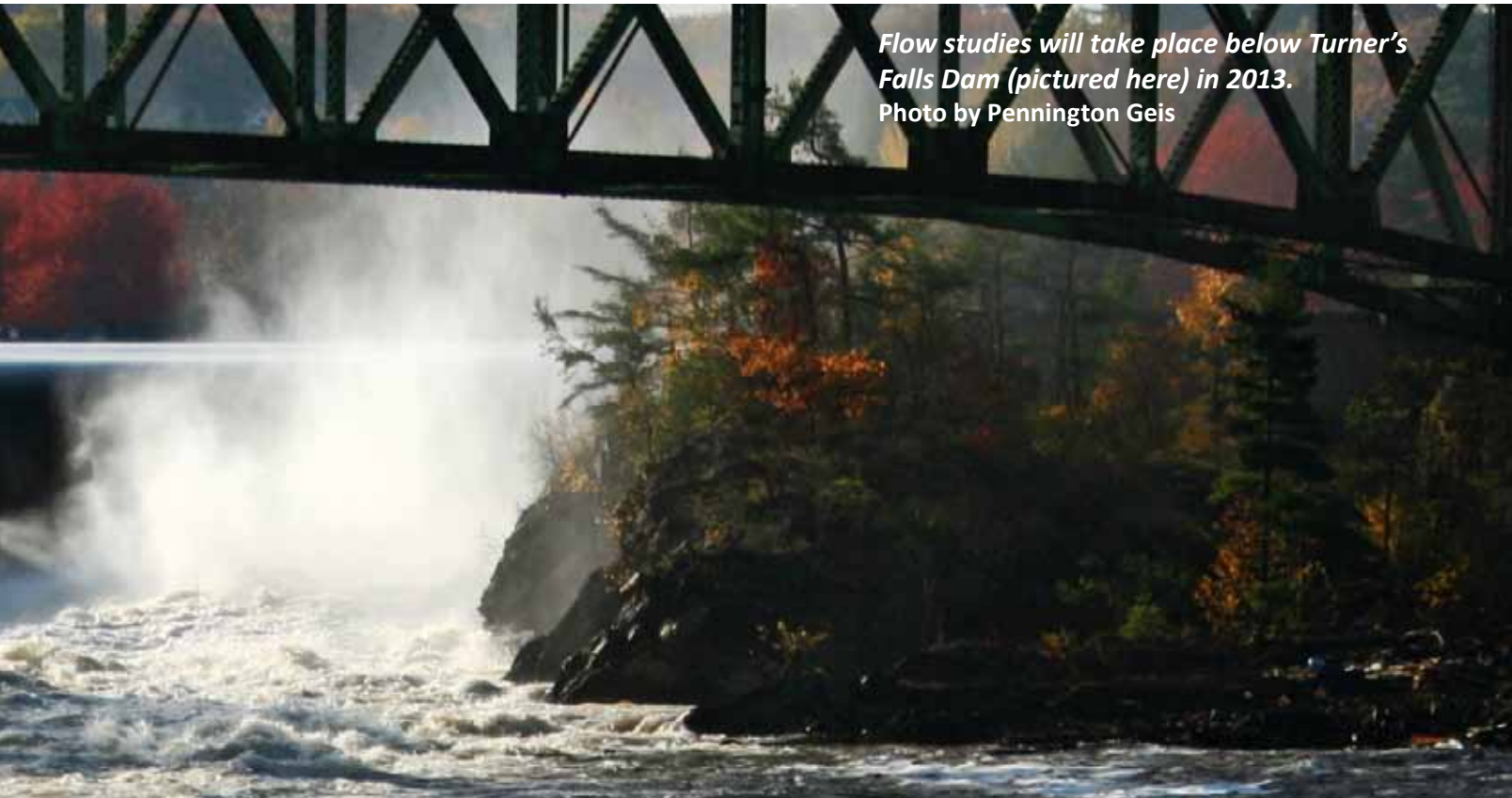
Turners Falls Dam and Bridge.
Photo by Pennington Geis

perform controlled flow studies next year in order to identify river flows suitable for boating.

Once a range of flows suitable for boating have been identified through the flow studies, American Whitewater will negotiate with the power companies to restore water to the dewatered bypass reaches and schedule releases from the dams in order to provide new paddling opportunities. We are still in the early

stages of the relicensing process, which will last five years, and American Whitewater and our partners will be actively involved in the studies and throughout the relicensing process. In addition, we will seek mitigation for impacts on boating opportunities and explore the potential for developing the bypass reach at Bellows Falls into a whitewater park.

Flow studies will take place below Turner's Falls Dam (pictured here) in 2013.
Photo by Pennington Geis



STEWARDSHIP

IMPROVING ACCESS TO THE SKYKOMISH RIVER

BY THOMAS O'KEEFE



The new access stairway at the Cable Drop access.

Photo by Thomas O'Keefe

WHILE AMERICAN WHITEWATER has had many major successes with our conservation work in the Pacific Northwest over the past couple of years, we are always looking for ways to make sure that our members and the general public can get out there and enjoy the resources we work so hard to protect. While we can often secure grant funding to support our conservation work, our members provide the direct support for our access work through contributions and volunteer labor. Individual members and our affiliate clubs have stepped up in a big way to help us advance a number of access projects in the Pacific Northwest region.

One of the rivers where we have faced ongoing access challenges is the Skykomish River: one of the most popular rivers in Washington State for whitewater recreation, but a river with limited formal

public access. Following a request we initiated several years ago to develop a formal access at Cable Drop, the Forest Service successfully secured resources that American Whitewater was able to leverage through contributions that had been made to the Skykomish River Access Fund over the years. With funding in place, the Forest Service was able to define a parking area and design a new trail and a set of stairs down to the river that accommodates rafts. One of our local affiliate clubs, Washington Recreational River Runners, stepped forward with volunteer labor to work on the project.

Over the past few months we have been working on a number of other projects. A new access trail for Canyon Creek in the Lewis River drainage and the Upper Sultan River Trail in the Skykomish River drainage are lined up for construction. We are doing initial planning for improved access sites on the Clackamas River and are also set to develop a site plan for a new county park that will provide formalized river access for the Middle Fork Snoqualmie. The site will be a great public space adjacent to a river that is the backyard run for the greater Seattle area paddling community.



A contractor works to build the connection between the parking area and the new access point at Cable Drop.

Photo by Thomas O'Keefe



Looking down the new stairway at Cable Drop access.

Photo by Thomas O'Keefe

NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA PROPOSED FOR MOUNTAINS TO SOUND GREENWAY TO INCLUDE GREAT WHITEWATER RUNS

BY THOMAS O'KEEFE

THE SNOQUALMIE, CEDAR, and Yakima watersheds in Washington State are known to paddlers for their dozens of great whitewater runs. From the classic drops of the Cooper enjoyed in early summer, Fall in the Wall where the South Fork Snoqualmie is buried in a beautiful hidden canyon between the lanes of Interstate 90, Ernie's Gorge that challenges the nation's top expert paddlers, the Powerhouse run at the base of dramatic Snoqualmie Falls where many beginners take their first strokes, the Cedar River where Olympic athletes have raced on slalom gates, to the Middle Fork Snoqualmie where paddlers from throughout the greater Seattle and Bellevue area converge after work, the rivers of the region are truly world-class and an important amenity for many who live and work in the region. All of these rivers and many more are within the boundaries of the Mountains to Sound Greenway, a 1.5 million-acre landscape that has sustained generations with its abundance of natural resources.



Kris Yaeger runs the first drop of the Cooper River (WA). The Cooper is a spectacular whitewater run in the heart of the Greenway that is enjoyed by paddlers from across the country.

Photo by Thomas O'Keefe

Today, the Greenway's scenic beauty is the backdrop for the daily lives of 1.4 million residents. Alpine peaks, wilderness lakes, rivers, and lush forests connect by road, rail and trail to rural towns and high rises, where local residents live, work and play in communities deeply rooted in the land around them. Twenty years of conservation have protected the natural heritage of the Greenway. Today, the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust is leading a bipartisan campaign to have the U.S. Congress designate the Mountains to Sound Greenway as a National Heritage Area.

As advocates for the dozens of rivers in this landscape and the opportunities to conserve and enhance the whitewater experience, American Whitewater has joined the effort to support designation of the Mountains to Sound Greenway National Heritage Area. Official recognition of the Greenway as a National Heritage Area will:

- Create a framework for communicating the national significance of the Greenway and the rivers that flow through it.

Racing on the Cedar River (WA), a dedicated course for whitewater slalom within the Greenway.

Photo by Thomas O'Keefe

- Build public awareness, recognition and involvement in stewardship of the Greenway including public access to rivers.
- Empower citizens, businesses, interest groups and government to work together more efficiently.
- Provide a legal structure to enable governments to work together across jurisdictions (important when one agency manages the put-in and another manages the take-out, for instance).
- Formalize the Greenway coalition's cooperative management style by naming the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust as the local coordinating entity, with American Whitewater as a coalition partner.

Visit the campaign website to learn more and register your support for the legislation that will formalize continued cooperative management that promotes both resource protection and public enjoyment of the Greenway's spectacular rivers. greenwayheritage.org

SLATE CREEK IN MAY

BY MIKE BARENTI



Between drops in Triple Drop, an iconic rapid on Idaho's Slate Creek.

Photo by Chris Lambiotte

IT WAS THE time of year when rivers kill. Two weeks of warm weather had melted away a winter's worth of snow to push the rivers around North Idaho past flood stage. The St. Joe forced its way into riverside stands of cottonwoods and willows and dogwoods, and even with the sun reflecting off it, the river looked so dark and somehow ominous that my kayaking partner and I transferred the discomfort the main river created in us to the tributary we hoped to paddle.

The tributary, Slate Creek, rushed beneath a two-lane bridge before meeting the main Joe just downstream. Someone had hand painted a gauge on a bridge pier, but the gravel around it shifts from one year to the next, so the gauge can't be trusted. The best Chris and I could do was estimate the creek at bank full—maybe a little higher,

maybe a little lower—with those maybes making all the difference.

Chris and I stared at the creek for a long time without talking. When we stopped to scout, a truck full of fishermen had pulled up behind us and the driver asked if we were looking for a kayaker. It struck me as an odd question, and I answered almost in unison with Chris that we weren't. The man went on talking anyway.

"There's a lost kayaker on Marble Creek," he said. A road runs beside that creek for its entire length and I didn't understand what his comment meant, although in hindsight the meaning was all too clear. When we passed Marble Creek that morning we saw no ambulances, no search and rescue trucks, no sheriff's cars, no Forest Service rigs, nothing to make us believe anything unusual was happening.

A week earlier, Chris, his wife, and I had paddled Marble. One of them watched their baby while I kayaked with the other. My wife had contemplated coming along too, but she hadn't kayaked much since we had our first child five years earlier and Marble isn't the kind of creek you want to boat after a five-year layoff.

It demands constant attention and solid skills, but isn't really extreme. At low water Marble probably isn't deep enough to float a department-store raft, but at peak runoff it's a full-fledged river that surprises with its speed and power and with the way one rapid piles into the next. The last rapid carries on for almost a mile. It can be scouted from shore, but once in the rapid, there are no eddies to rest in or scout from, so it must be run by memory.

CREEKING

On one trip, me in the lead and half way into that last rapid, I glanced back to make sure Chris was still behind. I didn't see him. I looked again, longer—too long—and crashed sideways into a hydraulic I needed to miss. The hydraulic grabbed my kayak and held it tight. I flipped, but not on purpose. Even though I felt the green water pulling on my submerged torso, I wasn't headed downstream. The kayak rested in a seam between the water pouring back into the hydraulic and the water rushing downstream. Instinct told me to roll up as fast as I could, but I knew if I did, I would end up back in the hole. So I waited. If I ran out of air or was pulled back into the hydraulic upside down, at some point I would come out of the boat and swim. I always assume a swim on Marble will be fatal.

Finally, as I felt the boat slide into the water moving downstream, I twisted my paddle around, snapped my hips, and rolled. Chris and I joked about what had happened once we reached the take-out. It became one of those times when things could have gone wrong but didn't that let me tell myself I stayed safe because I knew what I was doing. That might have even been true.

I wasn't really interested in running Marble Creek again. It's not just that I had run it the week before and wanted to paddle something different. I just wanted to run Slate Creek. Of all the rivers near my home, Slate is my favorite. Unlike most, which have a highway or county road or just a logging road beside them, the road into Slate travels high up the side of a mountain and isn't visible from the creek. The river has cut a narrow canyon where wild orchids bloom yellow and pink and white beneath a canopy of conifers that somehow grow on its steep walls, and the whole place seems as if it's hidden away only for whitewater boaters to see.

Unfortunately, the road into Slate is snowed over well into spring and it's hard to find a time when the road is clear and the creek isn't either too high or too low.

I hadn't caught Slate at the right level for two years. Because of children's birthdays and family trips, I knew if I didn't paddle with Chris that day, I would have to wait another year. Chris's situation wasn't that different from mine.

We stood on the bridge watching the water for a long time before I turned from the river to Chris and said "I think we can paddle this." Something in the look he gave me told me he was less than certain and we both knew our desire to paddle might affect our judgment. The final rapids include two waterfalls that at high flows turn treacherous. "We might have to portage Horseshoe and the big falls in Triple Drop, but we can run this," I said. Maybe I was trying to convince myself as much as Chris.

"What about Marble?" Chris asked, and I knew he wasn't talking about paddling it instead.

"I don't know what to think," I said. "It was just an odd comment."

Even though I had dismissed the man's remarks, they stayed with me as we twisted up a logging road past purple-blue penstemons and bunchberries blooming dogwood white. Chris stopped the truck to look at a pile of bear scat in the middle of the road and again when a gap in the thicket of Doug fir let us see the creek. We heard the sound of whitewater lifting out of the canyon but were so high Slate Creek was nothing more than a turquoise squiggle.

"We don't have to run this," I said.

"No. I'm okay," Chris said.

How fast I get ready to paddle often reflects how nervous I am, the more nervous, the slower I move. Before we put on Slate, I stretched; I went to the bathroom; I sorted through ropes, carabineers, slings, and Prusiks, then stuffed them into the back of my kayak; I stretched again. Finally



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there was nothing left to do but change into paddling clothes.

