



AMERICAN WHITEWATER

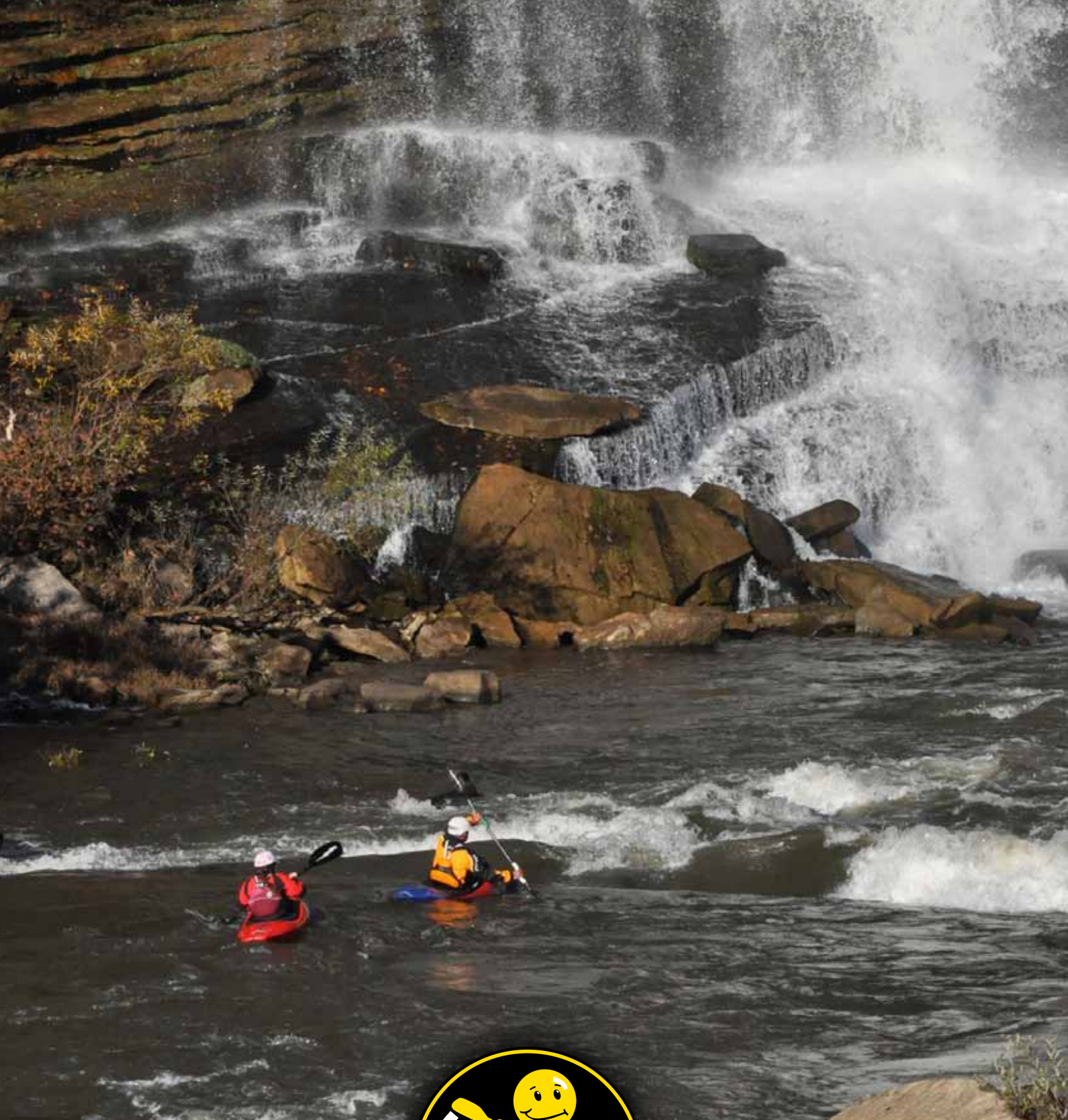
Conservation • Access • Events • Adventure • Safety

BY BOATERS FOR BOATERS
Nov/Dec 2012

CALIFORNIA BRIDGES— NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR RIVER ACCESS

OWYHEE ADVENTURES A PLenty





Where will a



take you next?

WHITEWATER | TOURING | FISHING • JACKSONKAYAK.COM



AMERICAN WHITEWATER

A VOLUNTEER PUBLICATION PROMOTING RIVER CONSERVATION, ACCESS AND SAFETY

American Whitewater Journal

Nov/Dec 2012 – Volume 52 – Issue 6

COLUMNS

- 5 The Journey Ahead by **Mark Singleton**
- 43 Board Elections
- 50 Enduring Rivers Circle

STEWARDSHIP

- 6 New Opportunities for Access at California Bridges by **Dave Steindorf**
- 7 New Protection for Rivers in the North Cascades by **Thomas O'Keefe**

FEATURE ARTICLES

Education

- 8 An Education on the Lower Pecos by **Tim Patton**

River Voices

- 14 Talkin' Kayakin by **Tom Legere**

Family Whitewater

- 16 Desert Family Float by **Tanya Randolph**

Whitewater Instruction

- 20 "I'm Flipping! I'm Flipping! I'm Flipping!" by **Mike Bezemek**

Creeking

- 26 Dave Wants an Adventure by **Ryan McCall**

Mental Game

- 32 Running Down Grassy Hills (and Rivers) by **John Meyer**

Wilderness Whitewater

- 35 Owyhee River: Plan C Gets A+ Marks by **Keith Gale and Carol Krueger**



Robyn Bataille and Chris Skalka immersed in the beauty and challenge of Vermont's Middlebury Gorge.

Photography by Matt Kiedaisch

Publication Title: American Whitewater
Issue Date: Nov/Dec 2012
Statement of Frequency: Published Bimonthly
Authorized Organization's Name and Address:
American Whitewater
PO. Box 1540
Cullowhee, NC 28723

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 bi-monthly AW Journal, a monthly e-news, americanwhitewater.org, paddling events, educational events, and through direct communication with the press.

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

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



American Whitewater Journal Staff

Editor Ambrose Tuscano
P.O. Box 913, Soda Springs, California 95728
e-mail: editor@americanwhitewater.org

Graphic Design/Production/Photo Editor Megan Seifert

Assistant Editors Erica J. Seifert, Barry Tuscano

Contributing Writers
Mark Singleton, Dave Steindorf, Thomas O'Keefe, Tim Patton,
Tom Legere, Tanya Randolph, Mike Bezemek, Ryan McCall, John
Meyer, Keith Gale, Carol Krueger

Photo Contributors
Matt Kiedaisch, Taylor Robertson, Thomas O'Keefe, Tim Patton,
Stacia Harrison, Mark McKinstry, Terry Shaw, Billy Sutter, Bill
Eades, John Niebling, Erik Johnson, Preston Brown, Keith Gale,
Carol Krueger, Rok Sribar

Events / Advertising Coordinator Jeff Paine
phone 828-398-0321
e-mail: jeff@americanwhitewater.org

Safety Editor Charlie Walbridge
Route 1, Box 329F, Bruceton Mills, WV 26525
e-mail: ccwalbridge@cs.com

Stewardship Reports Editor
Kevin Colburn, kevin@americanwhitewater.org

Missing Copies and Address Changes
Carla Miner, carla@americanwhitewater.org

American Whitewater is printed by Boyd Brothers Printing, Panama City, Florida.
All rights reserved.

EDITORIAL DISCLAIMER

The opinions expressed in the features and editorials of American Whitewater are those of the individual authors. They do not necessarily represent those of the Directors of American Whitewater or the editors of this publication. On occasion, American Whitewater publishes official organizational policy statements drafted and approved by the Board of Directors. These policy statements will be clearly identified.

Board of Directors & Staff

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chris Bell
chris@boatingbeta.com
Asheville, NC

Rich Bowers
rich@hydroreform.org
Bellingham, WA

Dave Cernicek
cernicek@cluemail.com
Jackson, WY

Adam Cramer
crameric@gmail.com
Bethesda, MD

Leland Davis
leland@brushmountainpublishing.com
Swannanoa, NC

Kent Ford
kent2003@performancevideo.com
Durango, CO

Jennie Goldberg
jennie@nwwhitewater.org
Seattle, WA

Christopher Hest
kayakasia@yahoo.com
San Francisco, CA

Don Kinser
dkinser@ediltd.com
Marietta, GA

Evie Locke
evelynlocke@verizon.net
Charlemont, MA

Norwood Scott
wns111@sbcglobal.net
San Francisco, CA

Charlie Walbridge, Honorary
ccwalbridge@cs.com
Bruceton Mills, WV

Courtney Wilton
courtneywilton@gmail.com
Portland, OR

BOARD OFFICERS

President: Norwood Scott

Vice President: Chris Bell

Secretary: Jennie Goldberg

Treasurer: Courtney Wilton

At Large: Kent Ford and
Leland Davis

AW STAFF

Laura Blalock
Finance Manager
Cullowhee, NC
laura@americanwhitewater.org

Kevin Colburn
National Stewardship Director
Missoula, MT
kevin@americanwhitewater.org

Nathan Fey
Colorado Stewardship Director
Longmont, CO
nathan@americanwhitewater.org

Megan Hooker
Stewardship Assistant
Portland, OR
megan@americanwhitewater.org

Carla Miner
Membership Manager
West Valley City, UT
carla@americanwhitewater.org

Thomas O'Keefe
Pacific NW Stewardship Director
Seattle, WA
okeefe@americanwhitewater.org

Jeff Paine
Outreach Director
Asheville, NC
jeff@americanwhitewater.org

Mark Singleton
Executive Director
Cullowhee, NC
mark@americanwhitewater.org

Dave Steindorf
California Stewardship Director
Chico, CA
dave@americanwhitewater.org

TOLL FREE NUMBER
1-866-262-8429

THE JOURNEY AHEAD

AS THIS ISSUE of the *American Whitewater Journal* was heading into production, the whitewater boating community was struck by two tragic events. First was the loss of Jeff West on the Stikine River in British Columbia, Canada. Jeff was an icon in the Southeast boating community and a frequent contributor to this publication. One week later, Alan Panebaker, AW's Northeast Stewardship Director, drowned while paddling the Upper Pemigewasset in New Hampshire. This one-two punch has left the close-knit whitewater paddling community in a state of shock and disbelief.

When events like these occur, we all look inward and examine our own individual risk/reward tolerances. Each of us makes choices about what we paddle and who we paddle it with. Very little in paddling comes free or easy, but a large part of the reward is having the skills to be on the water with close friends. In coming issues of this publication American Whitewater will be writing more about both Jeff and Alan and their many contributions to the paddling community. For now, the following was penned by Alan Panebaker and posted to his blog AT Paddling last fall when Boyce Greer passed away:

"Paddling difficult whitewater is about being alive. It is the most pure and true experience that I have ever known, and it has brought me more joy, pain, and satisfaction than anything else. So while it may be a little fringe to be out there running the hardest whitewater you think you are up to, it isn't crazy. It's life. And while we all need to be cognizant of the dangers and take care of each other on the river, we can't live our lives in fear."

— Alan Panebaker
from his blog AT Paddling

Jeff West and Alan Panebaker represented the best of the paddling community; each was smart, strong and capable in his own unique ways. Please stay tuned to future

issues of the *American Whitewater Journal* for tributes to these remarkable individuals.

Board of Directors Elections

As American Whitewater members, this is your opportunity to elect candidates to our Board of Directors, where they will represent you for the next three years. American Whitewater's Board embodies the ideal of grassroots advocates who live the AW mission "to conserve and restore America's whitewater resources and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely." Currently, the American Whitewater board consists of 12 voting members who serve three-year terms. As Executive Director, I work closely with the six-person Executive Committee, comprised of organization officers (President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary) and two at-large members.

Because American Whitewater is administered at the staff level, the principle role of the Board is that of governance, making decisions crucial to the care and feeding of the organization. In carrying out those responsibilities, members of a Board must fulfill certain duties to the organization, membership and the rivers we protect. Board responsibilities involve setting priorities and strategies to address our mission, and ensuring administrative integrity and financial stability of the organization.

On pages 43-45, you will find the bios of the four candidates to fill seats on the AW Board of Directors. The ballot for our Board of Directors election will be placed online from November 1st to December 14th. All current members of American Whitewater will be emailed a link to this information. Candidate bios are also posted to the AW website, americanwhitewater.org, for membership review.

In this year's slate of nominees we have three new Board member candidates from across the country. The states of Vermont, Oregon and Georgia are all represented in this election cycle. Geographic

diversity was seen as a key issue for AW's board work. A good geographic mix of representation keeps AW connected to the local communities where our directors, staff and members live, work and play. Please join with me and exercise your AW membership to elect this outstanding slate of candidates to the AW Board of Directors.

See you on the river,



Executive Director, American Whitewater



WRI
WHITewater RESCUE INSTITUTE

**SWIFTWATER
RESCUE TRAINING**

WWW.WHITewaterRESCUE.COM
406-207-2027
INFO@WHITewaterRESCUE.COM

NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACCESS AT CALIFORNIA BRIDGES

BY DAVE STEINDORF



Paddlers could soon be gaining river access at many more California bridges like this one on the South Yuba.

Photo by Taylor Robertson Photography

IT IS A well-known fact that access to most rivers occurs where roads cross them. Many of us have had the experience of showing up to our favorite boating run only to find out that the landowner who owns property next to the bridge has put up and attached a fence to the bridge, and plastered it with “No Trespassing” signs. At this point, people often contact American Whitewater for help in restoring access to the river. The next step for us typically involves an arduous process of contacting the State or County to determine the extent of public easements associated with the bridge. After determining what the public’s right to access is at these locations, we then need to have a discussion with the local landowners. Many times, local law enforcement gets involved. There really should be an easier way.

In the Spring of 2012, California attorney Frank Coats contacted American Whitewater with information about an under-utilized provision of the Streets and Highways code – Section 84.5. Making full use of this provision has the potential to be the biggest thing in opening up river access across the state in decades. Since 1972, Caltrans has been required

to fully consider and report on whether it is feasible to provide public river access when they build a new state highway bridge over a river (there are similar provisions for County and City bridges as well). Instead of squeezing uncertainly down the narrow easement that typically exists between a bridge and private land and getting into a conflict with neighboring landowners, there will be an easier way.

Through Frank’s research, it came to light that in the 40 years that these feasibility studies have been required, Caltrans hadn’t completed any. Currently one is under way – Frank’s pet project has been getting the agency to complete the first feasibility study on the Highway 99 Bridge over the Feather River at Nicolaus. Frank and American Whitewater have been working with Caltrans to make sure that this first study is done properly, and sets a good standard for those to come in the future.

In the bigger picture, there’s certainly a backlog of bridges where a feasibility study would have been required over the last 40 years. The agency will be taking on the task of clearly marking the public right of way at priority bridges throughout the

state where access is currently difficult. This fall, American Whitewater collected information from the boating community to help provide Caltrans with the bridges where this was the biggest priority.

Overall, this section of the California Streets and Highway Code provides a great opportunity for paddlers to get involved in the public process and open up more public access to rivers throughout the state. Thanks to Frank Coats’ tireless efforts to date—wading through nuanced case law and regulations and being persistent with Caltrans—this has the potential to do more for opening access in California than anything in recent history. If you live in California and see that there’s a new bridge project happening over an important river reach in your area, we encourage you to become aware of the public planning process for that bridge and write to Caltrans, the County Board of Supervisors, or City Government, and remind them that an Access Feasibility Study needs to be done. If you live elsewhere, we encourage you to check your state’s transportation codes to see if similar provisions are in place.

