



# AMERICAN WHITEWATER

Conservation • Access • Events • Adventure • Safety

BY BOATERS FOR BOATERS  
January / February 2007

# Wilderness RIVER RUNNING

**A Romantic Mexican  
Misadventure**

**Canoeing in Big Bend**

**Rafting the Yaak**

**A High Water Self  
Support Trip on the Taku**

**Plus ...  
The Philosophy of  
Mountain Water**





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# AMERICAN WHITEWATER

**A VOLUNTEER PUBLICATION PROMOTING RIVER CONSERVATION, ACCESS AND SAFETY**

## American Whitewater Journal

January / February 2007 - Volume #47 - Issue #1

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*Kyle McCutchen in awe of the Muddy Chute*  
Photo by Evan Stafford



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# Purpose American Whitewater

## River Stewardship: An Integrated Approach

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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# Executive Director The Journey Ahead

## Colorado Stewardship

By Mark Singleton

It's not everyday that Buena Vista, Colorado is the site of a nationally significant meeting. But late last year a group of committed Colorado boaters gathered on the banks of the Arkansas River with AW stewardship staff to discuss the specific needs and unique challenges Colorado rivers and recreational water use face in the state. This working group included members of the industry, retailers, athlete ambassadors, local politicians, outfitters and water rights advocates. The goal of the meeting was to open the dialog with individuals already active in Colorado to develop a common vision for improving the public's rights to enjoy whitewater rivers and for protecting those rivers from negative environmental impacts. Together we explored ways that American Whitewater can enhance and contribute to the collective goals of the whitewater community and play a strong leadership role in Colorado river stewardship.

Colorado has a large population of whitewater boaters and a significant tourism component linked to whitewater boating. Paddlers are currently recreating on over 180 whitewater runs in the state, and at least seven whitewater parks. From high alpine steep creeks to big desert float trips, Colorado offers superb rivers for paddlers of every ability level. This amazing state has embraced whitewater recreation as part of its outdoor recreation culture. Unfortunately, it has some of the weakest laws in the nation protecting flows and the public's right to float rivers. Paddlers are in a unique position to advocate for river conservation and access initiatives that will benefit local communities, wildlife, river ecosystems and the citizens of Colorado.

Overarching topics discussed at the meeting included:

Recreational in-channel diversions (RICDs): Colorado water rights provide the ability to divert water for beneficial use. In the late 1990s the community of Golden built a whitewater park that is widely recognized as an economic benefit for businesses in the town. Structures associated with the whitewater park "divert" water for beneficial use (in this case, recreation) and provide the local community with an economic benefit as an outdoor recreation attraction. The community applied for a water right to protect its investment in the park and protect flows required for recreational use. This approach is being used to protect flows at other whitewater parks in Vail, Breckenridge, Gunnison County and Chaffe County. The Durango community is currently in the process of trying to secure an RICD for their park.

Water allocations and withdrawals: The State Water Supply Initiative (SWSI) moves water out of the state's western drainages to feed the needs of growing urban centers on the east slope. Important discussions are happening now that could have a significant impact on how the state gets plumbed with a direct impact on recreation and the environment. Currently, the state is looking at a 20% gap in meeting demand on the Front Range in 2030 when population is predicted to increase from 4.3 to 7.1 million people. The whitewater boating community needs to be actively represented at basin roundtables that are in progress across the state.

Public enjoyment of Colorado rivers



and streams: With both an increasing number of paddlers and the opening up of new whitewater runs, land managers in the state face challenges in meeting demand for these recreational attributes. In addition, Colorado has some of the weakest laws in the nation protecting the public's right to float rivers.

These overarching topics of discussion demonstrate the need for an increased AW presence in the state to represent the interests of whitewater boaters. The very future of water is at stake as Colorado provides leadership to the rest of the country in water use and allocation issues. To succeed on these issues, American Whitewater is committed to placing a staff member in Colorado to work with community leaders and boaters to craft a future that embraces the recreational, economic and environmental benefits of appropriate water policy for the state. To view a copy of the position posting, please visit the AW web site: [www.americanwhitewater.org](http://www.americanwhitewater.org).

# Letters to the Editor

**Editor's Note:** Below is a reply to a Letter to the Editor written by Barbara Brown in the November/December issue of *American Whitewater*. The letter was critical of an expedition on Idaho's Marsh Creek that encountered a very serious log hazard. Kerry Walsh was the author of a story about that expedition that ran in the September/October issue of *American Whitewater*.

Barbara,

I guess you have to trust me when I say that we really were on our game when we launched on Marsh Creek. Our plan included hand and whistle signals along with adequate spacing of the boats. We checked with the rangers just before launch and the river had a clean bill of health. Scouting every blind corner on Marsh Creek is impractical if not impossible. The only reason the one kayaker was able to stop is because he saw the carnage of the rafts in front of him. Had he been in the lead he would most likely have hit the log.

Here's a little story that may help you understand the nature of the location.

Our incident happened in May 2005. It instantly became a hot topic amongst the boaters in the Pacific Northwest. Aerial photos, topo maps and GPS coordinates were posted to websites heavily used and relied upon by those of us involved in the Northwest boating scene. As May 2006 loomed, the topic picked up again, since the Middle Fork is a popular early season run. New aerial photos were taken which showed the log firmly in place, right where we left it. On May 11 one of the frequent visitors to the website actually called me to let me know he was launching the next day and he picked my brain for any extra information I might have about the log.

On May 12th he and his crew, equipped with GPS and all manner of data, launched on Marsh Creek. They stopped at exactly the right spot to scout the corner and the log. They bushwhacked to the trail and hiked downriver until they spotted my frame in the brush on the other side of the river. No sign of the log. Relieved,

they hiked back to their boats, hopped onboard and shoved off. About 100 yards downriver, guess what? They ran into the log and swam! The point is that this location is tough and will fool you. We will never run this corner again without careful scouting.

That particular log is no longer a problem. But others will appear and running Marsh Creek and every other mountain river will always require extreme care.

SYOTR,  
Kerry Walsh

**Adversity on the River**

**Marsh Creek Strainer: How To Drain The Testosterone Out of Ten Men in Three Seconds**

By Kerry Walsh

Had been (1) — chose a state of extreme confusion and disorder

Standing atop this green, rolling hill on the outskirts of Garden Valley, Idaho, I couldn't help but recall the events that had unfolded two days before while running down Marsh Creek on what was to be the one of an eight day rafting trip. My friend, whitewater guide Steve White, and I were on our way home to our families. We were a little light on gas, but grateful to be alive.

Standing on this peaceful hilltop, looking across the green valley toward the steep slopes of the South Fork Payette, we were struck by the fact that one fact was the final vesting piece of Dr. Vishnu Blackadar. During the 1970s, he was known to most folks, because a whitewater legend when, in his mid thirties, he took up the sport of kayaking and, at the ripe old age of 48, made a solo kayak descent through infamous Turnback Canyon on the Ahik River in southwestern Alaska. As a doctor based in Salmon, Idaho, Walsh traded the annual tarring his patients and used the opportunity to run all the whitewater that Idaho had to offer—and then some.

Walsh's life ended in May of 1978 when he and some friends kayaked the Canyon section of the South Fork Payette. About 112 miles below "Big Falls," a mandatory portage even today, he rounded a bend and encountered a log strainer where he was waggled and drowned. Today the rapid is called "Blackadar" or "Walsh's Drop" and is marked by a brass plaque attached to a rock just above the drop. The river now runs in the Garden Valley Flume Canyon beneath a beautiful river rock bridge, facing toward the river that claimed him.

I had a hard time reconciling the fact that

we had been here just three days ago with Mike Howell, another boater on the trip, unexpectedly on our way to the Middle Fork of the Salmon. Steve, having recently read the Blackadar biography by Ben Waters, had been recounting some stories about the man. We made several trips and looked down on the river, reconstructing the chain of events that ended so tragically. Little did we know that we would soon have our own story to tell.

For several years Steve has called with a great group of very experienced whitewater boaters from around the West. The de facto leader of this group was Mike Blackstrom, a northern California boater with an impressive rafting resume. This year Steve asked my name in the trip and Mike had invited me to join the group on an early season Middle Fork trip.

The only person in the group that I knew going in was Steve, but as the trip was organized and things gelled, I'd come to realize that Mike was likely the single most organized trip leader I had ever met. He had a firm and impressive grip on the people, the skills, the gear allocation

and the trip itself. Things came together smoothly as we moved toward our launch date of May 23, 2005.

Marsh Creek runs in an early season put-in when road conditions do not allow access to Boundary Creek, the usual put-in. Many boaters prefer to launch on Marsh Creek if the water levels are high enough just because it adds another order of magnitude to the already spectacular Middle Fork. Putting on at Marsh Creek also offers one the unique chance to run a river from beginning to end. A little more than seven miles downstream, this little meandering creek, barely wide enough to float a boat, becomes the Middle Fork of the Salmon which, on its journey to the Main Salmon River, is the crown jewel of whitewater rivers.

In the days leading up to our launch, Mike had monitored the river and road conditions closely, updating us daily. The Boundary Creek road reports were pretty

Photo by Mike Blackstrom

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September/October 2006

www.americanwhitewater.org

Dear American Whitewater,

In the September/October 2006 issue of American Whitewater Sue Taft states that Herbert Rittlinger should be credited with “the first descent of the Amazon from its source to the ocean”.

Rittlinger was an important pioneer and did some amazing early first descents in South America and elsewhere, but I believe investigation will show that a continuous descent from source to the sea of the Amazon, as currently defined, is not one of them. The longest tributary of the Amazon (“source”) is now known to be the Apurimac River. Prior to our 1975 Apurimac Kayak Expedition, former AWA director and president J. Calvin Giddings researched the history of navigation of this river very carefully and found that the steep, upper canyons had never been previously explored. Our expedition (documented in Giddings’ book, *Demon River Apurimac*) started well down from the 17,000+ foot source and ended in the Peruvian jungle, well short of the Atlantic Ocean, but was first to navigate the most difficult steep section including the Chasm of Acobomba. Coming a decade later and documented in National Geographic was the Amazon Source to Sea Expedition, which claimed a first descent of the river as a whole (National Geographic failed to mention the Giddings expedition in that article, even though they were well aware of it, having contributed in small part to its sponsorship—and even though the vast majority of the pictures in their spread were from the difficult whitewater section we pioneered).

I know that Rittlinger did first descents on at least parts of the Maranon, and that in his day, that tributary was considered the Amazon’s longest, a possible source of confusion.

Jim Sindelar  
(former AWA Exec. Director and member of Cal Giddings’ 1975 Apurimac Kayak Expedition)

Jim,

*In response to your concerns with my description of Herbert Rittlinger’s solo descent of the Amazon in 1936 and 1937 as a “first descent” (AW Journal, Sept-Oct 2006, One of Our Best Kept Little Secrets):*

*The use of term “first descent” comes with all kinds of booby-traps since it can mean different things to different people. Interestingly, the actual mountain source was not confirmed until the year 2000 using satellite navigation as the Nevado Mismi (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/1071838.stm>). Five tributaries, the Apurimac, Huallaga, Mantaro, Marañon and Urubamba-Vilcanota, are now considered the source of the Amazon.*

*To be correct, Rittlinger’s descent was not continuous but did include two tributaries, the Marañon and Huallaga, from approximately 13,500 feet to the ocean in a folding kayak. Cal Giddings’ 1975 Apurimac expedition used fiberglass kayaks and as you indicate, “started well down from the 17,000+ foot source.” It ended in the Peruvian jungle, well short of the Atlantic Ocean, but was first to navigate the most difficult steep section including the Chasm of Acobomba.*

Sincerely,  
Sue Taft

Dear American Whitewater,

I am writing to express my strong support for continued releases on the Feather River. As a trained scientist (chemistry and biochemistry), I am truly astonished at the bizarre “scientific” studies and recommendations that so completely ignore any evidence that does not support the foregone and surprising conclusion that natural flow on the Feather River is detrimental to it!

I hope that facts will ultimately trump lies and misrepresentations and that this jewel will remain open to boaters.

Linda Day  
Houston, Texas



# News & Notes

## Students Experience Chemistry on the River

By Michelle Yates

The world is a laboratory and chemistry students at New River Academy get to experience it first hand. Science teacher, Brendan Kelley, is facilitating a semester long experiment examining chemical characteristics of different rivers throughout the United States, Canada, and Costa Rica. These students intend to compare the levels of pollutants of these rivers to test for effects of human influences, such as agriculture and industry.

Thus far, Kelley and the students have collected samples from the Ottawa, Black, New, and Gauley rivers. Last Wednesday, Kelley brought his class on a field trip to the Fayette Station rapids to sample the New River.

"It was nice to get a hands-on experience and to get away from the books," explained Sam Fulbright, a student in Kelley's chemistry class. The class intends to sample five to eight rivers next quarter when the school makes its way down to Costa Rica for six weeks.

"It will be interesting to compare the rivers in Costa Rica to the ones in the United States because the sanitation laws are different," commented Kelley.

This experiment is testing the levels of a variety of things, including bacteria, chlorine, phosphates, and dissolved oxygen. Since samples are only taken once from each river, trends will not be apparent. For this reason, the experiment will solely compare chemical levels of the various rivers. Kelley emphasized that the objective is not to test for pollutants in general, for there are varying degrees of chemicals that occur naturally, but rather for extreme levels.

"If we find abnormal levels of nitrates, for instance, then it might explain increased

levels of algae productivity," said Kelley.

So far Kelley and his students have not drawn any major conclusions from their findings. The levels of oxygen, bacteria, and phosphates, for example, have all been about the same regardless of the river the sample was taken from. The class is enthusiastic about the continuation of this project throughout the duration of the semester.

"This experiment has a greater impact on us because we are physically conducting it, we aren't reading about it from a book in a classroom," Fulbright explained.

## Ladies on the Lower G Raises \$450.00 for AW!

By Anna Levesque

Nothing beats a great day on the river ... except for a great day on the river that also raises money for a great cause! Ladies on the Lower G is hosted by North American River Runners and sponsored by Girls at Play and Kokatat. This year, a group of 15 women got together on the Lower Gauley to kayak one of the best rivers in the Mid Atlantic, meet new friends and relax (shuttle and lunch were included!). Each participant paid \$30.00 and every penny went straight to American Whitewater for a total donation of \$450.00! Thanks to all of the participants and to Kathy Zerkle and Brian Jennings from NARR, and Eleanor Perry and Kasey Ankney from Dagger Kayaks for donating their time. The event was such a success that Girls at Play plans to make it an annual part of Gauley Fest. So don't forget to look for the Ladies on the Lower G event each year on the Friday before Gauley Festival. We hope to see you next year!



*Michelle is the winner of the 2006 American Whitewater/Huge Experiences essay scholarship contest. She is a junior attending New River Academy from Bainbridge Island, Washington. Her other hobbies include soccer, biking and running. Kayak programs Michelle has attended include DeRiemer Adventure Kayaking and Otterbar. To read more of Michelle's reports surf to [www.kayakschool.org/ahe/news/students/michelle.html](http://www.kayakschool.org/ahe/news/students/michelle.html).*



*The ladies with big smiles after a fun, wet day on the Lower Gauley*

photo by Matt Solomon





*Seth loving the Grand Canyon*

photo by Judy Epstein

## The First Oxygen Assisted Descents of the Dead, Kennebec and Grand Canyon

By John Mudano

In this day and age it is the extreme athlete who graces the pages of periodicals and garners recognition for completing amazing feats. In our society the common man doing the uncommon is often overlooked entirely. Seth Kallman is a common man and he is dying.

I first met Seth when he picked me up hitchhiking back to the put-in at the Deerfield, many years ago. His van stunk of wet polypro and neoprene and he gladly brought me and a bunch of other stragglers back to our vehicles. The second time I met Seth was on my first trip to the Kennebec. We hit it off—especially since I had Top Ramen in my food box and he had pork chops. I made dinner and Seth led me down the river that weekend, starting a close relationship that has spanned more than 12 years.

This spring Seth was diagnosed with IPF (idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis), a fatal lung disease. When he called me and told me I was shocked and devastated. I heard fear in Seth's voice for the first time. Neither of us was ready for our paddling days together to be over, and thanks to Seth's tenacity they weren't. Seth had signed up for a kayaking trip down the Grand Canyon with Jim Michaud and he was determined to make it. He sent his doctor a photo of himself dropping into a hole on the Deerfield and tried to explain to him the type of lifestyle he wanted to

continue to lead. The doctors prescribed pulmonary rehab, exercise and oxygen. With a little nudging, they understood the kind of man Seth was.

In order to complete the trip he was going to have to get on some big water with an oxygen bottle. Seth contacted Jon Baker, our good friend and industrial designer, and asked him to modify his PFD (an original design of Jonathan's). Jon flew in from Oregon and manufactured and attached a pocket that would hold a small O2 bottle. The boat, a fiberglass Sleek, was modified to hold a larger bottle between Seth's legs.

We decided to hit the second 7000 cfs release of the spring on the Dead River and also get a day in on the Kennebec. We arrived at the put-in with another good friend of ours, Bob Berliner, and Seth got his apparatus organized. We hoped it would work since the Dead is a long day and walking out makes it incredibly long. As we put in, Seth looked like a Navy Seal with his O2 bottle strapped diagonally across his chest. I am always nervous whenever I start a run; Seth never was before that morning.

We agreed we would all take it easy—a little surfing—and just try to finish the run without Seth taking a long swim. It did not take Seth long to abandon that attitude and he was soon surfing up a storm in his Sleek. He would turn up the oxygen to surf, and then turn it back down. Raft guides and fellow paddlers were amazed at his courage and attitude. The typical response after Seth told them what was going on was, "that is too cool, the fact that you are paddling."

Seth is the kind of person who helps others rise to and surpass their potential. Whether it is mentoring a young paddler (like Jonathan) or convincing me that I could run Crystal on the bottom Moose (I had a blast!), he gets people to move beyond their comfort zone and discover their true potential. He has brought the

same attitude to his illness.

We finished the run on the Dead after changing oxygen bottles and had a phenomenal time on the Kennebec the next day. Seth spent the next week paddling the Contoocook (on O2) and feeling great.

We spoke before I left for a trip on the Allagash, since he was leaving for the Canyon while I would be away. He was feeling confident and was excited to paddle. I thought of him often over the next few weeks and got a call from him as he was speeding through Arizona and I was preparing for a mountaineering trip. Afterward, I heard that his trip was phenomenal and that he ran every drop. Not surprisingly, Seth also ran into Dr. Michael Gray of Benson, Arizona, one of the two IPF experts in the county (in the Grand Canyon!). Seth always has a kind word for everyone he meets. Everywhere we paddle—whether it's the Moose, Ottawa, Dead, Kennebec, Rouge, Contoocook and everywhere in between—we manage to bump into someone Seth knows. He has sent tissue samples to Dr. Gray and is optimistic about the future.

Now Seth continues to work and paddle and is the model for oxygen-assisted exercise. At the behest of his doctor, he speaks to groups of patients in his situation. Seth is living proof of what determination and a great attitude can accomplish. As I sit here in the Canadian Rockies finishing this article I am looking forward to paddling the Kennebec once again this fall with my good friend. He is a common man, but that's exactly why so many people respect him.

# News & Notes




## Canoe Event Planned for Spring

This spring the Smokey Mountains will see more than their usual whitewater plastic hatch. Between March 9 & 18, whitewater canoeists from all over North America will gather in Lenoir City, Tennessee to meet, greet, teach, learn, try and buy boats, party and most importantly paddle some of America's classic open canoe whitewater rivers. The location is centered between the legendary streams of the Cumberland Plateau and the outstanding whitewater of the Tennessee tributaries and within an hour of some of the South's greatest runs.

The event, as yet unnamed, is the result of conversations among several veteran single bladders who were seeking ways to inspire renewed interest in whitewater canoeing. Mike "Louie" Lewis is the spiritual leader and unofficial host of the event. Louie, infamous for his Class V paddling and his unique approach to Tennessee English, said "we wanted to knit the canoe community closer and also let newer paddlers know how much fun whitewater swimming—errrr, paddling—can be."

A number of expert boaters have already agreed to conduct workshops, teach clinics, and lead trips on every level of water from Class II to class heinous. Clinic offerings are expected to include technique, gate running, playboat, creeking as well as boat outfitting and repair. World Champion canoe play boater Eli Hebert expressed support and pointed out that, "this will be a chance to paddle with and learn from the legends of our sport."

Esquif Canoe Company has committed to bring several of their latest whitewater offerings for demo and sale. Other manufacturers are also expected to attend.

