



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NEW RIVER GORGE NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE
GAULEY RIVER NATIONAL RECREATION AREA
BLUESTONE NATIONAL SCENIC RIVER
104 Main Street
P.O. Box 246
Glen Jean, West Virginia 25846



IN REPLY REFER TO:

August 25, 2021

An Open Letter to Gauley River Boaters

Dear Boaters,

The staff of the Gauley River National Recreation Area (GARI) welcome you to the 2021 boating season. Gauley Season will begin this year on September 10th and run through October 17th.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact us globally, the NPS continues to work hard to balance public use and public health and safety. On August 16, 2021, the NPS updated its COVID-19 safety protocols based on new guidance from the CDC. Face masks are now required of all NPS staff and visitors, regardless of vaccination status, on buses or other modes of public transportation, in all NPS buildings, and in outdoor areas where social distancing of six feet cannot be maintained. These regulations will be in place until rescinded or updated. The most current COVID-19 information can be found on the Park's website at www.nps.gov/gari.

The Gauley Tailwaters Campground is currently open and will remain open for Gauley Season with the following COVID-19 modifications:

- Due to the close proximity of the campsites and the inability to social distance, all campers will be required to wear a mask when in the campgrounds, unless they are physically in a tent or RV/travel trailer.
- No visitors will be allowed in the campgrounds at any time.

Failure to comply with COVID-19 safety precautions may result in a citation, removal or closure of the campgrounds. Other campgrounds regulations that will continue to be enforced are:

- No more than eight (8) people per campsite with no more than two vehicles and two tents.
- Quiet hours are from 10 pm to 6am.
- Pets will be restrained or on a leash of six (6) feet or less.

Rangers will be providing regular patrols of the campground to register campers and enforce regulations.

The river access points will operate much like in the past with few changes:

- At Masons Branch, parking is limited and quickly fills to capacity. The access road will be closed when the parking lot fills up. The access road will reopen sometime around 1 pm.
 - For the 2021 season, American Whitewater is once again leasing the Legg field (above Mason's Branch) for overflow boater parking. Camping in the field is prohibited.
- Parking at Wood's Ferry is limited and may fill to capacity, so boaters are asked to park close together in an organized fashion. The upstream end of Wood's Ferry is used for





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dropping off and picking up boats and gear and not for parking during the day. Unattended vehicles parked at the upstream end will be towed.

- The take-out at upper Swiss is the only lower Gauley public take-out within the recreation area. Parking is available to boaters in the field. There is no camping in the field or at the boat launch.

Hills to Hills Tours and Shuttles will be providing shuttle services again this year. This is the only shuttle service authorized by the NPS to operate. Boaters should beware of other uninsured shuttle services that are charging fees and operating in violation of park regulations. To arrange for a shuttle, contact Hills to Hills Tours and Shuttle at <https://www.hillstohills.com> or call 304-640-8122.

NPS river patrols will continue as in the past. Rangers and their patrol boats will be equipped to provide search and rescue, emergency medical services, and basic visitor assistance. In the event of an emergency, Rangers or other emergency personnel may request a flow reduction from the Summersville Dam. Rangers will once again be using a sign and signal protocol to help prevent boaters from becoming stranded due to the drop in water level. An emergency will be posted on the American Whitewater and Gauley River NRA website.

The area of the Gauley River NRA known as the "Gauley Rail Grade" crosses numerous parcels of land owned by private landowners and the NPS. While the rail grade has never been designated as a road or a trail, over the years it has been used illegally by vehicles to access the area. Effective January 1, 2022, the National Park Service will no longer allow off road vehicle (ORV) travel on the portions of rail grade owned by the NPS. If you have used this rail grade for motor vehicle access in the past you will need to make other arrangements for 2022.

As Gauley Season planning efforts progress, information will be posted on the Park's website at www.nps.gov/gari and the information will be shared through partnering organizations such as American Whitewater. As in years past, we appreciate all of the private boater cooperation that helps to make the Gauley Season safe, exciting, and memorable for everyone.

Sincerely,

Carmen Chapin, Superintendent
New River Gorge National River
Gauley River National Recreation Area
Bluestone National Scenic River