STEWARDSHIP

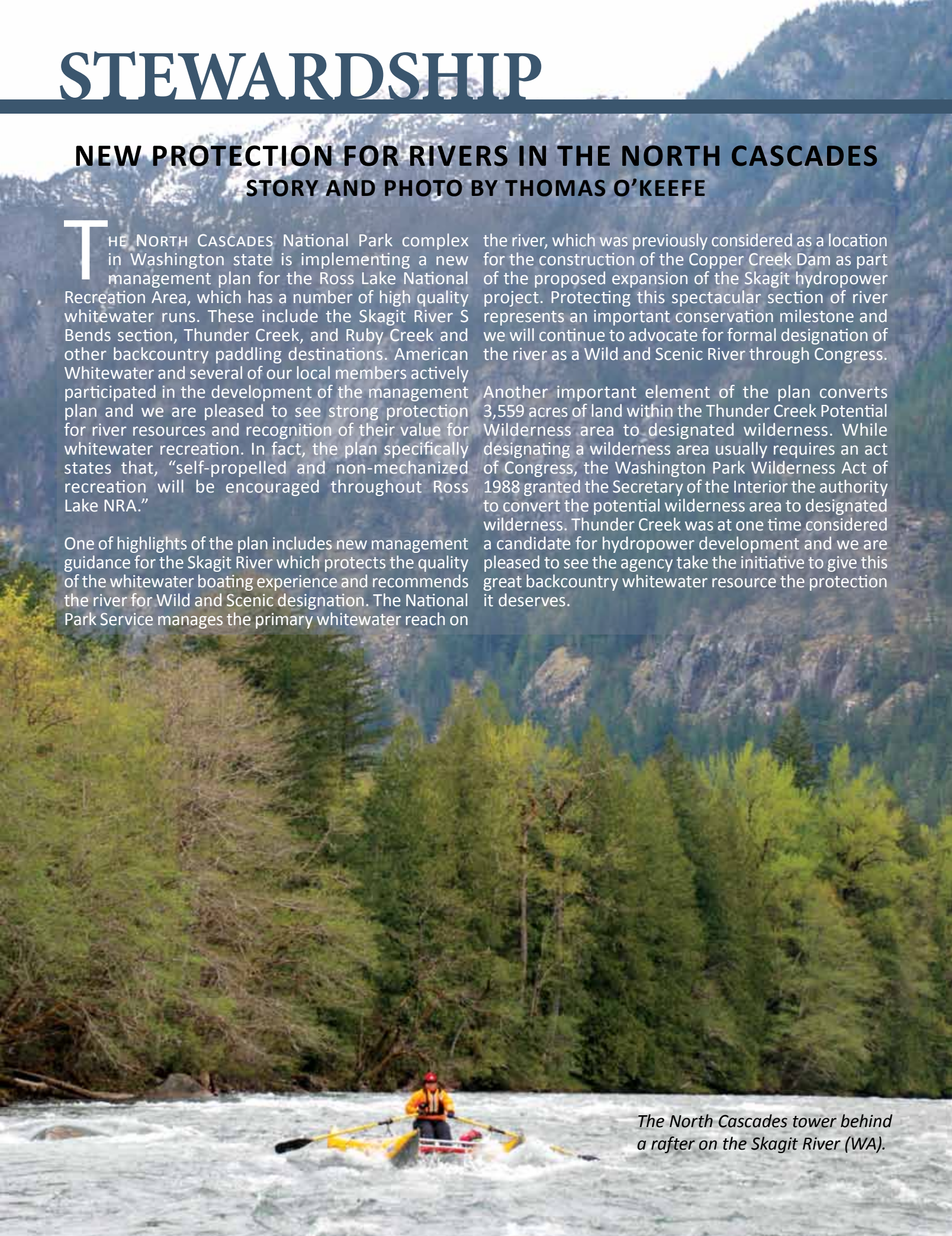
NEW PROTECTION FOR RIVERS IN THE NORTH CASCADES STORY AND PHOTO BY THOMAS O'KEEFE

THE NORTH CASCADES National Park complex in Washington state is implementing a new management plan for the Ross Lake National Recreation Area, which has a number of high quality whitewater runs. These include the Skagit River S Bends section, Thunder Creek, and Ruby Creek and other backcountry paddling destinations. American Whitewater and several of our local members actively participated in the development of the management plan and we are pleased to see strong protection for river resources and recognition of their value for whitewater recreation. In fact, the plan specifically states that, "self-propelled and non-mechanized recreation will be encouraged throughout Ross Lake NRA."

One of highlights of the plan includes new management guidance for the Skagit River which protects the quality of the whitewater boating experience and recommends the river for Wild and Scenic designation. The National Park Service manages the primary whitewater reach on

the river, which was previously considered as a location for the construction of the Copper Creek Dam as part of the proposed expansion of the Skagit hydropower project. Protecting this spectacular section of river represents an important conservation milestone and we will continue to advocate for formal designation of the river as a Wild and Scenic River through Congress.

Another important element of the plan converts 3,559 acres of land within the Thunder Creek Potential Wilderness area to designated wilderness. While designating a wilderness area usually requires an act of Congress, the Washington Park Wilderness Act of 1988 granted the Secretary of the Interior the authority to convert the potential wilderness area to designated wilderness. Thunder Creek was at one time considered a candidate for hydropower development and we are pleased to see the agency take the initiative to give this great backcountry whitewater resource the protection it deserves.



*The North Cascades tower behind
a rafter on the Skagit River (WA).*

EDUCATION

AN EDUCATION ON THE LOWER PECOS

BY TIM PATTON

A FEW OF US are lucky enough to be able to combine our vocations with our avocations, our work with our play. I teach aquatic ecology at a small university. The job came with the latitude to design field courses and research trips at my discretion, so I can combine instruction on boating and outdoor skills with instruction on river ecology and conservation. Teaching boating and spending time on rivers weren't in the job description, but became integral. Ostensibly, it sounds like a pretty good deal.

In addition to working with inexperienced paddlers, combining work and boating presents plenty of challenges. Not insignificant among these are gear issues. The sheer mass of dunnage needed for biological sampling, on top of the

usual multi-day trip requirements, can quickly become a pile at the put-in that looks alarmingly disproportionate to the volume of boat space. Torn between instant mashed potatoes versus the real deal? The question becomes trivial when you're hauling tubs of fish-sampling nets and concrete weights to anchor them down. The obvious solution: more boats, and in turn, teaching more people how to get them safely and effectively down the river. Second to gear on the list of woes is water levels. The ideal levels for recreation versus research are seldom the same. A general rule of thumb I've developed (there are no guide books for combining research and whitewater) is that minimum flows recommended for whitewater are about the maximum at which effective fish sampling can be done. Low water, heavy boats, logistics of research, winter weather,

and newbie paddlers: it's enough to make you wonder if this whole work and play combo is really a good deal after all.

A good example is a research excursion I conducted on the Lower Pecos River in southwest Texas along with four students and two colleagues in December 2011. The Pecos originates in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains of northeastern New Mexico and flows southeast to its confluence with the Rio Grande on the Texas-Mexico border. Once it tumbles off the mountains, it traverses several hundred miles of relatively flat landscape of little interest to boaters, and most of its precious water is captured within a string of reservoirs and used to turn desert into cropland. A look at the on-line discharge gauges scattered along its length often reveals cfs values in the single digits or teens, increasing as it



approaches the next reservoir in line, and emerging from that dam again as a trickle. But as the Pecos approaches its final 50 or so miles, it picks up reliable spring-fed flows and enters a limestone canyon. This Lower Pecos run is one I had read about, so when former student-turned-colleague Chris Cheek called last spring to tell me he started a project to look at fish community structure, habitat, and water quality on the Pecos and needed some help in the lower canyon stretch, it moved to the top of my to-do list. I had a solid cadre of students that had been helping me with various projects. Ethan Lovelace, Alex Rizzo, Grant Langmaid, and Stacia Harrison were all seniors and had paid their dues; this would be a reward trip for their hard work.

The various sources of information on the Pecos provide a general consensus that, water and weather considered, fall and spring are the time to be there, and that 100 cfs is the minimum for floating.

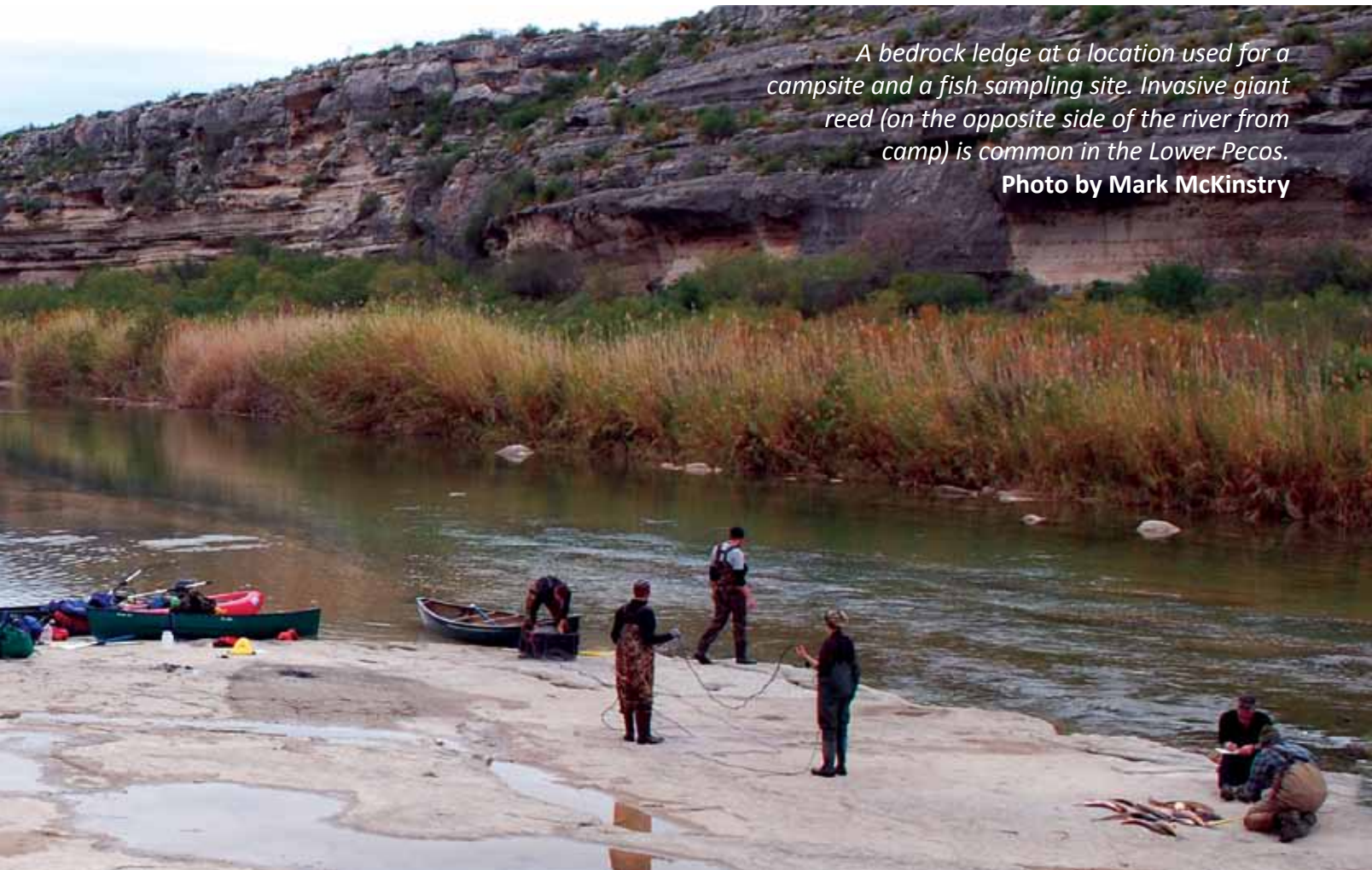
Anything less, one of the sources warned, would equate to lots of dragging and almost certain, potentially substantial, wear on boat hulls. So we marked the calendar for Fall 2011 and would shoot for the 100 cfs mark. It seemed reasonable; after all, we were just hoping for the minimum flow, and fall usually brings hurricane-source rains to the region. Just one problem: 2011 brought what has been described as the worst drought since the dust bowl to west Texas, and all of the scant upstream water was locked tight in already-low reservoirs. But the base flow of the Lower Pecos, the ace in the hole, is its springs. The top of the canyon starts with about 60 cfs and picks up to about 100 over the next 50 miles, thanks to a beautiful interaction of ground-water and limestone. The 60 cfs at the top was worrisome, but was it enough? Additional inquiry was in order, and it took only a couple of calls and emails to locate boaters with experience on the Pecos. Their consensus was that we could

get down it at that level, but we should be ready for lots of dragging.

The next decision: boats. The guidebooks recommended canoes; I spent my first 15 years of paddling in one, and found it relatively user friendly for inexperienced paddlers. Rafts have become my boat of choice for research trips for their obvious hauling capacity, but all things considered, canoes were deemed the right boat for this trip. There was one glitch; my long-time adventure buddy and research colleague, Mark McKinstry, would be joining us, and though he regularly kayaks the hard stuff and has oared thousands of miles in rafts, he has a deeply-rooted aversion to canoes. To ameliorate, I hooked him up with a great compromise: an Aire inflatable canoe. This was a boat Mark and I have found to be hugely adaptable; it is stable, has good hauling capacity, and is small and light enough to be shipped via postal service and thrown in the back of a bush plane.

A bedrock ledge at a location used for a campsite and a fish sampling site. Invasive giant reed (on the opposite side of the river from camp) is common in the Lower Pecos.

Photo by Mark McKinstry



EDUCATION



A male Rio Grande cooter, one of many species of freshwater turtles that could be seen basking or walking along the bottom of the river.

Photo by Stacia Harrison

He and I have taken ICs down desert and arctic rivers, drug them like cargo sleds over numerous shoals, lined them loaded with gear through bone yards, and used them for overnights and two-week adventures. This boat, rigged with a small oar frame, would be Mark's platform for the Pecos. The rest of us would use canoes.

Though I had originally planned for a fall trip, waiting for water that would never rise had taken us into early December before we decided to go for it. A 10-hour drive got us to the put-in at the tiny burg of Pandale, Texas, where a sign reports the population as "varies" and a few houses and campers suggested the population was—at least currently—fewer than 20 people. Our two trucks and one car were empty within 30 minutes, and we sent three drivers with the vehicles to the take-out near Langtry to meet our pre-arranged shuttle driver, while the rest of us rigged boats. The Lower Pecos run is typically Pandale to Highway

90, about 56 river miles. Amistad reservoir inundates the last 10ish miles, depending on reservoir level, so it is common for boaters to arrange for a motor boat to meet them where river becomes lake and be towed the final few miles. Because we were working with the shortest days of the year, and because we knew our progress would be slowed by sampling, we had made arrangements to take out at a private access point at mile 46, averting the final leg of flat water and the stretch of canyon referred to as "the wind tunnel." All of the lower canyon is bordered by private land, but Texas law allows paddling and camping

on navigable rivers as long as one stays within the high-water mark. Our shuttlers were back within 2 hours and we launched by the crack of 2 pm. The skies were drizzly, the wind breezy, and the temperatures about 40 degrees. It didn't depart from that much for the next six days.

The most immediate thing you notice about the Pecos is the water clarity. "Gin-clear" is an over-used but appropriate descriptor; the closest comparisons I can make would be the spring fed rivers of Florida or the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico, regions also characterized by the hydrology of ground water and limestone. We would be three days into the trip before we found water deep enough (probably 20 feet) that we couldn't see the river bottom. It is typical for fish that live in clear water to have exaggerated colors, and they were easy to spot from the boats. The channel catfish were as black as coal, the flatheads as brindled as pit bulls, the longnose gar as mottled as cheetahs. Schools of minnows, shad, redhorse, and buffalo passed below,

Southeastern Oklahoma State University students removing fish from a gill net. Gill-nets were used to capture larger fish, and seine nets (not shown) were used to capture smaller fishes. Our sampling indicated the Lower Pecos River has a relatively pristine and diverse fish community, though research is on-going.
Photo by Tim Patton





Boats parked in the mouth of a tributary in the crystal clear spring waters of the Lower Pecos.
Photo by Tim Patton

speeding up only slightly as the shadows of our canoes drifted overhead. I imagined their perspective: a brightly colored torpedo with a paddle and a gawking human face hanging over the side, gliding overhead. The occasional turtle—Rio Grande sliders, Rio Grande cooters, common snappers, and western spiny softshells—ambled along the bottom of the river, seemingly indifferent to our presence but more likely just lethargic from the cold. The whopping four miles we made the first afternoon were through scenic desert hills, but we seldom looked up. I can't recall a trip in which I spent so much time staring into the water, and the students were getting really good at drive-by fish and turtle identification. We landed at our first camp at 4 pm, allowing enough time to set up nets and camp by dark, about an hour later.

The lower Pecos is a series of pools and variable drops. The constant view up at the canyon walls and down into the water made for truly three-dimensional scenery, rendering the labor of paddling our heavy loads over lengthy pools barely noticeable. Overall drop through the 46-mile stretch is 360 feet, or 7.8 ft/mi. Drops were typically one of two forms: low gradient riffles or long, bony runs that would be technical and canoe-challenging Class III rapids at higher water levels. It would offer inviting play-boating at high water but the canyon lacks

intermediate access, so once in the canyon it is a multi-day commitment. For these reasons, the Lower Pecos has remained primarily a canoe run, though it would lend itself to a combination of play boats and gear-hauling canoes or small inflatables, provided the water level wasn't excessive for the support boats.

Though the lower Pecos appears to be mostly pristine, any non-bedrock banks are lined with invasive, non-native giant reed. The reed gives the river a lush, tropical appearance and is clearly out of place in a desert canyon. At the terminus of many of the pools, the river would split into multiple small riffles, each disappearing into a tunnel of reed with less than a foot of airspace between the water and overhanging boughs. Running them generally entailed ducking forward into the hull of the boat, dragging the paddle behind with one hand in an unrealistically optimistic effort to rudder, and using your free hand to deflect vegetation from your face. This usually required making a quick move upon emergence from the reed tunnel to avoid a bank or boulder, sweeping off the copious branches and aphids that covered you, and turning to watch the next boat emerge, its passengers usually laughing and/or cursing and equally covered with branches and bugs. Only a couple of these resulted in separation of paddlers from

boats, but the students did a great job of taking instruction. Cold water is also a great motivator for learning. Our modus operandi became one of using the lead boater to identify the best looking channel and disappear into it, then yell back "okay" or "not this one," and the next boat might try their luck on door number two.