"The greatest attraction though will be that which has always brought us here; the Cumberland Plateau and the Smokey Mountain runs. It will be fun to see and hear the greats of our sport, but the best will be paddling the Plateau again," said Al Grieve of Ontario, Canada. The paddling will include harder runs but much of the emphasis will be on moderate level paddling. "There is nothing better for our sport than to take new people down (Tennessee's) Clear Creek," said Missouri's Chris Kelly. 


*For more information go to [cBoats.net](http://cBoats.net) or contact Mike Lewis ([boatlouie@Bellsouth.net](mailto:boatlouie@Bellsouth.net)) or Chris Kelly ([Ckelly1022@aol.com](mailto:Ckelly1022@aol.com)).*



photo by Mark Scantlebury





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# Safety First

## Clipping In

By Eric Nies

It's day two for our group of kayakers on the Rubicon River, a classic overnight run in the California Sierras. We are portaging yet another wall-to-wall hydraulic, and this time it's a high up-and-around portage on some sketchy rock. So we break out the ropes, first to pull the boats up the side of the canyon a hundred feet or so, and then to traverse the boats downstream across 50 feet of steep, moss-covered slabs.

The set-up for the traverse is simple: I clip two ropes into the bow grab loop of a boat; one rope goes to me at the start of the traverse, and the other goes to my buddy Dave, who has scrambled across the slabs and has a solid position on a good ledge, out of sight and around a corner. I pay out slack, and manly Dave pulls it in at his end, hand over hand.

The first two boats slide across the slab nice and easy. I clip the 'biners into Boat Number Three, and, as I nudge the boat off my stance, I remember thinking that something looks a bit funny. Sure enough, instead of gently settling onto the lines, the boat falls off my ledge, comes loose of my rope, and takes off like a shot. I am left with a line with a 'biner still on the end, attached to nothing.

To this day, I'm still not sure how this happened. My best theory is that the carabiner gate was against the boat, and that the boat rotated and pushed the carabiner open. Of course, it may have just been that I was in a hurry and didn't clip in right. In any case, before I can even shout, the boat swings hard onto Dave's rope and careens across the rock. Dave somehow manages to hang on to his line with a minimum of rope-burn. How he and the boat don't both end up in the river, I'll never know.

This story reminds me of several points. First, ropework is dangerous. Second, carabiners can fail, by breaking, by opening unexpectedly, or by making us think that something is solid when it isn't. Lastly, I have to admit that I have set up some

sketchy rope systems on the river that no self-respecting climber or caver would touch. Maybe I should do better.

## Locking Carabiners Are Good

My old buddy Tom Jones designed mountaineering and climbing gear for Black Diamond before he became obsessed with technical canyoneering. His idea of fun is groveling through miles of claustrophobic crud, then rappelling 200 feet down a waterfall into a pool of more crud. All he uses is locking carabiners. He puts it succinctly: "Use a non-locking carabiner for anything you are willing to lose." (See his excellent gear discussion at <http://canyoneeringusa.com/utah/tech/biner.php>).

I cringe when I think back on all the times I've trusted my boat (or my skin) to a single non-locking carabiner. I think my habit in this regard comes from my rock climbing days, when I used one regular 'biner to protect a move, and then another 10 feet later, and then another, and then another. In reality the whole chain of carabiners made a redundant and robust system, but it felt like I was trusting my butt to a single 'biner each time. This feeling of trust in a single carabiner was something I got comfortable with, especially since nothing bad ever came of it (until I almost lost Dave's boat on the Rubicon). Since I've looked into this, though, I've found plenty more stories of the mystery 'biner that just came undone. Believe me, it happens.

This is why cavers, canyoneers, and rescue squad folks use big fat locking carabiners almost exclusively. And this is why rock climbers use lockers (or doubled non-lockers) for rappels, belays, and other situations where redundancy is lacking. I think that there's a message to boaters here. The simple setups we use the most (like my boat traverse story above) typically have little or no redundancy. If a

single carabiner fails, then the whole system can fail, sometimes spectacularly. My near miss with Dave convinced me—I'm switching to lockers.

The downside to locking carabiners is that they are a tad heavier and more expensive. Also, the locks can jam with sand, and can even rust shut, given enough time. After one bad scare, though, I'm happy to deal with this. Also, they are a bit more cumbersome to use. I've decided, though, this is a good thing. The extra time it takes me to clip and lock the carabiner forces me to slow down for just a moment and double-check what I am doing.

Two kinds of lockers are available, the old screw-type, and the newer kind with spring-loaded easy-close twist locks. For the river, the way to go is screw-type. They are cheaper, less prone to jamming from sand and muck, and easier to clean. There are many excellent products on the market now, but if you want a brand name, check out the Petzl Attache screw-gate, which is used in the pictures here (yes, I paid retail for it).

Doubled non-lockers, with the gates reversed, are usually as good as lockers. If you must use a single non-locker, carefully orient the gate and adjust your line lengths so that nothing is likely to push the gate open. It's worth noting, also, that non-lockers come in two flavors: straight-gate and bent-gate. In general, avoid bent-gates unless you are a gear ninja. The gates are designed to catch on stuff—good for making a desperate clip on a rock climb, but usually bad for rescue. The one place a bent gate is nice is on the end of the tow tether from your rescue PFD, but you should recognize that this 'biner will be more prone to opening accidentally as well.



Three-way death load.  
Do not do this, even with a locking carabiner.

## How to Break a Carabiner

Carabiners usually break when they are loaded incorrectly. The obvious way to do this is to load the 'biner sideways across the gate. Less obvious, but just as bad, is the three-way death load (see Photo 1). Never do this. Another way to abuse a carabiner is to load it while the gate is open. Surprisingly, most carabiners lose more than half their strength when the gate isn't fully closed--another reason to go with the locker. Lastly, avoid any situations that could bend the carabiner sideways (see Photo 2). Remember, the load on the carabiner should pull cleanly along the long axis. Ideally, nothing even touches the body of the carabiner.

A new carabiner, properly loaded, easily holds two tons. If the 'biner is visibly worn, dented, or cracked, it will hold less. Skinny, ultra-light carabiners wear out faster. This gives us yet another reason to buy lockers, which are typically fat and beefy. Skinny 'biners also put a tighter bend and more stress on whatever rope they are clipped to. Another reason to go with a heavy duty locker.

A matter of debate in rock climbing circles is what to do with dropped carabiners. In one camp are the paranoids, who worry over the invisible internal cracks that theoretically weaken a dropped carabiner, even if it looks fine. These folks throw away any 'biner that has taken a fall of even a few feet onto stone. In the other camp are the gear-trusters. They have faith that the alloys in carabiners are tough enough to handle a little abuse. This view is supported by Chris Harmston, the former quality assurance manager for Black Diamond:

I have test-broken hundreds of used, abused, and dropped 'biners (even some that fell 3000 ft. from the top of the Salathe Wall on El Capitan). Never have I noticed any problem with these unless there is obvious visual damage to the 'biner. While somewhat reassuring, this does not give you carte blanche to use carabiners that have

been dropped a significant distance. Immediately retire any carabiner that is crooked, has deep indentations, or has a gate that doesn't operate smoothly.

Sounds like good advice to me. For more discussion on this, check out these websites:

[www.blackdiamondequipment.com](http://www.blackdiamondequipment.com)  
[www.petzl.com](http://www.petzl.com)

## Lowering Boats

Every now and again I throw my rope to a swimmer. Occasionally I set up a Z-drag or some other funky rescue deal. Mostly, though, I use my rope on portages, usually to lower the boat around something. The set-up is typically low-tech: clip a rope into the boat, feed out rope (hand-over-hand or maybe with a body belay), and slide the boat down the hill or off the ledge.

As simple as this is, I have seen it go bad. I have seen grab loops break, carabiners fail, knots come untied, and boats dropped for no particular reason, instantly becoming 50-lb missiles bouncing down the hill straight towards someone's kidney. For this reason, the first rule of lowering is DON'T GET HIT BY THE BOAT. If you are at the bottom, stay aware of what's happening above you, keep your helmet and PFD on for protection, and stay out of the fall line when boats are being lowered.

If possible, move boats away from the hill once they are down, so that folks can fiddle with their boats in relative safety. If you are at the top doing the lowering, DON'T DROP THE BOAT. Get a good stance, stay aware of the situation below you, and ask for help if you are having trouble. If you drop a boat, yell "BOAT" as loud as you can.

The way that you clip into the boat is also important. First, realize that grab loops fail. (Remember EuroKayaks? They had killer grab loops. Everybody else's? They fail.) Inspect them before you trust them. Look for ratty webbing, loose screws, bars that rattle. The best place to do this, of course, is at home before you go boating. If you see a problem, fix it. Now. Today. Really. Unreliable grab loops are a major safety liability.

Next, it's important to recognize those times when, if you drop the boat, you could lose it for good into the river, off a cliff, whatever. In such set-ups, it's good form to tie the other end of your rope to a boulder or tree. This way, after you drop the boat by mistake, the boat won't fall into the void and be long gone.

Occasionally, the hand-over-hand lower is just not appropriate. Sometimes (loaded

---

*A hard pull here can bend the carabiner over the edge of the boat. Avoid this.*



# Safety First

boats, massive exposure, poor stances) you need a full-on climbing setup, with belays and anchors and such. That's more than I want to get into here. The important thing is to recognize when low-tech is inadequate or unsafe, and to figure out another way to go. And sometimes you don't need a rope at all, just a chain of one or two people to hand boats past a tricky spot.

## The "Soft Link"

The rigid grab loop bars en vogue now can be hard on carabiners, due to the potential pry factor (see Photo 2). I don't like to clip straight into them. Instead, I prefer to have a rope or piece of webbing acting as a soft link between the bar and my 'biner (see Photos 3 and 4). The soft link can absorb jerks and contortions that would snap a 'biner in two. Also, metal-to-metal connections are much more prone to popping open by mistake when twisted.

On my old Nomad, I installed short factory-sewn Spectra loops (quickdraws, for you climbers) through the grab bars, just for this reason. This increased the dangle factor of my outfitting, which never should be done lightly. On balance, though, I preferred the robustness of the web loops to the possible snag hazard.

Instead of installing more webbing on your boat, you can carry one or two Spectra climbing slings, and use them as needed. These sewn loops weigh almost nothing, cost just a few bucks, and are ridiculously strong. You can find them at any climbing store. They even float! You can stash one in your throwbag, clipped or tied to the top loop on your rope.

I have also been playing with some cute ways to create a soft link using the end of the rope itself, without a sling, and without the carabiner touching the boat. The simplest way to do this, of course, is simply to tie the rope through the grab loop. This is hardly convenient, but it can be very strong and secure. When you're low on carabiners, this might be your best bet.

Photo 5 shows the "overhand on a bight clip," or, if you prefer, the "overclip." The end of the rope passes through the attachment point on your boat, then clips to an overhand loop on the rope (see Photo 6). This is a very clean clip-in that sets up easily and gets the carabiner away from the boat. I like using an extra wrap if I'm clipping into a bar. It cuts down on the slide-around factor.

Knot-freaks take note: don't tell me about your figure-eight and your butterfly. The overhand loop may truly be the knot of choice here. It is about as strong as these other knots (depending on who you read), and in this setup it tends not to jam and can usually be untied with no fuss. The butterfly is theoretically a little bit better, but it is tricky to tie, and very tricky to check visually. Sooner or later, you will get it wrong. The figure-eight may actually be a bad choice here--it is alarmingly prone to loosening when the two strands on the same side of the knot are pulled apart. All in all, I like the overhand. It's strong, it's quick, and it's hard to screw up.

## Rescue Tie-ins: The "Big Loop"

Last summer I got to play rescue on the Upper Yough when we found an empty kayak wrapped pretty solid on a random boulder. After making sure all the people were okay, we started to fiddle. Barefoot Jim (a true river animal) managed to pull off a heroic underwater clip to a grab loop, and with some pushing and tugging the boat eventually came free. At one point, though, it looked like things were getting worse instead of better. This raised the real possibility that the boat might stay pinned, and that we wouldn't be able to unclip my rope.

In retrospect, this would have been a good place for a "big loop" (see Photo 7) instead of clipping into the grab loop, simply feed the rope through it, and then pull on both strands as one line. (If the grab loop is rope or webbing, make sure not to accidentally cut it by "sawing" your line back and forth



Above: Spectra climbing runner, grith hitched to wide end of a locking carabiner. To attach to a boat, feed the end of the runner through the bar or grab loop (you can add an extra wrap on a bar to cut down on the slide-around factor), then clip the end back into the carabiner, and close the lock. The girth hitch keeps the system clean and easy to use, especially when you are using the same setup for several boats in a row. The girth hitch does make the sling weaker, but it should still be much stronger than your rope.

Below: The overclip. Tie an overhand loop on a bight about two feet from the end of your throwline. Run the end of the line through the bar or grab loop (an extra wrap on the bar cuts down on the slide-around factor), then clip the loops together, and close the lock.



through it.) When you are done pulling, you can retrieve the rope simply letting the one end go (no knots in the end please), and reeling in the other end.


## A Good Rope

All of this assumes that the line you're using is actually decent rope, and not some sun-bleached junk from a hardware store. I like Spectra line for its strength, low stretch, and floatability. It's expensive, but for serious boating it is the only way to go. Make sure the end loops are solidly tied, and protect your line from pointless abuse (standing on it, baking it in the sun, pulling your car out of a ditch with it, etc).

Remember, also, that Spectra isn't magic. Even when new, it is not a climbing rope. And it does wear out with sun exposure and abuse, just like everything else. No one knows for sure how long a Spectra rope is good for, but it does not last forever. I buy a new throwbag every 2 years or so. For a big expedition, I just get a new one.

## Get Good Gear; Learn How To Use It

So get a good rope, check your grab loops, and buy a couple of locking carabiners and maybe a sling or two. Then start playing with this stuff—at the put-in, the take-out, your next portage, whenever you have the chance. Be thoughtful, and make clean systems that don't abuse your hardware. And if you have some new tricks, send them our way ([safety@amwhitewater.org](mailto:safety@amwhitewater.org)) or post them on the AW safety forum.

I feel the need to quote gearmaster Tom Jones again: "It cannot be emphasized enough that techniques must be tried first in a safe environment with backup and safeties, before being brought to the field. There is no way to obtain understanding of a technical skill like trying it, and experimentation is a lot more appropriate when your life is not on the line." 



*The big loop. Once threaded, this gives you a very strong attachment. Make sure that you do not accidentally "saw" your line back and forth through a nylon grab loop, as this can easily cut it. Tie the ends together (done here with a bowline) and pull, or simply pull on both strands as one. To release, untie knots and release the naked end of your line.*

# History

## The Forgotten Squirt Story

By Sue Taft

As the story goes, sometime around 1979 in West Virginia, Phil Coleman – a kayak racer turned river guide turned steep creek boater – described the move he made in his chopped race boat (slalom kayak) out of an eddy above Tear Drop on the Cheat as being “squirted” out. Although initially based on a stern pivot by Jon Lugbill for low volume slalom C-1s, squirt-boating evolved using chopped race boats at the hands of ex-racers, sometime-racers, and raft guides and was centered in the tri-state region of western Maryland, southwest Pennsylvania, and northern West Virginia. It was here that commercial rafting provided a livelihood – and the time – for early squirt-boaters to develop and innovate, but it was Jess Whittemore and the Snyder brothers, Jim and Jeff, who became the leaders.

Jess was one of the guides working for Cheat River Outfitters. Living at the guide-house in Albright, he boated the Cheat and Upper Yough throughout the winter of 1981-1982, often with the Snyders. He discovered that keeping his chopped race boat moving forward, as in slalom racing, provided opportunities to use the river currents. Although “discovered” a few years before, the “squirt” move was still not controlled and intentional but Jess worked on it until he understood what was required. He performed the first controlled squirt at Decision on the Cheat.

Jim later recalled,

*His [Whittemore’s] timely influence on the sport cannot be overestimated. He has spoon-fed the sport from its infant days to the present. . . The three of us [Jim, Jeff, and Jess] made a habit of paddling almost every day that winter [1981]. Jeff and I were there to perfect our backsurfing and paddle throwing, while Jesse was in it just for the kicks. The chopped race boat he paddled was dangerously small for his large-framed body. It*

*seemed that he could only keep one end of it afloat at any one time. Over and over, Jesse would break out of an eddy and sink his upstream hip and then his stern. He became quite skilled at head-high squirts. We watched spellbound as his squirts attained higher and higher limits. In a couple of short cold months, he was performing perfect backenders on eddy lines. It really looked like fun. Before long, it seemed we were going boating to watch Jesse. We knew that we had to get into the act before we fossilized.<sup>1</sup>*

After the guiding season for the Cheat was finished the following summer (1982), Jess went to work for River Sport on the Yough where he met Jon Lugbill. They wrote of their meeting:

*. . . Jess Whittemore looked upstream and noticed someone paddling a C-1 with great ability. He had heard Jon Lugbill was going to be around, and realized that it must be him. When Lug-*

*bill paddled down, Whittemore introduced himself. After seeing Whittemore zip in and out of eddies squirting and blasting, Lugbill figured out that this guy was actually the hot kayaker he had been hearing about. The two of them took off together, each showing the other their trick moves. That day, a racer and a river runner melded ideas to improve techniques beneficial to all canoesport. They learned from each other, and in analyzing the mechanics of squirting (pirouetting on the end of the boat), discovered some interesting offshoots.<sup>2</sup>*

While boating with Jon, Jess discovered front blasting and Jon imitated the move in his “flat” C-1. Conversely, Jon discovered stern blasting and Jess imitated the move in his “flat” kayak. This convinced Jess that flat surfaces and hull speed (that is, long boats) was needed for squirting. The result was his Millennium Falcon

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*From the River Chasers*

photo courtesy of Rob Lesser








From the River Chasers

photo courtesy of Rob Lesser

design based on the Equipe, the hottest slalom design at the time. It was also the beginning of a series of kayak designs that retained the approximate four-meter slalom length with flat surfaces and which developed a niche of their own as cruising squirt-boats. Even Perception acknowledged their influence in the market with their Sabre design, an offshoot of Jess' designs.

By this time, however, Jim Snyder's short designs emerged onto the developing squirt-boating scene. Although Jess' designs overcame the dreadfully slow hull speeds of the shorter Snyder-style boats, his designs were more difficult to paddle and required skilled expert boaters – like himself – to successfully make the squirt moves. In contrast, Jim's shorter squirt-boats were easier to paddle and soon became very popular, replacing Jess' designs for squirt-boating. The rest is history. Nevertheless, Jess' story is part of that history, and although often forgotten, his

influence on the development of squirt-boating can not be underestimated. 

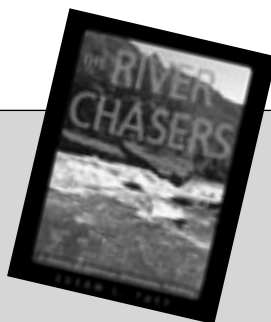
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Endnotes

1 Snyder, James E. *The Squirt Book*. Birmingham, Alabama: Menasha Ridge Press, 1987.

2 Whittemore, Jesse, and Jon and Jill Lugbill. "Squirt Boating: A New Dimension in Kayak Acrobatics" *Canoe* Vol. 14 No. 3 (June 1986): 58.



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

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# Stewardship Updates

## Settlement On The South Fork American

By Dave Steindorf

After years of planning, studying and down-to-the-wire negotiations, a settlement is at hand for the Sacramento Municipal Utility District's (SMUD) Upper American River Project (UARP) and Pacific Gas and Electric's (PG&E) Chili Bar Project. This agreement will bring boating flows to the Slab Creek Reach of the South Fork American River, the Ice House Reach of South Fork Silver Creek and a reliable flow schedule to the South Fork American River below Chili Bar Dam. This agreement will also do a great deal to help restore this watershed by increasing base flows and mandating pulse flows to restore these rivers' natural processes.

Partners in this settlement include two utilities, SMUD and PG&E, an array of state and federal agencies including, US Forrest Service, California State Water Resources Control Board, California Department of Fish and Game and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. There were also several members of the California Hydropower Reform Coalition, California Sportfishing Protection Alliance, Friends of the River, California Outdoors and the Foothills Conservancy present. Several private boaters and Bill Center (see volunteer of the month) from the American River Association were also key players in this process.

This process was a testament to the saying, "It ain't over 'til it's over." In August it seemed all hope of reaching a settlement on this project was lost. Both SMUD and the government agencies seemed to have given up and stepped away from the negotiating table. Not willing to take no for an answer, several dedicated paddlers, including Hilde Schweitzer and Theresa Simsiman made the case directly to the SMUD Board at their public meetings. SMUD's Board listened and got their upper management back to the table. After two weeks of intense daily negotiation an Agreement in Principle was reached

between all stakeholders.