By then it was warm, hot even, for mid-May, but because melted snow drove the creek I piled on polypro and fleece and covered it all up with a full drysuit. I wriggled my way into my sprayskirt, slipped on my PFD, and buckled my helmet. The ritual of gearing up somehow helped the jitters although it also made me feel as if I was preparing for battle. I'm not sure exactly why since I never see myself as being at war with the river. The preparations didn't completely calm my nerves, but I was committed to paddling so I climbed into my boat and started downstream.

I was 30 and living near Washington, DC when I learned to kayak. Then the idea of paddling a cool river on a hot and sticky summer day seemed fun. I expected nothing more than that. The Potomac River just outside the city makes a terrifying plunge at Great Falls, dropping 55 feet in a quarter mile. On the last day of my kayak lessons, I remember looking up at those falls and thinking I would never huck myself off them.

Two years later I stood on a mid-river island surrounded by falling water. I probably had no business there, but there I was even if I wasn't sure why. I felt like a kid standing at the edge of the high-dive for the first time, and no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't make that feeling go away.

I scouted the falls' three drops with my paddling partner, who had run them many times. When I climbed into my boat below the old diversion dam at the top of the falls, I was certain of my line through each drop and certain everything would go as planned.

I ran the first waterfall, a 10 footer, clean. I was in control. I knew what I wanted to do next. I looked for the eddy where I planned to stop. Somehow I didn't find it. Instead, unprepared, I sluiced down the second drop, a twisting slide of a rapid that wants



A typical Slate Creek drop at lower (normal) flows.

Photo by Chris Lambiotte

to flip boats, and when I hit the bottom, I flipped.

The river below that second drop gathers itself into a pool for a few seconds before plunging over the last waterfall and as I floated in it upside down, things were a long way from fine. A 22-foot waterfall roared just downstream. I tried over and over to roll, but the boat wouldn't turn upright.

I imagined going over the falls upside down, imagined hitting the sloping rock at the base of the falls, imagined the force of impact on my body, the weight of all that falling water pressing down on me, crushing me, and panicked. Somehow, I still don't know how, I found myself safe in an eddy above the last drop. My friend caught up to me and asked what I wanted to do. The rational thing to do, the common sense thing was to walk away. I should have been too scared for anything else.

Instead I was mad I had missed the first eddy, mad I had flipped, and mad I had botched my roll again and again. I had to run the big drop. Sitting in the final eddy, I put away the everyday thoughts about my job and my pain-in-the-ass roommates and the woman I was wasting my time chasing after. I put away all my worries about getting hurt. In the space I created, there was only the river, the falls, and me.

I thought out every boat lean and every paddle stroke I would take once, then again before I peeled out of the eddy and let the current turn the kayak downstream. My last strokes came as the kayak tipped downward. I tucked tight against the boat. Blue sky turned into the dark rock walls of the Potomac's gorge, which turned into the green Potomac, which turned into darkness as I sank into the river.

Then it was light. I looked up and saw people on the observation deck looking down at me. I don't know if they took me for a daredevil or a fool or both. I was

back in the real world with all its problems and imperfections.

I won't lie and say I didn't find something in the adrenaline rush of going over the falls, but I'm not some Red Bull drinking, extreme-sports junkie cliché who kayaks to confront mortality. When I first started kayaking, I imagined myself doing nothing more than floating easy whitewater. After running Great Falls, I spent more time honing the skills I needed to kayak harder whitewater. I understood that on a river I had some control over my fate and that by combining solid skills with good judgment, I could manage the risks I faced. (Of course I hadn't heard the saying then that good judgment comes from experience; experience comes from bad judgment.) What changed my paddling ambitions, what changed me really in that trip over Great Falls was that minute or two when I had no past and no future.

On Slate Creek, paddling with Chris, the world became a small place. The creek dropped away so steeply that a horizon line loomed perpetually 20 yards downstream, and often it looked as if the water disappeared into the side of a mountain. Beyond the horizon line, the creek made itself a mystery. I remembered the locations of its rapids and the lines through them, but we still moved downstream cautiously, making sure we could stop in an eddy before we fell over the horizon line.

Chris led most of the time, not just because he is a stronger paddler, but because having somebody in front helped me relax. Kayaking is as psychological as it is physical and mastering that mental portion of the sport is as hard as coping with its physical challenges. I tend to over think almost everything I do and some of my nervousness at a put-in comes because I know the psychological aspects of kayaking can get the better of me. In essence I worry about worrying too much, never the trait of a great athlete.

Finally though, the kayaking fell into a rhythm of eddy turns and peel outs until the repeating series of practiced strokes calmed me. I slowly put away thoughts about the man at the take-out and about what might have happened on Marble Creek and about what could happen on Slate Creek.

We moved quickly for the first hour, finding safe lines through the rapids without leaving our boats, and at some point I realized the creek wasn't as high as I had feared. In a slow section, I let the current spin the kayak in lazy circles while I watched puffy white clouds drift across the blue-sky afternoon. The creek meandered as much as a small creek trapped by mountains can meander before it slowed itself in a pool so deep I could barely make out the green and brown and purple stones covering its bottom.

After the pool another horizon line waited. We climbed out of our kayaks and wedged them into gaps between riverside boulders. Fir and cedar saplings filled those same spaces and we grabbed onto the trees for balance as we clambered over boulders taller than ourselves to get a good look at the rapid. I stumbled with my first steps and was glad moss softened the rocks. Scouting trails sometimes feel as perilous as rapids.

Bedrock pinches the river down to a slot so narrow that if not for the slick banks, someone could almost jump from one side to the other. After pushing into such a narrow gap, the river then tumbles over a slanting, five-foot ledge, and while no hydraulic guards the bottom, the currents churn confused and unstable.

"I flip about half the time I run this," I said.

I had that same edge of the high-dive feeling I've had so often since I started kayaking. I rehearsed my paddle strokes in my mind until I put the feeling away. Chris went first.

"You can pick up the pieces if I crash and burn," I told him before he peeled out. After Chris cleaned the drop, I set myself up and paddled hard for the narrow slot. The kayak felt steady in the water until I launched myself over the ledge.

When it landed, the boat slid out from under me. I smacked the water hard with my left paddle blade, snapped my hips, and tried to pull the boat back under me. It tipped even more. I sculled my paddle across the water's surface but it didn't help. I flipped, but with a hard hip snap, I was upright.

After that, the rapids bunched together, one separated from the next by only small pools. As the creek's gradient steepened, Chris and I were forced to scout each rapid. Above one horizon line, we talked briefly about running without scouting even though we couldn't see what waited downstream.

On another day I might have gone into the rapid blind, but that day I thought better of it. Out of our boats we saw a log

AW STEWARDSHIP

PROTECTING SLATE CREEK

BY KEVIN COLBURN

Slate Creek is one of the premiere whitewater creek runs in Idaho, treating paddlers to dazzling blue water, clean bedrock rapids, and great scenery. Regardless, the US Forest Service does not consider it eligible for Wild and Scenic designation. American Whitewater disagrees, and we have formally asked the Forest Service to reconsider this determination. A decision is expected later this year. If found eligible, Slate Creek's free flowing, high quality waters would receive interim protection from dams and other impacts.

CREEKING



Looking upstream at Triple Drop, although you might notice there are four drops.
Photo by Chris Lambiotte

jammed into the rapid right along the line we planned to follow. There was another way through, a route neither of us had ever tried. Before we climbed back in our boats, I pointed out the horizon line for a second, bigger rapid and reminded Chris that if things went wrong and he missed the eddy after the first drop, he should get left over that second drop and hope the landing spot was clean.

I paddle into the current and launched the kayak across a rock flake. The boat landed with a soft boof clear of the hydraulic twirling at the ledge's bottom. I eddied left and watched Chris make an easy run on the same line.

At the next drop, there was no talk of running blind. We scouted then made the standard line with no worries and followed

the creek around a sweeping turn. A side stream stepped down a terraced falls on river right, and we eddied out just below. I had never seen the stream so high. Horseshoe Falls was just down river. Chris and I grabbed our kayaks to portage but then Chris put his down. "We ought to look first," he said. We pushed through deadfall and stepped over old scat piles left along the scouting trail by wintering moose.

Spray rose into the air as water plunged down the falls, and the sun refracting off the water droplets filled the canyon with gauzy light. We had to shout over the noise as we talked over our options. Horseshoe Falls isn't particularly high, maybe 10 feet and shaped nothing like a horseshoe, but has a technical lead in that requires punching through a wave that wants to push a kayak off line and a terminal hydraulic at its base.

A small weakness in the hydraulic typically allows a kayak on just the right line to make it through. Any run requires precise strokes, and the higher the water, the tighter the line, and obviously, the more dangerous the falls.

I couldn't even find the weakness at the base of the falls. Chris pointed to where he thought he saw it, but the narrow jet of water didn't reach beyond the spot where the hydraulic pulled water back into itself.

The portage was short but hard and I was happy when I finally launched off the low canyon wall and landed in the cool of the creek. Below the falls, full of water pouring in from the side stream, Slate turned into what Chris and I had feared when we first looked at it from the bridge that morning. It pushed and boiled. Eddies, when we found them, were small and unstable, and we had to work our way around or under trees that had fallen across the creek.

I had settled into the trip by then and focused on the river and not my fears. Chris and I moved slowly. There was another waterfall downstream. Just as Horseshoe Falls is shaped nothing like a horseshoe, Triple Drop consists of more than three drops. The first is a 12-foot waterfall. There's nothing particularly dangerous about the falls, but a clean landing is important because the short pool below pours into a river-wide hydraulic. Mess up going over the falls, and there's no way to set up properly for the tight line through the next part of the rapid. I know more than one kayaker who has swum out of the hydraulic.

Chris plopped over a small ledge and I followed. A downed tree blocked a large eddy on river left and forced him into a micro-eddy just above the next horizon line. I stopped in an equally small eddy above him. If we had missed those eddies, we would have gone over the waterfall blind. A pair of trees crisscrossed the pool below making it impossible to set up for the hydraulic. We portaged.

The last significant rapid on Slate is a Class IV where the current caroms off an underwater boulder so that the water wants to shove a kayak up against a low, rock ledge on river right. The rapid has more push than you might expect from just looking at it, so it's important to set up left, barely missing the water rooster tailing off the boulder.

Chris went first and had no problems. I don't know if I was tired or lazy or just wasn't paying attention, but I started too far right, and wound up pressed against the ledge. The boat was on edge and about to turn over. My arm pressed up hard against the smooth rock, my right shoulder wedged as if an opponent had taken me into the boards during a hockey game. At least I was still upright. Eventually I worked my paddle blade up on the wall, pushed off, and came

free. In the calm water just below the run out, Chris said "You were never in any real danger." I wanted to believe him.

For a time, I worked as a cops and courts reporter at a small newspaper, and while doing that job I decided that people like reading about crime and mayhem because we want to find something in the details of the stories—about the perpetrators or the victims—that lets us know the same thing wouldn't or couldn't happen to us. We want to think we are safe. The stories where we discover we aren't safe are the ones that make us uncomfortable because they take away our sense of control.

As the news about the drowning on Marble Creek trickled in, I learned that the man had died the day before Chris and I paddled Slate Creek, that he had years of whitewater

experience, and that while I didn't know him, many of my friends did, including one who was on the trip. What I didn't learn was what had gone wrong.

Asking too soon seemed somehow rude, so I waited a few weeks before I brought up the trip with my friend. We were in an eddy on our local river one afternoon when I asked what had happened. He went through the details as best he could, but the only thing anybody could say for certain was that the paddler was safe in an eddy near the end of the final rapid and that the next time anybody saw him, he was out of his boat and floating in the river dead. It wasn't what I wanted to hear and I think my friend knew that. We sat in the eddy for a few seconds without talking and then we paddled.

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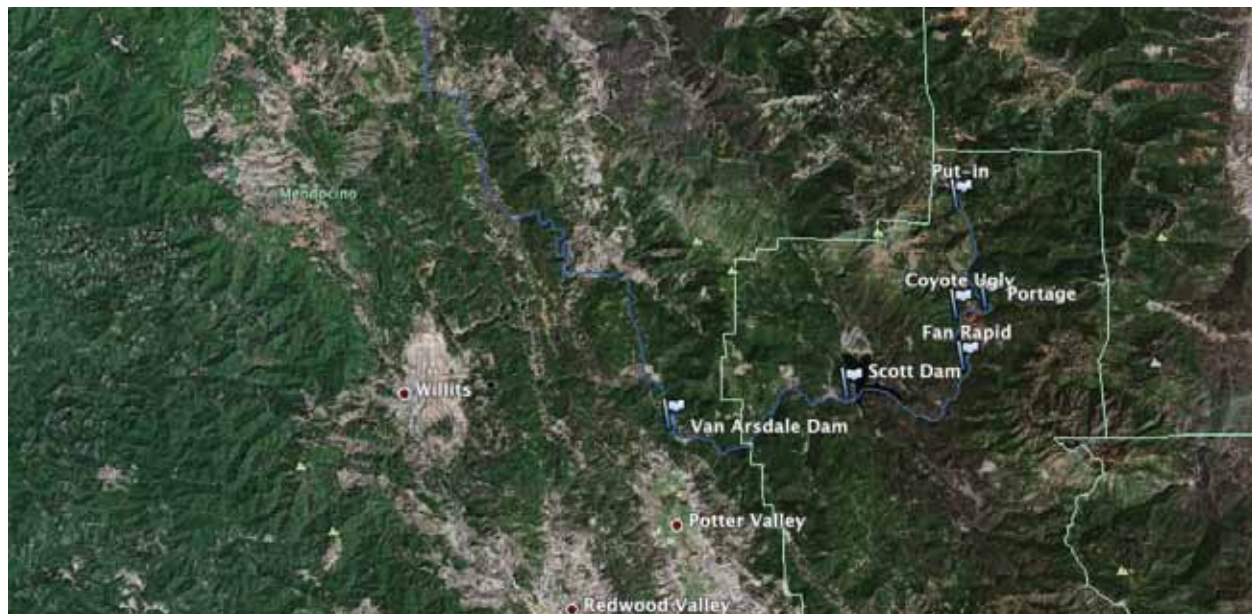
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STORIES FROM EXPLORE SIX RIVERS: THE UPPER MAIN EEL BY PAUL GAMACHE



AS WE STOOD by the guardrail looking down into the river valley below, it was clear how this project encompassed much more than whitewater. It's not until one begins to research why some lakes exist or why some sections of river flow year-round that one actually starts to understand the way things are.