Fortunately, the higher gradient riffles, with their jumbled boulder substrates and increased scouring ability during high flows, lacked the cumbersome reed and offered a read-and-run approach. Given the bare-bones water levels we had, most of the significant rapids entailed some combination of bumping along the bottom, stepping out as needed to dislodge the boat from a rock, and enjoying short but fun slides over small drops. It's always rewarding to watch new paddlers pick up skills and get a rush out of the easiest of rapids. It reminds you of why you originally picked up the sport. Mark and I talked to them about what these rapids would look like at high water, but the nuances of lines, eddies, sleepers, and sucking holes can't really be appreciated until you experience them. That would be a level of instruction we would want to undertake completely separate from a research trip.

No discussion of the lower Pecos would be complete without at least a mention of

EDUCATION

“the flutes.” About three miles on either side of mile 20 is a stretch characterized by a wide, shallow channel over bedrock. The eons have eroded narrow, longitudinal intertwining channels, or flutes, into the rock. At 100 cfs, you’d paddle over most of it. At 60, you get out and drag your boat like a stubborn mule over much of it, paying attention to keep the boat over the deeper channels while you walk the “ridges” beside them. Occasionally, in swifter channels, the mule would ram painfully into the back of your legs, and you quickly learn to speed up or sidestep when the lead line becomes slack. “Scootering” sometimes worked, and entailed standing with one leg in the boat, holding the gunnels with both hands, and shoving with the outside leg like you would propel a scooter. While not particularly fun for paddlers, the flutes are interesting and I can’t say I’ve seen anything like them on any other river.

For the six days we followed a routine. Each morning we would check and pull the nets we set the night before, drag seines through pools and riffles, and get a suite of water quality and habitat measurements. Then we’d load boats and paddle an average of eight miles/day, make camp about 4 pm, and set the nets that would be retrieved the following morning. For the most part, this went without a hitch. The weather was not the sunny southwestern winter skies we had hoped for. We had a total of 3 hours of sunshine in a week, and saw stars only a single night. Light rain came and went the first three days and skies gradually became a lighter shade of gray by trip’s end. Sure, sunshine is best, but with the right clothes, the weather wasn’t an issue—another important lesson for the newbies. Nights are long in December, so we’d do our best to stay up as late as possible. While 12+ hours on the ground was easy for the young folks, we old guys are lucky to stay prone for eight hours at a time. We saw no other people except for a brief and distant view of orange-capped deer hunters who had driven to water’s edge in a 4x4 a few hundred yards from where we were setting up camp. A few



A tributary to the Lower Pecos River. Most were dry, but water from the mainstem allowed us to paddle several hundred yards into the side-canyon for exploration.

Photo by Stacia Harrison

hours after sunset we saw lights on top of the ridge in the same area, and from them emitted the report of a single gunshot. We assumed it was recreational shooting or poaching, but just in case they decided it might be fun to shoot at something shiny, we snuffed our camp fire and headlamps and called it a night.

The Lower Pecos is another gem of the southwest, a genuine oasis in the desert with its crystal-clear spring water and abundant natural life. Mark, Chris, and I still have to do the obligatory number crunching, data summarizing, and report writing, but, aside from the reed over-running the banks and the scant upstream water that actually reaches the canyon, it is arguably more biologically pristine than most southwestern desert rivers, and every bit as spectacular. It shows the usual problems of non-native species and water removal, but ostensibly less exaggerated. As far as outdoor experiences and relatively wild rivers go, not too shabby.

As with most trips, it ended with its participants wondering aloud how the week went by so fast. This phenomenon wasn’t unfamiliar to me and Mark, and I’ve done enough trips with first-timers to recognize that their puzzlement is genuine. The students talked about what a fantastic trip it was, and now they have an appreciation for rivers and river trips that can only be developed through such an experience. And that reminded me of the importance of mentoring, be it science or river running, and preferably at the same time.

Low water, heavy boats, logistics of research, winter weather, and newbie paddlers: the more I think about it, this whole work and play combo is indeed a pretty good gig. I’ll definitely return to the Pecos: maybe for work, maybe for play, hopefully in weather warm enough to bring a mask and snorkel.

**JOIN THE
REVOLUTION!**



STOMPER



WWW.LIQUIDLOGICKAYAKS.COM

RIVER VOICES

TALKIN' KAYAKIN

BY TOM LEGERE

I LOVE TALKING ABOUT kayaking. So does, I've found, just about anyone else who boats. There's always something to yammer on about...the latest new river paddled, the merits of one paddle or boat over another, what's wrong with my paddling this year, what's right with my paddling this year, gossip about somebody or something entwined in the local paddling scene. You know what I mean. I'm never short on conversation topics with anyone in our club, because if that deep well of paddling topics ever does run dry, most of them are pretty interesting people off the river too. Paddlers tend to be like that. But I digress.

The thing is, much as I like to paddle, most of my waking hours are spent doing other stuff. Like working, commuting, doing basic chores around the house to maintain it and still leave time for paddling (and my standard of "basic chores to maintain it" has slid a bit since I started paddling five years ago...the price you pay for being on the water). But just because I'm not on the water or hanging with my paddling buddies doesn't mean my desire to "talk boating" falls off at all. It's still there and grows by the day, topics, opinions and random thoughts stacking up like firewood, just waiting for a chance to be heard. Sure, websites and message boards are OK, but in my opinion, they're a poor substitute for an in-your-face discussion, debate, or opportunity to play devil's advocate on some random topic. And please don't suggest I should talk to neighbors, coworkers or my spouse about such things. Before I was a boater, I was good friends with a couple of boaters. Let's just say that for a non-boater, two minutes of kayak talk goes a LONG way. A really long way. Once on the water, I pledged never to be a kayak bore. So far I've done pretty well. People at work see the stickers on my car, know what I do, and think I'm nuts. The neighbours think the little colourful boats are cool. My wife tolerates it. I consider



No time for idle chatter as the author gets ready to seal launch at the Kawartha Whitewater Paddler's "Naked In November" event.

Photo by Terry Shaw

myself lucky, in more ways than one. But I again, I digress.

By now I think you get the point: in my world, the first rule of Kayak Club is, you don't talk about Kayak Club. I'm good with that and the non-boating people in my life are more than good with it—they're thankful. So imagine my surprise one recent non-boating weekend when over the stretch of three days I encountered three enthusiastic strangers with whom I talked boating. Sometimes, the stars align.

The Person Who Just Doesn't Get It

The woman who cuts my hair lives on a local lake and has gotten into flatwater kayaking over the last couple of years. So although it's not whitewater, I love her passion for being out on the water in all kinds of weather and I consider her a kindred spirit. Best of all, I don't feel guilty regaling her with a few of my stories, because in the world outside of whitewater, I'll take a boater wherever I can find one. Near the end of my cut, a woman waiting for her turn excitedly pushed her

way into the conversation, anxious to know if I might have a kayak to sell her, as her inflatable had become damaged. Digging deeper into her problems, I suggested that she might want to consider buying a hard plastic boat next time around as it would definitely be more durable. She thought that would be a good idea, but it had to have room for her beer. And her smokes. And that the non-inflatable part sounded like a plan because she couldn't swim. At that point I told her that maybe we should hit the water sometime because it sounded like she was having a pretty good time out there. She agreed, but then took back the offer after noticing my wedding ring. Until then, it had been shaping up to be a Class V flatwater day.

The Guy Who Had a Taste and Dreams of More

My wife the good sport agreed to go for a flatwater paddle on the lake at the

Opposite: What better place to talk boating than at Gauley Fest?

Photo by Terry Shaw

cottage we were visiting with a couple of boats I'd brought along. When the lake gets rough and the swells rise, it's not such a bad way to spend a couple of hours. Rounding the bend of a huge island, we ran into a group of people having a great time exploring and swimming. Whenever I paddle the lake in my whitewater boat, people always give it a second glance because it is so obviously different from the other kayaks they're used to seeing. On this day, one guy actually called out "Is that a whitewater boat?" Wasting no time in initiating a whitewater conversation, it turned out this guy had paddled the Ottawa on an outdoor adventure course he'd taken back in high school. He practically drifted off into another place as he recounted the time he had gotten stuck in a "hydraulic" and had to fight his way out, in that way that only a sticky hole escape story can be told. He was one of those who'd tasted the sweetness of the sport but then been left without an easy way to continue on once the course was over. We chatted for a while, my wife burned in the sun, we chatted some more and my wife started drifting away, on purpose I'm sure. Zen-like, I advised him to hook up with a club in his

town. I then drifted away as well, leaving him to contemplate his paddling future.

The Kindred Spirit

My mom's family has a significant American component to it, so on the weekend closest to July 4th they all have a "cookout" (like "candy bars" and "soda," "cookout" is a word that we don't use in the Great White North) on an island and they invite us Canadians to tag along. Seeing how they are in our country and our national birthday, Canada Day, is on July 1st, inviting us to the "cookout" is the hospitable thing to do. But I digress.

Though I know most of the faces at the annual cookout, there was one guy I didn't know, who was apparently the new boyfriend of my second cousin. Standing around in an awkward circle making awkward conversation on very uneven island terrain, someone asked me if I was still whitewater kayaking. Thrilled with the opportunity to talk about boating even just a bit, I told them about my recent trip to Quebec to hit the Kipawa. Before I even got the first sentence out, the new boyfriend's eyes lit up and he didn't have to say another

word. Fellow boater. Palmer Rapids. River advocacy festival Hell Or High Water on the Petawawa. Ottawa River playspots. He knew them all and before long we broke away from the awkward circle, blissfully talking kayak, guilt free, no holds barred, understanding each other and sharin' the love. A couple of times I glanced over at his girlfriend, my cousin, who only looked bewildered. She couldn't get a word in and didn't even try.

What is it that makes some weekends better than others?

Tom Legere lives in Peterborough, Ontario and paddles with the Kawartha Whitewater Paddlers, who are proud to count at least 12 AW members among their ranks.





CAMP MOR
www.campmor.com

- BACKPACKING • TRAVEL
- FAMILY CAMPING • CLIMBING
- RUGGED CLOTHING, OUTERWEAR & FOOTWEAR
- BIKE TOURING • WATERSPORTS

For a Free Catalog,
Call 1-800-230-2151

or Write: **CAMP MOR**
PO BOX 680-AW2
MAHWAH, N.J. 07430-0680

























DESERT FAMILY FLOAT

STORY BY TANYA RANDOLPH

PHOTOS BY BILLY SUTTER

In Green Dragon Canyon

PICTURES OF THE Owyhee River's beautiful, rugged canyons, descriptions of its remote location, and its moderate rapids have always appealed to my husband and me as a possible family rafting trip. Unfortunately, after numerous years of watching river flows and weather, we hadn't managed to make it work. As teachers, we have only two windows of opportunity for long river adventures: spring break and summer (not that we complain!). These are fantastic windows of time that usually afford us plentiful opportunity for family adventure, but for rafting with children on the Owyhee River these haven't worked out to be the best times of the year. During most spring breaks the water has either been too high or the weather too cold for the kids, or life just got in the way. We found the summer option equally as challenging to catch. The Owyhee River only has adequate flows for rafts 25% of the years after June 1st. As luck would have it, 2011 was our year. Record

rainfall and snow pack made for fantastic late season conditions, and we found the Owyhee running at 3000 cfs when we arrived.

The last day of school was June 6th and my husband and I were on the road the next day with our 14-year-old daughter, her friend, our eight-year-old daughter, the girls' 72-year-old grandpa, and Kona, our dog: a small, family affair. To add to the family element of the trip was my husband's connection to the area. His great grandparents lived along the Owyhee in the late 1800s and settled into a ranch in Leslie Gulch in the early 1900s. His grandmother used to tell stories of life as a little girl in the river canyon. She was one of eight children and was born in a tent along the river before the ranch home was complete. The family managed an existence in the canyon until they had to abandon their homestead when the river was flooded to create Lake Owyhee.

After eight hours of driving from Northern California, we arrived in Rome, Oregon, which consisted of a store with an old gas station and farmland. Private boaters must stop at the store to purchase the \$7 per boat "Invasive Species Permit" for boats over ten feet. The locals were quite friendly and we were soon on our way with a little extra fuel and ice.

The put-in is right at the river in the town of Rome and has camping available which was a welcome sight after the long drive. In a short time we had tents up and were munching on dinner as the dipping sun created a stunning sunset in the high desert. We all stumbled off to bed and with a final question to my husband—"Should we put the rain fly on?"—I drifted off to sleep. If you ask the question, you know the answer. He, of course, said, "no....it doesn't look like rain." Great, lights out.

Lights on...sprinkles, then pouring rain, and finally "daddy!" from the kids' tent a

FAMILY WHITEWATER

few feet away invaded my sleep. Bless the children for saying daddy and not mommy. A few minutes of wrestling with the rain fly for both tents and grandpa moving his cot inside our tent, and we finished out the night's sleep.

River day one dawned with blue sky and no clouds. What happened to that rain that had us scampering around camp in the middle of the night? At least it was gone and we were on to the work of the morning. Running a private river trip requires a great deal of work. There are no guides airing up the boats, lashing down gear and breaking down camp for you. We dropped the boats at the launch and yanked all the gear out of the back of the truck and onto the raft trailer. After some pairing down of the supplies we had all the dry bags stuffed and the necessities (dish buckets, strainer, scat packer, 14 gallons of water, repair kit, first aid kit, chairs, table, two ice chests, and the gear net) stacked on the trailer. We definitely aren't the go-light type. I figure if I wanted to go light I'd go backpacking. This is rafting! About an hour later everything was lashed down appropriately and we were ready to launch. A total of four groups, including our group, put on the river this day. It seemed like a lot for mid-week on a remote river, but we heard later from the river ranger that eighteen plus groups were putting on when he left a few days later, and there were at least 200 people behind us on the river. Normally the Owyhee doesn't see that kind of use, but high river flows elsewhere brought the crowds.

We were finally ready and shoved off. The Owyhee River has multiple points of historical interest and we slipped past the first one just three miles into the trip. The Old Stage Stop is at the Owyhee River Crossing, the major ford for hundreds of years. Unfortunately, the Old Stage Stop is under private ownership so stopping to explore is not an option. At around mile five the farmland began to give way to canyon

walls and we slipped away from all signs of society. The whitewater for the first ten miles is very mellow. We were planning on camping at Fletcher Trails the first night and tackling the first series of Class III rapids on day two, but the campsites were taken by two of the three other groups that launched on the same day we did. It happens...so with an eye on our teenage girls in the Mini-Me (a 9-foot raft) we moved on and into the Class IIIs. The first Class III, Long Sweetwater, was very easy at that level, and we all passed through easily. Having never paddled the river before, we couldn't get a clear view of Upset rapid from above, so to stay on the safe side we pulled the girls from their tiny craft. Both Upset and Bulls Eye rapids were fun and offered no issues for our groups. The hole in Bulls Eye Rapid did look like it could be a problem at this flow. After the Class IIIs we pulled over at Hike-Out Camp at mile fourteen. Hike-Out Camp offered a beautiful view of the river and a short hike that climbed above camp. Unfortunately, the camp also offered a great deal of poison ivy, and to avoid infecting the entire group we had to keep Kona staked to the center of camp, a situation she did not enjoy at all.

Day two on the river started as it should, sipping coffee while watching the river slip by. I love slow mornings on the river. Before

the kids' tent starts to stir there is a certain peaceful quality that isn't to be captured again until the nighttime hours. After a bit of work breaking camp and loading the raft, we were on the water for some more adventure. A few miles downstream of camp Weeping Wall Springs drips into the Owyhee River—a pretty sight. Two Class III rapids, Read-it-and-Weep and Artillery, were on schedule for today. Both were very easy and not an issue. The river map showed Lambert Inscription to be on river left at mile 22. We couldn't find it or even what it was supposed to be, so we moved on down a few hundred yards to the hot springs and the beach below Rustler's Cabin. We arrived here just at lunch time, but it was obvious that we were going to spend quite some time with lunch, a soak and a hike up to the cabin, so we decided to call it a really short day and stake our claim.

The area was really nice with no poison ivy and lots to do. The dog was certainly thrilled as she could explore to her heart's content. After lunch we headed up to check out Rustler's Cabin area. It was only a short hike above camp, but there were a number of interesting sites. At an obvious stable area there were numerous tools that had been used to scratch out a living. An old saw caught our interest. My father-in-law, a retired logger, couldn't figure out what



Wayne and Jenna trading places

FAMILY WHITEWATER

had broken all the teeth on the saw and why someone would even need a saw in this treeless environment. The mystery was solved when we hiked further up to the cabin itself and saw the bricks that had been hand quarried from an area above the cabin. We figured the bricks must have been cut with the saw. There is a spring at the cabin which must have been great for the residents, but it left us with some very smelly, sticky, knee-deep mud to navigate. There were lots of squeals from the girls. Many other farm tools lay scattered about the cabin and we located what must have been cold-room storage. Life at this place could not have been easy, but it certainly is a beautiful spot. Most of our group returned to camp, but my husband, oldest daughter and I kept hiking up an old road. Curiosity and some great views led us to the top of the first ridge and an amazing view of the river canyon. Downstream we could

even see Pruitt's Castle and the amazing sights that awaited us the following day.