Under this agreement the Slab Creek reach will have several weekends of flows during the spring and potentially in October too. This is a beautiful Class IV/V run that is a stone's throw from Sacramento. The Ice House reach on the South Fork Silver is less well known. "I think this is one of the most unique runs in the Sierra," says Dave Steindorf, American Whitewater's California Stewardship Director. Steindorf, who worked for SMUD as a consultant evaluating the whitewater resources on this project said, "This is an 11 mile Class III/IV run at 5000 feet elevation that has more surf waves per mile than any whitewater park." The major concern with this run is that it passes through an area that burned during a large fire in 1992. Many dead trees have entered the channel and created significant hazards for boaters. Fortunately part of this agreement involves relocating some of the most problematic logs in the river and improving the safety of the run. The agreement will also provide reliable flows to the wildly popular Class III Chili Bar and Gorge runs on the South Fork American River. Nate Rangel, from California Outdoors, an organization of commercial outfitters stated, "This is the most important commercial rafting resource in California. This agreement is critical for our survival. We can't book trips if we don't know whether the water is going to be there."

American Whitewater and the other stakeholders will be working to finalize this agreement by the end of January. Hopefully this will be a done deal by the time you are reading this in the AW Journal. Our hats are off to all of those who have helped on this great agreement.

Deal on raising river's flow; Campgrounds, trails along the American also would benefit in SMUD hydroelectric upgrade. By Matt Weiser - Bee Staff Writer

Published 12:00 am PST  
Saturday, November 18, 2006  
Story appeared in METRO section, Page B1

Outdoor lovers will begin  
to see major improvements

along the American River's south fork in little more than a year under an agreement to modernize the Sacramento Municipal Utility District's vast hydroelectric system.

The agreement will govern how SMUD operates its 11 dams and eight power plants in the Sierra Nevada for up to 50 years.

If approved next year by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, the deal, reached Thursday, will provide more water for boaters, anglers and wildlife, and improve dozens of campgrounds, picnic areas and trails.

The deal concludes five years of sometimes testy negotiations between SMUD and a coalition of 13 government agencies and nonprofits. It was announced just one day before a federal deadline that would have triggered a prolonged and uncertain regulatory process.

Instead, both sides proclaimed Friday that they got what they wanted out of the agreement.

"From SMUD's perspective, the agreement we've struck is a win for us, it's a win for the environment, and it's a win for recreational concerns," said Jim Shetler, SMUD assistant general manager.

SMUD's Upper American River Project generates 688 megawatts of electricity at full capacity. That's about 17 percent of SMUD's demand, or enough to serve about 180,000 homes annually. It is a complex system that covers nearly 6,000 feet of elevation change in the Sierra Nevada, starting in Desolation Wilderness near Lake Tahoe.

Shetler said the agreement will reduce SMUD's generating capacity by less than 8 percent, though the exact amount is still being studied.

Since the original federal operating license was issued in 1957, the system of dams has diverted most of the water from long stretches of the American River's South Fork, the Rubicon River and Silver Creek.

Federal laws now require that new hydroelectric licenses restore some of the natural resources that dams have compromised for generations.

Beth Paulson, hydroelectric coordinator for the Eldorado National Forest, said the agreement accomplishes this.

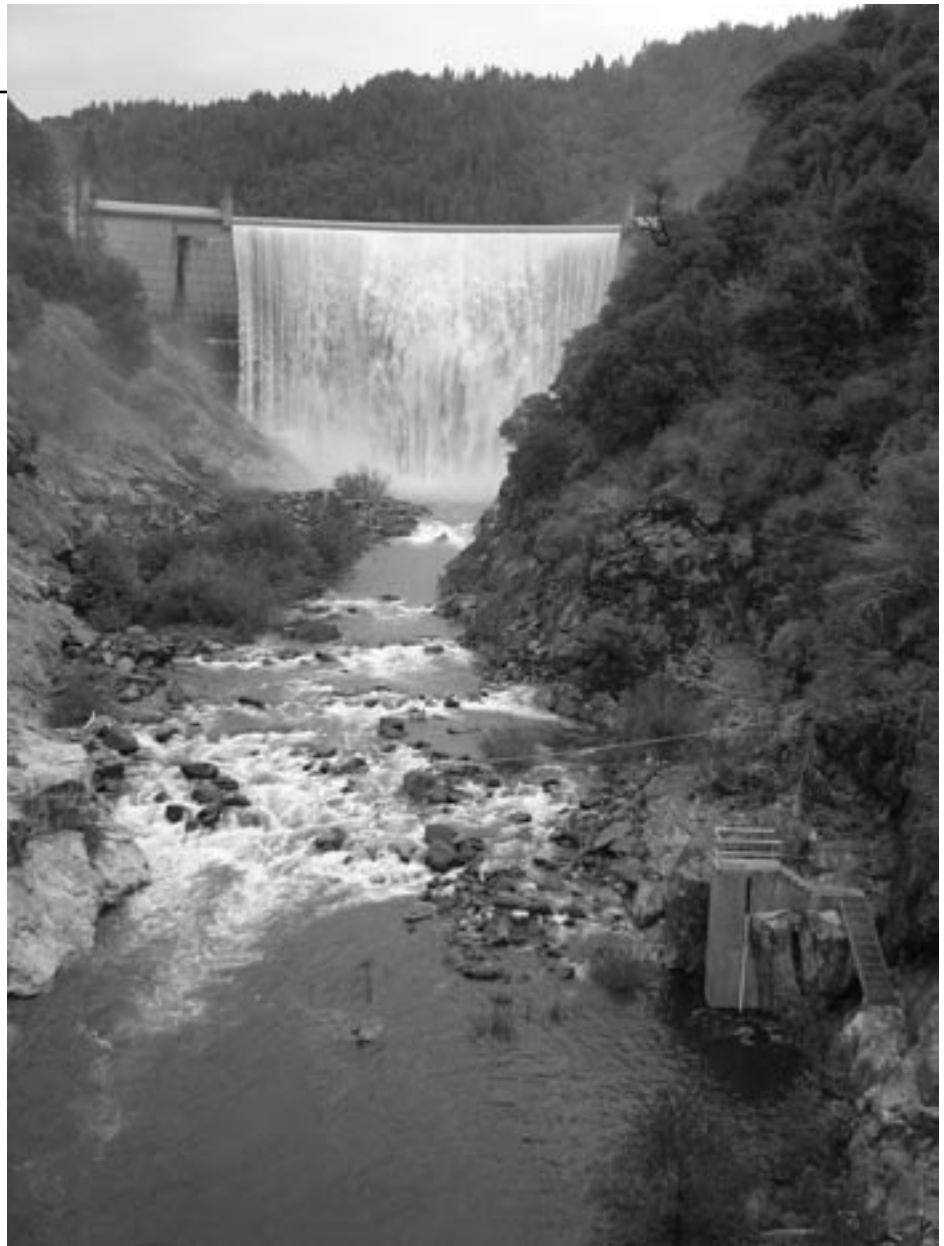
“What people will see in the summer is more stable reservoir levels,” Paulson said. “They’ll see much different stream flows than they have in the past. Our hope is that riparian areas and aquatic habitat will be improved by those flows.”

The Forest Service arguably had the most at stake in the negotiations, because it manages most of the public lands around SMUD’s facilities. This includes the Crystal Basin Recreation Area, the most popular area in the Eldorado National Forest, drawing 1 million visitors annually -- about 40 percent of them from Sacramento.

The California Department of Fish and Game also is a key player, working to set stream flows to benefit fish and wildlife habitat in the reservoirs and streams affected by the system.

New operating rules proposed in the agreement include:

- Year-round water flow increases of 10 percent to 30 percent on streams affected by the SMUD system, with much larger increases in springtime to more closely match natural runoff.
- Specific elevation targets at SMUD reservoirs to avoid the unsightly “bathtub ring,” when waters suddenly are drained for power generation, which harms boating and fishing access. This includes the largest reservoirs: Ice House, Union Valley and Loon Lake.
- Seasonal “pulse flows” on the Rubicon River, Gerle Creek and Silver Creek to simulate natural flow changes, which helps redistribute sediments to improve habitat and encourage plant growth.
- Predictable flows to accommodate



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# Stewardship Updates

whitewater boating in two areas that have not been accessible before: the American River below Slab Creek Dam and Silver Creek below Ice House Dam.

- Annual payments of \$1 million to the Forest Service, \$300,000 to the Bureau of Land Management, and \$75,000 to the California Department of Parks and Recreation.

- Tens of millions of dollars in recreational improvements over 20 years, including renovated campgrounds, improved boat launches, parking areas, roads and trails.

“Anglers are going to benefit and campers are going to benefit -- and river recreationists, too. And there’s a lot of people in those three classes,” said Ronald Stork, a senior policy advocate at Friends of the River and a participant in the negotiations. “The reconstruction of campgrounds and the enhancement of stream flows is going to be an amenity for the Sacramento community and anybody else who wants to visit the Crystal Basin.”

One item that still needs firming up, Stork said, involves operating rules to manage water flows below Chili Bar Dam. This small, 7-megawatt dam is owned by Pacific Gas and Electric Co. and is being licensed in concert with the SMUD system.

The agreement announced Thursday includes similar flow increases and recreational mandates for PG&E. But making that happen requires coordination between the two utilities, because the Chili Bar dam is largely at the mercy of the larger SMUD system upstream.

But the parties said Friday they are confident such remaining details will be resolved and the agreement as a whole will stick.

Terms require many of the changes, including increasing minimum stream flows, to begin within three months of the new operating license being issued. That is likely to happen by the end of 2007.

Others will take years. For instance, SMUD may have to modify Slab Creek Dam to meet stream flow targets downstream. If so, it has interim targets to meet in the meantime.

“Having an agreement after struggling, very frankly, for so long to reach one is a good thing,” Stork said. “If you’re going to be fishing these streams or even sightseeing these streams, you’re going to see a difference.”



**WAVE SPORT**

## American Whitewater’s 2006 River Steward of the Year: Charlene Coleman

*By Ben VanCamp*

American Whitewater and Wave Sport awarded the AW Steward of the Year Award to Charlene Coleman of Columbia, South Carolina at this year’s American Whitewater Gauley Festival. Coleman is the first recipient of the annual River Stewardship Achievement Award, which recognizes individuals who make outstanding contributions to river access, conservation, and/or safety on behalf of American Whitewater. Along with the award, Coleman received her choice of a Wave Sport kayak.

“We are very proud to recognize Charlene Coleman with the first River Steward of the Year award,” said Mark Singleton, Executive Director for American Whitewater. “We are very fortunate to have Charlene working on all our behalves and are grateful for all her efforts.”

As an active river advocate for the past 19 years, Coleman has spent a lifetime on rivers all across the country. An American Whitewater member for over

10 years, Coleman has worked tirelessly on environmental protection and conservation on a number of projects including Saluda, Tyger, Ocoee, Broad, Congaree, and Tallulah rivers and, most recently, the Chattooga River.

About her work Charlene states, “The Chattooga River raises such soul wrenching emotion in so many people, it makes it hard for many to understand what we are doing is pointing out a wrong that, if not corrected, could affect all natural resource users in the future. It’s not just about boating, it’s about the law.”

“We are proud to be a partner with American Whitewater in presenting this award,” said Jimmy Blakeney, Wave Sport Brand Manager. “It is the work of stewards like Charlene that opens access opportunities for all of us.”

Recently I had a chance to sit down and talk with Charlene Coleman about her efforts working on behalf of American Whitewater. Here is what she had to say:

*AW: Charlene, first I would like to congratulate you on being selected as AW’s River Steward of the year. How does it feel to be American Whitewater’s first ever River Steward of the Year?*

*CC: It sure was a surprise. I feel very honored to be even considered for such a wonderful award.*

*AW: I am curious how it all began. How did you get involved with volunteering for American Whitewater and other conservation organizations?*

*CC: A friend asked me to fill in for her at a Saluda River conservation meeting*



and then another and it just snowballed from there.

*AW: I know that you have a pretty impressive resume of projects that you have helped with. What rivers have you worked on over the past few years?*

CC: The Chattooga, Saluda, Tyger, Catawba, Broad, Congaree, Ocoee, and some local tributaries that needed some spokesmen for pollution concerns.

*AW: Well, that is quite the list, which of those projects are you currently working on?*

CC: Right now the most pressing is the Chattooga Headwaters illegal boating ban, Saluda Hydro licensing and protecting the Tyger from an ill-conceived dam in Union County. I still teach kayaking and safety/rescue, advise several government agencies on river safety and I do speaking engagements on river conservation and safety.

*AW: I know that you have been AW's primary volunteer on the Saluda River. Can you tell me about your efforts there?*

CC: Over 23 years ago, the Chattooga inspired me to become a boater, but the Saluda drove me to fight for rivers. I spent 14 years struggling with education as to issues and how to address them, then six years to get a painted color stripe system for warning river users of rising water levels on a hydro powered river that can rise in mere minutes, from 250 to 20,000 cfs. Finally, seven years of fighting to stop low water bridges (low head dam effect) from being built on the Broad river by the City, years of slow cooperative education, training, red tape clipping and positive reinforcement, to get highly skilled local kayakers accepted as a good rescue resource at the major rapids on the Saluda.

It all may sound like a struggle, and it is, but I've also made some great friendships/partnerships based on respect, for commitment to and knowledge of a resource and the people that interact with it. We are trying to make a reserve capacity, hydro powered, extremely urban, Class II-IV whitewater river as safe and clean as possible.

*AW: I understand that you are also heavily involved with safety education. How did you develop an interest in safety education?*

CC: Sadly, I lost a friend to urban whitewater, then I lost five more boating friends in quick succession. We were pushing the envelope and something was going badly wrong. I swore to Scott Bristow's memory I'd do whatever I could to increase the odds in our favor.

*AW: Why do you think it is important for paddlers be river stewards?*

CC: We are what we drink. Seriously, we are intimate with the rivers, so shouldn't we all protect our loved ones, our future, our health and the places that give us the greatest enjoyment/friendship?

*AW: Tell me, how did you get involved in whitewater paddling?*

CC: I was sent to the doctor from a sales meeting for white capping high blood pressure. My doctor told me to find a hobby. I had just seen kayakers on Section IV of the Chattooga during a raft trip and thought, "THAT is what I want to learn to do!" So months later when he treated me for separated ribs my doctor inquired as to how my blood pressure had gotten lower (and, coincidentally, how the injury happened). "I'm learning to kayak," I said. His reply, "I meant something safe, like GOLF!"

*AW: You seem to be involved in so many aspects of river stewardship. What is your favorite thing to help with?*

CC: Canoeing for Kids—a local charity that takes at-risk, underprivileged, and children with cancer on river trips year round.

*AW: What is the most challenging river project you have ever worked on?*

CC: You're kidding right??? All at once—THE CHATTOOGA!

*AW: Since you mentioned the Chattooga and have volunteered on the project for many years, are you still optimistic about the outcome for that river even with the recent dismissal of AW's lawsuit?*

CC: I am optimistic. I'm also a realist and I am not sure if the lawsuit will work out. In the end, I hope it forces the study



## **AW Salutes Bill Center, Volunteer of the Month**

The process of hydropower relicensing is, to a large degree, a war of attrition. Most processes take at least five years. Before you can get down to negotiating a final settlement you have to request studies, comment on study plans, conduct the studies and finally analyze those studies. To say this is a grueling process is an understatement. Make no mistake about it, relicensing a hydro project is a job; this is why it is so remarkable to find individuals who are willing to volunteer their time to one of these undertakings. No one exemplifies this commitment and dogged determination better than Bill Center. Bill's commitment to the South Fork American River predates the relicensing of SMUD (Sacramento Municipal Utility District) and Pacific Gas and Electric's hydro projects. Bill saw the river being threatened by powerful forces within the county so he ran for, and won, a seat on the counties board of supervisors.

When the relicensing of the Upper American River Project and the Chili Bar Project began in 2001 it was no surprise that Bill was front and center. One of Bill's great strengths is, that he understands the workings of this huge project as well or better than any of the utilities staff. This knowledge allows Bill to keep everyone honest about the operational capabilities of the project. He also uses this knowledge to find creative solutions that work for everyone, including the utilities. It is this creative problem solving that makes Bill an asset to everyone in the process.

The relicensing of SMUD's Upper American River Project has gone through many phases—collaboration, frustration, despair and jubilation—and through them all Bill Center has been there. However, he was by no means alone. Other key volunteers have added significant value to this process including, Chris Shackleton, Hilde Schweitzer, Nate Rangel from California Outdoors, Ron Stork of Friends of the River, Chris Shutes of the California Sportfishing Protection Alliance not to mention all of the government agencies that participated in this process. On behalf of our members who will benefit from this arduous relicensing process, American Whitewater thanks you for all of your hard work on this exciting agreement.

# Stewardship Updates

to be done correctly and results in a fair resolution of the situation.

*AW: Now for the easy question: Are you enjoying your new Wave Sport kayak?*

*CC: Well, I have been paddling Wave Sport boats for years and it is always nice to add another boat to the quiver. I really appreciate all that they do for American Whitewater and am glad to have received this award.*

## Controversy on the Klamath River

*By Thomas O'Keefe*

Controversy over the future of the Klamath River only seemed to increase this past fall as FERC released their preferred alternative calling for renewal of the hydropower license for four dams on the river. The Klamath River, located on the Oregon/California border, has been highly regulated for decades but most agree that the four lower dams produce a modest amount of hydroelectricity while devastating the once-impressive salmon runs.

While conservation groups, including our colleagues in the Hydropower Reform Coalition, have called for removal of the four dams for years, with the goal of restoring salmon runs, FERC did not even bother to review this alternative in their environmental analysis. We are greatly troubled by this approach and have joined others in asking for a full and comprehensive review of all alternatives. While hydropower will continue to be an important mix in our nation's energy portfolio, American Whitewater has always advocated taking a critical look at projects where the potential benefits of energy production are minor relative to the environmental impacts. Some dams hold opportunities to make changes to operations at minimal cost, while greatly improving flows for the benefit fish and other aquatic species (including whitewater paddlers). At other more marginal projects, however, measures necessary to bring the project up to modern safety and environmental standards are simply not cost effective and removal of the project is warranted. As evidenced by hundreds of individuals who came out to public meetings, FERC needs to conduct a complete review of this

project so all stakeholders can objectively evaluate the tradeoffs.