The first time I heard about the Potter Valley Project was from a man named "Rasta Jon" a few years ago. Jon is an older, quazi-transient resident of Arcata, California. Most days you can find him wandering the streets. His thick grey dreadlocks are hard

to miss. One morning, while walking to the store, I saw Jon and stopped for a moment to talk to him. I asked him how his morning was and he began asking me what I was doing. I told him I was heading out to go kayaking and he started rambling about the Eel River. A story of thieves, stolen water, and the Potter Valley Project began flowing from his mouth. Not sure what exactly he was talking about and not sure how much of it was actually true, I laughed and said, "Have a good day." To be fair, some days he's yelling about NATO and spaceships.

After a great day on the Trinity River, I was sitting at home when the conversation with Jon came back to my mind. After a quick Internet search it became clear that some of what Jon was saying was, in fact, true. After living in Arcata for many years, having paddled a majority of the runnable rivers and creeks in the area, I learned from Rasta Jon that some of the water on the Eel River is diverted into the Russian River. Jon planted the seed of knowledge and Explore Six Rivers created

the motivation to physically experience this altered landscape.

Stepping down from the guardrail we loaded up and headed to the put-in. Going up the road as far as the river looked runnable we stopped the truck and began unloading our gear. Will Parham decided to help out with shuttle and allow time to rest some sore muscles. Thankfully this allowed the rest of us to head downstream and not have to worry about hitchhiking the seldom-travelled road.

Putting in a little higher than where the Holbeck/Stanley guidebook suggests, we felt that we were close enough to the headwaters to call it the "source" of the Eel River. The rapids in this first section were mildly junky which is probably why the guidebook recommends putting in lower. We weren't complaining though, we were just elated to have enough water to make this section runnable. Once again Dan Menten's knowledge of how and when rivers in the area flow made it possible for us to estimate a good time to go for the source.



Looking down into Potter Valley.
Photo by Wes Schrecongost



Nearing the source of the Eel River (CA).
Photo by Wes Schrecongost

After a quick portage around a nasty looking sieve the rapids started to clean up. As we cruised through a section of moving current, a rustling in the bushes to our left caught our attention. Looking over, we spotted two black bear cubs and their mother scampering up the hillside. They

appeared to be curious about whether we were a threat and made sure to put some distance between us. It was hard to tell if one of the baby bears climbed a tree to run away from us or to simply get a better view of the strange creatures floating down the river. Regardless, we were all



Dan below the portage.
Photo by Wes Schrecongost

pretty impressed by the bear sighting. It was something we had all been keeping an eye out for. We floated on, satisfied to cross “bear-sighting” off the list of hopes for this project.

Continuing downriver we entered into a gorge. As the canyon walls became more vertical and the river banked hard to the right we came to a mess of car-sized boulders. Portaging on river left we made our way around and started down some of the larger rapids of this section.

At first the rapids were easy and straightforward. Boat scouting wasn’t a problem and slowly we were lured into running rapid after rapid with no more than a quick glimpse from an upstream eddy. Coming to a horizon line we knew something wasn’t right. Getting out on river right we took a quick look and realized that the 5-foot boof landed directly on rock with several sieves sitting menacingly directly below. Happy to have had some sense that the drop wasn’t good to go we made our way around on the right and got back into our groove of boat scouting fun.

“Coyote Ugly” Dan said as we got out of our boats once again. As we portaged around the rapid on river right we saw why Dan had named the rapid on his previous trip. A nasty semi-submerged log blocked the river right channel of an otherwise beautiful and fun looking rapid. It was one of those types of rapids that looks great from the top, but you later realize that you’ve been duped.

Whitewater continued and we were stoked on the fun read and run Class IV(+). As the rapids faded behind us a large black bear bolted up the hillside. It was comical to see this huge creature running for its life from Dan, Wes, and I. Four bears in a day—not bad.

As the river slowed and transitioned into Lake Pillsbury we were once again reminded of the Potter Valley Project. Built in 1922, the purpose of Scott Dam, and consequentially Lake Pillsbury, is to

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Coyote Ugly.
Photo by Paul Gamache

provide year-round water storage for a hydro system 12 miles downstream. This system downstream consists of another dam known as Cape Horn Dam; the reservoir is called Van Arsdale. This system feeds water through a mile-long, eight-foot diameter tunnel that drops water over 450 vertical feet through a powerhouse and then drains into the Russian River. The Potter Valley Project currently generates 9.4 megawatts of electricity and provides year-round irrigation to the area.



It is easy to get lost on Lake Pillsbury. If you didn't have a map, GPS, or some sense of direction you could easily paddle a mile or two in the wrong direction.

Knowing the layout of the lake we headed straight towards Scott Dam. Dealing with dam portages is always a challenge. Thankfully we found a quick route and made it around the dam with little difficulty.

Putting back on we made our way through a mess of trees and willows. Eventually, we spotted Will with Wes's truck in the distance and within a short time were drying our gear and looking for a campsite for the night.

For contrasting opinions on the Potter Valley Project compare www.pottervalleywater.org and www.eelriver.org

Scott Dam.
Photo by Paul Gamache

About Explore Six Rivers

Six Rivers National Forest in Northern California is named after the Smith, Klamath, Trinity, Eel, Van Duzen, and Mad rivers. In February of 2012, the team consisting of Will Parham, Wes Schrecongost, Dan Menten and Paul Gamache began pursuing their goal of paddling all six rivers from source to sea in a single season. The purpose of the expedition was to explore and promote paddling in and around the North Coast. This is one story, from one section, of one river. For more information and an online video of this section please visit: ExploreSixRivers.com

Paul Gamache is currently in Cameroon on a Sperry Top-Sider supported expedition. For more on this go to ChutesDuCameroun.com

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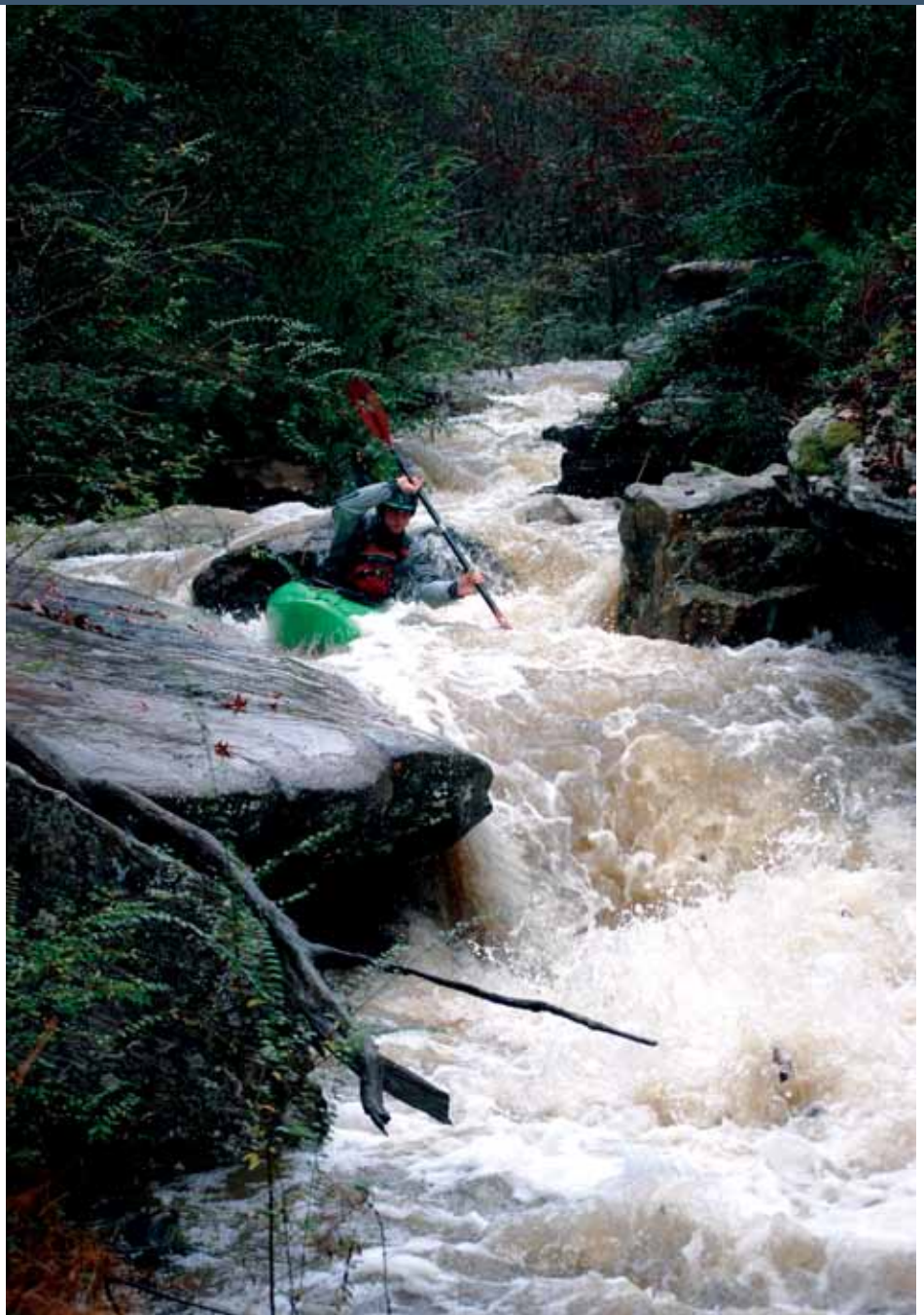
UNKNOWN ALABAMA: EXPLORING UPPER CHINQUAPIN CREEK

BY ADAM GOSHORN

THE FALL OF 2010 was an especially dry one in the southeastern United States, leaving boaters to rely on dam released rivers while waiting for the rains to return. For north Alabama, the fall of 2010 was the exact opposite of the fall of 2009. In 2009 the rains came back in force in the middle of September and provided consistent natural flow into early June of 2010. However, at the end of the first week of June, things dried up and there were very few natural flow events over the next five months... until the last week of November!

Early in the week, northern Alabama received around four inches of rain over the course of two days. By Tuesday morning the ground was thoroughly saturated and copious amounts of rain were still coming down. Despite the formerly low water table, rivers and creeks everywhere sprang to life and leaped out of their banks. Flows in Little River Canyon jumped from 50 CFS to 8,000 CFS in less than a day. As the rivers emerged from their long hibernation, so did the network of paddlers across the southeast. I think I received more calls, e-mails, and texts about boating in two days than I did in the previous two months combined. Everyone in the Alabama paddling community was beyond amped to finally get on some natural flow after months of dry conditions. The big question was where to go and what to run!

Leaving work a little after noon, I met Cliff Knight at the put-in for Chinquapin Creek, a tributary of Little River inside Little River Canyon National Preserve. The known section of Chinquapin Creek drops a whopping 350 feet over only 0.75 miles as it falls from the rim of Little River Canyon down to the confluence with the Little River itself. The last time I had paddled Chinquapin, I wondered about what the creek may contain in a section upstream



Cliff Knight running one of the longest rapid sequences on Upper Chinquapin Creek.
Photo by Adam Goshorn

of the traditional put-in. The gradient was milder, but the upper sections of other tributaries to Little River Canyon all had favorable bedrock features so it made me wonder why no one had ever bothered to check out the upper reaches of Chinquapin Creek. At the traditional put-in, the creek was already in a small gorge, which also added to my curiosity and it had been

lurking in the back of my mind ever since.

It is always a hard decision to pass up a good water level on a known run to go check out something unknown. More often than not, days of exploring the unknown result in more time bashing through underbrush than paddling quality whitewater. However, I love exploration and am constantly drawn

to find out what is around the next bend in the river; it is one of the things that has always appealed to me about paddling in the first place. Many times I prefer to hike an unknown run prior to attempting to paddle it, but there is something undeniably special about paddling into the unknown with minimal information. Sometimes the only way to really find out what is there is to go for it when the conditions are right and the draw of exploration led Cliff and I to the decision to see what Upper Chinquapin Creek contained.

After leaving my truck at the normal Chinquapin put-in (which would be our take-out) we took Cliff's truck up to our put-in on AL 176, where Chinquapin crosses under the road. The shuttle was about three miles long, even though we were only going to be descending a little

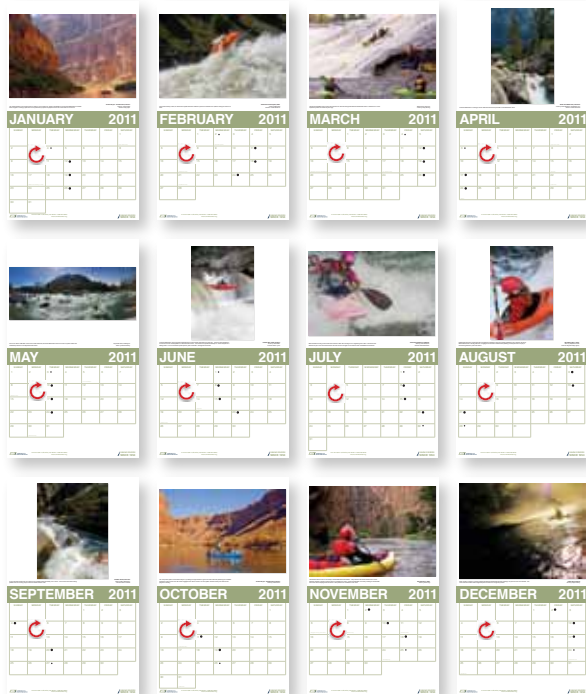
over one mile of the creek. Most paddlers who frequent Little River Canyon would recognize our put-in as the nondescript dip in the AL 176 a little over a mile west from the Chairlift Trail at Eberhart Point (a popular access point when paddling Little River Canyon). Chinquapin Creek is quite narrow this far up in its watershed, but numerous times over the years after large rain events I had seen it rushing under the road at seemingly runnable flows. Such sightings had continued to contribute to my curiosity about what Upper Chinquapin might contain and provided confirmation that it was indeed runnable with the right amount of rainfall.

As Cliff and I put on, my expectations for the run were pretty low. On such a small creek I was fully expecting Upper Chinquapin to be a tree-choked portage fest. As it turned

out, we were presently surprised to find that Upper Chinquapin was actually a fun run with no portages for wood. Not far below the put-in, the first real rapid was a short, low-angle slide into a nice five-foot ledge. Having reservations about the depth of the pool on such a small creek, I went first being careful to keep my bow up in the landing. I eddied out and was able to snap a quick picture of Cliff as he ran the ledge and joined me in the pool below. We were both grinning like idiots, eager to see what would come next, and feeling validated that the run was starting off so nicely.