Dawn broke with cold temperatures, wind, and overcast skies. Luckily we had rain/shade shelter up the day before to block the sun, so when the rain drops started falling we had somewhere to stash all the camping equipment while we filled our dry bags for day three on the river. I was really looking forward to a hike in the Chalk Basin area today, but the weather had other plans. By the time we packed everything up the girls were frozen. Kids seem to be a little more susceptible to changes in weather, but the hot springs were just two miles below camp so we pulled over for a few hours of soaking. The hot springs at Ryegrass Crossing were much nicer than the one at Rustler's Cabin, which wasn't much more than a hot mud hole, but at Ryegrass there were two pools established in the hot spring creek, and the

water was really hot! We had to dump a few buckets of river water into the pools to make them bearable, but all complaints of the cold dissipated. Unfortunately, we had to make more than two miles that day, so we eventually pulled on the wet gear and headed down river. It started to absolutely pour at this point and the wind was gusting. It was difficult to even see down river as we worked our way into the Chalk Basin. I'm sure this is one of the most beautiful areas of the canyon and a hike would have been great, but the weather just wasn't cooperating. One good part of the rain was Bogus Falls. It seemed to be bolstered by the extra water and was a beautiful sight.

Potters Cave was our next stop. The cave on river right was used by prehistoric people in the canyon as a shelter, and the girls liked exploring the spot. Below Potters Cave is Whistling Bird, a Class III. This rapid is

Idaho International Championships

\$33,000 Purse

June 21-23, 2013

Freestyle Kayaking & SUP Race



Hotel Reservations 1-866-682-3696

Visit www.kwpid.com for additional information.

IDAHO
www.visitidaho.org

created by a left corner and a large chunk of rock that has fallen into the river, creating a cave behind the rock. According to the river ranger, water not only flows between the rock and the wall (a passage too narrow for large rafts), but also under the rock as well. Our party chose to scout the rapid on river left. Better safe than sorry, especially with kids on board (plus the scout was very easy). A quick look showed a very easy passage to the left of the rock and we were on our way and past the spot in a few minutes. One of the prettiest camps in the river was just below Whistling Bird, so we pulled over and decided to call it a day.

Luckily, the rain let up for a little while and we were able to set up camp and dry out. It was a short reprieve, however, and we were soon huddled under the wing for the evening. We built in time for a layover day, a day just to lie around, swim, read and relax. When we awoke to sun for day four, we decided this was the place for a layover, and I soon took up residence on the beach with a book. This was an entertaining spot as every hour or so groups would come through to navigate Whistling Bird. Only one group had issues during the day. A cataraft pilot seemed to drift into the rapid completely unaware of where he was and

didn't take to the oars until it was too late. He and his raft quickly disappeared from sight. About seven seconds later the raft shot out of the cave area and into the main flow of the river, followed a few seconds later by a visibly shaken rafter. His PFD was torn on the right shoulder and the padding was hanging out. It looked like a rough ride. His comrades helped him right his cataraft and the group was on its way, the boat piloted by another member of the group. Another wet evening transpired but we were treated to some beautiful rainbows.

At the start of day five we were greeted once again by the sun and headed downriver; our goal was Greeley Bar and the hot spring. Along the way we paddled through the most amazing canyon I have had the pleasure of experiencing. The walls of Green Dragon Canyon soar a thousand feet straight out of the water, overhanging in places. The canyon becomes so narrow through the stretch it is difficult to tell where the water is even going. It's an amazing sight to be sure. Below Green Dragon the canyon widens and the remains of Morcum Dam can be seen. It was constructed in 1963 to provide water for the Hole-In-The-Ground Ranch. We were all excited for the next stop on our journey, the hot springs at Greeley



The author rowing Whistling Bird, one of a handful of Class III rapids on the run.

Bar. Unfortunately, they were under water at the current river flow, so we had our last river meal at Greeley Bar and headed to the take-out at Birch Creek. Just above the take-out is Birch Creek Ranch, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and an old water wheel sits partly covered with debris. After five days on the river, our trip came to an end.



Our truck was waiting for us, shuttled by Owyhee River Shuttles for \$125. The day was a little late for packing up and driving eleven hours back home, so we stayed one more night and headed out in the morning. The 30 miles of dirt road took almost two hours to navigate. Apparently the rain we had on the river had flooded a few of the little streams and the creek crossings were quite rocky. We made it to the highway and nine hours later returned home. We finally had our chance on the Owyhee, and I have to say it was well worth the wait, the weather, and the long drive.

Dana Randolph and Sarah Brooks in the Mini-Me.

WHITEWATER INSTRUCTION

"I'M FLIPPING! I'M FLIPPING! I'M FLIPPING!"

Taking the Girlfriend (and Other Beginners) to the River

BY MIKE BEZEMEK

WET MY FINGERS in the green water swirling past the put-in. It's cooler than I had hoped. I look past the budding trees at the gray sky, resigning myself to a 60-degree day. There will be no sun for my girlfriend's first whitewater kayaking attempt.

At least she won't get a sunburn. Hypothermia's another story.

At the truck, Ina's watching me closely as she puts on as many layers as might possibly fit under her borrowed dry suit. She gets cold easily, and the water is precisely the kind you find after a late-April storm sweeps down from the high plains and drops icy rain onto the Missouri Ozarks. As the flow peaked, so had my hope that the perfect level to take Ina down the Upper Saint might arrive that weekend.

Sure enough, the hydro-graph fell. The temperature rose, and with it my anxiety about leading her down the river for the first time. The thing is, she's a good paddler. I've taken her numerous times on flat Missouri float streams. She can turn, ferry, and lift her edges. All of this practice came in a hard shell—just without the sprayskirt. She learned to roll one time, but having her head underwater didn't agree with her. Thus, the compromise. As she suits up, I foot pump our inflatable kayak like a folk accordion player keeping time, but the tempo running across her face is more like the blues. She scans the moving water, her eyes betraying her thoughts: *Are we really going to do this?*

The Class II boulder garden of Entrance Rapid has provided many Missouri kayakers with their first taste of whitewater.

Photo by John Niebling

I examine Ina. Her life jacket straps are loose. I'd mentioned that she needed to adjust them. Annoyed, I cinch them up so tight she grunts.

"They'll loosen when they're wet," I explain.

"Wet?" she asks.

I pull the zipper on her dry suit, check the chin strap on her helmet, tuck the laces away on her tennis shoes, affix the Velcro on her—my—paddling gloves, which are two sizes too big. Most of the gear is two sizes too big. She looks like a whitewater-ready sumo wrestler, not the svelte young woman she is normally. Now hypothermia is less a concern than mobility.

"This is going to be fun," I remind both of us.

"Okay." She smiles.

A few minutes later, secure in our boats, we tepidly push off into the pool.

What's really scaring me isn't the river, or her being on it. It's the things that aren't scaring me at all. I've done this sport for over ten years, and now it all comes naturally. When I take beginners, no matter

how hard I try, I don't even think to mention so many things until they spontaneously come up—I swallow as we enter the first fast bend. How could I have forgotten?

I spin my boat in the current and paddle up next to her. She's concentrating on making her C-turn.

"Whatever you do," I say, "If you do fall out—"

She gives me a sharp look.

"You won't fall out," I say. "But if you do, lift your feet up. Never stand in the river. Keep your feet on the surface of the water, out in front of you."

I paddle backward and beckon for her to follow me.

Man. I forgot that one? It's never come up where I've taken her. Days upon days of easy paddling and learning the basics. I furrow my brow and wonder how many other things I have forgotten.

I never quite know what will happen when a beginner gets in a boat. It's different every time.



When I got started, we were just eager, hard-headed rafting guides hopping into massive Perception Pirouettes—the Godzilla was the latest thing, and RPMs were about to revolutionize the sport—and bombing down the South Fork American. Rocks? Rolls? Technique? Full strokes ahead! We typically made it a half mile between swims. But we didn't mind swimming. We kind of liked it. And we'd been taught how. Start in swimmer's position, keep your paddle (or toss it onto the banks), move aggressively to shore, drag your boat if you can, barrel roll into eddies when necessary. Do whatever it takes.

But I know there are two other types of beginners. Two sides of the same coin in the denomination of panic.

As a raft guide, I became all too familiar with the anti-panic of the passive first-timers, who toppled into the water and froze up. Despite my many pleas, requests, shouts, petitions, and screams, they floated passively toward certain doom and/or bruises. I remember swimmers who slapped at the current like water-winged toddlers, stared wide-eyed back at the raft, slammed into rocks like pinballs, while we chased and yanked them into the rafts where they flopped like caught fish between thwarts.

But there's another type. The real panicking first-timer. We were in college, young raft guides and kayakers who lived in a house where we turned our unhygienic pool into a roll clinic. Our athletic, naïve roommate had the night off from fraternity activities and declared in no uncertain terms, he was going to roll a kayak. How hard could it be? We set up a boat for him, got him into gear, and before we explained a concept beyond wet-exiting, he closed his skirt and pushed off into the pool. He paddled like a lost slalomist into the deep end, far beyond the reach of our instructor, and flipped his boat.

What we saw next terrified even the most experienced among us. A complete and



Danielle Sartori enjoys a nice beginner level at Entrance Rapid on the Upper Saint Francis.

Photo by Bill Eades

utter frenzy of splashing hands and flailing arms. The paddle flew onto the pool deck, nearly hitting someone. The deep end boiled like eight feet of hot tub. The boat spun. His head broke the surface. He gasped for air, collapsed back under.

His girlfriend shouted at us, "Jump in and get him!"

But it was like walking across a fire, through a gauntlet, into a cage fight. We reached to him from the side. His skirt finally popped. Exhausted, he reached out. We hauled him onto the deck, where he lay on his back, panting. He never went near that pool again, let alone the boats.

We approach the first rapid, Entrance. I glance at Ina, trying to figure out what type of beginner she is. How she might react if she swims. Her eyes dart around, taking in the willow islands, the rocky chutes, the bedrock banks. *Observant*, I decide.

"What do I do?" she blurts. *Inquisitive*, too.

"Watch the river," I say. "It's easy to read through here. Look for the easiest spot. The green tongue of smooth water."

"Just show me where to go," she seethes.

Demanding, I add to the list.

"Follow me," I say. "Down the left side. Nice and easy."

We enter the chute. I seek deep paths, free of rocks. She clutches her paddle. Her shoulders rise tightly. Mobility isn't even necessary. Now the issue is staying loose. But she matches me stroke for stroke. I take a big, exaggerated turn around a boulder, past a submerged tree. I spin and gesture at the line. Before we know it, we're in the Class II boogie water below the rapid.

"That's it?" she says, breathing a sigh of relief.

"Your first rapid," I say proudly. "You did it."

"Oh man, that was scary," she says, but I can see a hint of a smile behind her tense squint.

"What's next?" She glances around, like we're entering a haunted forest, but instead the river passes into a narrow channel between trees. *Focused*...check.

WHITEWATER INSTRUCTION

Ina's taking things seriously, and that's a good sign. She's listening, alert, composed. You just never know. Over the years, I've been present for plenty of first runs on the Saint.

My friend Paul had a bad angle on an eddy line which led to a flip, which led to him getting an earful from an old timer, who went too hard on Paul for lifting his head. This led to a nervous flip onto a rock, which led to a bruised cheek bone and psyche. This led to another flip on a willow fence, which led to several portages and exhaustion. We took out in the dark, and six months later he traded his hard shell for an inflatable.

The brother of another paddling friend came on a winter day, dressed in a borrowed dry-suit. The brother responded to our casual lessons on boat angles and ferries by insisting we were only confusing him. Then he insisted on paddling probe into Entrance Rapid. He swam, shivered it off. Swam at Land of Oz. Shivered again. Swam again. Couldn't stop shivering, and walked the rest of the rapids. He never came to the river again.

Another friend, despite her best effort to listen and compute directions from Paul and me, still floated the IK passively through everything that came her way. She bounced off willows and rocks, floated sideways and backwards. She spun circles one way. The next time we looked, she was somehow spinning the opposite direction. Paul and I watched with baited breath, ready to pounce. She was constantly close to flipping. She rode up onto rocks, bounced off obstacles, and rebounded right back around. No concern, no freezing, no edging, and therefore, no flipping. The boat floated through everything, and her blade barely touched water.

Aggressive. Terrified. Panicked. Frustrated. Discouraged. Humbled. Oblivious. You never know.

A half mile later, the next rapid arrives. Kitten's Crossing. A series of three diagonal drops, each steepest along the left. I explain the line to Ina. Start left, move right incrementally to stay off the right-side willow fence, then come back left at the end.

We begin.

The first drop passes with no problem. Ina times her ferry perfectly. I, on the other hand, need to stop staring at her and paddle my own boat. I clip the side of the hole, have to brace, and lose speed. Ina's boat sails up next to mine. I debate matching her speed, but hesitate. She slips past me.

"Where do I go? Where do I go? Where do I go?" she says frantically.

"It's alright," I say. "You got this. Just watch the river."

She gives me a look, like I refused to take out the trash, spilled beer across the floor, forgot our anniversary, her birthday, her favorite color—all in a single instant. She executes the rapid perfectly. Keeps her left angle past the second hole, and comes back right.

"Get up here!" she shouts.

I paddle past her and lead her into the eddy below the rapid.

"Don't ever do that again," she says. I add *mildly vindictive* to the big board.



Bill Fordyce finishes Kitten's Crossing on the Upper Saint Francis.
Photo by Erik Johnson

"Sorry, I'm just trying to help you learn."

She narrows her eyelids. "Uh, huh."

In some ways, I shouldn't even be here. Ina shouldn't learn from me, her boyfriend of four years. Whitewater has smashed more relationships than fiberglass boats.

Eight years before, I R2ed the Tuolumne with my raft guide girlfriend. We bickered our way through Rock Garden, tried to maneuver the boat through different lines in Nemesis, argued our way onto a perch below Sunderland's Chute, nearly flipped in Ram's Head. We didn't make our peace until Clavey. We only lasted a year beyond that trip.

Another raft guide took his girlfriend kayaking for the first time in a double-IK. He said, "Paddle left." She shook her head and paddled right. He said, "We're going over here." She pointed over there. He said, "Watch out for that midriver rock!" She stared at it, not paddling, until they hit it broadside. The IK wrapped around the rock, and they each grabbed hold of the bow and stern ropes, respectively. They hung there in the current, trying to ascertain blame. One would have to let go, so the weight of the other could pull the IK free, but who would it be? He never told us who gave in and let go, but they both came back soaking wet regardless.

As the river snakes toward Land of Oz, the final and biggest rapid on this stretch, I zip into an eddy.

"Practice eddying out," I shout back to Ina.

She gives me another look. "No, thank you."

I realize Ina might have learned better from a group of lady paddlers, with the patience and understanding for how she feels. Oh, well. Too late for that.

I explain Land of Oz. It's an S-turn that slithers left around a boulder bar, then drops over some wide holes, then curves



Cat's Paw rapid on the Lower Saint offers adventurous beginners some Class III Ozark paddling.

Photo by John Niebling

back right away from a big house rock and dumps into a wavy chute. I explain the order of the turns.

"Okay, say it again," says Ina.

"Face left and paddle. Turn to face right and paddle. Whatever you do, keep your angle right and paddle away from that giant rock."

She nods.

And we're in it. I watch her go, her face awash in determination. She hits one of the smaller holes and water splashes up. She shirks back from the splash.

"Paddle," I say.

Her blade grabs water. She makes the turn, as I urge her to keep moving. She passes the house rock. She angles straight in the chute. I hadn't even mentioned that part of the rapid. Her face grimaces as a wad of water flies into her eyes. She breathes sharply. She's through.

"That's the last one," I say.

She turns back to look. "That's it?" She lifts her shoulders. "That wasn't too bad. I thought they'd be harder."

"You did great," I say, pleased that she's prepared for our trip to the Southeast, the following weekend. "You're ready for the Nantahala."

Ina has been debating if she will paddle the beginner Class II river at all. The look of pride at taming the mighty Upper Saint rinses from her face and is replaced by apprehension.

"Is that harder?"

You just never know how it will go. The day before Ina will run the Nanty, I take my longtime buddy, Alex, down the Class III+ Ocoee for his first time. Alex, long ago, before he left California for medical school, took the guide school at my company. Afterward, he joined me for some days in a rented IK. Now he lives in the South and wants to give it a try again.

We scout Grumpy's ledge from the road, and I show him the long ferry around rocks and holes to the clear left-side line. When

WHITEWATER INSTRUCTION



Dave Weidinger gets a close look at Table Saw, which has cut down many beginners on the Ocoee.