## License for Chelan Gorge

*By Thomas O'Keefe*

In November, American Whitewater received word that FERC had issued a new license for the Chelan Hydroelectric project, located on the sunny east side of the Cascade Mountains in Washington. AW worked on this project, owned by Chelan PUD, for several years, advocating for opportunities to paddle the Class V Chelan Gorge. A small group of paddlers explored the gorge in 2000 as part of a whitewater feasibility study, and the new license calls for providing whitewater boating opportunities on a weekend in July and September. The utility has one year to develop a management plan for these releases as part of their overall requirements for developing a recreation plan. This means boating opportunities could be available as early as summer of 2007, but are more likely in 2008. While we have enjoyed a generally cooperative working relationship with the utility on this project, they have ongoing concerns with liability and have formally protested FERC's ruling that paddlers are not required to have liability insurance to participate in recreation at the project. This final remaining issue should be resolved soon and we will continue working cooperatively with the utility to educate paddlers on the hazards of this scenic but extremely challenging run. **AW**



*Paddlers on the J.C. Boyle Flow Study*

**photo by Josh Strange**

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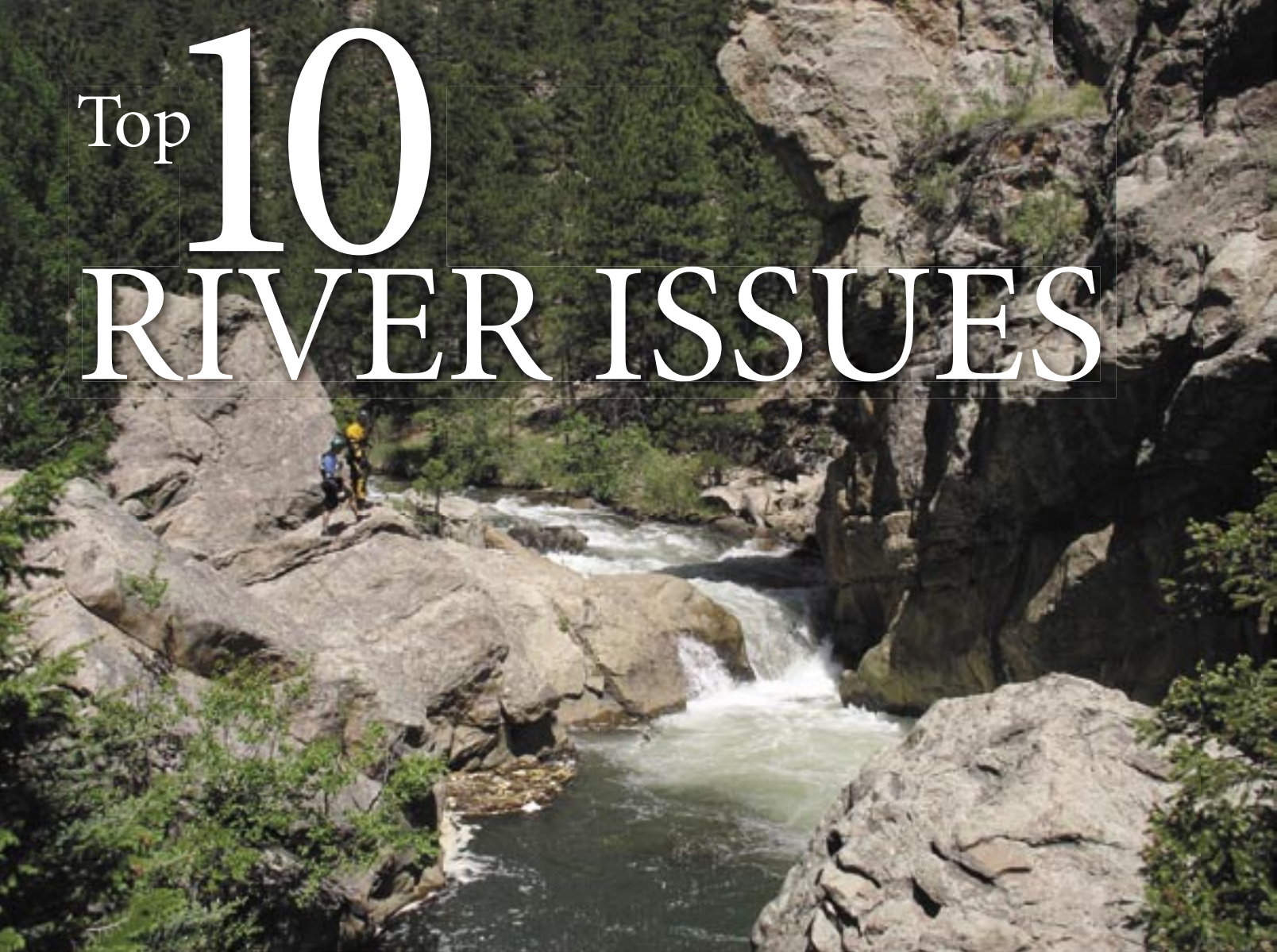
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# Top 10 RIVER ISSUES



## American Whitewater's Top 10 River Stewardship Issues of 2007

2007 is going to be an awesome year for American Whitewater. We anticipate that big new agreements will be reached all across the West to modernize, and even remove a few dams; Southeastern rivers that have been off limits for years will be runnable; flow schedules all along the east coast will be improved; and AW will launch a new position in Colorado. Behind these great results we're looking forward to is an organization that is up to the challenge. We have a great team on staff, a sustainable business model, new volunteer and web tools on the way, and an enduring commitment to whitewater rivers and the community of paddlers who enjoy them. 2007 also marks a changed political climate that most anticipate will make conservation

efforts more successful.

Don't pop the champagne just yet though! The coming year will offer up some serious challenges and epic opportunities for the paddling community. We are once again highlighting 10 projects that are among the top issues we will focus on in 2007. These projects represent the wide range of AW's stewardship work. Our regional model coupled with our volunteer program means that rivers across the country receive personal attention, and our mission ensures that we work on conservation, access, and safety issues. It is a big job, and we currently have over 100 projects on our plates. The 10 projects we have highlighted—in no particular order—illustrate the incredible

*Paddlers enjoy Colorado's famed Bailey run on the South Platte.*

photo by Thomas O'Keefe

ecological, social and recreational benefits paddlers can achieve when we work together, and the devastating losses we will experience if we fail to do so.

Nothing we do would be possible without your support. We are a grassroots organization and are limited only by the enviable enthusiasm of the paddling community to volunteer, write letters, pack meeting halls, vote, paddle responsibly, and financially support AW. Along with a description of each of the Top River Stewardship Issues of 2007 we have included a suggestion on how to get involved. We hope that all of our members will get involved on these or one of our many other projects in 2007.



## 1) Colorado Initiative

Colorado's rivers are faced with some of the biggest threats since the mining boom of the 19th century, and paddlers are in a unique position to do something about it. Proposals abound in the state to dam rivers and pipe them to population centers that are growing at alarming rates. Headwater rivers and streams will need people to advocate for keeping water in the rivers where it supports fish, wildlife, recreation, economic benefits, and local municipal uses. In the next couple of years, decisions will be made that chart the future of Colorado's whitewater rivers: will they continue to flow or be sacrificed for distant cities? American Whitewater is hiring a new staff member, a Colorado Stewardship Director, to work with the regional paddling community and play an effective and organized role in this and other critical issues in the state of Colorado. The Colorado Stewardship Director will work with a wide range of stakeholders on issues including water allocation, water rights, watershed management, and public river access, beginning in early 2007.

**Get Involved:** *Colorado area paddlers are encouraged to help us financially support this position, and to sign up as AW volunteers. We are seeking guidance and assistance from our members in setting up our work plan so please contact us if you have ideas and want to be part of the team. Our efforts in Colorado will only be successful through strong grassroots support.*

## 2) Restoring Rivers for Salmon and Boaters

For much of the last century, rivers in the Pacific Northwest have been harnessed for hydroelectricity, irrigation, and flood control to allow development in river flood plains. While we will continue to depend on those social services that rivers provide, there are also opportunities to protect and restore rivers for the benefits of paddlers and salmon—both of whom depend on clean, free-flowing rivers. In the coming year we will play an active role representing the interests of salmon and recreational river users in discussions over new and existing water development projects. As a conservation organization whose members regularly use rivers for recreation, we occupy a unique niche with coalitions like Save Our Wild Salmon, where we can credibly represent the



Top: Gilman Gorge

Right: Vail Whitewater Park

photos by Thomas O'Keefe



# Top 10 River Issues for 2007



photos by Dave Steindorf

recreational benefits of restored rivers. At the local level we will focus our efforts on keeping water in rivers, working with land trusts to protect lands along rivers, and providing fish passage at dams. At the federal level we will continue our long commitment to protect our bedrock environmental laws including the Endangered Species Act and Clean Water Act, and work with our partner organizations to protect the last best rivers under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

**Get involved:** *Big decisions will be made by elected officials on all these issues and they need to know that you support restoring free flowing rivers. Stay informed and write your elected officials often. We will be providing updates on opportunities to provide input on our website over the coming year.*

### 3) Feather River

For 10 years, AW staff and volunteers have worked to restore the ecological and recreational value of California's Feather River. This year we face the new challenge of keeping this important resource alive. Over the next year AW will be working with resource agencies and Pacific Gas & Electric to determine whether negative impacts from recreation or power

generation are actually occurring. The Feather has been a lightning rod for river restoration controversy and has uncovered a conundrum that affects dam-controlled rivers across the country. The fundamental questions are: What is river restoration, and how do we measure benefits and impacts of altered flows? Should the costs and benefits of providing hydropower to be evaluated on an equivalent standard as the costs and benefits of providing whitewater boating, angling, or any other beneficial use of rivers? We are looking to develop specific studies that will answer these critical questions. AW will continue to work hard to find solutions on the Feather because of the significance of this important public recreational resource. With your help we will ensure that paddlers have a seat at the table to affect decisions made on the Feather and all rivers across the country.

**Get Involved:** *This is a highly technical battle and we need your financial support to stay engaged. Keep an eye on the AW website for letter writing opportunities.*

County Line Rapid on the North Feather

photo by Thomas O'Keefe



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# Top 10 River Issues for 2007

## 4) Outdoor Alliance

Supported by a generous grant from the Turner Foundation, American Whitewater, American Canoe Association, Access Fund, International Mountain Biking Association, American Hiking Society and Winter Wonderlands Alliance came together to form the Outdoor Alliance to address the need for a human-powered outdoor recreation coalition. While almost 150 million Americans annually participate in recreation activities such as hiking, backpacking, climbing, canoeing, kayaking and backcountry skiing, broader groups with different recreational values and agendas often politically overshadow this large constituency. The Outdoor Alliance has several key goals that include educating decision makers about the size, characteristics, and needs of the human-powered outdoor recreation constituency, coordinating and mobilizing the alliance's collective grassroots on key issues, and developing unified public messages. AW is very excited to be a part of this new coalition and we look forward improving the collective voice of human powered recreationists across the nation.

**Get Involved:** *The Outdoor Alliance will be calling upon paddlers to support various initiatives throughout the year.*

## 5) Little Tennessee Watershed

The heart of our Southeastern river stewardship efforts is the Little Tennessee River System, and more specifically the Cheoah, Nantahala and Tuckasegee Rivers. We have been working hard to put water back in these rivers and we are finally starting to see the results of those efforts. The Cheoah is already a big hit with paddlers and local residents, and in 2007 we'll be working to improve access, management, and ecological conditions on the river. We are anxiously awaiting new licenses for the dams on the Nantahala and Tuckasegee Rivers, which are expected in early 2007. As soon as those licenses are issued we'll be racing to build suitable access at the West Fork of the Tuck and

set up an access plan on the Cascades of the Nantahala so that releases can begin sometime in the summer. Regardless of whether or not we actually get on these rivers in '07, this year will be a critical one in their restoration. Another key piece of the puzzle will be the removal of Dillsboro Dam, which we are anxiously awaiting.

**Get Involved:** *Keep an eye on the AW website for opportunities to build trails, remove invasive vegetation, and responsibly enjoy the newest recreational treasures of the Southeast.*

## 6) Chattooga

The debate over the Chattooga River has fallen into absurd and uncharted terrain. Our lawsuit against the US Forest Service over their ban on floating the Wild and Scenic Upper Chattooga River was dismissed and we have appealed (the USFS admits the ban is illegal, yet they are being allowed to continue it). This appeal could take many months to resolve. Meanwhile, the USFS is carrying out a poorly designed user capacity analysis that could lead to a totally or partially lifted ban or, less likely, a continuation of the ban. Both processes require continuous involvement from AW staff and volunteers, and both are critical to bringing nationally consistent management to the Chattooga. Regardless of the outcome of the access issue, our efforts have already been successful on a different front. For the first time ever, the USFS is gathering data and expertise on the use and ecological integrity of the Upper Chattooga River corridor. Our advocacy has triggered a crash course in river management for the local USFS staff, although it still remains unclear whether they will do the right thing in the end. It appears likely that decisions will be reached in 2007 that clarify the legality of the boating ban, and that create at least a short term plan for allowing some paddling for some amount of time. With all that the paddling community has invested in this river, it is incredibly important for us to stay engaged. While we expect 2007 to be a big year on the Chattooga, we also expect to be working on this issue for many years to come.

**Get Involved:** *Support AW through membership and donations, and send comments to the USFS's John Cleeves (jcleaves@fs.fed.us) and/or your political representatives requesting that paddling be allowed on the Upper Chattooga.*

## 7) White Salmon River, WA

Washington's White Salmon River has long been recognized as one of the nation's top paddling destinations. Flowing into the Columbia River, the White Salmon has year-round paddling opportunities that span the range from beginner runs to others that challenge the country's top experts. The watershed and surrounding communities have been an outdoor enthusiast's paradise with year-round paddling, wind surfing and kite boarding, climbing, and a ski/snowboard season that lasts long into the spring. With the goal of enhancing recreational opportunities on this river and restoring one of the best candidate rivers for salmon recovery efforts in the Columbia Gorge, we signed the Settlement Agreement in 1999 to remove Condit Dam. We continue moving forward on the effort which has required a full court press in response to an attempt by a local utility to acquire the dam by condemnation and stop its removal. This project will be a major focus in 2007, but we will also stay involved in other dam removal issues. Small dams that no longer efficiently produce power are set to be removed on the Hood River, Sandy River, and Elwha River and we will continue representing recreational users in those decisions.

**Get Involved:** *Letters to Congress (Senators Murray and Cantwell and Representative Hastings) and Washington Governor Christine Gregoire expressing your interest in a restored White Salmon River would be a huge help as we still need state and federal support for critical permit steps. If you live in Klickitat County we especially need local help in communicating the benefits of a restored river to local County Commissioners.*

*The White Salmon Narrows below  
Condit Dam, Paddler Thomas O'Keefe*

photos by Daniel Dancer



# Top 10 River Issues for 2007

## 8) Paddling Opportunities at Government-Owned Dams

AW has a long history of working across the country with utilities that operate federally-licensed dams. To obtain a license these owners must meet current environmental standards and provide river-based recreational opportunities through a process that restores overall river health. Remarkably, however, government-owned dams are exempt from the same requirements that it imposes on private owners. These include dams owned by agencies such as the Army Corps of Engineers, the TVA, and the Bureau of Reclamation. Projects run by these government agencies have proven a much harder nut to crack. We are beginning to see changes, however, and opportunities to provide downstream recreational benefits at projects that have previously focused mainly on reservoir recreation. There are opportunities to translate our early success on projects like the Gauley, an Army Corps of Engineers Dam, to other rivers across the country. In the coming year we will focus our efforts on documenting benefits of instream flows on recreation on rivers like: Green River, WA; Crooked River, OR; Lehigh, PA; Savage River, MD; and others. We will be able to use the results of our studies at the local level to work with water managers to find opportunities that enhance recreational opportunities, while working within current parameters for project operations. We will also be active at the federal level working to set policy that recognizes the benefits of river-based recreation.

**Get Involved:** *Agencies managing government-owned dams answer to Congress. Agency attitude towards river-based recreation is changing for the better, but only through our continued efforts to educate members of Congress. In addition, we are working to develop examples of government dams where slight modifications to operation could provide recreational benefits. Please contact AW by posting a comment on the stewardship forum on our website if you have a home*

*river where you see such an opportunity. We will use these examples in our discussions with agency staff.*

## 9) Gauley River Access

For the past decade, American Whitewater has paid for a leased field on Mason Branch road to provide free parking and public access to the Gauley River. The one-mile hike from the riverside to the field is steep and difficult on a rough trail along Mason Branch. AW's agreement with the landowner for Mason Branch parking is on a year-to-year basis and was never intended to be a long-term public access solution. In 2005, mid-river access was almost shut down for public use by stalled negotiations between landowners and the Park Service. A mini crisis was created when landowners (two well known river outfitters) along the Gauley River corridor threatened to deny access from the river to the Mason Branch field. As a result of that crisis and heightened awareness of the need to craft a long-term solution for public access to the Gauley River, the NPS is in the process of preparing a new appraisal. This appraisal, based on value of the land as an outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism site, should provide the necessary landowner compensation to complete the land transfer. AW is supportive of transferring these lands into the public trust to protect the Gauley River as a unique natural treasure. The end game is to see the Park Service own lands that will protect the river, insure public access, and allow the park to reach its management potential.

**Get Involved:** *Support American Whitewater through membership and donations. The Mason Branch field is paid for with membership dues to American Whitewater.*


## 10) Ausable River

Some corporations never give up. New York State Electric and Gas is certainly a shining example. They have blocked public access to the spectacular Class IV Ausable Chasm

for decades and have fought against efforts to open the river at every turn. In 2007 they will run out of options to continue denying access and will likely be forced by federal regulators to unlock their gates. AW needs to play an active role in these final decisions which themselves are based on over six years of activism. The Ausable Chasm really is a recreational treasure: it boasts naturally flowing Class IV bedrock creek in a spectacular vertical walled canyon throughout the summer and fall. This project is just one example of the advocacy work we do on rivers across the country to protect public access to waterways developed for hydropower.

**Get Involved:** *The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission needs to know you are interested in this river! We'll be asking paddlers to send letters to FERC on our website early in 2007.*

### SUPPORT FOR OUR WORK

The support for our work on the Top 10 Issues comes in many forms. Our members serve as volunteers and also provide direct financial support for our stewardship work. Several foundations are critical to our success including the Hewlett Foundation supporting our hydropower work particularly in the West, the Conservation Alliance and Charles Stewart Mott Foundation supporting our work on the Little Tennessee watershed, and the Murray Foundation in New York. Finally many companies have stepped up over the past year to support our project work and they are profiled on our Corporate Sponsors page in this and every issue of American Whitewater. 



Josh Bechtel  
Team Kōkatat

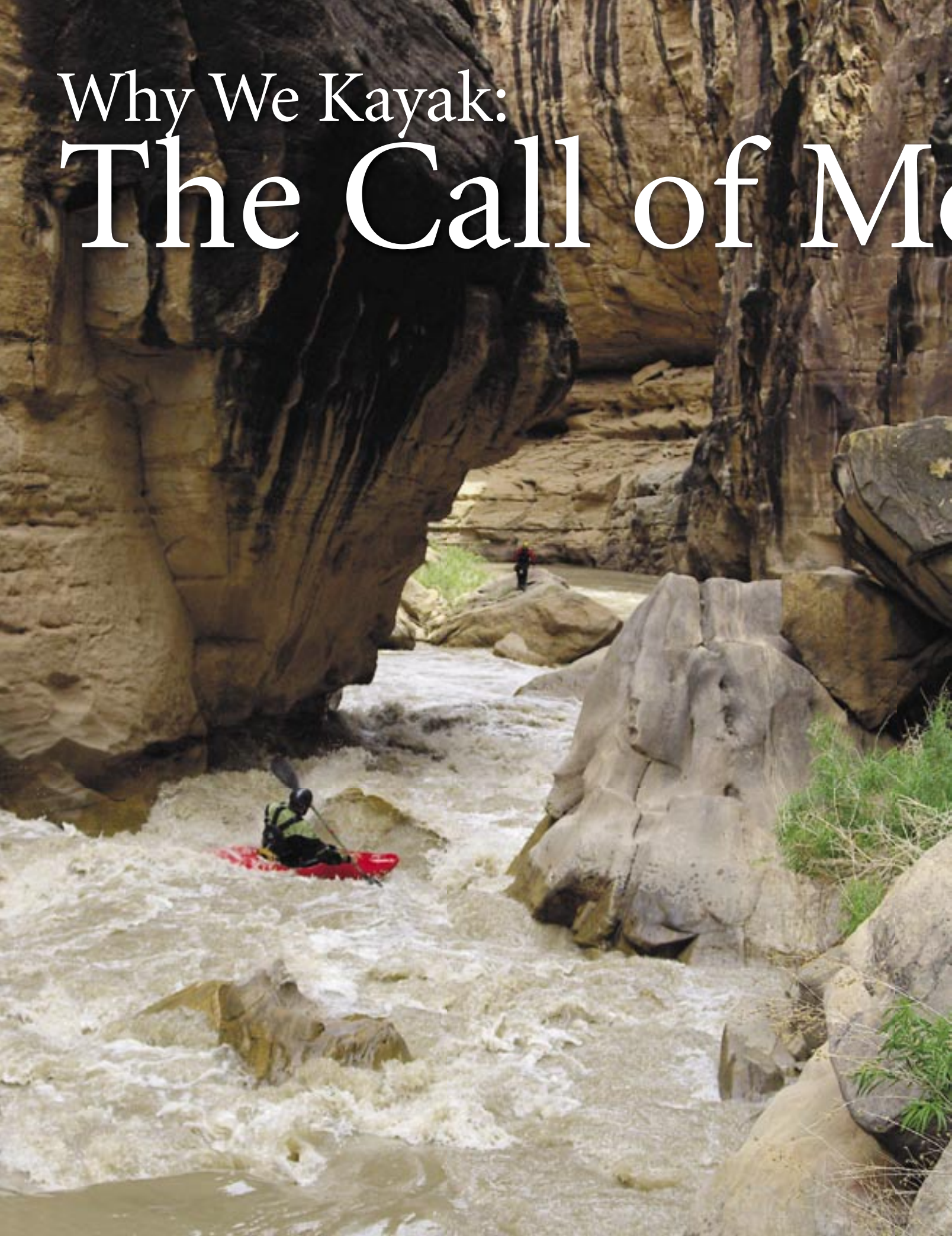


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# Why We Kayak: The Call of Mo





# Mountain Water

By Evan Joseph

*In Memory of Adam Barron, Daniel DeLavergne and Danny Samuelson*

Treasure Canyon was beautiful until it got dark. As the sun set on our hike back to the truck we pondered the events that led to our near total team destruction. “We might as well put on as late as possible,” were the words that escaped Pete’s lips as we lounged in the alpine sun at the put-in bridge. Our logic, since we did not have a shuttle, was that taking off later in the day would give us a better shot at finding campers at the take-out with whom we could hitch a ride back upstream. Two swims, two lost paddles and only one breakdown paddle later we were engaged in a wilderness streamside hike with heavy plastic backpacks. We stumbled into the take-out campground to find no campers and approaching darkness.