We continued downstream, boat scouting and bank scouting as necessary. The creek's narrow streambed and banks overgrown with rhododendron and mountain laurel created many blind spots along the way. Each time, one of us would hop

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Cliff Knight running a ledge towards the beginning of Upper Chinquapin Creek.
Photo by Adam Goshorn

out and make sure we weren't about to unknowingly let the swift current lead us into some ungodly strainer or dangerous rapid. Luckily, time and time again, we would return from such scouts to let the other one know that all was clear. As we continued downstream, we found the run to be a mix of bedrock slides and small boulder-style rapids that reminded us both of the characteristics of Johnnies Creek, another tributary of Little River Canyon only a few miles away. However, Upper Chinquapin Creek was significantly easier than Johnnies Creek with no rapids exceeding Class IV in difficulty.

Partway through the run, we did encounter a longer, slightly steeper rapid that required some precise maneuvering. We decided to run it one at a time since there was some potential for a broach pin where a mid stream rock split the flow in a somewhat inconvenient location. Cliff ran it first while I took a photo from the bottom of the rapid, ready to run over and help out if he pinned on the troublesome rock. As we expected, the move around the rock was tricky, but Cliff managed to rattle through without incident and hopped out at the bottom to return the favor by setting safety for me.

Reaping the benefits of going second and seeing Cliff's run, I adjusted my line and was able to slide through the pinch with less difficulty.

At another spot, we did end up portaging one rapid. The entrance made it hard to see downstream, so I hopped out for a quick scout. After my initial peek, I signaled to Cliff that he should probably scout as well. The rapid had a rocky entrance and then the creek was split by some midstream boulders, pinching the left flow against a small cliff and on the right it dropped into a narrow slot against an overhanging midstream boulder. The rapid wasn't that big and neither one of us really wanted to leave it unrun after having successfully descended everything up to that point. However, at the water level we had, the left side wasn't runnable and the right side looked like it would result in a hard hit to the ribs. After a few minutes we conceded that the rapid probably was runnable, but seemed like it would be rather painful

The nondescript dip in the road that is the put-in for Upper Chinquapin Creek.
Photo by Adam Goshorn

and didn't look like very much fun. We completed the portage quickly and continued downstream. It wasn't long before we rounded a bend to see the small road bridge overhead that was the normal put-in for Chinquapin, but signaled our take-out.

After our successful run of Upper Chinquapin Creek we rounded out our afternoon of exploration with a quick sprint down Upper Teddy Bear Creek, another tributary of Little River Canyon (just a few miles north) that neither of us had previously run. As we reached the truck just before dark, we couldn't stop talking about how pleased we were with our decision to choose the unknown over the known. The successes of that day (and others like it) will continue to fuel my desire to paddle the unknown and undoubtedly influence my decision making on future days when the rains provide the chance to explore something new.

Adam Goshorn is a long-time supporter of American Whitewater and a life-long paddler currently residing in Mentone, Alabama. You can keep up with his adventures online at: www.granolapaddler.blogspot.com



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INSTRUCTION

FEATHER RIVER ORL

BY SETH DOW

THE FEATHER RIVER Outdoor Recreation Leadership Program (ORL) has been at the epicenter of outdoor leadership training in Northern California for at least a decade now. Students of the program have travelled to distant parts of the world, including Russia and Chile, and are generally amazing skiers, kayakers, leaders, workers, and people.

The program operates out of Feather River College, a community college in the vibrant and somewhat hard-to-leave town of Quincy, 90 minutes north of Lake Tahoe. In the winter the valley is surrounded by snow capped peaks that offer quality backcountry skiing; spring gives locals some of the best and most convenient whitewater in the state; summer and fall offer opportunities for rock climbing, dam release paddling, and beautiful hiking and swimming. With such great proximity to this outdoor smorgasbord, the town of Quincy is lucky to also have such a great school to support locals' skills and stewardship of the backcountry.

The philosophy of the program can be summed up with the phrase "Get 'em out there," and though the implementation is more complex than that, it has worked. People come out of this program with hard earned skills, and a much deeper sense of who they are and where they want to go than when they arrived.

There are a few adages I heard in my time at ORL that have stuck in my mind:

"Tell me, I will forget; show me, I will remember; let me do, I will learn."

"Whether the weather is cold or whether the weather is hot, whether the weather is sunny or whether the weather is not, we'll weather the weather whatever the weather, whether we like it or not."



Rick Stock, ORL's Program Coordinator, demonstrating an important quality of a leader: a loud voice.

Photo by Seth Dow

"If you're bored, you're boring!"

"Slow is smooth, smooth is fast."

"You wouldn't worry so much about what people think of you if you knew how rarely they did."

People in ORL gain experience through days spent in the field—a lot of days in the field. During a year there are at least 100 days of class that are oriented towards skill building, and those are scheduled days. If you do any recreating yourself, you will hardly have time to unpack between one trip and the next. People in ORL experience enough to see the mistakes they make and are able to adjust to the wild by correcting those mistakes. They also have conversations with a variety of experienced leaders during these outings, and not just the full time faculty. The program has a culture surrounding it that Rick Stock, the Program Coordinator refers to as "The Legacy."

Past students, people who have gone on to guide in West Virginia, Idaho, Alaska,

Chile, Canada, as well as many other places, often make a special pilgrimage back to their old stomping grounds to be guest instructors on trips. This gives students the opportunity to hear differing opinions on how to manage risk, what techniques are most useful, and generally reminds them that the program they are doing really leads to powerful and life-changing outcomes.

Students have several major opportunities for this learning: The winter trip, the river trip, and the land trip. The winter trip is a five-day winter camping trip that, depending on the year, seems to either be dumped on, or struggling for snow. I remember sitting inside the first snow cave I ever built, soaked with sweat, and thinking, "How the hell am I going to stay warm now?" It certainly is a struggle to manage all the little things when you are out there: Cold feet, cold hands, hunger, food, exertion, attempting tele turns, pooping, cantankerous stoves, cheese that freezes—oh man—the cheese always freezes.

Students in ORL are not afforded the luxury of lethargy. Once the snow trip is over, it is on to the river. Rick, the program leader, does not believe in keeping rafts pumped. Every day those boats go out they are pumped by hand, a labor of love. When I went there, I reveled in it. I went rafting almost 30 times in the month of March, pumping and deflating the raft each time. I only grew lazy about pumping after graduating and becoming a raft guide. To top it all off (pun intentional) the raft guide school typically operates in the snow. If you haven't rafted while it is snowing then I can't really call you a rafter. This guide school builds character as well as skill.

ORL does not spare anyone the experience of real adventure. People are put face to face with problems, and they are expected to solve them and take care of themselves. If students walk away from this program

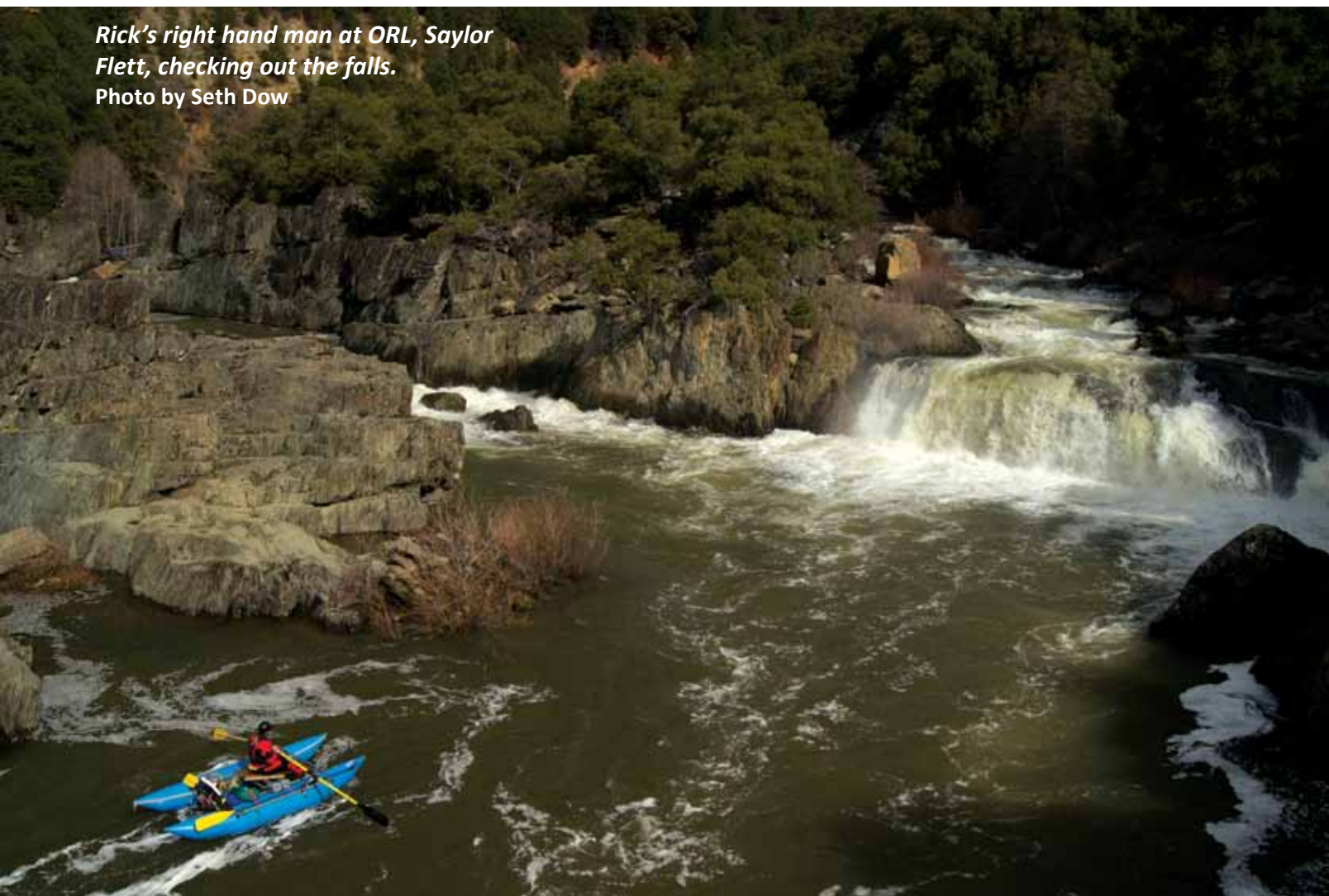
with passion then they are on their way to a lifetime of recreation; if they don't then I would posit that perhaps the outdoors really is not where they should be anyway, because everything you experience there is just the beginning. If students continue on the path they will be hiking out of gorges, dealing with broken skis and poles 10 miles into a ski, and trying to manage injuries and helicopter landings. It is not due to chance that success in this program leads to success in the profession.

You have to admire a program that lets you face the world, that allows you to safely fail, that pushes you to reach deep within yourself to make the changes you must in order to survive, and beyond that, thrive. We all need something like this in our lives, a dose of reality, with all its nuance, pain, and joy. I have never had as much fun as when I was in the program, never felt so

passionate, and have been profoundly impacted by the experience that I had there as a student.

The price tag for ORL is no deterrent either. With NOLS courses going for approximately \$25,000 for an equivalent course, the ORL cost of less than \$1000 for in-state tuition is refreshing. This program will continue to produce stellar athletes, stewards of the wilderness, scholars, and inspire people to take this life and make it meaningful. My hat is off to the Feather River Outdoor Leadership program for its influence on the whitewater community, as well as the larger outdoor community. Check them out if you ever want to be invigorated. They have had students as young as teenagers and as old as people in their 60s (my parents, for instance). It is never too late to learn.

Rick's right hand man at ORL, Saylor Flett, checking out the falls.
Photo by Seth Dow



INSTRUCTION

HOW-TO: HIGH AND LOW BRACING

BY KIM BECKER

IMAGINE YOURSELF KAYAKING smoothly through the lead-in to your favorite rapid. All of a sudden, you're caught off guard, and you get pushed to the side. You plant a brace and you manage to stay upright as you drop into the rapid. Phew! How did you do that?

High Brace vs. Low Brace

Like the forward stroke, the high and low brace are fundamental paddling skills. In general, a brace allows you to stay upright during times of instability on the water. There are two kinds of braces: high and low. With practice, each person will develop their own bracing technique, and adopt a particular brace based on what type of use it's put to: maintaining stability, or recovering from an instability.

Low Brace

This brace is typically used to make small adjustments and maintain stability while paddling. To low brace, hold the paddle just higher than the deck of your boat, wrists up and elbows down, making sure the back of the paddle is facing downward toward the surface of the water. If you start to tip over or lose stability, simply "press" down into the water with the back of the paddle blade while doing a hip snap away from the direction you are tipping. Remember to keep your wrists down and elbows up.



Tip: When low bracing, try to keep your paddle blade forward of your torso. This will help prevent injury to your shoulder, as well as put your body in an aggressive paddling position for when you no longer need to brace.

The low brace is ideal for side-surfing in a hole, however, it does put your shoulders in a weak position in which they are not well suited to absorb a lot of shock. It is best used while your boat still has some form of stability, when the boat is on very little edge/tilt. If you are past the point of no return, or your boat has tilted farther than you can normally balance, you'll want to use the next technique, a high brace.

High Brace

This brace is typically used to when the paddler is severely off balance, in an effort to recover from instability. To practice a high brace from the low brace position, simply cock your wrist backwards toward your chest, and tuck your elbows down near the sides of your torso. The paddle will now be around chest high, and ready for a high brace using the power side of your paddle blade. If you start to tip over or lose stability, simply "press" the power face of the paddle down into the water while doing a hip snap away from the paddle blade you've "pressed" into the water.

Tip: Do your best to maintain bent elbows while doing a high brace. This will prevent over-reaching and putting excessive strain on your shoulder. Just as with a low brace, try to keep your paddle blade forward of your torso. This will help prevent injury to your shoulder, as well as put your body in an aggressive paddling position for when you no longer need to brace.

The high brace is best used when you are past the point of being able to balance on edge. The high brace keeps your elbows close to your torso, and gives your shoulders



The author demonstrates the high brace.
Photo by Zachary Collier

a lot of dynamic range of motion for better shock absorption. With that said, the high brace is not the greatest for an extended period of time, as this usually means your boat is high on edge—a risky position!