Photo by Erik Johnson

we paddle, he styles it, skimming into the final eddy like he hasn't taken a five year break.

Fast, technical rapids fly under his tubes. He nearly walks the plank at Gonzo Shoals. He surveys Broken Nose from eddy #2 and opts for the cheat. He makes a hard cut cross-river at Slice and Dice. He goes double big at Double Suck—not on purpose, just misses the line. He plunges deep into the second retentive suck hole, but keeps his head and stays straight, coming through the other side. Lucky, yes, but also a skillful plan B. He rides the center and slams the holes at Double Trouble, before we make our way down to the Doldrums.

And then comes Tablesaw. It's the biggest, but not the hardest. He's gone through those with ease. But the sight of the river dropping away, holes chattering like teeth, spitting rooster tails into the sky? Alex takes a wary look from the eddy, as I explain the line.

"Ready?"

Alex nods again. I peel out and ferry over to the right eddy. I glance at Alex. He's let his angle go slack and now is heading center. He corrects and angles toward the left side. He won't make the eddy, but he could make the line. I take off down the rapid, gesturing at the route briefly, before plowing through the holes myself. When I reach the bottom, I look for Alex. He's in the river, rising and falling in the humps of water, clutching his boat. I paddle into the current.

"Swim left," I shout.

He doesn't hear me.

"Alex!"

His head snaps up.

A half dozen boaters from the Missouri crowd begin shouting different directions. Alex's head spins and he does nothing but float. He finally gathers himself. He lets go of the boat and begins to swim—at too soft an angle. His IK is corralled into the eddy, but Alex zips toward the bump and

grind left side of Diamond Splitter. Not a comfortable place to swim. Still clutching his paddle, he claws his way out of the river, just before the current slams rocks.

Alex shakes his head. "Man, I freaked out." He looks up at the rapid. "It was just different. Bigger than the others. It got in my head."

Who hasn't been there? A paddler on a new river? After running other rapids—some similar, some harder—for whatever reason, certain rapids get into one's head.

The day arrives. At the Nantahala put-in our St. Louis paddling friend, Nicky, takes Ina under her wing. Nicky loans Ina a drysuit to combat the ice-cold, dam-released water in the narrow, tree-lined canyon. Nicky patiently describes the run and offers to let Ina follow her down the easy lines. Ina listens closely and nods politely at each of Nicky's comments. I happily fade into the background.

When we put on, the first cold water splash jolts Ina like a slap in the face. She stares from bank to bank. This river is wide and fast, at least twice the width and flow of the Saint.

Suddenly we're in the quick, choppy boogie water and drops of Patton's Run. Ina squares up and follows Nicky's line. She comes out the other side, gripping the sides of her boat.

"That's the hardest one, other than the falls," reassures Nicky.

The run continues, mostly uneventful. The Nanty is riffles and runs and C-turns. Ina navigates just fine, occasionally lurching her body away from flying lobs of cold water. Several miles downriver the channel splits, with one side rushing right through a narrow, fast channel between overhanging trees. We take this natural tunnel of green.

I'm surfing a wave on the other side of the chute when Ina paddles past me. She hits

a boil line. Her boat spins toward a slabby ledge. She rides up onto the ledge and stares down at the eddy water, a full two feet below.

"I'm flipping?" she calls out, urgently. She leans downstream and her right tube begins to teeter over the edge.

Scenarios flash through my head. I peel off the wave and turn toward her, windmilling my paddle to cross the distance to what may be my girlfriend's first flip. She's never swam in fast current, let alone whitewater. She's never been willing. There's no way I'll reach her in time. Her boat begins to cantilever. I scan the chute downstream: deep, fast, cold. It will surely sweep her down a ways, before we can get her out.

"I'm flipping! I'm flipping! I'm flipping!" she shrieks. The boat slides back around the ledge toward the current. Calm sets in. "I'm fine."

Her boat spins back into the middle of the river. She puts in a paddle stroke and faces downstream. A submerged rock slides underneath her floor. "What was that?" She looks around side to side.

I smile.



Rachel Fleischut plunges into cold water below Patton's Run on the Nantahala.
Photo by Bill Eades

"This isn't funny," she says. She lets out a grin between scowls. "That was scary."

"I know," I say.

The rest of the day is uneventful. We carry her boat around Class III Nantahala Falls.

"Maybe next time," I suggest.

"Next time?" she says. "Next time we're doing something warmer."

"Deal."



Kōkatat®
made in arcata · ca
www.kokatat.com

A full-page photograph of a kayaker in a blue kayak navigating a narrow, rocky gorge. The kayaker is positioned on the left side of the frame, moving towards a waterfall. The water is white and turbulent as it falls over the rocks. The surrounding rocks are dark and jagged, with some moss or lichen visible. The background shows more of the gorge and some greenery at the top.

DAVE WANTS AN ADVENTURE

STORY BY RYAN MCCALL
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATT KIEDAISCH

Ed Clark lining it up on the Middlebury Gorge.

IT WAS A late May weekend in Vermont. The prior three days had yielded some good flows on the usual suspects. It was Sunday and a handful of us were still itching to get in the water even though most of the other local rivers had dropped off. It was at that point Dave said he wanted an “adventure.” Boy, did he ever get one.

The Middlebury Gorge was still running a respectable flow, so it became the logical destination. With Russ Kelly as our seasoned Middlebury Gorge vet we had a guide who really knew the river. Russ’ mind is like a vault; no detail is too small to be stored for future use. We even got hi tech drawings in the dirt of what rapids looked like. AWESOME! I was the newbie on the run. Marshall Pahl had been down the Middlebury Gorge at a lower flow a long time ago and Dave Packie had only boated the Birth Canal (yes, the rapid names are female reproductive system themed).

So after a mandatory look-see at the Birth Canal from above Rebirth we headed to the

put-in, up towards Ripton. The first mile or so down to the confluence with the North Branch of the Middlebury River was really fun Class III/III+ continuous boogie. It was nice to get some of that in before the action started. My heart was so far in my throat before the run, I was actually feeling sick. I was experiencing lots of anticipation and anxiety after seeing some pretty stout drops from a distance and from the committing and unportageable nature of the gorge. So, like I said, the upper part of the run was a nice way to loosen up and get focused (or decide that you were just not feeling it and get out before the committing part).

The four of us arrived at the confluence with the North Branch and the anticipation ramped back up as Russ started to give exacting details about what lay downstream. Marshall and I jumped out of our boats, one with a camera the other with a rope and watched both Russ and Dave run the entry drop of the Fallopian Tube and both get splatted on a rock that Russ said has pinned him in the past. It

honestly looked like he and Dave had just missed the same fate by a very small margin. At this point it was get’er done or hike out. Marshall had only three days in his boat that season prior to this run so he made a judgment call and hiked it out.

I had been having a solid season up until then and felt pretty confident that I would be ok continuing on. I ran the entry drop a little farther right than Dave and Russ and never got near the pin rock. However, I was completely locked into a left brace when I needed to dig right into an eddy—the first missed move of the day for me. That meant I was going to get the first shot at running the 15-foot waterfall at the end of the Fallopian Tube—whether I wanted to or not. Suddenly details from Russ’s description of the falls were blinking bright red in my cortex, something about a wicked crack in the wall directly above the falls that can swallow the front end of a boat. Even though the current was pushing you in the direction of the crack, I remember him saying, you needed to drive across the

CREEKING

current and try to get a late boof off the falls. As I came up to the crack, everything felt like it was in slow motion. I could see the edge of the falls and where the nose of my boat could be swallowed so I dug and stroked and then it felt like I was hanging in space for a whole lot longer than I can remember from running any other 15-footer. Everything went white, then dark, and then white again, and then...I was bobbing in the inner gorge, the birth canal. *Whoa is this really cool*, I thought!

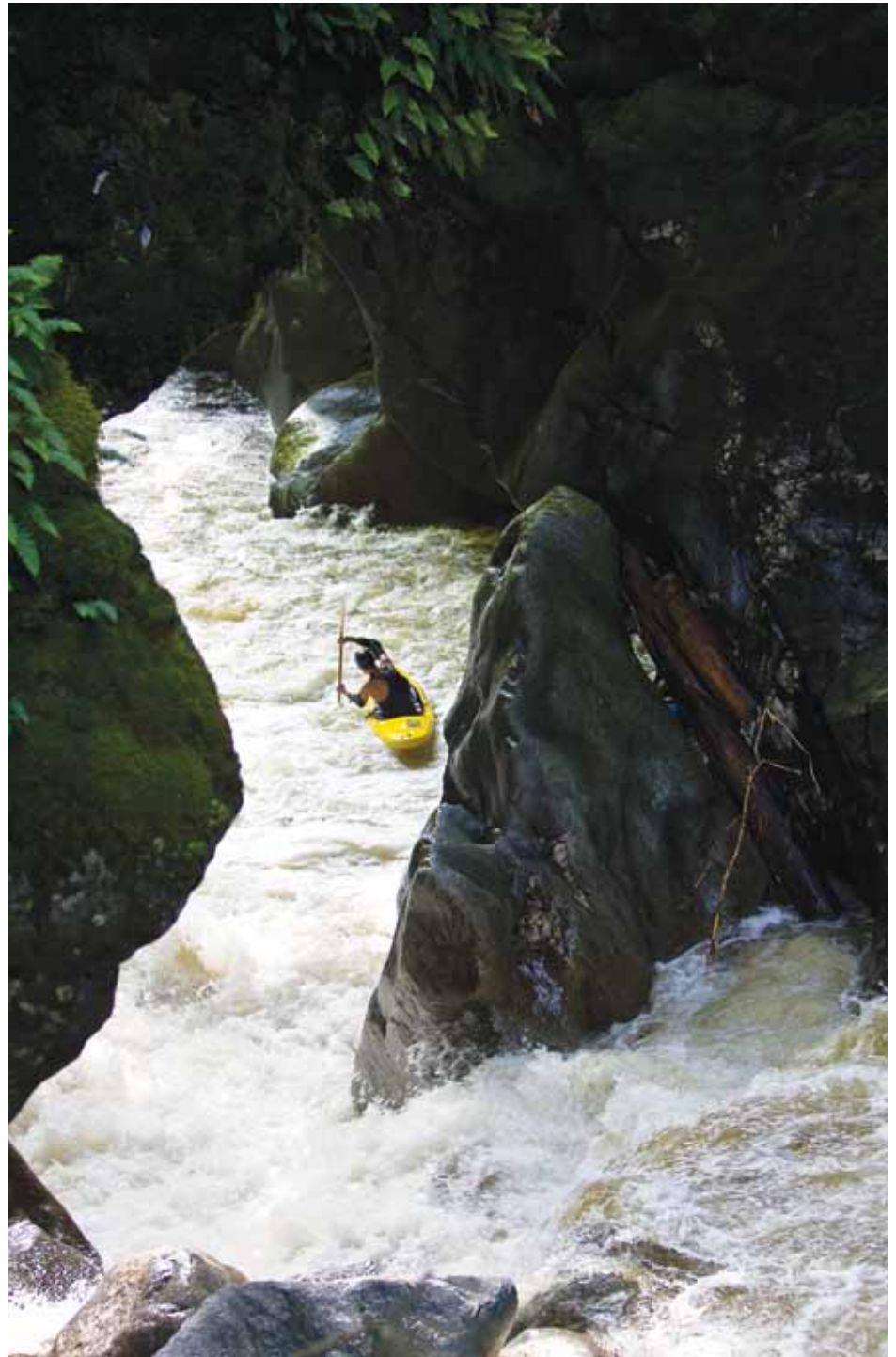
It felt like eternity before Russ banked around the top and threw a HUGE boof and landed about as perfectly as I have ever seen off of a trashy lip! Lots of whoops and hollers and smiles later, we sat bobbing in our respective eddies, waiting for Dave. Dave threw a pretty cool melt-down/boof thingy that didn't quite send him far enough from the spout of the falls, which pounded down on his stern giving him an AWESOME ender. This resulted in a swim in the preferable river right eddy where Russ was able to scramble up the ledge and get Dave a rope to climb up the wall with and then tow his boat out of the surging eddy. Absorbing some sunlight and taking in the whole beauty of the gorge for a few minutes while the rescue proceeded was pretty cool.

All regrouped, we paddled down to look at the next drop, a three-foot ledge boof above a squirrely flume. Russ styled it and was in the eddy above the next drop. Dave ran up to his boat and came down through the ledge and the flume with style as well. Next up was me. As I finished the three-foot boof, in the slack water above the flume I could see Dave out of his boat, headed down the river left shore. Wow, I thought, he really hurried on down through Rebirth and is already scouting the stuff below. Later I learned that Rebirth had munched him—just like it was about to do to me.

Trip Kinney working hard to stay off the undercut wall on the right, deep in the heart of the Middlebury Gorge.

So I hit the flume in more or less the right spot but didn't anticipate it snagging my bow. It flipped me so quickly that the next thing I knew I was getting hammered along the bottom of the river and taking shots to the head and hands. Then it all stopped and

I found myself broached against a boulder upside down above Rebirth, one of the ugliest rapids I have ever seen or boated. So I thought, forget this and wet exited my boat. As soon as I surfaced Russ was in the eddy telling me to stand up and grab my



A full-page photograph of a kayaker in a yellow kayak navigating a narrow, rocky gorge. The kayaker is wearing a blue helmet and an orange life vest, and is holding a yellow paddle. The gorge is characterized by steep, mossy rock walls and dense vegetation hanging from the top. The water is dark and turbulent. The title "MIDDLEBURY GORGE" is overlaid in large, white, serif capital letters in the center of the image.

MIDDLEBURY GORGE

*Fred Coriell and Ed Clark in a rare
peaceful moment in the main gorge.*

boat. Huh—easy enough. I am safe and I didn't run Rebirth upside down, I thought to myself.

I did a quick sort of mental regroup and went to pick up my boat to drain it out when suddenly my right shoulder felt loose. But Russ was pretty anxious to get down river to make sure Dave was ok, so I told him to hit it and watched his line as he peeled out and disappeared. All of a sudden I realized where I was: in the Birth Canal, alone, and with no choice but to run the next drop with a loose shoulder. I couldn't have been in a more committing place with no way out but down the river.

Instead of freaking out I tried to focus on what I needed to do. I finished my mental regroup, got back into my emptied boat, ferried into the eddy threw a few paddle strokes, peeled out, and dropped off the same line Russ did.

I don't even know what happened next other than that I was upside down again, waiting for a good opportunity to roll. Then it hit me—Russ's description from earlier—this was where the entire current of the river pushes into an undercut portion of the wall on river right—I needed to roll—NOW! I hit my roll and came up only to hear Russ screaming PADDLE! I paddled just enough to get away from the wall but my



CREEKING

stern was sucked under and I flipped again and ended up in a shallow rapid that yanked at my paddle. I felt my shoulder go again, so I let go of the paddle and managed a hand roll (what the heck is the purpose of having a hand roll? You can't paddle anywhere after you are up anyways!).

Now I was headed down a Class V river, without a paddle, facing backwards. It didn't take long for me to get flipped. And being completely shot, moments later I was swimming up on a beach on river left just above the next rapid. My boat was stuck in an eddy upriver a ways and Dave was standing there laughing because he had just done the same thing.

At this point I was fairly confident that there was no way I would be boating out of the gorge with the way my shoulder was

behaving. I saw that I could hike/scramble out from this spot and chose to do so. Meanwhile, Russ and Dave decided that they would put my spray skirt on my boat and bump it down the river through several other legit Class IV and V rapids. I was happy that I didn't have to try to carry it up the gorge wall and bid farewell to my trusty cork and paddling partners. As I began my hike I could hear the familiar BONK of a boat bouncing off of rocks downstream out of sight.

Compared to what had happened inside the gorge, climbing out was no big deal. I hooked up with Marshall and we got all the vehicles down to the take-out, then we chilled there waiting for Dave and Russ.

It probably took the guys an additional 90 minutes to boat the remainder of the river

to the take-out. What I saw from shore was them sending my boat down through the last rapid, and it running cleaner than it probably would have with me in it. The rest of their run had been uneventful and enjoyable without the stress of the Birth Canal but the river still had them on their toes.

Upon their arrival at the take-out vehicles, brewskis were popped all around. At the very least I needed to have beers on hand for the two guys who got my boat safely out of the gorge without me having to haul it up the wall.

As we sat near the water at the take-out and recounted the day's events one thing was clear: Dave got his adventure...from what I saw of his run, at least. You'll have to ask him about the rest of it....



Jonny Adler catching a great boof in the Middlebury Gorge.

SINCE 2001 KAYAK SESSION HAS GIVEN AW OVER \$160,000 TO SUPPORT IT'S TREMENDOUS EFFORT.
LET'S MAKE IT EVEN MORE THIS YEAR!

GET YOUR GREEN CARD TODAY!

SUBSCRIBE TO KAYAK SESSION MAGAZINE, CONTRIBUTE TO AW EFFORTS EVEN FURTHER AND SAVE MONEY!