Our legs cramped as we hiked the five miles back up the road to the put-in. We found the truck, retrieved our gear from the take-out and attempted to leave Treasure Canyon via Elwood Pass. Around midnight, as we approached the top of the pass, our ascent was slowly stifled by building snow banks. At this point the location of one of our cameras came into question. With some prodding Pete eventually owned up to leaving it below the first gorged rapid, where he had had his swim. Back to the put-in we went and the views of the sun rise from our wilderness bushwhack to retrieve the camera could not have been more spectacular. Limping into Alamosa around 10 am, our plans for a three-day descent of the Los Pinos, including a seven-mile hike to the put-in beginning at 9 am that same morning, were officially scrapped.

We spent the afternoon soaking in Pagosa

Springs and headed towards Bayfield feeling humbled but refreshed. Word of an accident in Vallecito reached us that evening. Confirmation that our friend Adam Barron had been lost below Entrance Falls seemed to slow time to a standstill. We made our way to the Vallecito campground to help in any way that we could. The next few days were spent in a distant stupor, painfully searching for Adam’s body.

Our original plan to embark on a ten day mission had been a bust from the start. We severely underestimated the high flows in Treasure Canyon and much, much worse, we were now heading back early to the Front Range for the sad occasion of commemorating Adam’s life. It was a beautiful memorial held at the Flagstaff Amphitheater and the theme was living life in the moment, every moment. For him, just as for us, that meant exploring the natural world with all the energy and the passion that it demands. With questions of life and death, why and why not, heavy on our minds we set out for Utah that evening. We didn’t know it at the time, but we were embarking on a trip that would answer the question that every kayaker’s family asks. The question that always seems to surface for even the most fearless boaters when there is a death on the water.

## Why We Kayak

We drove through the night and ended up driving in circles on a dark and dusty BLM road in an attempt to find the put-in for the Muddy Creek Chute. Right on schedule—around 4am—we pulled over to the side of the road to sleep. By 8:30 the sun was well up and the pool of sweat in my sleeping bag could have been measured in cubic inches per second. We were surprisingly close to the put-in when we

awoke. We began to feel more optimistic until we remembered the shuttle. I threw scissors on the sixth round of a two-of-three Rochambeau. Kyle pulled the mighty rock. Between us and our run of the Muddy Chute lay my completion of a 15-mile uphill bike ride in the sweltering sun of the San Rafael Swell.

I set off for the take-out in the T500K (Kyle’s legendary Toyota truck which is projected to reach 500,000 miles before its next mechanical servicing), scoping out the hills that I would be climbing in the thin saddle of Kyle’s mountain bike much too near in the future. The hills went on for so long that it became painful to pay them any attention whatsoever. When I turned the final corner above the take-out, a small group of campers packing up their tents appeared in my view. I immediately wrote them off as a mirage, but they turned out to be real and, yes, they would be happy to drive me back to the put-in.

The look on Kyle’s face was priceless as we bounced down the final stretch of road. The momentum was building in our favor and we profusely thanked our new found friends for an improbable shuttle in what is unquestionably a barren land, especially on a weekday. We put on to warm, muddy (hence the name) water and easily floated through the majestic slot canyon of the Chute. Trepidation was low because this was not a whitewater run and we enthusiastically reveled in the beauty of such a remote and wild place.

When we took out we began making plans for the Black Boxes of the San Rafael the following day. To our dismay not a single boater was able to answer the call of duty. Biking this shuttle is not really a viable option, so we resigned ourselves to a long drive into the Uinta Mountains for a run of the Upper Provo. Stopped about 100

# Wilderness Paddling



## Mountain Water: The Lifeblood of the Land

Though valued for their scenic grandeur and recreational opportunities, the surrounding mountains are most valuable because of the water they provide. Their high summits and basins create a natural watershed of immense worth. It is here that winter snows accumulate and in summer melt, reaching the thirsty lands below via rivers and streams.

Annually, 6 to 14 inches of water, in the form of rain or snow, fall on the lower valleys and desert lands, while 40 inches are deposited in the mountains. This water, the lifeblood of the land, provides for fishing, boating, and many forms of outdoor recreation as well as for industries and agriculture.

Photo by Evan Stafford

miles short of our destination by night road construction, we were forced to camp on a highway pullout. The sound of the Lower Provo River would have been soothing, were it not continually drowned out by the sound of backhoes, bulldozers and other construction machinery.

We awoke to the sound of moving highway traffic, signaling that the road was open again. A couple of hours later we were standing on the viewing platform for the Upper Provo Falls, a grand set of three sliding falls of up to 25 feet high. They looked very runnable and the flow looked more than adequate. The middle slide looked somewhat dicey and as we scouted downstream finding two more decidedly more difficult falls, our group trepidation meter began to rise.

Returning to the parking lot we found another unlikely shuttle. Kyle went to drop the T500K about five miles down the road. I stretched and tried to release my mind from the consistent barrage of doubts and questioning.

Fully stretched and feeling much looser, I walked over to an interpretive sign overlooking the falls. It read, "Mountain Water: The Lifblood of the Land." Smack! Wham! Boom! It hit me like a cold sack of ice cubes to the dome. How could there be a better medium by which to explore the world? Water covers 70% of the earth's surface. The human body is made up of 60% water. All living things require fresh water to live. Some unorthodox scientist in Japan even showed that frozen water crystallizes differently when influenced by human intentions (The Hidden Messages in Water – Masaru Emoto, 2004). Kayaking puts you neck deep in the blood of life.

The Upper Provo was an all day adventure, an all-out classic, with slides and falls, gorges and logs, wildlife and crisp clear mountain water. We were back to the basics, exploring the world from the seats of our small watercraft. We finished the

day tired, resigned to get a long night's rest and hoping that the following day might be an "easy" day on the river. This became an unlikely scenario as we re-entered cell phone service. A message from our Utah connection, Sam Chesley, outlined a plan for a one-day blitz of the Black Boxes of the San Rafael ... beginning, of course, the following morning.

We arrived at the take-out ahead of schedule—around 2:30 am. It was like

sleeping in the soft sand of an ocean estuary. Bird and frog sounds straight out of a nature CD lulled us to sleep. We awoke casually. Carbs and protein would be needed for a long day. Kyle and I inhaled our regular morning meal of smoked salmon and bagels. After breaking the fast we were introduced to the crew, a mix of experienced Utah paddlers ready to venture deep into the desert geology. A short, but hotter-than-the-depths-of-hell type hike was our wake up call. Those in



Provo Falls, lead-in

Photo by Kyle McCutchen

# Wilderness Paddling

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flip-flops painfully endured a steep down climb through cactus infused scree to the canyon floor.


The first gorge was spectacular. The painted walls framed a deep slot of a river. The sound of the rapids below each pool reverberated throughout, spawning looks of deep concern among the uninitiated. Past the crux, the views upstream were those of 16mm high-grade movie film and so were our perma-grinning faces of awe.

Beyond the first box we floated through sacred country, almost circumnavigating Mexican Mountain in the heart of the Swell. Pictographs and, I am certain, other signs of an ancient past line the banks between the boxes. The second Box was the more intimate of the two, dark and full of quality Class IV+ rapids. We paddled the remaining flat-water below the Second Box in a pink twilight glow.

The desert areas of Utah are spiritual

places. The barren landscape gnaws at your every footstep as you dodge some cacti with a left skip and attempt to prolong the inevitable chapping by licking your cracked lips. The warm muddy water that carves through these sacred boxes does not last long in an average year, but to catch these indispensable waters is to experience a few fleeting moments of divine connection with the river via a paddle stroke. Peoples of all kinds have found solace in the dry washes and windgate sandstone cliff faces that are indigenous to the area, from the Anasazi to the Mormons. The San Rafael through the Black Boxes is Utah's quintessential soul boater run for those who've found kayaking to be their religion.

We rounded out the trip with a mid-elevation day of the continuous and crisp Class IV whitewater of Cottonwood and Left Huntington Creeks. Cottonwood Creek's short aqua pools and long frothy rapids were just what the doctor ordered. Afterward I wanted to go home; we had sampled the delights of Utah's lifeblood and I had found my mojo. But Left Huntington was still on the list. Once on the water it was one continuous slide for six miles and my initial hesitation was certainly unjustified as we careened down one finale of a Utah run. Flying around blind corners and skidding down slate slabs, my grin was unmistakable. These final two runs were classics in their own right. The satisfaction was evident as we washed the fine desert sand of the San Rafael out of our gear and ears with the Mountain Water: Lifeblood of the Land. Pushing the T500K hard, we rolled back onto the Front Range of Colorado right on schedule—around 3:30 am.

Forgive us family and friends, but this is why we kayak. 



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*Charging it through Cottonwood Creek*

Photo by Kyle McCutchen

*Rockfall Portage, San Rafael*

Photo by Kyle McCutchen

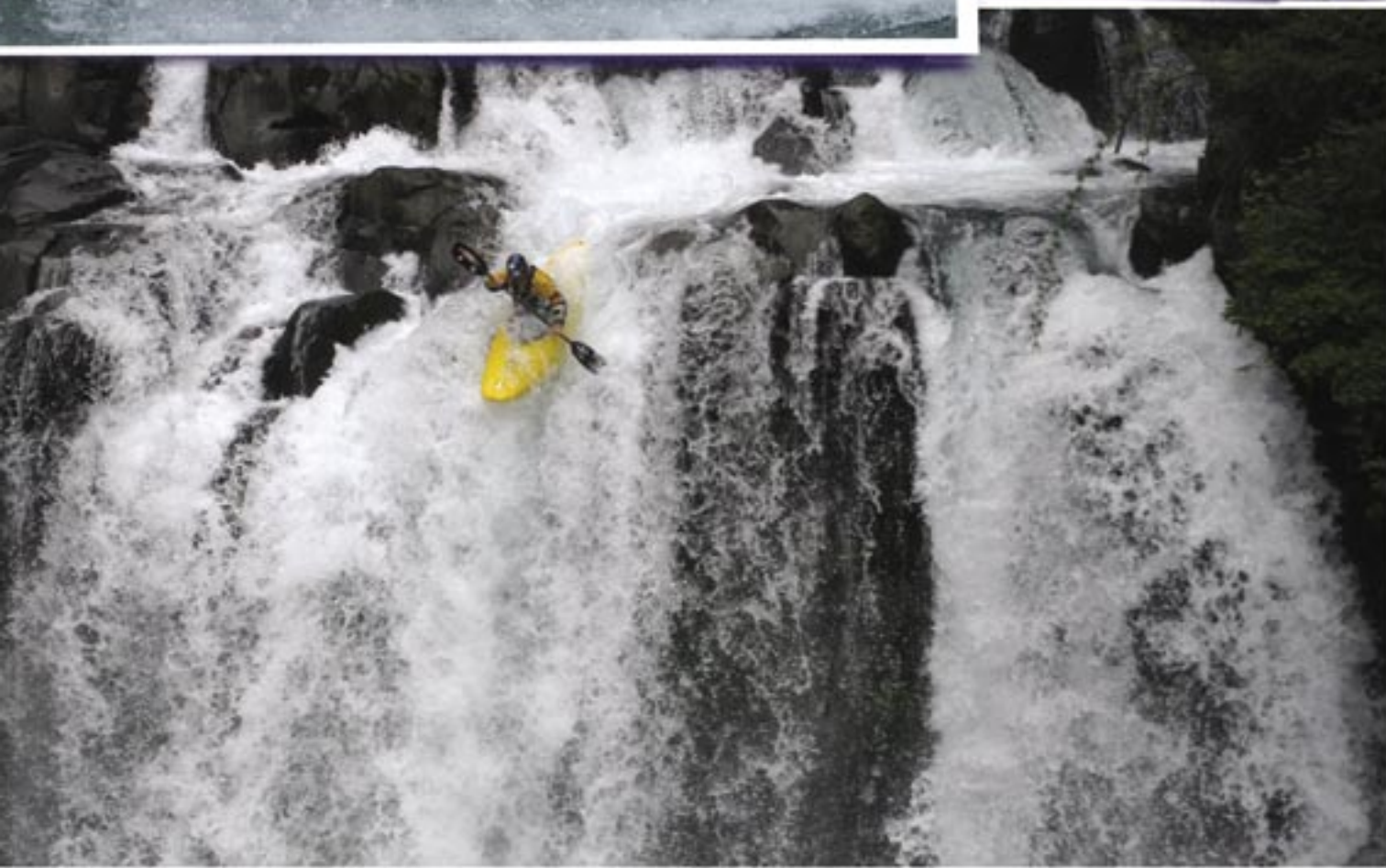




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# Wilderness Paddling

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## The Taku River **Expect the Unexpected**





By Tyler Williams

The blue-green glacial lake imperceptibly gathered into a narrow channel of current, and we soon realized that we were paddling past the lake's outlet. Judging from the maps, I had anticipated this first section of river to be a meandering 300 cfs. It was a powerful 1,000 cfs.

Within seconds the river turned into a nonstop blur of snapping waves. River-wide current raced down the 30-foot-wide sluice, bending the alders along the banks. Lisa was in the lead, bombing around blind corners without stopping. At the first available eddy, we both pulled over. Lisa said anxiously, "It's pretty fast." I nodded in agreement, and peeled out of the eddy in the lead, determined to be more diligent in catching eddies than she had been.

I was instantly flushed to the middle of the torrent and thrust downstream. At each wave crest, I blinked to clear my eyes of the splashing water, and feverishly scanned for an eddy. There were none. I knew that a river-wide log or hole would be virtually unavoidable. A tangle of overhanging alders prevented me from approaching the shoreline. Finally, an eddy came into view, and I made a charge for it. Lisa joined me in the slow water, and I stated the obvious, "This is kind of tense." She agreed. Thoroughly adrenalized, we got out for a scout.

This unexpected bit of whitewater action was eerily fitting right into place on this trip. Already, our descent seemed fated to exceed our expectations. Before we'd even left the civilized world, our plan for a pleasant wilderness float had taken on an ominous feel.

A week before we made final preparations for our descent of British Columbia's Taku River system, the phone rang with news of a helicopter rescue on the river. My brother and his party of seven had launched on the Sheslay River—the upper main arm of the Taku—in two 14-foot rafts. Their itinerary was nearly identical to ours, except that Lisa and I planned to start our trip farther upstream with a first descent on a tributary creek. Our routes

would follow the Sheslay north along the interior side of the Coast Range, join the westward-running Inklin River at mile 50, and continue downstream onto the Taku, emerging on the tidewater of the Pacific seven days later. The rafters expected one Class IV rapid on the run, just enough whitewater to add some spice. High water changed all that.

As their bush plane hummed off into the distance, the rafters carried loads of equipment down a quarter-mile trail to the put-in. Upon reaching the stream, my brother, Jerry, noticed brown debris-laden water flooding through a forest of willows near the river's banks, and concern grew. Once on the water, however, his fears diminished. He recalls, "It was fast, but flat. We thought, 'Okay, we can do this.'"

Day one took them a quick 20 miles. They camped at a side creek, on a spit of gravel. With floodwaters lapping over the banks in most places, it was the first beach they'd seen all day. Day two ushered them past the mouth of Tatsatua Creek, where they planned to conspicuously leave a bottle of wine for Lisa and me. It would be a coy wilderness salute to congratulate us on our first descent of Tatsatua, due to take place a week later. Despite their best efforts, however, the flooding Sheslay prevented them from reaching shore and dropping off the wine. "We just flew by there," Jerry remembers.

In the afternoon, they saw their first whitewater as the river ran through a series of sharp bends, causing the overstuffed channel to recoil into bizarre folds and surging waves. Jerry did his best in the lead boat to stay to the inside of corners and hit everything straight, but when rocky bluffs suddenly appeared on both sides of the river downstream, they knew they were in for something big. A giant crashing wave guarded the entrance to the gauntlet. A surreal lilting spruce forest swept by along shore. There was no stopping.

Jerry avoided the big breaker at the head of the rapid only to run smack into a second swell that rebounded off the wall and surged into the boat. His 18-year-old son

had just enough time to yell "highside!" as the raft rolled onto its edge, and then sickly slapped upside down. Two swimmers went left, two went right. All went deep. After a gasping half-mile swim in the surging glacial water, Jerry and his younger 15-year-old son scrambled ashore on loose river cobbles along the right bank. As for the other two swimmers, one made the left shoreline, while the other precariously climbed onto a midstream logjam. The flipped raft was long gone.

Meanwhile, the second raft had nearly flipped also, dumping its oarsman into the freezing silt. He was frantically pulled back into the boat mid-rapid, and they bounced along shore until someone jumped off with a rope and got the raft stopped.

All eight of the rattled rafters were reunited within an hour, and they attempted to proceed in the one remaining raft. It was clearly too much weight for the boat, however, and with another rapid looming, they pulled onto a narrow gravel bar on shore and made camp.

In the morning they weighed options, none of which were good. With the river still rising, nobody was too keen to get back on the water. Another flip would mean certain disaster. A hike out meant a minimum of 50 miles of bushwhacking, and even then there was no guarantee that the little dot on the map marked "cabin" would be occupied. Complicating matters was the fact that most of their food was gone with the flipped raft. Whatever they decided to do, it would be done on a meager food ration: one third of a hamburger patty, and two tablespoons of corn per person, per day. The only thing they felt confident would occur (besides hunger) was a worried mother's phone call when they did not arrive at the take-out on schedule five days later. The decision was made—they would stay put and wait for a search plane to find them.

Their week-long wilderness ordeal blurred into one long routine of basic existence. Feeding time was, of course, the highlight of each day. After finishing their dinner meat rations, each man would receive

# Wilderness Paddling

one lick of grease from the bottom of the cooking pan. Their hunting forays produced one squirrel, and one grouse, which they promptly devoured.

Two days after their take-out date, the real possibility of starvation began to loom. Their energy reserves were fading along with their hopes for rescue when they heard the glorious rumble of a low-flying aircraft. Two helicopter rides and several thousand dollars later, the ill-fated Sheslay group was safely back in Juneau, Alaska.

The day after their rescue, Lisa and I arrived in town to find eight beaten, skinny, weary men. My big brother was visibly shaken from the experience, and he admonished us not to go into that same untamed, unforgiving, unrelenting wilderness. "The water is too high. You shouldn't go now. Come back in three weeks," he suggested. But everything was set. We'd scheduled our work around this trip. We'd gotten our kayaks to Alaska. It was hard to turn back now. Besides, Lisa and I were "river professionals" with 35 years of paddling experience between us. Quietly, to myself, I thought, "This sounds like high water Class III; we won't even be challenged."

As I delicately climbed out of my boat on raging Tatsatua Creek, I began to wonder if my decision to go on this trip meant I was being resolute, or just damn cocky.

Lisa and I hacked our way downstream over moss-covered logs and beneath sharp boughs of spruce, periodically catching glimpses of the creek. After a quarter-mile, the river widened and slowed, offering ample eddies. We returned to our kayaks, paddled what we had scouted, and then repeated the process. We agreed to pull over early and scout anything that looked questionable, even if our scouting missions did lead directly down grizzly trails. We kept the bear spray handy.

After a few easy miles of floating, an

unnamed tributary entered carrying a noisy 700 cfs of glacial silt. Our swift brown river opened into a braided channel of cobbles, and we easily drifted past bewildered moose standing on islands in the river.

The scenic floating ended too soon when the braided stream again gathered itself and sluiced into a forested canyon. Fast, powerful Class III-IV forced us back into eddy-hopping mode.

We probed down the outside of a bend (the inside was fast and eddy-less) beneath an unstable rocky cliff, and pulled into an eddy of sharp rocks for a scout. The move looked like a relatively simple ferry to the inside of the corner, avoiding a couple holes in the process. As we returned to our boats, Lisa mentioned how unstable the geology above us was. On cue, a shower of pebbles came falling down, bouncing off our helmets. We scurried under the shelter of an overhanging cliff, and I helped stabilize Lisa's boat as she crawled in amidst the rockfall. In the rush to get out of there, she nearly blew her ferry angle, and had to make a few last-minute correction strokes to avoid the holes. I hurried into my boat, reminding myself that no ferries are "simple" on a fast 2,000 cfs wilderness river.

The rapid went without a hitch, and soon the river opened into a braided channel again. We made camp in a steady drizzle. After struggling with a smoky fire for a couple hours, it was time for pea-soup and a retreat to the tent.

The next morning brought breaks of sunshine. Tatsatua Creek raced through its maze of gravel bars and logjams, and in less than an hour we paddled out the mouth into the mighty Sheslay River. Our first descent was complete. Now only 150 miles of high water wilderness river remained.