Safety Tip: It is important when bracing to stay within your paddler's box. To be more specific, try not to reach too far out from your boat, too far upward (for a BIG brace), or too far backward (if you happen to be tipping over while on your back deck). These actions put your shoulders in compromising positions, and leave them open to injury. If you feel like you are out of your paddler's box, and your high brace might be putting you at risk for an injury, let yourself FLIP OVER and roll back up. It's better than a dislocated shoulder...

With time, each paddler develops her/his own bracing technique, and just like rolling, which brace you use, and when you use it becomes hard-wired. Be sure to practice both braces in flatwater, and move on to experimenting in swifter current as you become comfortable with your newly learned skill.

See you on the river!

An example of good low brace technique.
Photo by Zachary Collier

WOMEN IN WHITEWATER

CONFIDENT WOMAN IN A CANOE

BY BRIANNE CONDON

MY NAME IS Bri Condon and I am a strong and competent woman. I have not come to this conclusion through any means other than remaining competitive in sports (a world dominated by mostly male achievements) throughout my earlier years, and through actively experiencing the outdoors (a world dominated by mostly male achievements) ever since. I have grown into the individual I am today because of the lessons I learned on the water from individuals like Laurie Gullion and countless other mentors who have raised my standard for intentionally focused outdoor programming. Laurie has served as faculty at the University of New Hampshire for many years, and in 2011 she received the American Canoe Association's Excellence in Instruction Award. I can only hope that she won't notice this small tribute to her leadership and my successes here, since she, unlike me, often does not like to bring attention to her accomplishments. Because of her skilled approaches to transferable instruction in canoes, I have been able to take my experience of waterways in the Northeast and expand my reach to the Pacific Northwest.

Rivers cause my heart to race, and my mind to follow its course. I am currently an active member of the Lower Columbia Canoe Club and paddle mostly coastal rivers each weekend throughout the winter. Although my tandem canoe partner and I are separated by one thwart, opposite genders,



The author and her tandem partner take on major rapids on the Main Fork of the Salmon, August 2012.

Photo by Zachary Collier

and by at least four generations, we do not think that this is just cause to miss an eddy turn in our local Class III rivers. It has been a great source of conversation, humor, and motivation between two people who were fundamentally taught whitewater canoeing in two entirely separate ways. I have been academically taught how to paddle a canoe to the best of my ability, while he has taught himself. Without words we navigate beautiful stretches of scenic and powerful rivers, and have found a shared love of the Dagger Dimension. I believe it is each paddler's responsibility to teach another paddler the strokes of the game, and it is even more important for competent female paddlers to pass on their knowledge of the sport to novices.

Along with my interest in promoting the growth of women in whitewater, I am also interested in seeing whitewater canoeing grow, or at least not shrink. The growth of whitewater canoeing seems to have come to a halt in these parts and in order to keep

the knowledge of whitewater canoeing in the present tense, I believe it is important for paddling communities to think about ways we can tackle this phenomenon of an endangered pastime. I have proposed to my paddling club ways that we could possibly record an oral history from members of various groups across the country, however, three things I have consistently found that old-time paddlers always bring on a trip is their PFD, their helmet, and their traditions. The inertia of tradition seems to have recently blockaded the possibility of recording the oral history and modern day accomplishments of whitewater canoeing. However, I believe that as a paddling community we can come together and find the correct line and shoot for a compromise.

When Bri Condon is not paddling or exploring the backcountry on foot she has charged herself with the goal of earning a master degree in adventure education and furthering her non-profit design for Catalyst Wilderness Therapy Programs. Her up and coming program has been designed to allow teenagers of the foster care system to have equal access to exceptional mental health care through a specialized backcountry setting. www.CatalystWilderness.org



The author's canoe pulled ashore for the night against the backlit canyon walls, John Day River (OR), Clarno to Cottonwood Section.

Photo by Brianne Condon

WOMEN IN WHITEWATER

LACEY ANDERSON: WHITEWATER MAVEN

BY NEIL NIKIRK

LACEY ANDERSON IS a rarity in the whitewater world—a mature woman who thrives on adventure and the unexpected while pursuing her passion for running rivers outside of the mainstream destinations. Mature at “50-something” she is still actively guiding on some of the West’s most famous rivers, and when not guiding, exploring rivers outside the US. In the past couple of years, she has completed over two dozen multi-day river journeys in remote areas of Mexico, almost all of them first descents in an inflatable (cataraft), and some being the first known descents, period. Not your average boater; not your average female; definitely not your average female boater. Her independent nature, high tolerance for danger, thrill of the unknown, and ability to handle whatever comes her way makes her an exceptional individual in the relatively small circle of female hardcore whitewater boaters.

Since her first rafting trip in 1983, on the South Fork of the American River



Lacey on the Barranca Grande section of the Rio Antigua, Veracruz, Mexico.
Photo by Neil Nikirk

in California, Lacey dreamed of being a river guide. Even while juggling family obligations to her daughters and furthering her education to become a credentialed

teacher, Lacey worked as a summer guide on all the forks of the American River. Since then, Lacey has logged over 6,500 miles on numerous rivers and countless days in the wild, both on and off the river. A chance encounter while leading a backpacking trip in 2000 with an adventure outfitter from Mexico led to Lacey organizing and leading the first commercial descent of the Rio Urique in the famed Copper Canyon region of Chihuahua, Mexico in 2002. This successful trip ignited a passion for exploration of remote river canyons. Since then she has notched first descents of the Rio Atoyac, Rio Atotonilco/Santa Catarina, Rio Xochiotlahuaca, Rio Tehuantepec, Rio Tlapeneco and others stretching from northern to southern Mexico.

On a recent trip into the Guatemalan highlands to run the Rio Copon, a river reputed to be the finest in all of Central America and with only three previous

Surfing fun on the Rio Copalita, Oaxaca, Mexico.

Photo by Neil Nikirk





Put-in for the Middle Rio Atoyac, Oaxaca, Mexico.

Photo by Neil Nikirk

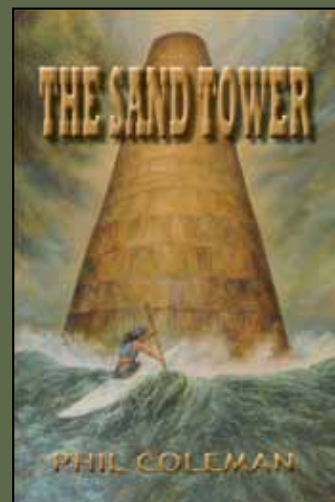
descents, Lacey and a group of river enthusiasts/conservationists were held hostage by villagers who thought they were associated with mining and hydroelectric interests, and nearly lost their lives. Thanks to the selfless act of a newfound Guatemalan friend, Lacey survived to tell the tale. Along with the sobering reality of her own mortality came a heightened awareness of the value of living in the moment and enjoying everything in life that makes you happy to the fullest.

Since that time, Lacey has downsized into her "second home," a trusty Toyota pickup/camper combo and lived the life of a river guide and explorer. This last summer was spent guiding on the Colorado River and the Middle Fork and Main Salmon Rivers in Idaho. Returning briefly to her cabin in Joshua Tree, Lacey then embarked on another journey to Mexico. Luring her were the travertine waterfalls of the Rio Lacanja

and the big water of the Rio Usumacinta, the Sacred Monkey River of the Mayan world. Plans for 2013 include guiding on the Salmon, a return visit to the seldom run canyon of the Rio Mulatos/Aros/Yaqui in northern Mexico, an exploratory trip on the Rio Guerachi in the heart of Las Barrancas del Cobre (Copper Canyon), more exploratory cataraft runs in Mexico, a return to Guatemala, and maybe an expedition to Peru.

More than just the thrill of the unknown drives Lacey to boat these rivers that are well off the beaten track. She is an avid supporter of river conservation activities and an opponent of mining, hydroelectric, and other interests that threaten clean, free-flowing rivers. By publicizing her exploits through her blog, she hopes to raise public awareness about these and other threatened rivers to aid in the fight against interests that would irrevocably harm the

river and surrounding ecosystem. Lacey is also a successful author of two books on camp cooking without coolers and an e-book on camp cooking without coolers or stoves. These publications provide boaters and other outdoor enthusiasts with meal plans and lots of recipes for gourmet camp cuisine using non-perishable ingredients that do not require refrigeration. Proceeds from the sales of her books are used to fund river preservation efforts through donations to various river protection organizations.



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LOVE & WHITEWATER

SET UP FOR LOVE WHERE YOU'D LEAST EXPECT

BY SCOTT ANDERSON

KATY AND I met on April 4, 2009 at the Webster Springs Festival. Like most whitewater festivals, it's held at a place in the woods where dirty, smelly kayakers gather in modest numbers to put on wet neoprene, splash themselves in chilly water, and celebrate afterward by drinking cheap beer and listening to banjo music. And if you've ever smelled wet neoprene, you know what a powerful aphrodisiac it is.

We were introduced by a mutual friend, Stacey, against our better judgment. I'd met Stacey on a month-long kayaking trip through the Grand Canyon, and Katy was her dentist. Stacey described us to each other in glowing terms, which only added to our pessimism, but we let her play matchmaker because there wasn't any pressure to hit it off. We were both going to Webster Springs anyway, we didn't have to look nice, we weren't going on a "date," and if we didn't like each other we could still have a fun weekend of kayaking.

I arrived at Camp Caesar late on Friday night, pitched my tent in the dark, and fell asleep to the sound of pouring rain. When I woke up in the morning the group was getting ready to run the Back Fork of the Elk. Fifty feet away, Stacey was talking conspiratorially with a girl I didn't recognize and glancing in my direction. When she gestured me over I realized that the other girl must be Katy; she was much cuter than I had dared to hope.

Stacey declared that I would be riding with Katy to the put-in, which was totally fine by me; however, Katy had driven to Webster Springs with her dad, Steve, and he was not part of the conspiracy. Unless we wanted a chaperone, he would have to be removed from the car with the utmost subtlety and tact. Below is a faithful account of the conversation between Stacey and Katy's father.



Katy and Scott a year later on the Gauley.
Photo by Barbra Giorgini

"Steve, you're riding with Joel today."
"Huh?"
"You're riding with Joel."
"But I drove here with Katy."
"That's great. Now get in the car with Joel."
"But all my gear is in Katy's car."

Let it be said that getting separated from your gear is one of the cardinal sins of kayaking. The last time I did that I returned home to Maryland only to realize my paddle was in Tennessee. Nevertheless, the girls managed to convey to Steve through tone of voice and body language that he would not be allowed to ride in Katy's car under any circumstances, and if he violated this edict he would bring tragedy on his house by ruining his daughter's only chance at happiness.

Everything settled, I got into the car with Katy and we drove to the Back Fork of the Elk. I don't remember what we talked about aside from the usual inquiries about each other's family and where we grew up, but I do remember that the conversation flowed effortlessly from topic to topic. Some conversations are like flatwater and lead you nowhere without effort, others are like manky boulder gardens that will pin your boat if you miss a stroke, but ours

had a rhythm that felt just right, and took us in directions we were excited to go. I was especially intrigued by her feistiness.

That day on the river was pretty magical. The sun was shining, the water was cold and clear, and between each rapid we continued our conversation where it left off. I had brought a camera to take photos of the river, which was very convenient because it allowed me to take photos of Katy as well! I tried to be sneaky about it, but I probably wasn't fooling anyone.

Later that night, back at Camp Caesar, I tried to persuade Katy to stay for the bonfire and the bluegrass band, but she and Steve had to go, and I forgot to ask for her phone number. Fortunately, we had a mutual friend who was glad to get it for me...



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MENTAL GAME

KEEPING UP WITH JONSEY

BY TEAGUE SWALM

I've paddled for seven years. Or rather, I've been a paddler for seven years. And as I sit here with an ice pack on my shoulder—the consequence of not having given proper respect to a river with consideration to my own currency—I have had an epiphany...I can't keep up with Jonsey!

For years I've read scores of articles and posts about paddling progression; what's the right balance of experience vs. river, risk vs. reward, etc. Among paddlers, what river to paddle or rapid to run/portage is very personal. Mostly, my experience with fellow paddlers (my experiences and theirs), has been very positive; i.e. a solid paddling crew typically provides spot-on beta/advice/sanity/prayer, while ultimately respecting individual decision to huck or not to huck, sometimes despite contrary opinions. I've likewise tried to offer reasonable man backup to my fellow paddlers, while of course respecting their unique comfort zone and/or aspirations. And I have frequently added my own two cents to forums regarding "reasonable" progression.

But I believe my own kayaking "lifestyle" qualifies as unique. And I'd like to share from that experience with both those tormented souls living a similar challenge and also the dedicated crews who frequent the river alongside them.

Seven years. For immersed paddlers, a lifetime of experience twice over—that is, if you actually live near some terrain relief. As a paddler, I've had the unfortunate circumstance of residing in several paddling hells. Personally, I'd estimate an average gradient of my hometowns over 80% of my padding career at about 5 fpm, aka FLAT.

Not sure exactly when I caught this rotomolded plastic mariner bug; perhaps looking down from a streamside trail or dangling from a rocky crag (another wrong sport for a guy from the tundra), but at some



Swami on Bullpen, Chattooga Sect 00, Feb 2013.

Photo by Elliot Buchholz

point I simply knew I had to whitewater boat ride. When the professional opportunity arose to live in Atlanta, I excitedly gave a buddy from Western North Carolina the news and had him purchase for me everything I needed to kayak. I can still feel the butterflies I had the first time I strapped into that, uhhh, pink (thnx Halo) Corsica S and nervously approached the thundering certain death of Nantahala Falls. I was an immediate whitewater junkie, and could vividly imagine a future of hucking the Pacific Northwest's juiciest spring thaw.

Unfortunately, life with access didn't persist. From the relative river proximity of Atlanta, to [OMG] New Orleans, to [F'in A!] Ft Worth, to [no, you don't really have surf] Virginia Beach, I've remained religiously dedicated to, if not obsessed with paddling. My average transit to the river has ranged from seven-hour drives to o'dark early wakeup plane/train/auto Ironman days—brutal. Couple that with family and career commitments and, river days are premium; progression is extremely challenging. Despite countless hours reading, watching videos and dreaming of kayaking, my total accumulated river days

more closely resemble about two season's equivalent of an Asheville, NC boater. Probably why I'm continually surpassed by guys who I saw attempt their first combat roll two years ago—frustrating.