Here's how: As an AW member, you save money when subscribing to Kayak Session. If that's not enough, your purchase awards another 5 bucks back to AW's effort to change the world. If that doesn't change the world, it can at least make it a little sweeter...



50% discount on Kayak Session Subscriptions!
30 USD for one year subscriptions
5 dollars back to AW for every subscription purchased
Save, Support, Enjoy

Special offer available only with the use of the present form (photocopy accepted)

Please sign me up for one year (four issues)

Start my subscription with: ☐ current ☐ next issue

Name

Address

City State Zip Phone

Email (for customer service only)

Method of payment: ☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa ☐ Check

Credit card number Exp. date: / 20

Signature

You may fax this form and/or credit card orders to: 828-586-2840

Detach and mail to: American Whitewater / Kayak Session Subscription - Po Box 1540 - Cullowhee, NC 28723
Call toll free: 1-866-262-8429 - info@americanwhitewater.org or subscribe online @ www.kayaksession.com

MENTAL GAME

RUNNING DOWN GRASSY HILLS (AND RIVERS)

BY JOHN MEYER

RECENTLY I WAS playing with my three-year-old nephew on a grassy hill. He was running down the hill, giggling and smiling, when his foot caught the ground. He tumbled onto his stomach, as only a three-year-old can, and he effected a graceless fall onto the soft grass. His immediate reaction was not to dust himself off, nor stand back up, nor cry, but rather, to slyly look at the faces of the adults nearby to gauge their reactions. Surely looks of concern or a panicked rush to ensure his well being would have brought on tears. Our smiles, however, served as the only necessary indication that falling down a grassy hill was okay, and it was okay to get back up and continue playing.

* * * * *

Standing in the put-in parking lot minutes prior to my first hard-boat trip down West Virginia's New River Gorge brought out in me a nearly identical search for the appropriate emotional tenor, to be based on the attitudes of those around me. Despite spending the previous two years guiding rafts down the same stretch of river, this day's highly anticipated trip left me scratching and clawing for an excuse to abandon the seven miles that lay between me and the take-out. I had just begun hard-boating, and had just bought my first kayak months ago. I had only logged three trips, all on smaller, Class III rivers. And the Gorge was running at nine feet, or roughly 20,000 cfs, a few cfs below the level at which half the commercial companies stop taking guests down the Gorge due to concerns about fast currents and huge features. I should have just faked an illness at the campground.

A whole series of paddlers having a blast right down the middle of Iron Ring, one of the Gauley's infamous drops.

Photo by Thomas O'Keefe

This trip had been scheduled for some time. It came early in a two-week period in which our company trained its new potential raft guides. We were starting a video program, and I had to get to a point where I could successfully kayak the entire section without fear of swimming, and potentially sending my pelican-case-enclosed camera solo down the rapids ahead. In the first few days of the raft guide training period, this particular day had been set aside for me to follow an experienced boater down this familiar stretch of the New River Gorge for the first time in my kayak.

"Are you still going to go?" I'm not sure who said it, but it didn't matter. All of my friends were standing there, and they were all thinking it. We had all learned to guide rafts together, learned to roll kayaks together, and now I was the guinea pig. The question hung in the air. I felt like a three-year-old lying on my stomach after a fall.

I sheepishly looked at the faces of my friends.

They would know how to react. Surely one would have slightly pursed lips and a head

cocked slightly to the side. Another might have the slow side-to-side head shake, indicating it would be fine to postpone the trip in light of the high water. Others would have their eyes on the ground, tacitly acknowledging I didn't have to go.

"Of course he's going." It came from the experienced boater I was hoping I wouldn't have to follow into the waves I knew so well, the ones I'd seen flip 16-foot long rafts. It wasn't said so much as an answer to a question, but as a dismissal of the notion that abandoning paddling plans was acceptable in challenging conditions, a rejection of the idea that anything less than complete confidence was grounds for facing one's fears.

It was with this mindset that I put my boat on my shoulder and followed him down the stairs to the put-in, paddled hard through current, and leaned into big crashing waves. Detailed descriptions of lines and probable effects each hole and wave would have on my kayak were not discussed. Rather, guidance came in the form of confidence-laden principles.



"If you can put a raft there, you can put a kayak there," or "Lean into everything."

The mindset was one that encouraged reliance on ability, minimal though it may be, instead of dwelling on what was yet to be learned. It was one that supported systematically ensuring the safest trip possible, relying on your friends to help when necessary, then focusing on the challenge and fun rather than the ever-present dangers. It was a mindset that set a definite and identifiable tone that while we all boat for different reasons, we all boat for fun. Like an adult smiling at a recently tumbled three-year-old, the constant encouragement and unrelenting support from that experienced kayaker helped me remember it was okay to be nervous above big drops. It was not a sign of failure to venture off course, or even swim out of my boat.

* * * * *

The following fall, a group of experienced paddlers corroborated this mental attitude of encouraging less-experienced paddlers to kayak new rivers that were within their safety and skill levels, but likely out of their comfort zones. A close friend and I had decided on short notice to run the Upper Gauley, the section of whitewater that serves as a graduation pedestal to aspiring boaters who spend summers on the New. We felt confident in our paddling skills, after honing them on high-flow New River summers the previous two years. However, we felt shaky about the prospect of paddling this river about which we had heard so many stories and seen so many classic carnage shots on the big screen at the nearby outfitter's bar. Our worries were not of a specific nature. We weren't worried about paddling headlong into Inertia, Woodstock, or The Box, whose presence was the setting for so many acquaintances' horror stories. Rather, they were general worries. They stemmed from an overwhelming nervousness that does not arise due to one hole or one rapid, but from a largely irrational fear of the



The author, pictured scouting Pillow Rock Rapid on his first run of the Upper Gauley. As usual on this trip, the preferred line through the rapid was described to him as, "Just go down the middle."

Photo by Preston Brown

cumulative effects of so many rapids that had seemed intimidating for so long.

We arrived at the put-in largely because neither of us would admit we should turn around, and since we had just decided to make the trip the night before, we hadn't had time to confess our hesitations and talk ourselves out of it. Strangely, the mixture of emotions that kept us driving north from Virginia was equal parts fear and bravado. Our plan was to go slowly, scout everything, and ask as many questions as we could of the paddlers around us at the top of any particular rapid. As it turned out, that plan never came to fruition.

Help came in the form of our pre-trip shuttle providers. We met up with an interesting mix of fun-loving and carefree, yet sick-skilled boaters who offered to let us tag along. While our mindset of the Upper Gauley and our inaugural trip down it had been established through years of hearing stories about this river and its

rapids, studying written accounts of the lines, and a nervous Jeep ride that morning, our shepherds had a very different idea.

We had seen the Upper Gauley two years prior. Being new to the whitewater scene, our first view of the river came from the front of rafts guided by our friends. However, our relative inexperience, profound excitement to be on this river, and mind-numbing cold led us to remember very little of our trip two years later. As we put on, we were amazed by the speed of the current, the size and prevalence of holes and rocks strewn throughout the river, and the lighthearted, confident attitudes of our companions. The latter was a sharp contrast to our anxious, stiff-armed approach. Through the first few minor drops and warm-up rapids, our only solace was the limited knowledge we had of the top of the river: that the first major rapid, Insignificant, lay immediately after a big bend in the river.

MENTAL GAME



One of the reasons the Gauley is so much fun: great surf waves.

Photo by Thomas O'Keefe

Of course, the river is all bends, and the slightest among them would elicit a squeaky and apologetic query from one of us to the others, asking if Insignificant was next. Again and again it wasn't.

When finally the river's entire left bank was a giant wall of iron-streaked West Virginia rock, and the entire river crashed around a bend to the right, our stomachs knotted further. As two paddlers who derive confidence from information, we were ready to hang on every descriptive word uttered by our guides. We wanted to hear about every rock, every hole, and every wave. We wanted to know where they were going, where not to go, and where the raft would go. We wanted a Plan A, Plan B, and Plan C, and the defining events that would dictate which course to take. We were ready to absorb stories of people who had been too far left, too far right, and every conceivable corrective measure. One of us asked for a description of the best line.

The response initially seemed less than helpful. "It's a big river. Just go down the middle of everything."

The response had come from the driver of the shuttle van, whose New Zealand accent had seemingly been affected by spending so much time in West Virginia that he had developed a drawl on top of it. He was the same person who had carried out a two-minute conversation with another paddler in the pool above Insignificant while sitting on a perfect stern stall. His mindset was one of complete confidence giving rise to unadulterated fun on the river. While he did not discount danger or sacrifice safety on the river, his focus was on the positive aspects. He was not looking at the keeper holes or pinning rocks. He was looking at the flume of unbroken green next to them that provided the clean line through. He spent no time thinking of what could go wrong, but reveled in his opportunity to be in one of the most magical places on earth, boating through big water.

This attitude had an immediate effect on both of us. We could not help but embrace this style of paddling. Some fears were dissolved, and in their place, confidence was cultivated. We stopped worrying so much about the worst-case scenario. We had a lot of fun.

* * * * *

Like a three-year-old lying on the grass, throughout my time paddling I have looked to those around me to provide an idea of what action should come next. On many trips I've wondered if it was appropriate to start crying, or to stand up and take another run down the grassy hill. Without fail, my paddling friends have instilled confidence and fun with every inquisitive glance I shoot their way.

Perhaps it is this mindset that places members of the paddling community so close to my heart. I find parallels in everything I do that bring me back to the river, and back to my friends. Above big drops, I still look my friends in the eye, and their responses bring me confidence.

The mental game inherent to whitewater flows over into every action of life. Unsuccessful job interviews are reflected upon as opportunities and learning experiences rather than failures. Professional relocations are seen as the gateway to new adventure, rather than the culmination of everything left behind. It is no wonder that rivers provide such an easy metaphor to life, and no wonder those who love life on the river think so deeply about the meanings of their own.

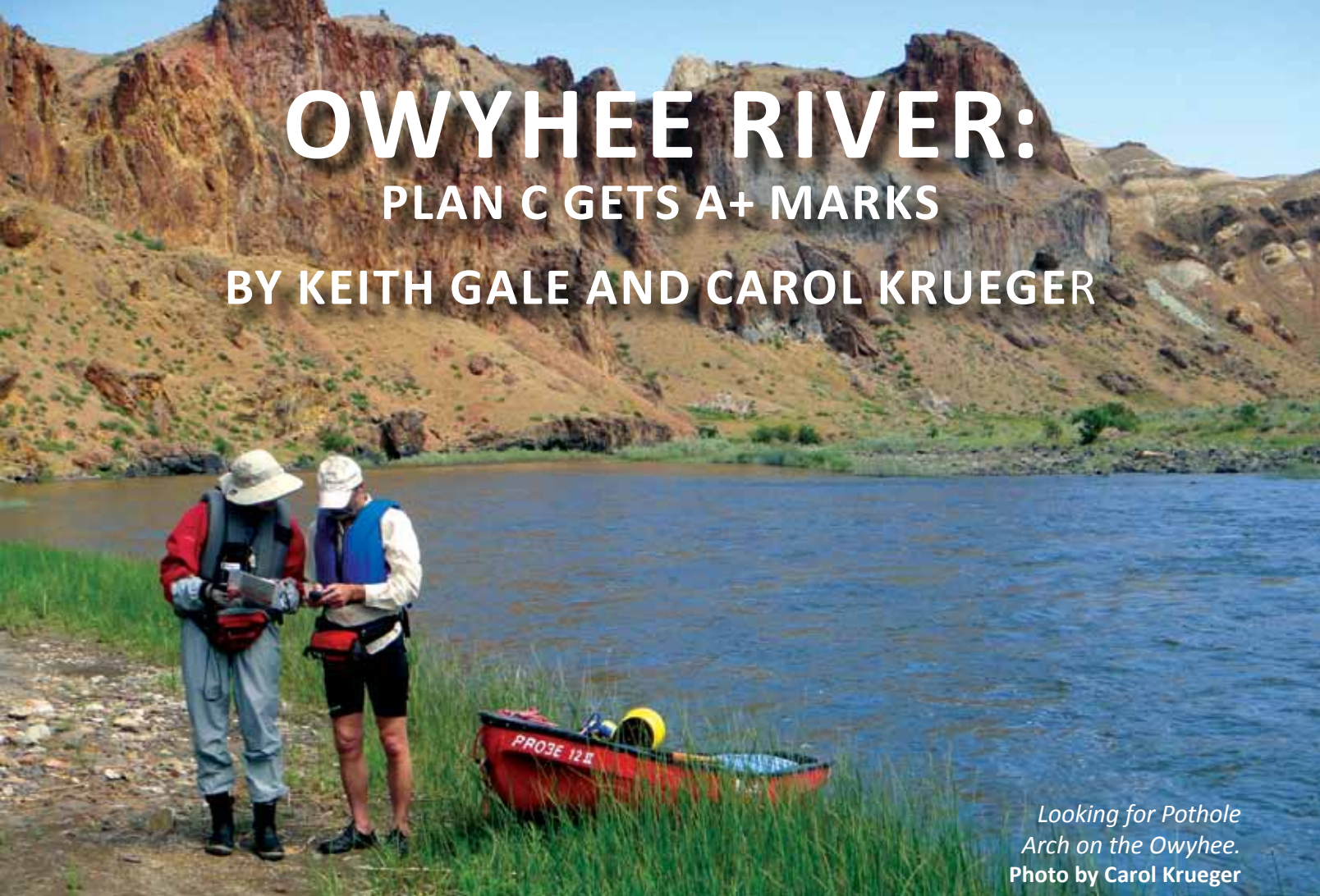
At the same time, the effect my paddling mindset has had on my life goes beyond reflection. Upcoming challenges of the day are noted and moved to the back of my mind as I focus on the positive path through my day. Major issues are addressed, corrected as well as possible, and left upstream. Most prevalent is the mindset that in life, as in rivers, every put-in has an accompanying take-out, and love and fun should be paramount.

As I continue to shoot inquisitive looks to my friends in search of guidance, I am happy to know that without fail, I am encouraged to push my limits, go down the middle of the big stuff, and continue to stand back up and run down the grassy hill again.

OWYHEE RIVER:

PLAN C GETS A+ MARKS

BY KEITH GALE AND CAROL KRUEGER



Looking for Pothole Arch on the Owyhee.
Photo by Carol Krueger

IT WAS THE end of October 2010, and the annual cider press party in full swing above fog shrouded Arcata, California. The event takes place each year on Fickle Hill—which has more topographical relief than the entire state of Minnesota—meaning that this year those of us washing, chopping, and pressing cider from the bushels of apples were out of the fog, under cloudless blue skies.

In this idyllic setting, Kit threw out the idea of trying for a permit for the Desolation Canyon section of the Green River in Utah for the summer of 2011. Quickly, the number of hopeful participants swelled to 20 paddlers comprising two rafts, one IK, and the balance in tandem canoes.

As winter progressed, snow fell in abundant quantities in the northern part of the western United States. Many areas saw record snowfall, including the drainage that feeds Flaming Gorge Reservoir, which

along with the Yampa River, is the major contributor to flows on the Green River.

Due to Kit's early-morning diligence, the group was fortunate enough to pick up a permit to launch on June 25. Great excitement abounded! Flurries of e-mails were exchanged among the participants, job tasks were assigned, a few people dropped out, raft rental and shuttle arrangements were made, deposits paid, hotel reservations, air plane reservations, travel plans were all set into motion. Then came the waiting game with spring runoff.

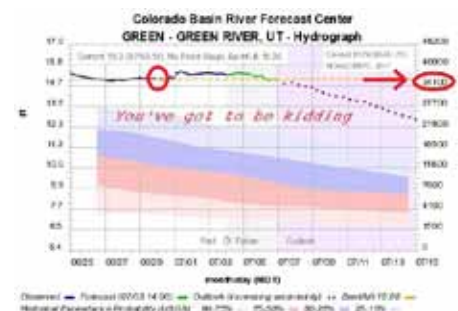
With roughly two weeks to go before launch, the Green River was flowing at approximately 35,000 cfs, with no signs of dropping. Kit, our trip leader, finally decided to cancel. In open canoes, even with raft

support, 35,000 cfs was not considered a doable flow.

A cancellation for the San Juan River was obtained, but with an earlier departure date, which siphoned off almost half the group.

For those of us who were not able to make adjustments to our vacation time for an earlier departure, it meant working on plan C. Rivers were up all through the West, which opened up some opportunities for a group of nine. Originally, we were going

The hydrograph of the Green River in spring/summer 2011. Luckily our backup trip on the Owyhee was incredible!
By Carol Krueger



WILDERNESS WHITEWATER



Portaging Whistling Bird Rapid on the Owyhee River (OR)
Photo by Carol Krueger

to have raft support, but they decided to bow out, opting to enjoy a more leisurely non boating vacation. Another couple dropped out, and we were down to five, thus presenting an interesting challenge. Having lost the ability to carry the dining room table, a.k.a. Raft table and Dutch ovens, could we think outside the box? Yes, we decided, self-supported, backpack style! Freeze-dried food, water filters, and itsy-bitsy two-man tent instead of the Taj Mahal tent.