The Sheslay was a wide and fast 12,000

cfs. It was easy to see how my brother's raft trip was unable to pull over to scout. Even in our kayaks, getting to shore took some foresight. When a large breaking wave appeared at the entrance to a canyon 200 yards downstream, we hurried for the bank. Our scout led up a talus slope to a rocky point. As we crested the rim, the river suddenly assaulted our senses with a voluminous roar.

Below us lay a seething chaos of water: giant boils, crashing folds, violent eddies, and a big hole. We looked at each other and immediately knew that this was the spot where the raft had flipped. It was bona fide, big water Class V.

Seeing the rapid brought my brother's ordeal into clearer focus for us. Someone could easily have drowned here, and I breathed a sigh of relief that they were all still alive, and that, for the moment, so were we.

Lisa was eyeing a line down the right side of the pulsating mess when I proclaimed above the roar, "I'm gonna portage from that eddy over there." Dragging our gear-laden boats one at a time, we were ready to put in below the rapid an hour later.

The next day the river was joined by a clear tributary draining the glacierless interior. Here the Sheslay turned westward, changed its name to the Inklin, and began to run through mountainous country toward the coast.

We drifted and paddled lazily beneath green treeless hillsides where forest fires had burned away the timber. The afternoon sun cast a warm amber glow on the brushlands, and a big gravel beach

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*The Taku river is known for its wilderness grandeur*

Photo by Tyler Williams



# Wilderness Paddling

sparkled up ahead. We pulled in for camp, and quickly unloaded our boats to take advantage of the sun's drying rays. We were draping our wet paddling clothes on beach willows when I heard a deep baritone sound. I looked toward Lisa to see if it was just my imagination, and noticed that she, too, was looking for what had made the noise. Then she said it—"bear."

Across the river was a large dark grizzly. He sat and looked at us, reminiscent of our Rottweiler at home begging for a treat. The bear made a steady tonal chant, obviously directed at us.

The swift glacial river seemed a comfortable buffer from the bear, so I raced to change camera lenses and snap a few photos before it ran off. But it didn't run off. The bear ambled downstream, and then paced along the bank. He continued the slow deep chant of "hoof, hoof." Suddenly the river separating us seemed rather narrow.

The bear entered the water to swim across. We scurried to throw our gear back into our boats for a fast exit. The swift river caused the bear to lose significant ground on his ferry, so we had time for an escape. With one eye on the swimming griz, we hurriedly crammed sleeping pads, drybags, cooking pots, and long underwear into the kayaks, and danced into our sprayskirts.


The grizzly climbed out of the water 300 yards downstream, and disappeared just beyond a riverside cliff. We got in our boats and ferried across the river. From here, we were relatively safe. Yet even in this virtually ideal scenario, we felt fear. It is never peaceful when you realize you are prey. The griz sniffed at the edge of our would-be camp, then walked uphill into the bush. We floated a few more miles before stopping for camp—this time on an island.

On the afternoon of day four, the river turned abruptly into the snow and ice-

bound Coast Range. We were at last on the mighty Taku—a river of 40,000 cfs that braided through a wide valley rimmed by steep mountain spires.

Dawn came with a steady morning breeze, which grew into a midday wind, then a river-whipping gale. Dynamic, swirling clouds curled over snowy ridgetops in the distance, beckoning us onward into the aggressive windstorm. We were nearing a gateway that led to the green moist world of the coast, and it seemed that bucking the headwind was our final test before we were allowed to pass into the abundant land beyond the mountains.

Our muscles weary, we finally crossed the threshold of the Coast Range, and the wind slowly abated. A waterfall roared from the alpine zone one thousand feet above us to the valley floor. Ragged Sitka spruce defiantly reached out into the misting abyss, silhouetted against a grey ceiling of cloud.

We floated through this spectacular scene on the placid Taku, realizing that we were finally on the "pleasant wilderness float" we had anticipated before the trip. Jagged glaciated mountains lined the calm river up ahead. It was apparent that the Taku would finish as it had begun—by exceeding our expectations. 



Tyler Williams is a writer and photographer from Flagstaff, Arizona. He is the author of *Canyoneering Arizona*, *Grand Canyon River Hikes*, and *Whitewater Classics*. His newest title, *Paddling Arizona*, is due out in January 2007.

## The Taku River is in grave danger!

A mining company called Redfern Resources has received initial approval from the government of British Columbia for the Tulsequah Chief mine and road project. Redfern plans to open the mine along the Tulsequah River—a spectacular glacial tributary to the lower Taku. The mine would likely pollute two vital salmon spawning areas on the Taku. As a part of the project, a 100-mile access road would also be constructed over the mountains to Atlin, B.C. This would completely destroy the isolated character of the now wild coastal region.

*For information on how you can help save the Taku from this potentially catastrophic mine, contact the Transboundary Watershed Alliance: [www.riverswithoutborders.org](http://www.riverswithoutborders.org).*

### Transboundary Watershed Alliance

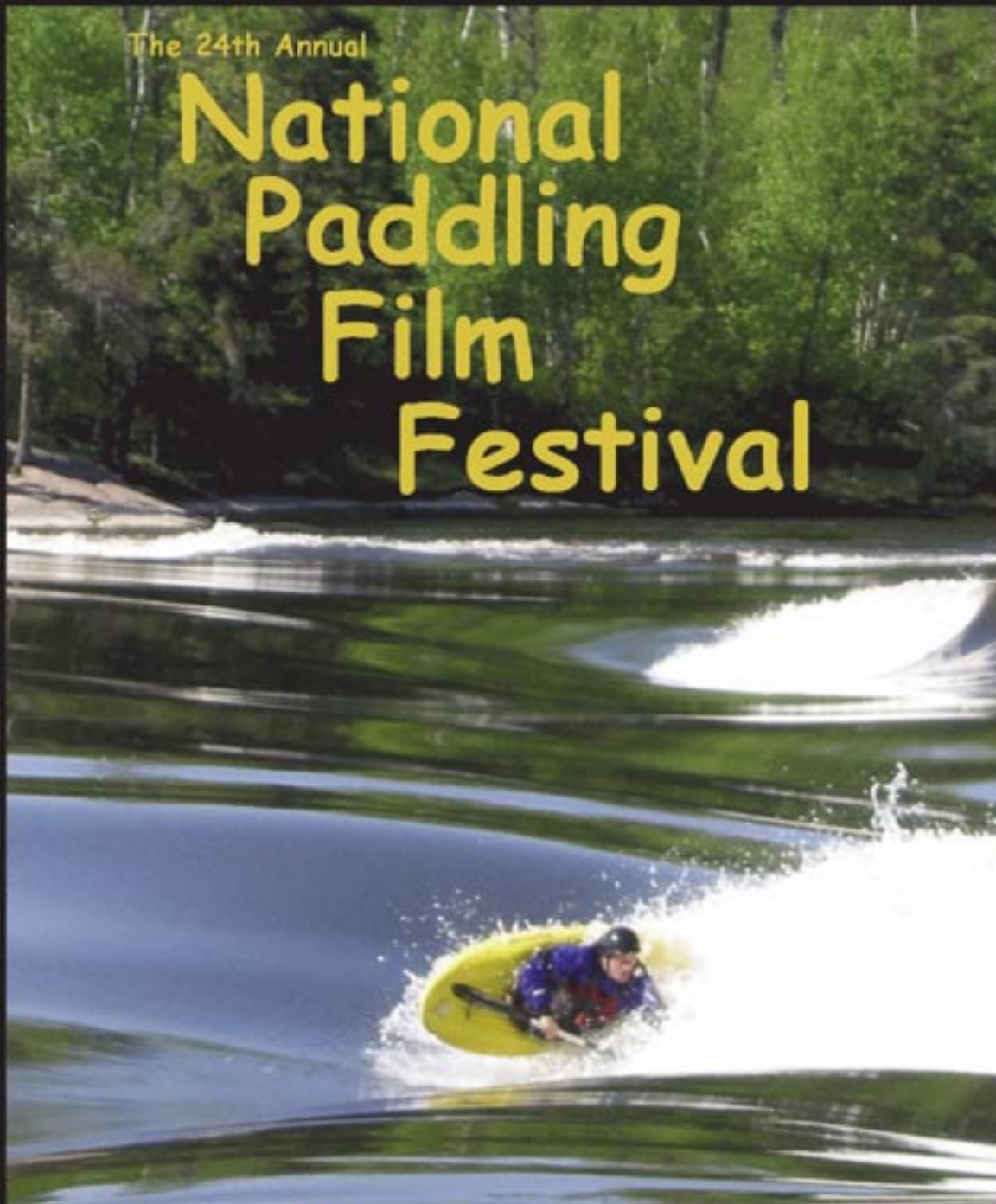
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# Wilderness Paddling

## Yaak Rafting

By James Knobbs

*No one tests the depth of a river with both feet.*

- African Proverb

Except for me—and my wife, but only because I make her. By this I mean that we sometimes raft rivers that we perhaps don't know enough about—in this case, the Yaak River in northwestern Montana.

My wife, Sparky, and I had been planning a weeklong trip to Idaho and Montana with the idea of R2-ing several Montana rivers: a couple of forks of the Flathead, the Alberton gorge of the Clark Fork, and maybe back into Idaho for a late season Lochsa.

Since we were going to visit Sparky's parents who live in Sandpoint, Idaho first, our plan was to make a long arc from northern Idaho, over to Glacier National Park, down to Missoula, and then over Lolo pass and down the Lochsa.

Starting in Sandpoint, the plan was to drive north to Bonners Ferry, and then follow the Kootenai River upstream along Highway 2 over to Kalispell and the Flathead drainage. This would take us past both the Moyie River, which we had boated several times, and the next drainage to the east, the Yaak River, which we hadn't.

The Moyie is a fun Class III river that flows through a beautiful valley, and I thought, "The Yaak is just one drainage over, the geology couldn't be all that different—it's probably very similar."

Let me point out now that I never did very well in geology class.

The only information about the Yaak that we could find says that it is a Class III river with a couple of big Class IV rapids thrown in for good measure. It seemed from what we could find out that it was primarily a kayaking river, though I could find nowhere that said you couldn't raft it.

Talk of Class IV rapids made Sparky very nervous. Though I have paddled an R2 setup in Class IV water, the only Class IV she has boated has been with me rowing.

So initially, the Yaak was off our list of potential rivers.

From her parents house, when we checked the water levels on all the planned rivers, I pointed out that the Yaak was right at the low end of what was considered runnable, so it would be as easy as we could ever find it. I told her the worst that would happen would be that there wouldn't be enough water for our raft, so we might end up dragging it downstream in some places.

Basically, I whined and wheedled, until she agreed to do it against her better judgment. On the other hand, she did agree to marry me, so her judgment is already somewhat suspect (even to me).

So we headed out. We locked our bikes at the take out where Highway 2 crosses the Yaak, and headed up to the put in. This is a small campground just below "Yaak Falls."

One of the reasons that this is primarily a kayakers river, is that it is a huge pain to carry a raft from the parking area to the river. Even with our exceptionally small 10-foot self-bailer, we were sweating profusely by the time we got the boat to the river.

Because we didn't know how much we might have to carry the boat, we packed as light as we possibly could: just the raft, our biking clothes, a throw bag, a top-off pump, a very minimalist repair kit, and an extra paddle. Everything else we wore.

There was a family playing in the big eddy there at the put in while we prepared to launch. The patriarch was considerate enough to provide us with some words of wisdom. Some of the words actually were wise, which in my experience is pretty rare.

First, he gave us the obligatory "You're not going to take that thing down this river are ya?" We get that a lot in regards to the

10-foot raft. On a trip down the Grand Canyon, we inflated it just after Crystal and R2'd the rest of the Gem Series, which simply flabbergasted the rest of our party. They had two kayaks shadow us the rest of the day, convinced we would end up swimming.

Once that was out of the way and he saw that we were serious about the trip, he told us, "A few miles downstream, there is a weir that some Chinese miners built that goes all the way across the river. Just after that, the river makes a big S-bend through a huge rapid. That's where you might want to walk around."

Personally, I thought he must have been smoking crack: why would Chinese miners build a weir across the whole river?

Perhaps I should mention I didn't do well in Anthropology either.

So we launch. At that point, the river did seem a lot like the Moyie: a medium grade, continuous slope river. For about half a mile it remained that way.

Then, the Yaak suddenly turned into a pool and drop river. The pools were short: generally only 20 or 30 yards long, and the drops were pretty steep, typically between six and 10 feet high, and quite abrupt. If the water was higher, I imagine a lot of the rapids would flow into each other more, but at 750 cfs, the Yaak had a distinctly pool and drop flavor.

Though this was much more challenging than the Moyie, we were still well within our comfort zone. After several miles of excellent Class III water, we had still seen nothing that could possibly be described as a man made weir.

We did however, come to an S-bend rapid that was more demanding than anything before, and once through, I assumed the worst was behind us. After an additional mile of good rapids, we came to another challenging drop.

In hindsight, I'm sure this was the "weir" about which the guy at the put-in referred.

I still think that it was a natural formation and not manmade, but in any case, it was quite distinctive. We made a bad decision about on which side of the river to run it: we chose left, but the right channel was much cleaner. As it was, we had to make a couple of strong moves to keep from wrapping, but made it through without even bumping a rock.

In the pool below the “weir,” we spun the

boat back upstream to admire our run and to take a picture or two of the drop. This was ill advised.

When we next looked downstream, it seemed as if the river had disappeared.

At that moment, Sparky inconveniently forgot how to speak English, and began babbling in an animated tongue with which I was not familiar.

We were well beyond any eddy in which to pull out, though we initially made a valiant run towards the one on the right. All this time I was scanning downstream looking for lines and logs: unfortunately

not seeing the former, but fortunately not seeing the latter.

This was the “big” rapid on the Yaak, which we later found out is called Stone Chest. Looking over the lip of the drop, I could see about 30 yards of cataract, a short pool, and then another thirty yards of frothy white drop. In case I didn’t make this clear, this rapid was steep. As steep as a cow’s face? You bet, and then some.

Happily, though Sparky had lost the ability to communicate in any human language, she had not forgotten how to paddle. We dropped over the brink, squared up and

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*By the way we'd run Upper Stone Chest, Lower Stone Chest didn't seem so bad*

Photo by James Knobbs



# Wilderness Paddling

punched through a big hole on the left side, then had to highside as the bow of the raft rode up a rock formation jutting off the left bank.

About this time, Sparky regained the facility for language and suggested politely (in the sense that she used no words banned by the FCC) that we pull over in the pool and scout the rest of the rapid. This seemed like a good idea to me. In any case, I was eager to rinse the fresh urine out of my wetsuit.

In retrospect, though it kind of freaked us both out to run Stone Chest blind, it was probably better that we didn't stop at the top to scout it. If we had, I am certain there is no way I could have gotten Sparky back in the boat. She would have made me

portage the whole rapid.


As it was, after the top half of Stone Chest, the bottom half seemed tame by comparison. So even after a good scout from the pool in the middle, Sparky was only mildly reluctant to continue.

There were a few more good Class III drops, and unfortunately Sparky was starting to feel a lot of post-adrenaline fatigue. Just when I started to hear some desperation in her voice, we came to a long flat area that lasted for close to two miles. This gave her some time to rest and re-energize before the final Class IV rapid on the river called Good to the Last Drop.

At low flows, Good to the Last Drop is simply a lot of boulder dodging,

pinballing, hope-your-raft-doesn't-get-stuck-too-badly, boating. We made it through, though not exactly cleanly, and floated the final 300 yards to the take out.

There a local fisherman asked, "You didn't take that boat down this river did you?"

What could we say? If you're going to commit, you've got to do it with both feet. 







*Upper Stone Chest. A good idea to scout this one.*

Photo by James Knobbs

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# Wilderness Paddling

## Squeeze Play

By Bill Tanger

The first omen was the airline losing Juanita's luggage.

She would spend the next eight days sharing mine... shirts, socks, sunblock, deodorant... We did stop on the shuttle to the river to buy her a new hat. Five days floating through the Chihuahuan desert without a hat can kill.

After a two-hour, four-wheel-drive ride through blazing desert (never seeing another soul or animal), we reached the put-in at Talley. The Rio Grande was ripping by at flood stage, 3200 cfs with a rolling wave train right in front of us at the put-in.

The riverbank was collapsing as we rigged our canoes with the food, water and gear for our five-day wilderness float. Big chunks of the shore would give way as the river ate at it and the banks splashed down into the water and disappear. The river was a chalky tan, thick and opaque.

That morning Juanita and I and the guide, Patti, had debated using a raft or two canoes. The two canoes won out over Juanita's objections. We would paddle tandem while Patti soloed with the larger share of the gear.

Our only big concerns were the two rapids we would probably need to line. Portaging would be almost impossible because the canyon walls came down to the water, and running the rapids would be high risk. On a five-day float through the desert, losing a boat is not an option.

Our first major rapid was Tight Squeeze, only an hour or so downstream from the put-in. Patti exuded confidence. Juanita exuded doubt.

And so we pushed off around 2 pm, loaded with gear and skittish with the unfamiliar weight and tippiness of the canoes. In only a few minutes we floated into Mariscal Canyon. As we drifted downstream, the river narrowed and the canyon walls

climbed to over a thousand feet high, sometimes stepped back as they rose, sometimes straight down to the water.

About an hour later we cautiously approached Tight Squeeze, catching several eddies on river right, then inching downstream until we were in the eddy closest to the drop. We tied our canoes to some tamarisks and climbed over the rocks to see the rapid.

Tight Squeeze is not really a big rapid; it's just unfriendly. The river necks down to about twenty feet wide, dropping over a river-wide ledge of about a foot and a half. But the ledge is V-shaped with the point of the V facing downstream, so no matter where you run the ledge, you are at an awkward angle.

Below the ledge drop was another low, large rock that was directly in the way. We agreed to line the canoes down by rope.

We took the tandem canoe first, with the ropes fore and aft, slowly and carefully bringing the boat around a 10-foot diameter rock near shore and then over the ledge drop. As cautious as we were, the canoe started to turn sideways to the flow. Patti had the upstream rope but could not hold the boat back. She finally had to let go and yelled to Juanita to hold on, as the boat filled with water and turned over.

The weight of the boat was too much and Juanita had to let go. Suddenly our canoe was heading down the Rio Grande, upside down and out of control.

Patti took only a few seconds to decide, then yelled, "I've got to go after the boat," and jumped into the river after it. The canoe was headed downstream around the bend where the sheer cliff walls dropped straight down into the rushing river.

In a minute Patti and the canoe were out of sight.

For an instant I debated my options.

Then I turned to Juanita and said, "I've got to help her out. Stay right here, don't go anywhere and be careful, OK? I'll be back."

I waded into the river, dove out into the current and swam after Patti.

Juanita was now alone at Tight Squeeze, guarding the remaining canoe and gear.

As I swam around a bend in the river I caught sight of Patti swimming after the runaway canoe. In short order she found the bow rope and was side-stroking towards shore, while towing the canoe.

I caught up with her and together we pulled the canoe to shore, dumped out the water and dragged the boat to a safe place above the flood level. We had landed a quarter-mile downstream from Juanita.

We were exhausted. After we caught our breath, we began to size up our predicament. We could see that upstream the sheer canyon walls fell straight into the river. The river raced downstream furiously, far too fast for anyone to paddle or swim against.

How would we get back to Juanita?

The only way possible seemed to be to climb about seventy feet up the canyon wall to a narrow ledge we could see that ran back upstream ... how far we could not tell.

We gathered some rope and hiked upstream, scouting for climbing routes. We reached the sheer rock walls at the water's edge, but we found no route up.

We backtracked downstream, tried to climb one place and gave up, went further downstream, getting further away from Juanita. If we could not get back upstream, the nearest help was two and a half days downstream, and even then, a trip would have to be outfitted to come back down to Juanita. We carried no cell phone because reception was impossible in the canyons anyway.

Patti found a possible route and started up, picking her way between the cacti, mesquite and cats claw. I followed. It wasn't long before we were bleeding all over with scratches from the thorns, needles and knife sharp rocks. This was not what I

remembered from the brochure....

At the top of the ledge we found a narrow animal trail. It was about two feet wide, studded with rocks that had obviously fallen from above. We had to stop every few yards to push aside branches of mesquite and cats claw to make progress along the narrow ledge. I asked Patti if she had ever been on this trail.

“No, but if we can make it to a cave that’s up here, I think we can make it back down to the river to Juanita. But getting through the cave could be the worst part of this.”

In another 15 minutes, we were at the base of a large sloping shelter cave. The trail led straight up into the cave. There was no alternate route.

“This cave was home to a Vietnam vet who lived here as a hermit for about 20

years,” Patti said. “He fixed up the cave but now it’s in ruins, so we need to be really careful.”