Now admittedly, I'm relatively conservative when it comes to stepping up. An outcome of "probably ok" doesn't get me on a drop. Having started kayaking at 35, I've too many mouths to feed to auger in playing modern savage. But like all paddlers, I do have Holy Grail aspirations. Case in point, my painfully slow recent step-up to the Green [lite]. One of my core crew managed to, after recently moving to Asheville, not only run the Green inside the two-year mark of taking his first stroke, but chalk up so many laps as to know every boof, rock and splash on the river. To boot, he's also logged a dozen other Class Big-time Appalachian classics. In contrast, my monthly (if lucky), two-day foray to the put-in typically includes a gratuitous warm-up lap (somewhere "friendly" to knock off the rust) then, if/when the water level's "normal," a carefully studied maintenance/progression lap. This two step forward, one step back shallow ascent has continued for years and has created everything from

MENTAL GAME

personal frustration to total war on the home front, not to mention a mountain of roadtrip expenses.

This is probably a good time for a quick, related tangent. “Progression” doesn’t necessarily mean stepping up. There’s a plethora of skills acquired over the spectrum of rivers—notches a paddler carves—not all of which exist on every river. For instance, a periodic pool session for roll tune-up or a day practicing attainments is a solid part of every wise paddler’s “progression.” Let the fundamentals slip at the peril of both paddler and crew.

So ultimately, what is “reasonable” progression (and/or expectation)?

Though the choice is extremely individual, I’d submit that what goes into a sausage maker is fairly homogenous. Most paddlers have a vision of where they’d have their paddling—from loops and air blunts, to steep, low volume creeks, to Inga projects. That vision serves as a navigational beacon toward which paddlers chart a progressive course through the challenges and obstacles of physical ability, practice, access, fear, health, money, etc. Assuming the stars align to provide a landscape conducive to

evolution, a paddler will eventually face the personal choice of [acceptable] risk versus reward.

And though it’s typically advantageous for an athlete’s growth to follow the lead of those with more prowess, it can also present a conundrum. Time and again I watch more proficient, more current paddlers make short work of the outer limits of my ability/comfort zone. Often, it’s dangerously tempting to be swept up in the moment, brawn over brains, pressing forward to the lip of a drop that may (or may not) end with triumphant fist pumps. Too boot, with every Paddlin’ Joe on the river sporting multiple Go-Pro’s, “chair” paddling with Vimeo oftentimes leads to a false sense of familiarity and comfort with otherwise unfamiliar rivers.

Thanks to organizations like American Whitewater, access is vastly improving and upper echelon paddlers are going bigger each year. Our sport is growing, continually pressing the limits of paddler and equipment capabilities. But just because the Watauga’s no longer considered the gold standard for extreme hairboating doesn’t mean that its teeth are any less lethal. Those of us in the lower tiers are

afforded and exposed to bigger aspirations as well.

Granted, a certain degree of forward lean is required to reach escape velocity and a higher orbit, but realizing the day’s “too much,” both for paddler and crew, is paramount. After all, extremis for one is extremis for all. In return for my responsible paddling, I EXPECT my boys to rescue me in the event of a mishap. Likewise, I expect them to afford me the same responsible decisions, for which they may also rest assured that I WILL swim through a sieve for them.

I guess the point of this ramble is thus: with the myriad of complex factors, both internal and external, that paddlers face as they embark upon a river, and considering how quickly a day can turn from legend to tragedy, coupled with the fact that our sport is rapidly expanding and continually pressing new limits, recreational risk management should be that much more at the forefront of a crew’s mindset and an infinitely conscious element of each adventure. Put more simply: don’t feel like you should have to keep up with Jonsey!



BEST INTERMEDIATE RUNS

NORTH BRANCH OF THE PISCATAQUOG RIVER, NEW HAMPSHIRE

BY PATTI RUTKA

DESPITE THE OVERHANGING branch 15 feet downriver of the put-in that clothes-lined me out of my open boat one October day on New Hampshire's North Branch of the Piscataquog River (known to locals as the P-Cat), the Lake Horace to Everett Reservoir run remains one of the most delightful intermediate river sections I have ever paddled.

October has its advantages and disadvantages as far as boating goes: the weather and water are cold, so the choking latex gasket at the neck of a drysuit replaces the freedom of summer paddling gear. On the other hand, New England in October puts on its coat of many colors. Boasting classic autumn scenery, the P-Cat combines some winding, narrow, delicately beautiful fast water sections with some Class III-III+ drops to challenge the intermediate paddler.

The overhanging branch at the put-in that snagged my PFD and fished me out of my boat was one of many blowdowns and strainers that add an element of complexity to the seven-or-so-mile run (there are several options for take-outs—an upper, middle, and lower—that can shorten or lengthen the run). Right below the dam at the put-in the river is typically narrow, perhaps no more than 30 feet wide, so it feels very creek-like but lacks the gradient of a creek—at least at first. The October release, which happens for one weekend, delivers around 450 cfs into the river, so it's technical rather than pushy and is a good level for open boats as well as kayaks. While I have a pump in my canoe, I've seldom had to use it on the P-Cat because of the low flow. Be warned that whether or not there are strainers at the put-in, the fast water start is not warm and fuzzy for people just stepping up to Class III; while there are no



Face washing at Slab City.

Photo by Ron Chase

full-fledged rapids to begin with, a paddler has to be on her game and ready to move.

Shortly, the river constricts to the first drop called Slab City. This can be scouted on either side of the river, and I've seen paddlers take both left and right lines. Choosing the right requires slicing a thin line between a hole on the left and some junk on the right, with a protruding stump of a log to complicate matters. Choosing the left is easier to line up for because an overhanging branch helps mark the set-up. Here the move is left-to-right, starting just off the left bank. Watch out for a diagonal wave on this maneuver. A fellow paddler underestimated the current's speed, got slapped by the diagonal, and landed a nasty head-knock in the resulting swim. The good news is that the outflow is recovery-friendly, with a small beach on river left for emptying out and watching others run, or for taking photographs.

Some smaller rapids follow, though nothing of consequence, so you can enjoy gliding past burnt umber leaves, scarlet maple, golden poplar, and deep green

hemlock and rolling hills. Horses on river left gaze as you wind through scenic New Hampshire woodland.

The next major drop comes at the site of an old mill. This drop is easily scouted from river right, even if you want to run left, although the river is marginally wider here than at other places. The right side is also amenable to setting safety or videoing because the shore is slabby rock, which provides good footing. That same slabbyness makes for a scrapey run, though, so be prepared to do some Fred Flintstone and Barney Rubble moves with your paddle as you scramble your way down the top part of the double ledge. If you run right, keep it straight, or you'll find yourself side-surfing in short order, as I did on my first run. Finish right, crashing through a hole at the bottom of the second part of the ledge. If you run left, the line is somewhat more fluid at the top, but there are more holes to dodge. Either side will scuff up your boat (or your shoulder), and many paddlers choose to walk here to avoid consequences.

BEST INTERMEDIATE RUNS

Buzzell Hill, the next drop, is the most complex and difficult of the run. It is easily portaged on the right and can be scouted from either side, though I recommend the left, having tried both. Scouting from the left will give you the advantage of more accurately studying the current dynamic of a curler wave that is the bane of a phenomenally high percentage of paddlers. The first year I ran Buzzell's I saw nine out of 12 people swim here—including me, and a Class V boating buddy. The other Class V boating friend ran a sneak route on the right. I've seen this rapid cause bloodied body parts and a torn rotator cuff, so it's nothing to mess with despite its intermediate rating; assess carefully before you run.

That being said, you'll have an easier time with two blades on this drop, but open boaters will find the top part of the drop a better righty move with the bottom portion

a better lefty move over the snarling curler. There are eddies to work with in what the AW write-up calls a "series of staggered chutes" as the water picks up and moves into the meat of the drop. The regular line entices the paddler hard left, to avoid a hole or punch it with momentum, then moves right with conviction to perpendicularly smack the curler that is just waiting to bobble then flip a boat before the boater gets dragged over a rock pile at the bottom. It is possible to run left all the way and avoid the curler, but then you have to contend with biting off the edge of a huge hole left-center before crashing through the turbulence at the bottom. The outflow is mild if you do make it; if you don't, there is a large, re-circulating eddy on the left at the bottom of the drop that will welcome the boat and paddler. Those setting safety can stand above the eddy on a rock and get good views of the entire rapid.

One more narrow drop, a double hydraulic, will make the paddler think. Most run it on the left, bracing through the side-angling holes, but a sporty boof move from left to right into an eddy below a small rock ledge works just as well. The rapids relax into quickwater for the rest of the run as the river winds through tight curves, past forests showing off their flaming fall palette. The North Branch of the Piscataquog in October is a gem of a release not to be missed, and there's a great Mexican restaurant in nearby Concord where tired paddlers can finish off their day.

Running Buzzell Hill.
Photo by Ron Chase





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BEST INTERMEDIATE RUNS

THE NOLICHUCKY

BY CHARLIE WILCOX



THERE COMES A time in every boater's paddling career when he or she decides it's time to suit up and move up to Class III whitewater. This intermediate level of paddling can be the most fun part of developing into a better kayaker because at this point you are in adventure mode. You're going places you've never been and doing things you've never done before. I have spent (and am still spending) most of my time as an adventurous intermediate paddler on the Nolichucky Gorge in eastern Tennessee.

In the southeast, running Nantahala falls successfully is a well-known rite of passage from Class II to III rapids. After that, you're



Left and above: Early morning at Nolichucky Campground.
Photo by Berkley Wilcox

left wandering where to go next, how to get there, and what to expect once your spray-skirt is sealed. Luckily American Whitewater's website and members have contributed greatly to answering many of those questions in their online river database. As a matter of fact, I got my first look at the Nolichucky through the computer screen and set it high on the short-term hit list.

A few weeks later I saw that it was running and decided it was time to step up my game. Myself and a few other beginner/intermediate paddlers ran this gorge for the first time one early spring Sunday last year and were hooked. For us it was the first river we had run by ourselves so were hyped up regardless of what lay ahead. We scouted the lines and kept the research we had done the evening prior fresh in our heads as we descended alongside the train tracks. We navigated our way down, eddy hopping every section of whitewater, and successfully making it through rapid after rapid. That in and of itself provided us with a confidence boost like no other.

At camp that night we recalled the day's events but as I shoveled through my brain for real images of the river and its surroundings, I realized I had very little. Sometimes as intermediate boaters we tend to focus on getting to the next rapid, getting through it, finding the eddy at the bottom, and repeating the process until we reach the take-out. This causes us to recall only up close and personal images of

Camping out of the shuttle vehicle.
Photo by Berkley Wilcox





Nice break spot after Quarter-mile rapid.
Photo by Berkley Wilcox

rapids. In this case I remembered that the Nolichucky is packed full of small play holes, a few really good surfing waves, a couple slot moves, and numerous ledge drops that can be run with a variety of lines. But ask me what else I saw that first run and I couldn't tell you a thing. I sought to change that and as spring turned to summer I spent five or six consecutive weekends sleeping in a tent at the take-out of this particular run.

One of the great things about the Nolichucky is that although it's not a dam release river, its watershed is huge and the level is up almost every time it rains. During one of the earlier summer weekends in the gorge I experienced an awakening on why I had returned. The sun was shining and the temperature was perfect as I rolled into "On the Rocks" and watched as my bow disappeared into the white hole below me. As it resurfaced I noticed the water shed off my skirt before I paddled across the eddy line where I waited for the rest of the crew. For the first time I actually felt comfortable

sitting in the eddy. I looked up at the huge walls of the gorge and realized I was in one of the most elaborate wildernesses I had ever experienced.

I would tell you the Nolichucky Gorge is beautiful and fill your head with clichés but I'm not going to. Instead I'm going to tell you that this place is astonishing in its depth. The canyon-like walls hug a rather wide and deep body of water perfectly against the boulders alongside the main flow. Not only are the mountains that make up this place high in elevation, but they are suitably steep. The angle of the Nolichucky Gorge allows you to really see the rock formations and wildlife that would otherwise be masked by forest and vegetation. The overall geography of the place is exceptionally pleasing to the eyes and grants those who experience it with a sense of solitude and carefree intensity what whitewater boaters tend to hunt for. The wildlife viewing there is better at times than anything in the Southeast. I have

seen bear, deer, or turkey on every descent through this place and there's never a lack of eddies to sit in and absorb the scenery.

As I peeled out of the eddy I had been waiting in, I realized that not only had the Nolichucky allowed me to really progress in my skills as a whitewater enthusiast, but it had also taught me that boating isn't only about running harder rapids and making it down alive. It's really more or less a strange and less traveled road to unknown places.

Yes, our sport needs commercialized rivers, there is no doubt that it is a necessity, but it also needs places like the Nolichucky that allow intermediate boaters to feel disconnected from civilization and marketing just long enough to take in some scenery, run some great water, and become better paddlers.

REVIEWS

REVIEW: *ANYTHING WORTH DOING* BY JO DEURBROUCK

REVIEW BY TYLER WILLIAMS

IF YOU HAVE even the slightest interest in Western rivers or the boatmen who run them, you will enjoy Jo Deurbrouck's *Anything Worth Doing*. If you happen to be one of those river-smitten boaters, this book is a must-read.

Let me first disclose that I'm biased, because *Anything Worth Doing* is built upon subjects with which I have particular interest: Idaho rivers and running the Salmon River source to sea. And the 'Blue Ghetto' that Deurbrouck describes in the preface to her book—I lived there. The pay phone that delivers the sad news of a guide's drowning to Deurbrouck, and helps provide framework for the book—I stood, stupefied, in that very same booth when the news of kayaker Dugald Bremner's drowning came down the wire. Being so close to a story, I might have found fault with Jo's perspective, or easily rolled my eyes at embellishments in her delivery. Instead, I grinned wide, or teared solemnly, while reading her descriptions of those places and times. The fact is, Deurbrouck nailed it, spot on.