The group of five, consisting of Peter Bloch, Marianne Kube (both of Berlin, Germany); Carol and Dave Krueger from Eureka, California, and Keith Gale (of the greater San Francisco Bay Area) reorganized after the Green River trip was foreclosed upon, heading to the Owyhee, one of the most remote rivers in the Lower 48. The Owyhee is known as the “Loneliest River in America,” and Oregonians proudly tout the Owyhee as the “Grand Canyon” of Oregon. Paddlers heading for the Owyhee

Loading up the shuttle rig at Birch Creek take-out.

Photo by Carol Krueger

can expect enchanting canyon scenery similar to that of the Colorado River, and geography reminiscent of Bryce and Zion National Parks.

In 1819, North West Company sent Peter Ogden to explore the area. Included in his group, were three Hawaiian trappers who were never heard of again after the expedition. The word Owyhee is old English

for Hawaii. The Shoshone and Bannock Indians inhabited the Owyhee watershed for thousands of years before the arrival of the white man. In 1863, the discovery of gold and silver in the area brought in a temporary influx of miners. The majority of mining camps have long since disappeared, although there are a few scattered ranches and farms in the area. Congress in 1984 designated 120 miles to be known as “The Owyhee Wild and Scenic River.”

We arrived at the put-in location of Rome, OR with an international emergency already on our hands. Peter had forgotten to mention a critical transaction to Marianne which desperately needed to be completed before we put in. To put the communication hurdle into context, recognize that Rome has a total population of five (not five hundred, five thousand or fifty thousand...just five). The entire Rome complex consists of three broken trucks, one dilapidated repair garage and one fully operational diner with two homes. The nearest real town is Nampa, ID, 94 miles away.

Now, how does one contact Germany from such a remote location? Cell phone? Nyet. Pay phone? Nein. Sat phone? Oops, didn’t bring that. Internet? Yes, thank goodness!



And they even had free wi-fi. Peter and Marianne busied themselves for the next 40 minutes while Carol and Dave prepared for the put-in and Keith, nonchalantly, ate ice cream (great buy for the location: \$3 for two scoops). Fortunately, the transaction was completed and now Peter and Marianne could relax.

While waiting for the rest of the group to show up, Carol happened to observe a group of hired shuttle drivers departing with their four wheeled charges to be delivered to their respective take-outs. She does a double take as she notices a Jeep Liberty towing a trailer drive-by. That just looks like her sister and brother-in-law's rig from Portland Oregon! It had been rumored that they had decided to cancel their Main Salmon River launch due to high water.



A tandem team, not a divorce boat: Carol and Dave Krueger on the Owyhee.
Photo by Keith Gale

Thinking a Monday late afternoon put-in would be non-competitive, we were surprised at how wrong we all were. Because of the high flows on the other major rivers, specifically the Middle Fork, Main, and the Lower Salmon Rivers in Idaho, the Owyhee, which is un-permitted, was inundated with floaters (remember, Boise is a two-hour drive away). The banks were overburdened not by high river flows

or river detritus, but by raft upon raft. The group next to us was friendly enough, trading the use of Keith's knife for a few bites of their watermelon—a cool delight in the sweltering heat.

Push off was almost 2 pm and we gently floated the first six uninspiring miles. This portion of the Owyhee is a false façade to the inner beauty of its geology. The

brisk current whisks us by hayfields and grazing cattle.

Lunch was on an island with a host: a good sized bull snake which was initially identified as a rattlesnake due to a seriously deterring sound it was making. The snake simply wanted the same sun that we did, and it took a pleasant, if stilted, negotiation to secure our lunch spot.



A sunset calm before the storm.
View from Ryegrass camp.
Photo by Keith Gale

WILDERNESS WHITEWATER

After a few hours, we entered the first canyon with two points of interest: Owyhee Butte and Little Owyhee Butte. The Owyhee River from Rome to Owyhee Reservoir cuts neatly through the strata of the Owyhee Plateau, beginning with the youngest rock — the Rome Beds—and ending with the oldest—the Sucker Creek Formation. To float downriver is in effect to travel progressively back in time, from rocks 10 million years old in Rome, to rocks 16 million years old at the reservoir. This amounts to a backward step in time of roughly 100,000 years with each river mile.

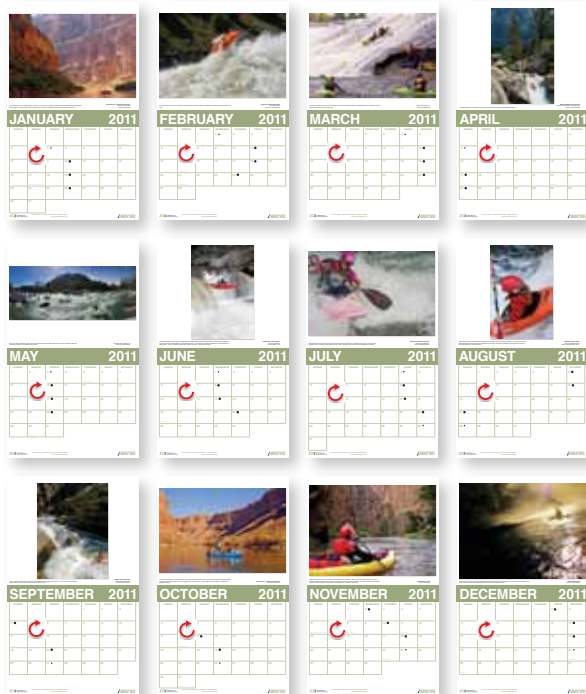
The river canyon opens up gradually, as more and more soft sediment is exposed along the banks. Lambert Rocks, some 25 miles downstream from the put-in, is a fantastically eroded monolith of great beauty. Part of what makes Lambert

Rocks so striking is a series of black lava flows that provide sharp contrast to the lighter colored lake sediments. Volcanism has lent other color and drama to Lambert Rocks, as well. As lava flowed rapidly over moist lake flats, clay in the muddy flats was baked by the intense heat, and turned into a natural, red brick. This brick layer is visible below each of the lava flows, and it is particularly resistant to erosion. Each of the picturesque columnar rock formations in the Lambert Rocks badlands is capped or armored by a layer of the brick. The hard, erosion resistant nature of the brick is in fact responsible for the columnar topography. After Whistling Bird Rapid (day three) the river takes an abrupt eastward turn into Green Dragon Canyon (a.k.a. Iron Point Canyon). Incredibly sheer walls make this canyon one of the most picturesque sections of the river. The rocks here are

predominantly banded rhyolite, and the varicolored pinks and grays characteristic of this rock are spectacular.

Keith, paddling his solo canoe, carried lunch for the group along with three MSR Whisper Light Stoves with cook set, and a new unopened one gallon can of fuel. The Krueger's carried the Scat Packer, nine gallons of water, the group's breakfasts, water filtration, and rain tarp. Marianne and Peter provided scrumptious German dinners, accompanied with German white wine and German chocolates for dessert. In addition to all of the group gear, there was all of the personal gear that had to be stowed someplace. Carol felt that the Krueger's were probably carrying an extra 60 pounds compared with previous raft support trips.

Membership Installment Plans!



Big support, small payments

Now, you can choose to pay for any \$250+ membership in four or twelve payments. It makes that \$750 Lifetime membership just \$62.50 a month. Easy as \$62 pie :)

New and renewing members:

americanwhitewater.org/join

Current members:

1-866-262-8429





A cool pinnacle overlooking the Owyhee.
Photo by Keith Gale

Our first night camp was just below the first canyon. While others were making camp, Keith attempted to ascend the far side of the river to a bluff that seemed to be an entrance to a canyon which feeds the Owyhee. He paddled across and went ashore. His first attempt up the creek from the canyon was thwarted by high brush. His second attempt was thwarted by itching nettle. His third attempt downstream was thwarted by...you get the picture. After determining that the far shore was impenetrable, he came back and swam with Marianne in the cool pleasant waters, drifting in the passing current.

The BLM River Ranger whom Carol and Keith had spoken to appeared suddenly. His group was taking inventory of the Golden Eagle aviaries in the area. After a pleasant discourse, he and companions were soon on their way. Peter and Marianne had made dinner in Las Vegas and kept it frozen until now—a remarkable feat of modern technology. Consisting of almost

Keith, Peter, Marianne, Dave and a loaded canoe.
Photo by Carol Krueger

authentic meatballs (only lacking in ground pork to moisten) and potato salad, the meal introduced us to the fine culinary talents of our international friends.

The next morning we awoke to some surprises. The first was a scorpion underneath the Krueger's tent and the second was a large track left behind by

what we collectively believe was a bear. The pads seemed too spread out for a feline, and much too large for a canine. Though our shuttle driver considered the geology/topography to be contra indicators, later, when we discussed it with him, that is our story and we are stickin' to it!

This section of the Owyhee River write up in the 1991 edition of "Oregon River Tours" states that there are only three Class III rapids: Whistling Bird, Montgomery, and Morcum or Rock Dam. This is correct, but in Carol's opinion, this edition definitely underrates the classification of the remaining nine named rapids as presented in the new 2011 version of the BLM Owyhee River map.

The first named rapid was Bull's Eye, so called because of a large rock right-of-center. The line right of the rock is impossible, so we focused our efforts on the left. There are several rocks on river left to either provide a pause or help you slow down to miss the pillow surrounding the Eye.

The next formation was Weeping Rock, which is a freshwater source literally coming out of the cliff band on river left.



WILDERNESS WHITEWATER

The spring water is welcomed, as the river is slightly contaminated with arsenic. The Weeping Rock spring poured forth with cool, clear, clean and refreshing replenishment. We refilled our water bottles and were set to depart when we spot a lone green raft across the river, separate from a large rafting contingent. Keith noted its separateness but only thought it was a small group of perhaps two or three individuals. We later learned that the individuals were involved in a life-flight extraction after one had dove into the river and severely lacerated his skull. They were able to hike out to the rim and contact emergency services in Boise (some 100 miles away) via cell phone to launch the air rescue.

We passed several more moderate rapids, Read It and Weep and Artillery, before coming to the first of two hot springs (river left). The water at the springs was quite warm, registering 109 degrees F on Keith's wrist computer. We decided to make camp about ¼ mile downstream of the springs. Keith did a quick hike to a bluff above the camp gaining perhaps 500 feet of elevation above the river. Peter and Marianne

reheated another pre-prepared delicious dinner—this time pork goulash, sauerkraut imported directly from Germany, and mashed potatoes. But the meal was not had without a struggle. First, the winds had picked up considerably, indicating a front was moving in. Trying to keep the stove lit was turning into a challenge. We became creative in our excavation and rock wall construction to create a windbreak. After struggling to keep Keith's first MSR stove lit, we switched to back up stove number two, and then number three, we finally came to the conclusion that we had a bad batch of new fuel. On the previous night, we had finally consumed the last of the old fuel in his tank, and now were using the new. Fortunately, after packing her food bag, Carol had enough room left over, and put in a one burner propane stove and propane tank. For once redundancy paid off!

The fair weather gave way to a storm that rolled in before dark. The thunder announced that our time of relaxation was over and we rushed about to secure the camp. Even though it packed some heavy winds and brought pockets of downpour, we had all experienced worse on the river,

and everyone was snug in bed by the time it hit with full force. Fortunately it was mostly gone by morning.

Even with the storm gone, we did wake to a dreary scene, with no sun and heavy clouds. We abandoned the hot meal to get on the river quickly. Fortunately, as the day progressed, the weather improved.

The geological highlights of the Owyhee were still ahead of us. Pruitt's Castle—a beautiful rhyolite fortress—then Lambert Dome, Chalk Basin, Bogus Creek Falls and Rinehart Falls.

At our flow, 1700 cfs, the Kruegers decided to line Whistling Bird, as their boat was sluggish with the amount of weight she was loaded with. Keith, Marianne and Peter did just fine bumping down the far left bank.

As we approached Montgomery Rapids, we decided we would scout it. Keith pulled off on river left and took his camera to capture the event and scout. Carol and Dave led off, and looked to have a safe and effortless run down the rapid without incident. Just as Keith cut away to capture

Entering Iron Point Canyon on the Owyhee River.
Photo by Keith Gale





Peter Bloch & Marianne Kube, our international olympian paddlers.
Photo by Carol Krueger

Peter and Marianne make their approach, the Krueger's caught a rock amidships and dumped over. Observation: Loaded boats don't respond quickly. Fortunately, they were at the end of the rapid and were able to get into the nearby eddy. It was a good spot for lunch and the sun warmed Carol as we ate, so all was well.

We all wished we had time to pull off at Jackson Creek and set up camp on its cool sandy bench. There are petroglyphs here, all around this camp. Whomever arrives here will find that they are not the first to see that this is a wonderful campsite. But, on the advice from the BLM office ranger, we had decided to take four days and three nights to paddle the 51 miles, taking out at Birch Creek, above the reservoir. Unfortunately, this itinerary left us no extra time to explore.

Big mistake!

Below here, was the final hot springs across from another relic from the past. This hot springs was upstream of the campsite by about ¼ mile on river left. It had more

Looking down stream of Bogus Falls, Owyhee River, OR.
Photo by Keith Gale

significant geological formations, and again was quite warm, at about 109 degrees.

On our last day we attempted to find Pothole Arch, our final field destination, on river left above the take-out. The two map-aholics on the trip, Keith and Carol were becoming frustrated as the BLM map and Keith's downloaded GPS map did not necessarily correspond with each other. Keith finally decided to do a 20-minute hike, checking out a slot canyon nearby. Upon his dejected return, we assembled to launch when suddenly we heard a loud "pzzzt." We searched for the source of the

sound and found that the inflatable canoe had burst a seam. Black rubber vs. hot sun, and a hot sun won. Undaunted, with only 1½ miles to go we reloaded the canoes with the gear from Peter and Marianne's canoe and headed downstream for the final mile.

The take-out is remote and subject to the interesting dilemma that a storm can close the road (and thus your egress) for days. Thus, part of your planning needs to account for at least one extra day of food. There are no bands or parties to greet you—the excitement must be self-contained, just like the rest of the trip. The take-out does offer a fine shady picnic area, though.

Carol had pre-arranged for a shuttle to take us from the take-out at Birch Creek back to the put-in at Rome. Our shuttle service was early, and we efficiently loaded gear atop the Chevy Suburban for the two-hour quiet ride to Rome. There are several interesting sites or vistas which are worth stopping for on the dirt road out to the main highway, and our shuttle driver shared a wealth of information about the local area.

The trip was excellent and we were disappointed we did not plan for a longer stay. An extra two or three days would make this trip ideal, and we plan to do the Owyhee again!





AIRE Rafts, Cataracts, Kayaks

AIRE

makes your

RIVER TIME

some of the best **TIMES** of your life

If you want a relaxing trip or have the skills to go huge, AIRE has the perfect raft to match your desired pace.

Whether you purchase a high performance PUMA series raft or an expedition sized round boat, you will experience the ultimate in USA craftsmanship, proven design and outstanding 10 year warranty.

www.aire.com

800-247-3432



Do they hit the rock?
Scan to find out!

BOARD ELECTIONS

AMERICAN WHITEWATER BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTIONS 2012

EACH YEAR AMERICAN Whitewater's membership elects board members. The following candidates are volunteering to serve three-year terms on the American Whitewater Board of Directors. Current AW members can cast their votes through mid-December. Vote for any or all of the four candidates on the American Whitewater website: www.americanwhitewater.org

Deadline for submitting electronic ballots is December 14, 2012. Thank you for your participation in this important election process.

Ed Clark



My passion for whitewater hit late but hard in 1997, since then I've been fortunate enough to make many friends on the river and spend time in some of the most amazing places on the planet because of paddling.

I originally joined AW to get a discount on my first boat, but since then I've been

consistently impressed by their efforts and accomplishments in river preservation. Unfortunately, I've also seen some fabulous places either threatened or destroyed by development or misguided "river restoration" work. Locally in Vermont I got involved trying to keep the bulldozers from channelizing everything in sight after Hurricane Irene last year and also worked with AW to add a Northeast stewardship position in memory of my friend Boyce Greer.

As a mostly retired Family Practice doc with grown children and lots of energy I look forward to trying to do my part as a board member to help AW succeed in its mission.

Susan Hollingsworth



Kayaking and rafting form the bridge between me and the world. It began during my first year as a raft guide on Pennsylvania's Lehigh River when I learned that a vast network of boaters spanned the continent. I soon ventured into other communities, traveling to experience new rivers in parts of the world I never thought I would visit. Every time, the boating

community made me feel at home. The thrill of kayaking and my love for our rivers evolved into my vehicle for developing other skills. I learned how to guide and teach as a whitewater instructor, I began writing for whitewater publications and blogs to better communicate ideas and issues within the boating community, and I taught high school science and history for the World Class Kayak Academy.