We climbed up a broken ladder made of skinny mesquite branches into the cave. The hermit had built a level deck made of a framework of branches, on top of which was a floor of river cane, lashed together with wire. Placing our hands and knees in line with the framework of branches underneath us, we crawled unsteadily across the rotten and brittle river cane floor. Below us was bedrock of knife-sharp rocks.

One knee at a time, we negotiated our way across the disintegrating cane floor and down another broken ladder to a rocky slope. We scrambled back out of the cave on the upstream side. Below us we could now see Tight Squeeze Rapid where we had left Juanita. We called out to her and our shouts echoed around the canyon and came back to us. After a minute we heard Juanita shout back but she could not see us. We were too high up the canyon wall.

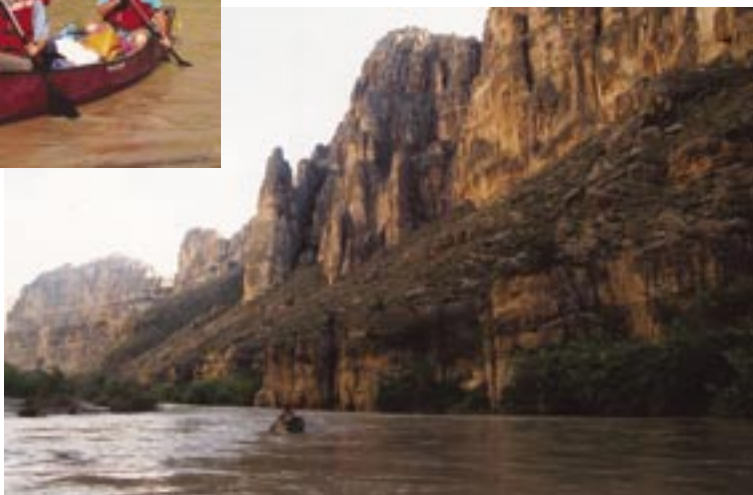
By following the animal trail we soon climbed back down to the river. We were



Left: Juanita and Bill on the Rio Grande.

Below: Maybe this is why they call it the “Big River”

Photo by Bill Tanger



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# Wilderness Paddling

enormously relieved to get back together safely. We broke out food and water from the remaining canoe and ate lunch hidden in the shade of a huge rock. It was over ninety degrees and dry as dust.

When we lined the second canoe down the rapid, we were much more careful. It had more of our supplies and gear than the first canoe and all of our food, and was much heavier.

Nonetheless, even with extra precautions, the canoe filled with water and sank. This time we had belayed the ropes and managed to bring the sunken boat to shore just below the rapid. There we bailed and bailed and finally made it floatable.

Patti got in and since there was room for

only one, Juanita and I had to swim the swollen, muddy Rio Grande to get to our canoe. A quarter mile downstream we got our boat back again.

We had lost hours lining and rescuing boats so we were behind schedule. We paddled until just before darkness when we had to stop to make camp.

The next day we paddled 26 miles to make up for lost time. That was more miles than we had ever paddled in one day, and more than we ever want to paddle again.

But we got back on schedule, and the rest of the trip was laid back, relaxed and fun—just like the brochure. We watched wildlife, hiked and shot photos in cathedral-like arroyos, examined

abandoned candle ovens and got religious over the jaw-dropping thousand foot canyons—Mariscal, San Vicente, Hot Springs, Boquillas—as we floated through.

All went well until the next to last day.

When we stopped for camp that afternoon, we walked about the campsite area to pick a spot to throw down our sleeping bags. The place was full of low, footwide anthills, maybe a hundred or more.

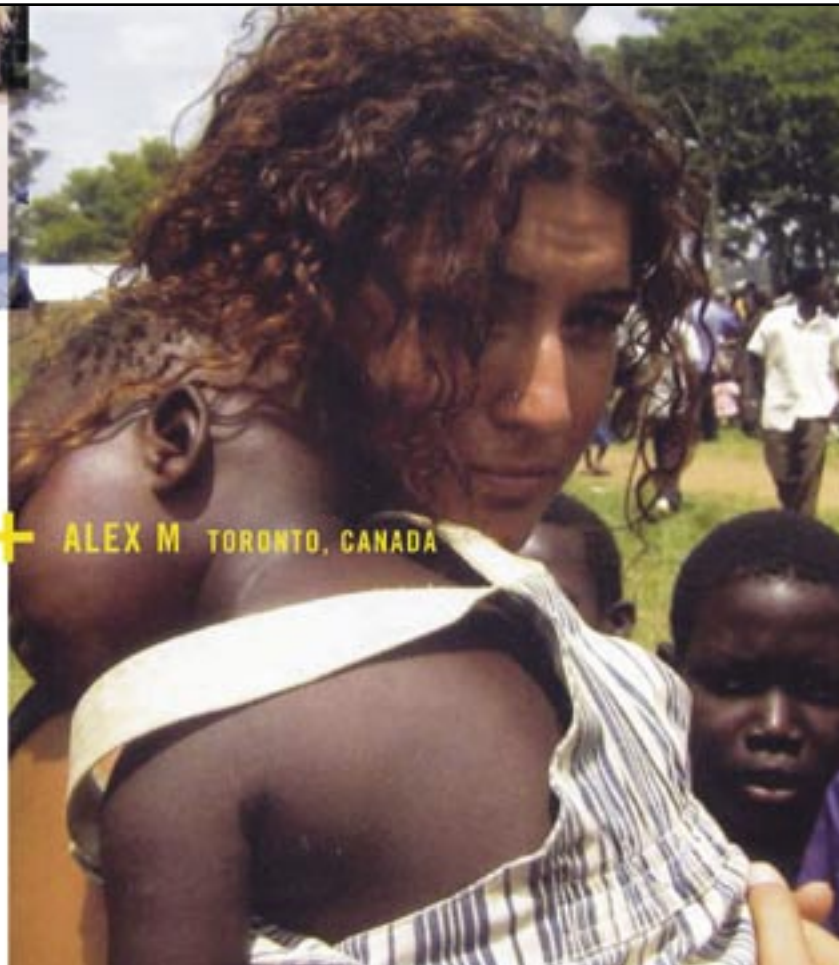
I mentioned that these could be fire ant mounds, but Patti brushed off my concerns. “We don’t have fire ants at this campsite,” she said.

Just after sunset, she was off behind



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some tamarisks, changing clothes after washing up in the river. We couldn't see her, but suddenly we heard a shriek and Patti burst out of the bushes, butt-naked and ran straight into the river, yelling and smacking her leg.

"Fire ants!!! Agggghhh! Fire ants! Damn it, damn it, damn it...."

Later that evening I learned why they are called fire ants. They crawl up your leg but do not bite until their leader releases a pheromone signal. Then they all bite at once and release their venom, which is why your leg feels like it is on fire.

Patti's ankle and toes swelled up mighty big. She took lots of Benadryl that night and didn't get any sleep, but by morning

the swelling was subsiding and she was on the mend.


### Epilogue

We got home on October 8th. On October 10th, we found a short newspaper article in our paper. The headline: "Fishermen make unusual catch on Rio Grande."

"Nuevo Laredo, Mexico – Mexican fishermen captured a 7.5 foot crocodile on the Rio Grande, authorities reported on Sunday...

The reptile was caught on a fisherman's line Saturday in a sparsely populated stretch of the river on the outskirts of Nuevo Laredo, across from Laredo, Texas. It was turned over to a local animal shelter."

Juanita was not pleased. She dreamed the next night that she was swimming the muddy Rio Grande when two beady eyes popped up out of the water in front of her.

It was an exciting trip on the Rio Grande. I'm ready to go again. I'm not sure if Juanita will be back though. She thinks the croc has family. 



JARED F.

SETH & TYLER

ROSA T.

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# Locals' Favorite

## Gillman Gorge

By Ken Hoeve

Abandoned nearly 30 years ago, the small settlement of Gilman, Colorado is nothing more than a ghost town these days. An old school, general store and a few homes are all that remain in this fenced in EPA Superfund site, located eight miles south of Minturn, Colorado. While the passing motorists may find themselves pulled over on Highway 24 taking photos of the eerie town and its nearby mountains, the Eagle River, about 1000 feet below, is the real hidden gem to kayakers.

The Gilman Gorge section of the Eagle is a Class IV-V paddler's dream, with everything from stacked up rock garden rapids to small slides and big boofs. The gorge has been well known by local paddlers for nearly 20 years, when early pioneers navigated its tight moves in boats nearly twice as long as today's creekers. The tales of blasted rock, rebar and debris seems to keep many kayakers away from the easily accessible stretch, but a recent crop of local boaters has made this their daily 5 o'clock paddling club.

The nice thing about a Gilman run is the easy shuttle and its proximity to the nearby interstate that delivers paddlers from all over Colorado. The negatives are VERY cold water, some of the sharpest rocks around and the private mining property on either side of the river. Gilman was closed to mining after a malfunction allowed a bunch of funky stuff to leak into the Eagle River. Although the river has since been cleaned up, paddlers passing through can't help but notice the old

buildings, mine shafts and Agent Orange-style soil that scours the terrain. The look of the place is so industrial and dank that it was used as the focal point in Steven Segal's *Dark Territory*. You get the idea.


But let's talk rapids because this river is full of them. The put in for Gillman Gorge is 10 miles south of I-70, off Highway 24, near Red Cliff. For a jump start to your paddling day, put on at Homestake Creek (Home of the Teva Mountain Games creek race) for a hefty dose of steep Colorado mank. For the more timid, simply make your way to the confluence with the Eagle River. Once on the water you have about a half of a mile warm up of read-and-run fun before you get to the telltale views of the mines. Once past the buildings and bridges, be on guard as it is game on from here on out. The first significant rapid is Fall Creek Rapid. Here, the water constricts, steepens and speeds up as it cascades through a three-part series of drops, holes, slides and a finish move that requires a monster boof over a boat-eating hole.

As you move further downstream, the action continues through a bunch of stout micro-rapids that can pin and pinch the best of boaters. Blasted rock and pieces of steel on the river's edge is a good indicator to what lies under the water's surface, so it is in everyone's best interest to stay upright. In all you will encounter four significant rapids between the first and the final rapid of Gilman.

If the saying "save the best for last" could ever be embodied by a creek run, Gilman's Slurry Pipe Rapid is it. On a run in 2006, visiting pro paddler Jay Kincaid summed it up best when he was

overheard saying, "Man, I thought I was about to get the smack-down. It was all good, then all of a sudden it wasn't." Yep, Slurry is a nasty one. Even if you run it daily like the locals, the pucker factor goes up as water levels rise. Slurry Pipe is created not only by the blasted mining rock, but also by a flood that ripped an old wooden mining tube down and dispersed it throughout the rapid. To say the least, this rapid's 100 yards of hell can be rewarding or terrifying. Regardless of how many times you run it, you know a butt whooping can occur at anytime. When in doubt, get out. The riverbed is sharp, painful and man-made. Getting caught in the top hole will pound you and if a swim occurs, well, you get to doggie paddle the whole rapid. Additionally, the locals are sure to impose their traditional swimmer's punishment of drinking a bootie beer at the take out.

Once through the bottom of Slurry, kick back and laugh as it is only 50 yards to your car and only a couple miles to the area's top watering hole, The Saloon. If he wasn't along on your trip, Minturn/Red Cliff local Dan Mitchell will be at the bar slinging beers and shots of fightin' whiskey. Dan is a pioneer of this run and knocks out some vertical here just about everyday before heading to work! He also won the very first race down Homestake Creek, so be sure to stop by and share war stories.

Local Beta: This run gets good when the Eagle is at two feet on the Dowd Chute gauge and remains quality up to five feet. Above that it is still fun but WAY more serious creeking. Be on our game if you decide to get in there at those flows. The land in the gorge is private, so try to avoid walking around the mines and train tracks. For best results, tag along with the locals that hit it everyday—and dress warm! The water is cold and the canyon has endless shadows. Elbow pads are recommended as well. If you need to camp, there is an area about a mile past the put in on Highway 24. If you are climber, bring the ropes as this area is littered with good routes. For local info check into Colorado's message board at [www.mountainbuzz.com](http://www.mountainbuzz.com). 



Typical Gillman gnarr

# River Voices

## Coming Out Party May 2006

By Norm Karasa

frozen, waylaid, unforgiven  
like knowing the waters  
a kayak's paddle touching the water  
a boat in the water, water rising, rising  
not seeing, not feeling  
walking a high wire  
on the water, just one line to see  
feeling the world go out beneath my feet,  
floating  
unfeeling, closing up, afraid to know of  
feeling any danger  
bumped, banged up, nothing to draw  
from  
afraid now, without the playful,  
meeting myself  
the world's story for me  
just a flutter in my stomach, feelings?  
no joy, just fright, not touching the water  
telling no one, no body to be there, for me  
to let me be, feel the water, the greatness  
the wonder  
the place where you touch, and feel with  
your soul  
your now, your dreams, your possibilities

gasping for air  
freezing up, touching  
and grasping into the air, falling in the  
water  
trying to find my center  
a touch, a feeling, giving the feeling back  
a receiving, the same  
your thoughts are mine, mine, yours  
the closeness  
screaming an acceptance from the  
universe, of you  
a prayer of thanks, forgiveness  
take me for what I am, give me more to  
feel  
my feelings for more, no much more than  
I am  
to have my paddle in the water



## Whitewater Lust April 2006

By Norm Karasa

surrounded in your christa, is just being  
gently taking and filling me  
with excitement for leaving a still-life  
framed  
heaving waves, surround me, consume  
me  
the mouth of a world, soft bosom in my  
face

not a friend, not a love, but a lust  
me, needing to be wanted for being you  
good enough, understanding enough, a  
good, a great lover  
coming up for air only for a short while  
demanding all my thoughts, my feelings  
on your time

losing myself in your embrace, wet  
changing your mood, sometimes asking  
most often freely changing from easy or

teasing  
to turbulent or wild asking, me to be  
vigilant, free, there to care

I ladle your sweet syrupy river of life  
with my paddle, welcoming, moist for me  
always wanting to be ready  
a wild soft underbelly  
an uncradled home

ravishing crystalline edges and a bubble  
necklace  
deep green tongues and sparking eyes  
lit only to be able to splash your face  
to illuminate  
the depths of your fathomless beauty

whirling pools of mystery from  
a past time deeply hurt  
shown only so as not to go in  
you pull me into your breath, breathe  
I kayak, a breath bigger than my air



## How Did I Get Here?

By Steve Nason

How did I get here? Looking around in amazement at the hillsides with bright new green leaves against blue bird skies all along the Dead River, I wondered what it was I had done to be so lucky as to live in an area where I could see sights like this on most any weekend. Each rapid we slid thru, each eddy we rested in, brought new and wondrous sights. As I eddied out below the last rapid before Hayden's Landing, an eagle flew up, crossed the eddy and landed in a tree where we watched him rest.

A ripe moose carcass lay on shore half in and half out of the water, its color and bloated appearance indicated it was a good idea to keep our distance. It wasn't a pretty sight but it was nature in its most raw state, not something I could see from the couch in front of the TV. In another rapid a splendid brook trout jumped out of the water to grab a flying meal. The rapids glistened in the sun, inviting us to come play with them, to ride their currents and splash in their waves. As we neared the end of the run, each rapid was more thrilling than the last.

How did I get here, surrounded with the kind of friends you could trust with your life? Friends that you could make plans with and depend on to meet you hundreds of miles away, knowing they would be there; friends that are quick to step up and help you if you are struggling; friends willing to risk their own safety to rescue a swimmer, a paddle or a boat, and do it with out thought or pause; friends with coolers full of ice cold beer at the take-out; what did I do to deserve them?


How did I make it to this place? What was it that made me so lucky to be able to live a life such as this, with weekend after weekend of amazing adventures in a wonderland of mountains and rivers; to have the fellowship of people I admire and wish to emulate, to aspire to be more like

them to have the endurance, the strength of character, the patience and the courage they have?

The years I have spent hanging out with paddlers and trying to follow their examples have made me a better person. I know I still have a long way to go because I can feel under the surface there still lives a jerk. I try hard to hide him but on a hot steamy day sitting in traffic I can feel him, he still is there waiting for a chance to show his ugly face. I hope I can continue to hide him and maybe if I do it long enough he will just go away. I keep looking on the store shelves for Jerk Repellent but so far no luck (it should be right next to the bug dope don't ya think?).

I spent most of my life in search of something. I never knew what it was, just that there was something missing and I wasn't going to be happy until I found it. I spent most of my time and money looking in all the wrong places. I never would have guessed that paddling would lead me to the happiest days of my life, a life filled with the wonders of nature, adventure, adrenalin rushes and, without a doubt, the finest of friends anyone could ever want.

Thank you all for being a part of my life, it seems everywhere I go I run into friends who I have either paddled with or shared a beer and a story around a campfire with. I never know when I pull into an eddy who I may meet, but I know I can put them into one of two different categories: old friend or new friend.

I look forward to seeing you all in that eddy. 



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## Strength Training for Kayakers

By Matt Young

*This is the first in a two-part series on strengthening your kayaking muscles during the "off season." Don't miss the March/April issue of American Whitewater for the second half of Matt Young's Training Guide.*

This winter, don't let cold temperatures and bad weather keep you from staying in great paddling shape. As the weather gets colder, I end up spending a little bit less time paddling, and a little bit more time in the gym. It doesn't matter if you're a freestyler, creek boater, beginner, or expert. All paddlers can benefit from a regular exercise routine.

There are many exercises that one can do to help train the muscles most often used in kayaking. The goal is for the exercises to mimic paddling movements as close as possible. A regular exercise routine can help improve paddling power and reduce the risk of becoming injured in the upcoming season. This article will offer some ideas of exercises to be added to a regular routine. Please keep in mind that this is not an exercise prescription, and it is best to consult a physician before beginning any exercise program.

I have broken down the exercises that I plan to cover in to four different groups. This article will focus on two of them, cardio + core and forearms + shoulders. You'll have to read the March/April issue for the last two groups.

### Cardio

Running at a slow pace for 30-45 minutes is a great idea for overall fitness and should be done most days of the week. But when was the last time you paddled at a slow, consistent pace for 30-45 minutes? We don't paddle like that so we shouldn't train like that. If you really want to improve your fitness for paddling, incorporate some interval training into your cardiovascular workouts. Interval workouts can include running, cycling, using a rowing machine,

or even swimming laps in a pool. I have offered up two great interval workouts that you might try incorporating into your routine twice a week.

#### 30/30/30

In this workout you will jog (or equivalent pace on a machine, bike or in a pool) for 30 seconds, run for 30 seconds, sprint for 30 seconds, then repeat. You can do this workout as long as you can stand it. If you can stick with it for more than 15 minutes you should start downriver racing because you're an animal.

#### The Five-minute Breakdown

In the five-minute breakdown you will jog for two minutes, increase your speed in the third minute. Continue increasing your speed in minutes four and five until you are almost sprinting in the final 30 seconds of minute five. Repeat the five-minute breakdown for no less than 30 minutes. Remember, no cheating.

### Core

Balance and stability in the core is essential for all paddle sports. The core muscles include those that can be found in the stomach and lower back. Having a strong core can improve balance and rotating power. Strengthening the core also involves some of the most fun exercises you can do in the gym.

#### Cable Chop

Use any cable machine with the handle up as high as it can go. Grasp the handle with both hands pull from up high, across your body toward your opposite hip. Try to keep both arms straight throughout the entire movement. This exercise works great for rotational strength during a forward stroke. Don't forget to rotate to both sides.

#### Kneel on the Ball

This is a fun one. Kneel on a giant ball, like the ones you see on TV. It is best to start close to something you can lean on for support. Always keep your eyes focused on a fixed object, your knees close together and your butt tucked up underneath your hips. Try for 30 seconds to start and then

work up from there. If you get really good at this, try standing on the ball.

#### Medicine Ball Twist

You'll need a partner or a solid wall for this one. Partners sit about 10 feet apart, opposite each other in a half sit-up position. The idea is to twist and throw the medicine ball back and fourth. Catch and throw twenty times, then repeat. This exercise will develop twisting power and stability in the midsection. This exercise gets the shoulders involved as well.

#### Superman

Lay on a ball (the same kind as in the kneeling exercise, above) face down. You should make contact with the ball at your hips and curl over to start. In one smooth motion contract the muscles in your back and look up with your arms out to the sides. Hold the contraction in your back for two seconds then return to the starting position. This one will strengthen the lower back so you can sit properly in your boat, and stay comfortable in your boat for longer.

### Forearms and Shoulders

There are some small muscles in your body that, when conditioned, can make a big difference in your paddling. Having strong forearms will really help you keep a strong grip on your paddle during long surf sessions or when paddling in cold water with gloves. Strengthening the muscles of the shoulders will reduce fatigue when paddling and reduce the risk of shoulder injury.