I did not know Clancy Reece, the book's central character, but after reading about him I feel, as much as anyone can ever "know" someone through the pages of a book, that now I do. Following service in Vietnam, Reece returned to Idaho and helped develop a fledgling commercial rafting industry. He was seemingly always the senior, the guide to legions of less experienced guides, the one who had done it all. Most Salmon River paddlers have stopped at mountain man

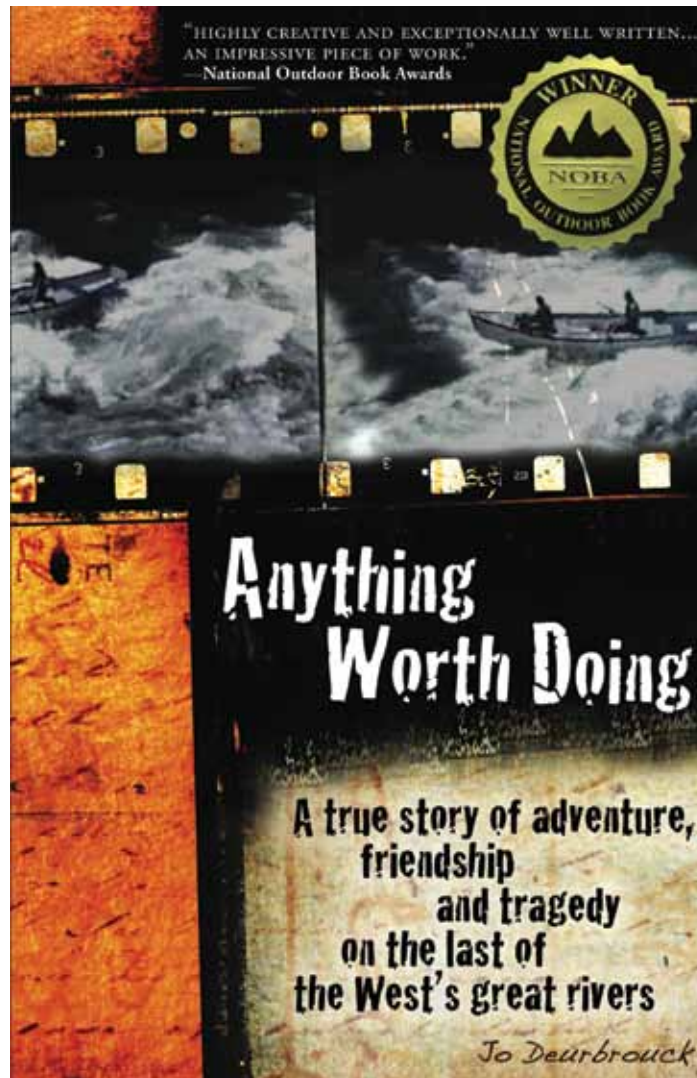
Buckskin Bill's castle along the river. Reece spent an entire season with Buckskin. A barrel-chested, introverted craftsman and poet, Clancy Reece drowned on the Salmon at the age of 50, near the end of a record high water speed run. This incident is the centerpiece of the book.

sea. "Because anything worth doing," he said, "is worth overdoing." This, readers will learn, was classic Reece commentary.

The real instigator of the source to sea trip, however, was Clancy's sidekick, Jon Barker. Jon, the son of Idaho outfitting pioneers John A.K. and Mayre Barker, is a natural and accomplished adventurer who made the first descent of Peru's Cotahuasi among other achievements. Nimble, driven, and many years younger than Clancy, Jon made an unlikely but effective teammate with Clancy. To get through the lower Snake and Columbia on their Salmon through-run, they sailed and rowed a handmade wooden dory, riding through the ship locks and battling horrendous headwinds and waves on the Columbia River Gorge. Deurbrouck takes you straight into the gunnel-gripping moments, and relates the random experiences that tend to happen on such journeys, like unknowingly mooring to a pier adjacent to a teenage detention center. That's fun reading.

This book will entertain with its real-life characters and river dramas. It will educate you about the Salmon/Columbia River system, from Lewis and Clark and the free-flowing Salmon River to the immovable dams and the improbable salmon mitigations of today. Its passages will resonate with anyone who has fallen in love with a river, anywhere. *Anything*

Worth Doing is one book that is certainly worth reading.



However, *Anything Worth Doing* is not about death, but rather living—at full speed—the river life. The title stems from Clancy's reply to the question why he wanted to run the Salmon from source to

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WHITEWATER ACCIDENTS: JULY – DECEMBER 2012

BY CHARLIE WALBRIDGE

In 2012 Low water and drought produced the lowest number of fatalities in the U.S. since 2005. There were 9 kayaking and 5 canoeing deaths, less than half of last year's totals. Rafting deaths (24) were down by 25% as well; the breakdown was 8 commercial and 16 private rafting accidents. Causes of death include 9 instances when a life vest wasn't worn, 9 cases of flush drownings (when life-jacketed paddlers died after unobstructed swims), and 7 deaths that resulted from pins on strainers. This was the first year I can remember that no paddlers were killed running low-head dams. There were also several accidents in Canada that are worth hearing about. Here's a summary of what happened from July through December of this past year:

Kayak Accidents

This year we saw six very skilled kayakers (four Americans and two Canadians) die in North American Class V whitewater. This number is above average, but not unprecedented. These deaths sent shock waves through the small community of expert paddlers. Two earlier accidents were discussed in the Sept/Oct 2012 issue of AW Journal and can be found in the AW

Accident Database at americanwhitewater.org. The rest are summarized below.

In February 2012, the area around the Green Truss Bridge section of Washington's White Salmon River was hit by a freak ice storm. The river was blocked by many large trees. Although the worst of the log jams were no longer present, many dangerous spots remained. In Zig Zag Rapid two logs came together to form a downstream vee. As the water dropped, passage over these logs became precarious. On August 1st Chris Schwer, 27, tried to "bunny hop" the barely submerged log. He was pinned in the apex of the vee with a log on his chest and his boat under the log. His position was initially stable, but this section of river is a walled-in gorge with very limited access. The group would soon risk their lives to help him. A report by Andy McMurray describes what happened next:

"Abe had a rope on him within 20 seconds while I, on the opposite bank, attempted to scramble out to Chris with my throw bag... Crawling out on the log towards Chris, I remember screaming at him to clip himself into Abe's rope and to exit his boat and swim. He looked calm, knowing that we were coming for him.

"As I got closer to where he was pinned, I was swept under the logjam by the

upstream current and flushed downstream in the gorge below. I was able to swim to an eddy in the walled in gorge below but couldn't climb back out on the left side after numerous attempts to get back upstream..."

"...John and Lance, the other two kayakers... raced downstream, portaging the rapid on river left...Lance had erected an anchor on river left and [they] were "live baiting" John on a rope with hopes of clipping into Chris. Chris was under water at this point, yet John was able to get a rope into Chris's hand, which he hung onto for only 10 seconds or so. Soon after John was flushed off the log in similar fashion [to me]."

"...Abe and I were erecting a 3:1 anchor system on the river right shore with hopes to "live bait" from our side. John was able to get back to the river left bank via the rope he was attached to, got into his boat, and ferried above the log jam to our side with more throw bags and assistance. We erected the system and live baited Abe out into the log jam...to attach the system to Chris' body and extract him. He [Chris] was completely submerged at this point...for almost 20 minutes."

"Abe got to Chris and cinch[ed] a piece of webbing around the shoulder strap of his PFD. ...he wasn't able to get a piece

| US Whitewater Fatalities | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 |
|--------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Kayak | 16 | 17 | 12 | 11 | 20 | 18 | 11 | 14 | 8 | 17 | 15 | 19 | 23 | 9 |
| Canoe | 5 | 11 | 9 | 7 | 14 | 5 | 4 | 8 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 5 | 13 | 5 |
| Commercial Raft | 10 | 15 | 11 | 7 | 2 | 5 | 6 | 11 | 12 | 11 | 8 | 6 | 13 | 8 |
| Private Raft | 6 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 11 | 7 | 13 | 22 | 13 | 13 | 16 | 14 | 18 | 16 |
| Total Raft | (16) | (17) | (14) | (8) | (13) | (12) | (19) | (33) | (29) | (24) | (24) | (20) | (31) | (24) |
| Total Fatalities | 37 | 45 | 36 | 26 | 47 | 35 | 34 | 55 | 44 | 48 | 46 | 44 | 77 | 38 |
| No PFD | 1 | 10 | 6 | 5 | 13 | 7 | 8 | 14 | 9 | 6 | 10 | 16 | 17 | 9 |
| Flush Drowning | 11 | 11 | 4 | 8 | 12 | 10 | 8 | 8 | 7 | 16 | 9 | 1 | 21 | 9 |
| Strainer | 7 | 4 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 10 | 6 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| Low Head Dams | 3 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 7 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 15 | 9 | 0 |
| Class V Kayakers | 5 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 6 | 4 |

of webbing around Chris's waist. Chris also wasn't wearing a rescue vest, as Abe would have been able to clip into the ring on his rescue harness. With Abe back out of the water, we established a 3:1 system with Lance's river left anchor as a vector. Our plan was to extract Chris and begin immediate CPR. After pulling for over a minute, we...ripped the shoulder strap off his PFD."

Since the group now realized that rescue was impossible, they left the gorge and notified authorities. The next day local paddlers joined forces with the county rescue team to recover Mr. Schwer's body. The recovery took over eight hours, and required a tethered raft and extensive rope work. McMurray's report continues:

"After much reflection, I have personally concluded that there was nothing more we could have done to save Chris' life. All of us on the river that day are highly trained and certified whitewater professionals, trained both in swiftwater rescue and wilderness medicine. I believe that his boat and his body were pinned in such a way that any sort of rescue effort was almost futile at best."

This entire report is available in AW's accident database.

The North Branch of the Pemigewasset drains Franconia Notch in New Hampshire's White Mountains. It's a small creek with steep rapids and falls, some of which are well-known tourist attractions. On September 19th Allan Panebaker, AW's New England Stewardship Director, and two other expert paddlers were having a fine day on this challenging run. At Wham Bam, a long, steep rapid in a deeply sculpted granite riverbed, careful scouting revealed a strainer in the top drop near a sieve. The group believed that it could be easily missed and the first two kayakers ran the rapid cleanly. Mr. Panebaker, 29, had his boat hung up on the strainer and got pushed into the sieve. According to a report from Adam Herzog, who was in his

group, the boat broached, pivoted, then disappeared. Later the boat washed out, but Mr. Panebaker did not. The group threw ropes to the point where he was last seen and were able to snag a log. When a swiftwater rescue team arrived they joined forces and moved the log, freeing Mr. Panebaker's body. This loss is deeply mourned by everyone connected with our organization. Again, consult the AW Accident Database for a full report.

There were two fatalities in Canada last fall involving Class V kayakers. On September 11th Jeff West, a renowned kayak instructor from Ocoee, TN, drowned during a solo run of the Grand Canyon of the Skikine in British Columbia. This 45-mile long stretch contains huge Class V+ rapids in a sheer-walled gorge. Only two paddlers have ever made solo runs in a single day. West, 40, had previously run the Stikine in a day with a group and ran the lower half of the canyon solo after his partner was evacuated. No one knows exactly what happened. Mr. West passed a cataafter at the Site Zed portage; later in the day the same rafter found him floating in an eddy near their campsite. Even though Jeff himself said that swimming in the Stikine would be "the worst mistake you will ever make," rescues have been made here by skilled parties. Self rescue, however, is nearly impossible.

In another incident, Rob Thompson, a highly regarded Canadian 19 year-old, was pinned at the bottom of a "straightforward" 20-foot waterfall on the Upper Cheakamus River in British Columbia. On September 28th he and two friends decided to try the left chute. Photos show a drop that looks pretty clean. His friends ran successfully, but Mr. Thompson dropped over the edge and disappeared. After his life vest and paddle washed free the authorities were notified. An initial search turned up nothing, but his friends returned a week later for another look. According to a post on calpaddle.com (available in the AW Accident Database), they found Mr. Thompson pinned in his kayak against a large strainer or sieve at the

base of the drop. Although they couldn't get a very good look at the obstruction they managed to release his boat and make the recovery.

We have sketchy information on two other whitewater kayaking deaths in 2012. Joseph Cushman, 72, was a first-time kayaker who was wearing a life vest that did not fit him well. On July 28th his boat flipped in fast water on the Swan River near Big Fork, MT. His friends chased Mr. Cushman downstream and got him to shore but couldn't revive him. Months later, on December 12th, Shelbi Danielle Arno drowned after she was trapped in her kayak on Clear Creek in Shasta County, CA. Ms. Arno, 39, was a solid, experienced paddler; both she and her companion had paddled this Class IV run before. She was pinned in her kayak on a midstream rock. Her fellow paddler was able to wade out and release the kayak, but Ms. Arno was unconscious and washed downstream. Rescuers found her the following day.

Canoeing Accidents

Canoe accidents were down substantially in 2012; only two happened in the last six months. In the most serious incident, two women were killed on Alaska's Eagle River after their canoe flipped upstream of a log jam. According to the Anchorage Daily News, Fern Johnson, 60, and Carol Heater, 48, were swept underneath the strainer. A man who was also in the canoe was stranded on the logjam. He was picked up by emergency responders. We also received word that Don Griffeths, 63, suffered a heart attack while paddling the Cabarton Run of the North Fork of the Payette. Mr. Griffeths, a veteran open canoeist from McCall, ID, flipped in a rapid and swam to shore just prior to his death. He'll be sorely missed by all who knew him.

Rafting Accidents

Four rafters in the last six months were not wearing PFDs, and died from swims that someone wearing a life vest could have survived. Two of these deaths occurred on Wisconsin's Wolf River. First, Lina Maria

SAFETY

Castaneda, 20, drowned at Big Smokey Falls on July 7th, then Michael Danovsky, 39, disappeared in the Dells on August 4th. Both fell out of rented rafts and were not using the life vests they were issued. Another man died after being thrown out of an oar-rigged raft in Tumbleweed Rapid in Montana's Alberton Gorge. Although reportedly an "experienced" rafter, Neal Albright, 49, was not wearing his PFD. Finally, On July 19th, a man running Oregon's Rogue River disappeared after he jumped out of his raft to save his dog. Ronald Mongini, 68, wasn't wearing a life vest. The dog was fine; Mr. Mongini's body was found in an eddy that evening.

In other incidents, on June 30th Nicole Pomeroy, 16 was pinned in a strainer after her raft capsized on Oregon's North Umpqua River. In a similar August 4th incident, 44 year-old Lisa Ann Keating died after a boat she was paddling with her husband hit a downed tree and capsized. On August 5th Sharie Smith, 50, perished after their boat washed over Lava Island Falls, a 15-foot high, two-step drop on Oregon's Deschutes River. Although this Class V drop is well marked, some people apparently don't get the message. Her companion, stranded in midstream, was rescued by local firefighters. Lastly, James Wilson, 50, was paddling an inflatable kayak when he died on Montana's Middle Fork of the Flathead River on July 24th. According to a sketchy newspaper account in the Kalispell, MT Daily Interlake, the Canadian's boat capsized and he was "wedged in the rocks, held under by the force of the water." Members of his party freed him and tried CPR, without success.