Most recently my relationship with rivers has turned toward conservation and stewardship. I took interest in the removal of Condit Dam immediately upon moving to the Columbia River Gorge, and quickly began representing the boating community at local stakeholder meetings and events. Through this experience I've begun working with Riverkeeper Alliance partners on water quality monitoring, writing more on conservation issues and looking toward a Masters degree in natural resource management.

It all began with the obsession to kayak as much as I possibly could and take in everything the river had to teach me. With each new river community I visited across the country, I grew more passionate about paddling new whitewater and connecting with the people who valued the river as much as I did.

Brian Jacobson



BOARD ELECTIONS

My paddling career began at age 15 as a result of an ill-fated trip in a Styrofoam sailboat, an unknown river, and a blown out dam. I was instantly hooked. I went to an outfitter and bought a boat, never having sat in a kayak before. Boating quickly became a key part of my life, both the river experience and the fellowship that developed with my paddling friends. I joined AW in 1976 mainly to get the Journal to read about exciting rivers around the country and the world. Over time my perspective expanded to appreciate the stewardship work by AW to protect river access and improve river management.

After a well spent youth as a raft guide and photographer on the Ocoee, Chattooga, and Gauley, I eventually completed college

and began a career as an environmental engineer. My work is generally cleaning up soil, groundwater, and preventing surface water impacts from the industrial practices of the 60s and 70s. My perspective is always guided by asking myself, "would I float the receiving stream" after the work is complete. Success often involves complex decisions involving the client, the regulator, project cost, and practical considerations. This work experience translates well to the challenges AW faces with its stewardship projects.

I became involved with AW as a volunteer in the 1990s on the Chattooga effort as AW started petitioning for access and study. My involvement grew with time and by 2005 I was immersed in the project and

came to fully appreciate the AW volunteer/professional model. The progress that has been made on the Chattooga helped me appreciate the successes AW is having on similar projects across the country. Within two hours of my house I can, or shortly will, be able to paddle the Cheoah, Tallulah, Upper Nantahala, and Tuckasegee as a result of AW's work.

Stewardship involves more than changing the operation of a dam or regulations of an agency. It involves changing local opinions, often on a person by person basis, and keeping the local paddling community involved in the process. I hope my service on the board will help AW continue to achieve the successes we are currently seeing on our rivers.

No more renewal notices!



Sick of renewal notices in the mail?

Sign up for auto-renewal on your AW membership and you'll never get another. Your membership won't lapse and you'll be helping us save our limited funds and trees!

New and renewing members:

americanwhitewater.org/join

Current members:

1-866-262-8429



Courtney Wilton



I started kayaking at an older age and fit the definition of “average recreational kayaker” pretty closely. While impressed with the skill and courage of those who boat Class V water, I mostly stick to Class III runs. I envy those who paddle 100+ days a year; I try to boat every weekend, but don’t always due to work and family responsibilities. I’m amazed at those who can surf well, but still struggle with the feeling of being upside down/underwater—and don’t always hit my roll. In short, I’m a pretty average boater.

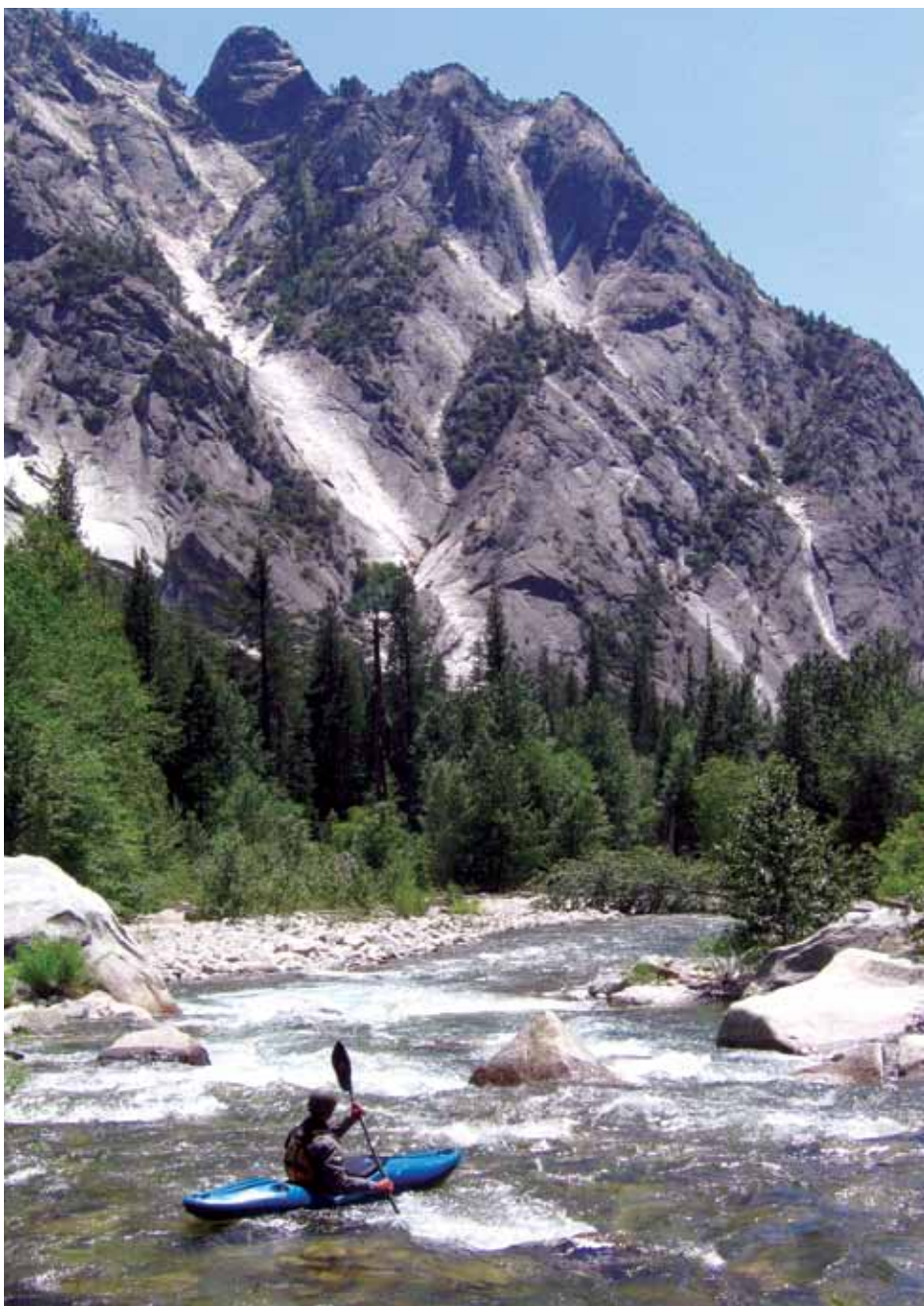
Despite my mediocrity I’m also pretty passionate about whitewater. For one, I’m continually amazed at the jaw-dropping beauty of the sport. Last weekend while kayaking the upper Klickitat in Washington our group rounded a corner and came upon an elk standing in the middle of the river. What an amazing sight! Who else has the opportunity to see such things! Two, I

AW’s Board helps guide the organization in the fulfillment of its mission, “to conserve and restore America’s whitewater resources and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely.”

love the excitement and still get pleasure out of playing back various runs—such as escaping disaster on Grand Canyon’s Lava Falls. What a rush! Three, I’m continually impressed with the people who are drawn to the sport. Kayaking isn’t easy. It requires perseverance, humility, decisiveness and a certain level of intrepidity. I’m inspired not so much by the feats of kayak superstars, but what I see as the wonderful

attitudes/combination of skills shared by so many “average Joe’s and Janes” who embrace the sport.

I think AW captures these values as well. With a limited staff and tight budget they continually do great things to preserve our rivers and our heritage. I’m happy to contribute to them in any way I can.



AW PARTNERS

\$20,000 - Class V



\$15,000 - Class IV

\$10,000 - Class III



\$7,500 - Class II



Fit for Adventure



SUBARU

\$5,000 - Boof



\$2,500 - Wave



PARTNER SPOTLIGHT



American Whitewater is supported by members, donors, foundations, and partners in the whitewater and outdoor industries. In each edition of the *Journal*, we highlight one such partner in this space. American Whitewater urges you not to make purchase decisions blindly. We hope you'll consider a company's commitment to river stewardship when making your next purchase.

Jackson Kayak was born in October of 2003 as a family owned business dedicated to making paddling better for everyone. In the time since then, the company has grown from a 730 square foot ex-laundromat to a nearly 100,000-square-foot facility in Sparta, TN.

More than just a manufacturer of whitewater products, Jackson Kayak is also a full service kayak company, offering flatwater boats, a full fleet of fishing kayaks and now on the SUP scene with the SUPERCHARGER for whitewater, SUPERFISHal for fishing and SUPERNATURAL for recreational activity.

What's more, Jackson Kayak backs up its product with a lifetime warranty on workmanship and frequently goes above and beyond the written warranty in case anything goes wrong. Customers of Jackson Kayak always have access to the president of this company, Eric Jackson, by emailing him at eric@jacksonkayak.com. How many companies do you know of that can say that?

Finally, and just as importantly, Jackson Kayak is a long-time supporter of AW. Jackson Kayak is a Class V sponsor, donating multiple boats to American Whitewater to use to encourage memberships, donations and volunteer participation. As an American Whitewater Partner, Jackson Kayak, lends its voice in support of our rivers everywhere.



Join



AMERICAN WHITEWATER Today!

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

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

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

Membership support is what will determine our ability to continue our river stewardship work in the years to come. Individual Annual Memberships are only \$35. If you are a member of your local paddling club and your club is an Affiliate Club member of AW, join as a Club Affiliate Individual for \$25. This is 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: _____

Name on card: _____

Signature: _____

ENDURING RIVERS CIRCLE

EARLIER THIS YEAR American Whitewater launched the Enduring Rivers Circle, a planned giving program for those who wish to embrace American Whitewater river stewardship efforts for the long-term by including AW as a provision in their will (bequest). The Enduring Rivers Circle was created exclusively to honor and recognize people who have helped to continue our river stewardship efforts through a gift to American Whitewater in their estate plans.

As an Enduring Rivers Circle member, donors receive special recognition to serve as a reminder of their ongoing commitment to river stewardship. Enduring Rivers Circle members join a ring of individuals who are making it possible for our children and future generations to experience for themselves the rivers that have coursed through our lives and made them so much richer. Enduring Rivers Circle members' commitments will be recognized publicly in the American Whitewater Annual Report, unless they prefer to give anonymously.

Estate Plans

What is a bequest? A bequest is a provision in your will or living trust that enables you to include a future gift to American Whitewater. Bequests may be general or designated for a specific project or purpose. If you would like to make a gift to American Whitewater while retaining control of and access to your assets during your lifetime, a bequest can help you achieve these goals.

What are the benefits of a bequest? A bequest is one of the simplest and most flexible ways to make a planned gift to American Whitewater. For example: You can leave a permanent legacy but defer payment of the gift until you no longer need the asset. There is no minimum amount. Bequests of all sizes are an important legacy to American Whitewater. You may choose how and when you want your bequest to be made from your estate. Your bequest may be made contingent upon whether other heirs and beneficiaries survive you. It's easy to alter an existing will or living trust to include a bequest to American Whitewater.

A bequest qualifies for an estate charitable deduction if your estate is taxable.

What are some of the options for planning a bequest? It's easy to shape a bequest that matches your goals. Here's how:

- Specify a fixed amount: Designate a specific dollar amount to be given to American Whitewater.
- Use a percentage: Naming a percentage of your estate to go to American Whitewater keeps the size of your gift in proportion to the size of your estate.
- Identify specific assets: You can give securities, real estate, and other property through your estate.
- Make an unrestricted bequest: An unrestricted bequest provides American Whitewater with the greatest flexibility. You make your gift available for general purposes,



Photo by Rok Sribar

allowing us to use it wherever the need is greatest.

- Make a restricted bequest: You provide a gift designated for a purpose that is most important to you.

What is the next step? If you have already arranged for a bequest or other planned gift, we would like to honor your support. Please notify American Whitewater Executive Director, Mark Singleton mark@americanwhitewater.org and become a member of the Enduring Rivers Circle. If you are still considering such a gift, let us know so we can help you and your advisors complete your gift in a way that benefits your estate and makes clear your intention to support American Whitewater river stewardship.

When you join the American Whitewater Enduring Rivers Circle, you demonstrate your commitment to rivers and help ensure the long-term strength of American Whitewater.



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 Blue Ridge Voyageurs, 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.

Blue Ridge Voyageurs is a whitewater paddling club from the Washington, DC area. Members of the club revel in the challenge, camaraderie, adventure, and natural beauty of whitewater paddling. The club offers trips at all skill levels from beginner to expert, with most trips in the intermediate to advanced levels. Club members have paddled virtually every whitewater stream in the Mid-Atlantic region, ranging from family/cruising trips on easier streams such as the Cacapon, Hughes and Cedar Creek, to expert-level runs on the Upper Gauley and the Upper Yough.

Club membership is an affordable \$15 annually for an entire family. If you've had whitewater paddling instruction and you would like to be taken down new rivers, please join us. Similarly, if you are a seasoned boater wishing to join a fun group that will gladly show you the more difficult rivers you've been wishing to paddle, then the BRV is the club for you! Check out the club's website at <http://www.blueridgevoyageurs.org/> to learn more.

Thank you Blue Ridge Voyageurs 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

California Floaters Society, Cameron Park
Chico Paddleheads, Chico
Gold Country Paddlers, Lotus
Guides House, Laytonville
Sequoia Paddlers, Forestville
Sierra Club Loma Prieta Paddlers, San Jose

Colorado

Avid4 Adventure Inc., Boulder
Grand Canyon Private Boaters Assn, Colorado Springs
Lower Dolores Boating Advocates, Dolores
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

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

Idaho

Idaho Whitewater Association, Boise

Indiana

Ohio Valley Paddlers, Evansville

Iowa

Iowa Whitewater Coalition, W. Des Moines

Kentucky

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

Louisiana

Sabine Whitewater Club, Lake Charles

Maine

Penobscot Paddle & Chowder Society, Troy

Maryland

Blue Ridge Voyageurs, Silver Spring
Mason Dixon Canoe Cruisers, Boonsboro
Monocacy Canoe Club, Frederick

Massachusetts

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

Minnesota

SCSU Outdoor Endeavors, Saint Cloud

Missouri

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

Montana

Butte-Anaconda River Runners, Butte

Nevada

Sierra Nevada Whitewater Club, Reno

New Hampshire

AMC New Hampshire Paddlers, Raymond
Ledyard Canoe Club, Hanover
Merrimack Valley Paddlers, Nashua
Mt. Washington Valley Paddlers, Intervale

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
St Lawrence University, Canton
Zoar Valley Paddling Club, Buffalo

North Carolina

Base Camp Cullowhee, Cullowhee
Carolina Canoe Club, Raleigh
Landmark Learning, Cullowhee
Triad River Runners, Winston-Salem
Western Carolina Paddlers, Asheville

Ohio

Columbus Outdoor Pursuits, Columbus
Keelhauler Canoe Club, Cleveland
Outdoor Adventure Club, Dayton
Toledo River Gang, Haskins

Oregon

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

S. Carolina

Foothills Paddling Club, Greenville
Palmetto Paddlers, Columbia

Tennessee

Appalachian Paddling Enthusiasts,
Limestone
Chota Canoe Club, Knoxville
East Tennessee Whitewater Club, Oak
Ridge
Tennessee Eastman Hiking and Canoeing
Club, Kingsport
Tennessee Scenic River Association,
Nashville
Tennessee Valley Canoe Club, Chattanooga

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

Blue Ridge River Runners
Coastal Canoeists Inc, Richmond
Float Fishermen of Virginia, Roanoke
Hollins Outdoor Program, 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

British Columbia

Thompson Rivers Univ Adventure Studies,
Kamloops
Vancouver Kayak Club, N Vancouver

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.



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



The world keeps getting smaller. Leave a small footprint.



Introducing the all-new 2013 XV Crosstrek. It's a natural choice for any direction you're headed. As the most fuel-efficient All-Wheel Drive crossover in America* with 33 MPG† and a Partial Zero Emissions Vehicle built in a zero-landfill plant, it'll take you more places, more responsibly than ever. Love. It's what makes a Subaru, a Subaru.



XV Crosstrek.™ Learn more at subaru.com

2013 Subaru XV Crosstrek models are certified as Partial Zero Emission Vehicles (PZEV). PZEV emissions warranty applies to only certain states. See dealer for complete information on emissions and new car limited warranties. *Based on JD Power crossover segmentation and US EPA fueleconomy.gov. †EPA-estimated hwy fuel economy for 2013 Subaru XV Crosstrek CVT models. Actual mileage may vary.

RECESS IS BACK



• ORIGINAL HYBRID •
FOOTWEAR, BAGS AND SOX



KEENFOOTWEAR.COM

Hybrid.care™

PROUD SUPPORTER OF
AMERICAN WHITEWATER