There were five commercial rafting fatalities during this same time period. The first occurred on July 14th, on Section IV of the Chatooga River in South Carolina. According to posts on Yahoo's Swift H2O Rescue site, the water level was 1.9 feet (a medium level) and rising following rain in the headwaters. The level was probably higher at the Five Falls, so the group took extra precautions. At Jawbone Rapid, a



This, and all subsequent photos are of Rob Kelly's rescue effort on the Upper Nantahala.
All photos by Rick Thompson

double-guided raft flipped. As the guides and other passengers swam to safety Michael Dorris, 58, floated passively and did not attempt to swim or grab a rescue line. He washed into "Alison's Rock, an extremely deep undercut at the top of Sock-em Dog Rapid that was the cause of a previous fatality. The river later crested at 4 feet, so recovery attempts had to wait for the water to drop. Two days later, with the level at 1.7 feet and falling, rescue teams launched below Woodall Shoals and made their way to the accident site. A tethered raft was used to position the underwater camera which later located Mr. Dorris' body. The next day, after the water level dropped to 1.5 feet, rescuers used a long hook to reach under the rock and pull his body free. An autopsy revealed that he had a broken neck, which could explain why he was so helpless after his raft capsized.

There were two other commercial rafting fatalities in California. On July 15th a guided raft flipped in Tunnel Chute, a steep Class V rapid on the Middle Fork of the American River. Guides picked up all the swimmers and were counting heads when

an unidentified woman started having trouble breathing. CPR failed to save her. On August 1st Mariati Tani, washed under her raft after it pinned at the base of Clavey Falls on the Tuolumne River. The water was unusually low, exposing a rock that had never caused trouble before. Guides had her out in under 10 minutes, but by then she was beyond help.

In Wisconsin, a man died after a guided raft hit a rock in Piers Gorge on Wisconsin's Menomonee River. The impact with Volkswagen Rock threw two people into the water. One paddler washed safely downstream, but Mark Fackler, 59, was pushed under the rock and pinned. The outfitter said he had seen many people swim cleanly there over the years and had no idea the rock was dangerous. Paddler Ted Belec reported in an email that "Volkswagen Rock" is actually two rocks piled on top of each other. The lower one is undercut, and this is where the pin occurred. The body was recovered when the water release ended in late afternoon.

Lastly, in a very disturbing incident, a

woman died on a summer rafting trip on New York's Upper Hudson. According to North Country Public Radio, Tamara Blake, 53, was rafting with her boyfriend and a guide. They flipped on the Indian River, a Hudson River tributary that carries summer dam releases from Indian Lake. No one is quite sure what happened next. Her boyfriend got the boat ashore but Ms. Blake was not recovered until after she washed five miles downstream! We can't explain how an able swimmer fully outfitted in a PFD and helmet could die in Class III rapids or why other rafts on the trip didn't come to her aid. In the aftermath of this tragedy her guide was found to be legally drunk. He was convicted of involuntary manslaughter and is currently in prison. The outfitter, who has been in legal trouble before, is under investigation and is likely to have his license revoked.

Near Misses and Rescues

Every year American Whitewater hears about many searches and rescues made by emergency responders. Most are pretty straightforward: a paddler who's been stranded on a midstream rock, brush pile, or on the wrong side of the river is picked up and brought safely back to civilization.



These paddlers are typically inexperienced, often boating alone or without PFDs. Most trained whitewater paddlers manage these situations routinely, but there are some notable exceptions. On Oregon's McKenzie River two men got stuck in a drift boat after running down the wrong side of Class III Martin Rapids. Someone called 911. After a Sheriff's Department powerboat couldn't

reach them, a Coast Guard helicopter eventually was called in. A rescuer was lowered to attach the men to a harness and hoist them up one by one. The entire operation took over four hours. Looking at videos of the area, I believe that paddlers trained in aggressive self rescue could have abandoned the pinned drift boat and swum ashore safely, perhaps helped by other boaters in their group. That would have saved everyone a lot of trouble.



Anchorage, Alaska Firefighters made a truly outstanding rescue on September 14th of a kayaker pinned on partly submerged log. Water was coming over the man's shoulders and he could barely keep his head above the cold, rushing water. Fortunately this incident occurred on the Eagle River near Eagle River Campground. Someone heard his cries for help and dialed 911. First, an off-duty police officer arrived to offer moral support. Next, a swiftwater rescue team arrived in a jet powered inflatable rescue boat. They eddied out below the man, sized up the scene, and decided to cut the log to pieces with a chain saw. Photos of the incident show a very well-equipped

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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

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Email _____

Phone _____ Member Number: _____

↑ _____ if you have one and know it

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: _____

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Signature: _____

SAFETY



“Not until [I was] at the tree could I see any of her boat. The stern tip was about a foot under water and was difficult to make out. I reached along it and felt the tree contact, and continued until I felt her. I was able to swing her torso around the tree and bring her head to the surface. My position ran out of reach and leverage doing that. I let go, reset with my body against the log (but sure to keep my hips above the water line). This time I was able to bring her up to the surface (still in the kayak)...based on small observations like eyes/skin etc., I thought there was little chance of a rescue. Training, instinct, and hope all made it a no question to give a few rescue breaths before going back to getting her free...

“At that point it seemed that [my] upward efforts were not going to free her. The tree was like a cantilevered leaf spring and had water and her surface area pushing up, while its resting shape was pushing down. So we had to go down to get out. With three to four shoves and torques of the kayak she drifted out, still in the boat. I looked up and saw that people were ready

and capable crew. It took them about 30 minutes to free the kayaker. To see excellent photos of the rescue go to <http://www.adn.com/2012/09/16/2627621/trapped-kayaker-rescued-from-eagle.html>.

would have been difficult to approach and maintain locomotion and footing. At the very last part of the walk my footing was poor, but I had options to avoid the strainer.

A similar incident occurred during a scheduled water release on North Carolina's Class III+ Upper Nantahala River. A kayaker who pulled over above a downed tree didn't realize that the current there was still powerful enough to cause trouble. Her boat was pushed into and under the log, where both disappeared. Fortunately Rob Kelly, a quick-thinking whitewater guide, was driving the NOC Shuttle Bus and witnessed the entrapment. He pulled his bus over and started wading across the river. His narrative continues below:

“Reassessing the situation, time, and options at hand, it seemed safe enough to continue. My footing was good, and the rapid below was not too aggressive if I had to swim. There were people starting to gather at the bridge, including boaters and ropes. My travel to the tree was diagonally downstream heading into deeper, swifter current. If it had been lateral or upstream it



below and signaled and shouted to them that she was floating downstream..."

Meanwhile, members of her group and other paddlers pulled over and were ready to help. They swam out, pulled her ashore, and began CPR. She regained consciousness quickly, but was still very weak. She was taken to a hospital in Asheville, NC and released two days later, after her lungs had recovered from their ordeal. This rescue is shown here in several excellent photos taken by Rick Thompson. Full accounts from Rob Kelly and other participants are available on the AW Website in our Accident Database.

The accounts in this article come from newspaper articles and chat rooms like Boatertalk, Mountainbuzz, and Boof.com. Other sources include Yahoo's SwiftH2O chat room, the IBWW page on Facebook, and the National Park Service Morning Report. I'm especially indebted to Joe Hatcher and members of the AW Board and Staff for providing many good leads. Several other people were kind enough to answer inquiries about various accidents by email or Facebook message.

American Whitewater needs your help in collecting this information. Since most of us will never encounter a fatal accident in our paddling careers it's important to share the facts of these tragedies and learn from them. By studying accidents we learn how to avoid trouble and react effectively to emergencies that do arise on the river. Our techniques, procedures, and river gear can be modified based on what happens in the field. Please help us out! To report a whitewater accident, near miss, or serious injury, go to the Safety page on the American Whitewater site, click "report an accident," and enter your information. You can also forward newspaper articles, chat room posts, and first person accounts to the safety editor at: ccwalbridge@cs.com. Please feel free to recommend any sites that you think would be a good source of accident information to us. Thanks!

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.

AFFILIATE CLUBS

AW'S ORIGINAL PURPOSE

BY CARLA MINER

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 Spokane Canoe & Kayak Club- 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 Spokane Canoe and Kayak Club is an organization of individuals who are enthusiastic about human-powered watercraft. The Club promotes conservation of natural resources, particularly of rivers and lakes, as well as promoting wilderness access to ensure access to local waterways. Members range from whitewater kayakers and canoeists to racers, recreationalists, campers, sportsmen/women and families with children. Their members paddle open canoes, whitewater canoes, whitewater kayaks, sea kayaks, inflatable kayaks, rafts and sit-on-tops.

Club meetings are held the fourth Monday of the month, from October through April and feature programs of interest to water sport enthusiasts, including slide shows, paddling presentations, and environmental topics. The Club coordinates many flat water, moving water and whitewater trips and they maintain a calendar on their website for details on the current year's paddling trips. They also offer paddling clinics for flatwater canoeing, sea kayaking, and canoeing and white water kayaking, led by certified instructors. The Club also publishes a monthly newsletter Eddy Line that is available online.

Membership in the Spokane Canoe & Kayak Club is an affordable \$25 per year for a household. Check out the Club's website at <http://www.sckc.ws/> to learn more or check out one of their monthly meetings.

Thank you Spokane Canoe & Kayak Club for your continued support of American Whitewater!

The AW Journal Club Affiliates by state:

Alaska

Fairbanks Paddlers, Fairbanks
Nova Riverrunners Inc., Chickaloon

Alabama

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

Arizona

Outdoors Unlimited, Flagstaff

Arkansas

Arkansas Canoe Club, Little Rock

California

Chico Paddleheads, Chico
Gold Country Paddlers, Lotus
Sierra Club Loma Prieta Paddlers, San Jose
Shasta Paddlers, Redding

Colorado

Avid4 Adventure Inc., Boulder
Colorado Whitewater Assn, Denver
Grand Canyon Private Boaters Assn, Colorado Springs
Dolores River Boating Advocates, Dolores
Friends of the Arkansas River, Canon City
Outdoor Pursuits, Durango
Pikes Peak Whitewater Club, Colorado Springs
San Miguel Whitewater Asso, Telluride

Connecticut

AMC - Connecticut Chapter, Waterbury

Delaware

AMC Delaware Valley Chapter, Oaks
Wilmington Trail Club, Newark

Georgia

Georgia Canoeing Asso, Atlanta
Paddlers4Christ, Ellijay

Idaho

Idaho Whitewater Association, Boise
North Idaho Whitewater Boating, Post Falls

Illinois

Chicago Whitewater Assn, Chicago

Indiana

Hoosier Canoe Club, Indianapolis
Ohio Valley Paddlers, Evansville

Iowa

Iowa Whitewater Coalition, W. Des Moines

Kentucky

Bardstown Boaters, Bardstown,
Bluegrass Wildwater Asso, Lexington
Viking Canoe Club, Louisville

Maine

Penobscot Paddle & Chowder Society, Troy

Maryland

Greater Baltimore Canoe Club, Baltimore
Mason Dixon Canoe Cruisers, Boonsboro

Monocacy Canoe Club, Frederick

Massachusetts

AMC Boston Chapter Paddlers, Boston
UConn Kayaking, Amherst
UMass Outing Club - Whitewater Kayaking, Amherst

Minnesota

Minnesota Canoe Asso, Minneapolis
SCSU Outdoor Endeavors, Saint Cloud
Rapids Riders, Minneapolis

Missouri

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

Montana

Beartooth Paddlers Society, Billings

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
Zoar Valley Paddling Club, Buffalo

North Carolina

Base Camp Cullowhee, Cullowhee
Carolina Canoe Club, Raleigh
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

Oregon

Eugene Kayaker, Eugene
Lower Columbia Canoe Club, Portland
Northwest Rafters Association, Roseburg
Oregon Kayak and Canoe Club, Portland
Oregon Whitewater Association, Beaverton
PDXKayaker, Portland
Willamette Kayak & Canoe Club, Corvallis

Pennsylvania

AMC Delaware Valley Chapter, Oaks
Bradford County Canoe and Kayak Club, Sayre
Canoe Club of Greater Harrisburg,

Harrisburg
Conewago Canoe Club, York
Holtwood Hooligans, Paradise
Lehigh Valley Whitewater Inc., Lehigh Valley
Mach One Slalom Team, State College
Philadelphia Canoe Club, Philadelphia
Three Rivers Paddling Club, Pittsburgh

S. Carolina

Foothills Paddling Club, Greenville
Palmetto Paddlers, Columbia

Tennessee

Appalachian Paddling Enthusiasts,
Limestone
Chota Canoe Club, Knoxville
East Tennessee Whitewater Club, Oak
Ridge
Plateau Eco-Sports, Cookeville
Tennessee Eastman Hiking and Canoeing
Club, Kingsport
Tennessee Valley Canoe Club, Chattanooga

Texas

Rockin 'R' River Rides, New Braunfels

Utah

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

Vermont

University of Vermont, Burlington
Vermont Paddlers Club, Montpelier

Virginia

Float Fishermen of Virginia, Roanoke

Washington

BEWET- Boeing Employees Whitewater &
Touring Club, Bellevue
EPIC Adventures, Cheney
Paddle Trails Canoe Club, Seattle
Spokane Canoe & Kayak Club, Spokane
University Kayak Club, Seattle
Washington Kayak Club, Seattle
Washington Recreational River Runners, Renton

West Virginia

Dbl Z! Whitewater Club, Fayetteville
Redneck Kayak Club, Beckley
WVU Whitewater Club, Morgantown
West VA Wildwater Assn, S. Charleston

Wisconsin

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

Wyoming

American Packrafting Association, Wilson

Ontario

Guelph Kayak Club, Elora
Kawartha Whitewater Paddlers, The
Kawarthas

British Columbia

Thompson Rivers Univ Adventure Studies,
Kamloops

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/>. Or, if you are renewing or joining by mail or telephone just mention the name of the Affiliate Club you belong to and you can take advantage of the \$25 membership.

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

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

JOIN AMERICAN WHITEWATER AS A CLUB AFFILIATE!

10 REASONS TO JOIN AW AS AN AFFILIATE CLUB

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

For more information, contact Carla Miner at membership@americanwhitewater.org or sign-up online at www.americanwhitewater.org/membership.



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Saving Rivers Since 1954

Rok Sribar and friends, East Fork Kaweah, CA. © Darin McQuoid

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gear bag, twice as important.

americanwhitewater.org/join

AW AMERICAN WHITEWATER

Contribute your text and photos to *American Whitewater*

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

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

americanwhitewater.org > Library > AW Journal

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