#### Forward and Reverse Wrist Curls


Sit on a bench or chair with your forearms on your knees with hands hanging over freely. Grasp a bar with palms facing up, curl your wrists towards you, release and repeat. It is easy to cheat on this one, so make sure you get a full range of motion. The same movement can be done with palms facing down.

#### Straight Arm Raise

The straight arm raise will help reduce fatigue on those long days of paddling. Grasp a bar with palms facing down. In one smooth motion, keeping arms straight

bring the bar up until the arms are at a 90-degree angle to the rest of the body. Slowly bring the arms down, then repeat.

*Rotator Cuff Strengthening*

Strengthening your rotator cuff will help keep that lovely little joint right where it is. Get yourself a big rubber band or some surgical tubing and get after it. Rotate the shoulder joint with resistance going towards as well as away from your body. Make sure to keep your elbow tucked in. 

*Special Thanks to Drew Haas For the photos and Lake Placid Health and Fitness for use of their facility.*

*Matt Young is a Personal Trainer and PE Teacher in Lake Placid, New York.*



*Cable Chop - finishing position*



*Straight arm raise. Bring the bar to this position then slowly lower your arms.*



*Cable Chop - starting position*



*Forward wrist curls help build forearm strength*



*Left and above: Kneeling on the ball develops core strength, plus it's fun! The medicine ball toss with a partner is a great core workout. The superman exercise on a ball.*



All photos by Drew Haas

# River Voices



*The author in the center of the auction on the South Silver.*

## The Gods

*by Andrew Guldman*

I am the old guy at put-in. I shave my head to hide the receding hairline and incoming grey. But I know it doesn't fool anybody. However, on this day at Holm Powerhouse, the start of the Tuolumne's Cherry Creek run, I saw an even older guy. Then another. I recognized the first face. After a closer examination I placed it. The intense narrow look. The vintage 80s lifejacket. Chuck. Another furtive look. Yes. Chuck Stanley. Legendary whitewater pioneer and co-author of the California paddling Bible, *The Best Whitewater in California*. I worked up the nerve to introduce myself.

"Hi, Chuck?"

"Yes?" *It is Chuck! Cool!*

"I used to work for Kiki here at ARTA. In 1986. I met you with Eric and Lars that summer. I'm Andrew. Nice to see you."

"Oh yes, 1986. That was a good year."

"I remember you running Cherry Creek with some big water that summer." *Big?! More like humongous!* 6000 cfs. I cringe to think about it.

I returned to my group and continued my put-in preparation. "That is Chuck over there. Chuck Stanley!" I gushed quietly.

"And there is Richard Montgomery," a companion offered.

...an excellent paddler with a bad reputation as a Hollowform abuser. While on a pilgrimage to Colorado in '74, Richard destroyed his "guaranteed indestructible" Hollowform. When he attempted to exercise his guarantee, Tom Johnson, the boat's designer, declared Richard a "registered boat abuser" and refused him a replacement ... Having paddled often with Richard, I've witnessed several spectacular wipeouts that his boat scouting has generated. The best of these might have happened in a place we ended up calling Richard's Hole.

These old guys were the gods and I was on Mount Olympus for the day!

We embarked on our roller coaster ride down the Tuolumne River right behind the gods and their group. We made slower progress and soon they were gone. Eventually we arrived at Mushroom, one of the landmark rapids. Lo and behold, there were Chuck and Richard finishing their scout and preparing to run the rapid.

"Mind if I run with you?" I asked casually as my group prepared to portage.

"Sure, the more the merrier," Chuck replied cordially. "This is Richard."

"Hi. I'm Andrew," I introduced myself. "I think you have paddled with my brother Jason in Santa Cruz."

"Oh, yes. I remember Jason. Blew out his shoulder, right?"

"Yeah, he doesn't paddle much any more."

"What's Jason up to?"

"Flooring. Hardwood flooring."

Richard turned his attention to Chuck. "I couldn't see the bottom of the rapid. What side is the mushroom on? I can't remember."

"The mushroom is on the left. You go down the channel to the left of that pourover rock thing, then go down to the right of the mushroom," Chuck instructed, modeling the curving left-to-right motion with his hands. "If you catch the eddy in the middle of the rapid, then you can see the bottom section."

"The hole at the bottom has gotten bigger the last couple of years," I piped up. "It is smaller the further right you hit it. I paddle hard to the right after the pourover."

Richard and Chuck nodded appreciatively.

Off they went. I followed their entrance, and then caught the big duck pond eddy on the right near the top. I could see Chuck in the middle eddy but no Richard. He pointed to me and motioned for me

to join him. This was like playing catch with Joe Montana. Eddy hopping with Chuck in Mushroom! I zipped down to the middle eddy.


"How was Richard's run?" I asked.

"Good," he answered. "No eddy, but it was smooth." Pause. "I'm going to hit that right run." And off he went. Zig zag zoom and he was at the bottom.

My turn. Once again, with considerable effort, I was able to follow Chuck's lead. Playing catch with Joe. I caught the ball.

"So Jason's a florist?" Richard asked in the pool at the bottom.

"Flooring. Carpentry," I corrected with a smile.

Then off they went. Paddling Chuck's Wave with Chuck and Richard's Hole with Richard would have to wait for another day. 



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# River Voices

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## Rock Contos: A Profile

*By Tom Diegel*

Perhaps it was the time he had to unzip and shed his pfd to escape entrapment in an underwater cave. Or maybe it was when he got wrapped around a log on a flooded creek in urban San Diego, lost all his gear, and then got fined for trespassing as he dragged his soggy carcass back to the road. The two bandit solo trips down a certain well-known, heavily-regulated Southwest desert river in the middle of winter probably helped too. For sure, swimming across the Eel River at 250,000 cfs after losing his boat was also pretty notable. Soloing Ernie's and Robe Canyons in a weekend, as well as such California classics as Kings Canyon and the Cataracts of the Kern? Yup, he did that. It could have been getting Dengue fever in a Mexican jail after losing a boatful of gear and his wallet just a week prior to putting on as trip leader for a private Grand Canyon trip. But it was most likely been the dozens of solo first descents down some of the most remote and unknown rivers in North America and his subsequent verbose tales of them that has helped solidify the legend that is ...

# Rocky Contos.

James John Achilles Contos is one of the few people whose parents, despite giving him four names, decided that these weren't quite enough and gave him a fifth name at an early age. Despite the burly-sounding name and his intrepid nature, "Rocky" is hardly physically intimidating, with only 145 pounds shrink-wrapped around his 6-foot frame and a soft nasal voice that has earned him his sixth name of "Mumbly." His path to expedition kayaking was an unlikely one. He grew up in San Diego with parents who are not outdoor-hippies, who took their kids on Sierra backpacks but are actually urban-bound gun dealers. However, after taking a kayak lesson from the well-known UC Davis outdoor program early in his undergrad years Rocky knew right away that he was destined to kayak. And his propensity to tackle rivers on his own terms was born right away. Not owning a car, he asked a buddy to drive him up the most logical river he saw, the Main American, to paddle for four days down towards the San Francisco Bay. En route he flipped in high winds/waves and had to swim a quarter mile to shore, where he dried out his gear that had been stored in garbage bags deep in the bowels of his new/used (and much beloved) Mirage. Thus a legend was born.

Rocky has not paddled thousands of miles solo because he likes to be alone; on the contrary, Rocky works very hard to find partners. The problem is that his perception of running rivers is simply different than everyone else's. Rocky likes to "do" rivers. Top to bottom, easy or hard. The concept of doing short runs that are in guidebooks seems silly to Rocky; he simply goes up as high in a drainage as he can, puts on in a trickle of water, and will literally try to follow it to the sea, if it's possible. And because there are always more rivers than time, he likes to do them fast in order to get them all in. This past spring, for example, he started at the Marsh Creek put in for the Middle Fork of the Salmon after driving all night. He paddled all the way down Marsh Creek,



the Middle Fork, the Main Salmon past Riggins, and down the lower gorge for an amazing 355 miles in 3.5 days. Though in this case the Main was running at 90,000 cfs (Rocky has an unusual affinity for big water), generally the speed at which he's able to paddle is extraordinary. Despite his scrawny arms, Rocky has an uncanny ability to somehow transcend the friction of the water and glide effortlessly down rivers faster than virtually anyone else. This could well be due to a secret weapon: his predisposition towards long, old boats.

*Rocky and a farmer pose for a photo during an R-2 descent of Rio Ameca, Mexico*

Photo by Barbara Conboy

Rocky has used his small Seattle yard, his parent's place, and various shuttle drivers' homes in Mexico as docks for his fleet of old boats (Extremes, MicroX's, Rockits, Freefalls, Overflows, etc) that he's picked up over the years, in part to feed his habit and replace boats that have been or undoubtedly will be broken, lost, or stolen.

# River Voices

Of course, he hopes that by knowing that a spare boat awaits, someone will come meet him for yet another Crocky Paunchos adventure.

The primary reason for Rocky's expeditionary zeal is his thirst for knowledge. Rocky is a neuroscientist and has been in academia all his life. After a long stint at UC San Diego earning his doctorate studying mouse brains, he moved to Seattle to work with a woman who has since won a Nobel Prize. The methodical process associated with deep science has manifested itself into Rocky's approach to kayaking, with not only far-too-many hours of creating meticulous map notations of potential first descents' drainage area sizes, amount of rainfall, gradient, and mile/kilometer markings but also his obsession with chronicling his adventures. With still photos, videos, tape recorders, written notes, and epic stories, Rocky not only wants to "do" rivers, he wants to know them thoroughly as well. Mile by mile, rapid by rapid, Rocky documents his trips like the good scientist that he is. Fortunately for him, just as he was entering his prime as an aspiring expedition kayaker, the Internet sprang to life and provided him the needed outlet for this documentation, and the early days of rec.boats.paddle was the chosen medium. After a particularly impressive string of postings during the epic 1997 El Nino year that sent many dry Southern

California rivers into a winter-long frenzy, Doug Ammons, a fellow brainiac expedition kayaker, published a hilarious and relatively scathing parody of Rocky's tomes entitled, "The Adventures of Crocky Paunchos" (years later, Doug sent Rocky a copy of his new book out of the blue and included a note apologizing for the article. In a testament to Rocky's good nature, he didn't really understand the need for Doug's apology). Unfazed, Rocky carried on, though the intensity of finishing up his doctorate precluded his ability to both do as many expeditions and write about them.

However, while finishing his doctorate Rocky was also researching and preparing himself for his next life's work: Mexican rivers. The Sierra Madre Mountains that drain into the Pacific are a several-hundred-mile long chain of mountains that rise out of the desert south of Arizona and run all the way down the long country, forming a spine that reaches up over 11,000 feet and is an amazing catcher's mitt for the monsoonal rains that pound the range every summer. It doesn't take a very long look at a map of Mexico to realize that there are a lot of blue ribbons snaking out of these mountains towards the Sea of Cortez. Despite the efforts of great kayakers doing intrepid and creative runs around the world, there were literally dozens of entire drainages with warm-water creeks and rivers that run every

summer just south of the border that had never been done. Rocky poured over the excellent Mexican topo maps for literally years, telling anyone who would listen: "Northern Mexico. Now THAT'S where there's a LOT of good whitewater!" It was hard to believe. But once Rocky was unleashed from his doctoral duties, he took a few months for planning then embarked on a four-month trip to explore the rivers of his dreams and prove to himself that he was right.

What followed has been an extraordinary streak in expedition kayaking. Rocky has done 47 first descents, many of which have been nearly a hundred miles to (in the case of Rio Yaqui, north of the Copper Canyon region) over 300 miles, nearly all solo, and almost all have had both exceptional scenery and high quality whitewater. By his count, he's done 51 trips for 4073 miles, 3026 of which have been first descent miles. Some of the runs he's done have seen one or two previous descents on certain sections, but in just a few years he has quietly and most certainly become the preeminent expert on northern Mexican "brownwater" (most of the rivers run brown after long, dry winter and springs). With his ultimate goals of writing and publishing a guidebook, starting some guide/logistics services, and saving these extraordinary rivers from a Mexican government eager to dam them for their power-creating potential, he has finally reinvigorated his writing career. Emboldened by a concerted effort to increase his vocabulary beyond the scientific realm, he has finally started turning his copious notes into written articles that are nearly as epic as the runs they describe.

While some first descenters or expeditionary paddlers prefer to keep their secrets to themselves, Rocky, as a result of the "publish or perish" pressures of academia, feels compelled to spread the gospel, and he eagerly anticipates the day when he is able to take groups of people south of the border to show them these Mexican gems, not unlike his well-known predecessor further south in Veracruz, Grant Amaral. However, future clients should be aware of a critical fact: Rocky has no adrenal glands (or at least, as friend, fellow expedition kayaker,

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and neuroscientist Preston Holmes has put it: “Rocky’s mind simply works ‘differently’”). As indicated earlier, Rocky’s yen for adventure has led him into plenty of misadventures, and his extraordinary confidence and self-reliance has given him such an acute sense of what he can accomplish at a high level that it is sometimes difficult for him to acknowledge other people’s limitations, whether mental or physical. On a recent first descent of Rio Chinipas in the Copper Canyon region that he described as the most difficult one he’d done in Mexico, Rocky determined—after six days of excruciating portaging and a little river-running that only got the strong crew a little over 20 miles—that “this tributary will probably be the least popular” of the three possible starts! After finally catching our breath from laughing, the rest of our crew agreed that it was not only a first, but very likely an “only” descent. That said, Rocky is a stellar partner on any river due to his excellent probing abilities, tremendous fitness, ability to suffer, quick laugh and smile, ferocious scrabble playing, and an extraordinary way of pulling off successful and memorable trips.

Perhaps in an era of quick-bang-for-your-buck river running and park-n-play, Crocky Paunchos’ fundamental desire to paddle from high-elevation, steep Class V down through hundreds of miles of Class I-III rapids and flatwater in big boats doesn’t engender much enthusiasm from either fellow experts or beginner/intermediate paddlers. But the vision that he’s had of exploring and popularizing remote, difficult, and undone rivers virtually under the collective noses of the US paddling community and the “temerity” (a favorite term) he’s exhibited in successfully tackling the “ineluctable defiles” (another favorite) is nothing short of extraordinary for this soft-spoken and affable neuroscientist with a grand zest for a little adventure. 

For more info, check out Rocky’s excellent website: [www.sierrarios.com](http://www.sierrarios.com).

# Book Review

## Review of *Wherever Waters Flow, A Lifelong Love Affair with Wild Rivers*

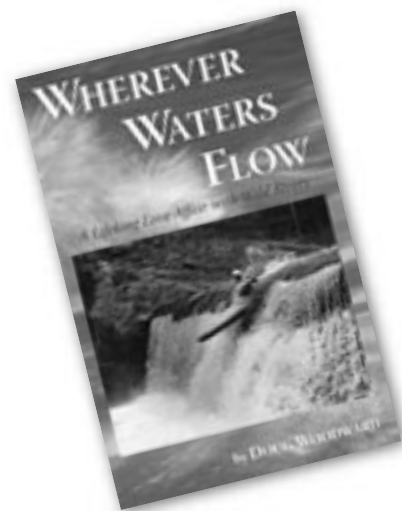
by Doug Woodward

Review by Charlie Walbridge

When I was just starting to paddle whitewater Doug Woodward was one of the sport’s established leaders. Many of the people I met began their careers as Explorer scouts under his leadership. I also knew that he, Claude Terry, and Payson Kennedy were close friends who had worked together as stunt doubles in the movie *Deliverance*. They would later start two of the Southeast’s leading whitewater outfitters. But there’s a lot more to the story, and his book fills in the blank spaces.

Beginning with Doug’s youth, and his time in the Boy Scouts, the book traces his early years exploring and learning from Appalachian rivers. From his first time in a canoe at scout camp his experience grew. Whitewater trips on the Cacapon and Potomac were followed by bolder runs on the Yough, Chattooga and Tellico (Including a first run of Baby Falls). His early tries at boatbuilding and his travels on the Eastern Racing Circuit give a clear picture of what the sport was like in the 60s and 70s. For anyone who started paddling during this time the book offers a pleasant jaunt down memory lane.

Doug was a well-traveled paddler who paddled in Idaho with Walt Blackadar and made one of the first hard-boat runs down the Grand Canyon. His love affair with the Chattooga led him and Claude Terry to work closely with then Governor Jimmy Carter to obtain “Wild



and Scenic” designation for the river. Much of his book is about paddling trips he took with his family, and their adventures and misadventures on the great Western and Arctic rivers. River running was central to his family life and these journeys were really quite remarkable.

*The book (272 pages, hard cover) can be ordered from Doug Woodward himself at Headwaters Publishing, P.O. Box 494, Franklin, NC 28744 for \$26.95 + \$5 shipping.*

# The Last Word



## The Gift of Wilderness

By Ambrose Tuscano

Last week I was fortunate enough to catch a slideshow presentation of a canoe trip taken by a couple of friends of mine in Canada. This wasn't just any canoe trip—it was a wilderness extravaganza in one of the wildest, most remote areas of North America. In fact, after reading the next sentence, most of you will want to promptly search a map or log on to Wikipedia.com to check for the very existence of the place I'm about to mention. Gretchen and Andrew's expedition explored about 600 miles of the Thelon River in Nunavut Territory, Canada. I know I did some head-scratching when I heard of the river's location. *What the heck? How come I've never heard of Nunavut?* My first thought was that my friends were pulling my leg—surely there are only 12 provinces in Canada. But when I got home and checked

the all-knowing Internet, there it was.

Before that slideshow, if someone had asked me how confident I was in my knowledge of Canadian provinces and territories, I would have bet the farm on my geography smarts. Afterwards I was just grateful for my self-imposed ban on gambling. So where is Nunavut? Well, according to my seemingly authentic Internet sources, it's directly north of Manitoba, east of the Northwest Territories, on the northwest shores of Hudson Bay. In fact one of the reasons many of you may be unaware of the existence of Nunavut is that it only separated from the Northwest Territories in 1999. The recently created territory became at once the largest (over 2,000,000 km<sup>2</sup>—about 300,000 km<sup>2</sup> bigger than Alaska) and least populous

(fewer than 31,000 residents) Canadian territory/province.

The more I read about Nunavut, the more I became intrigued. I was fascinated by its size, stretching from the four corners area—where Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Northwest Territories and Nunavut meet—to Baffin Island, just north of Quebec, to Ellesmere Island, off the west coast of Greenland. I was also amazed at just how few people live there. Nunavut averages a person for every 64 km<sup>2</sup>, which is about one thirtieth the density of Alaska; its biggest city, Iqualuit, is home to only 5,236. Perhaps most impressive is how unknown this huge chunk of North America remains. And I have to say (beginning, perhaps, to get to the point), that I'm heartened by the existence of

a piece of land so close to home that is still so wild. During their 40-day journey down the Thelon, Andrew and Gretchen saw only a couple of other humans.

As I watched their fantastic assortment of photos, I remembered wilderness paddling trips of my own and wondered why it had been so long since I'd wandered anywhere nearly so remote. About three slides later I got a partial reminder as the audience let out an involuntary gasp. The photo on the screen was a close-up shot of a tent fly, but it was hundreds of black dots in the foreground that had captured our attention. "The flies were pretty intense," Andrew narrated. "When the wind wasn't blowing our evening routine was pretty much eat, dive into our tent, spend 45 minutes killing flies and not come out again all night."

Gretchen said, "At first it took us a long time to brush our teeth because every time a fly got stuck to our toothbrushes we'd stop to scrape it off; after awhile we stopped caring and just brushed with flies." Bob Gedekoh, former *American Whitewater* editor, longtime friend, and veteran of numerous northern Quebec wilderness kayak trips has his own philosophy on the subject: "You know you're ready to go back there when you've forgotten how bad the black flies are."


Gretchen and Andrew paddled a heavily weighted tandem canoe and thus were not able to enjoy the Thelon River's occasional whitewater stretches. In fact, much of the whitewater necessitated arduous, two or three-stage portages (bags, then more gear, then canoe) through brush thick with swarms of black flies. However, for 40 days the river's whitewater was just a much a factor of their existence as fishing with the 10 Cast Rule (if you don't get a bite in the first 10 casts, pack up your rod and reel because the fish just aren't biting), carrying a rifle everywhere they went for Grizzly insurance, and battling frequent gale-force winds.

Simplifying life to a routine of surviving in nature is one way to make sure we maintain an appreciation for our world and respect for our place in it. When

the features of our environment—our commute, office building and suburban home—are indistinguishable from those in 1000 different cities, we can be forgiven for thinking that we humans are gods, in perfect control of our lives and world. Get away from it all for a few weeks, and we begin to remember our humility, our place in the order of things.

Andrew and Gretchen went to Nunvut, among many other reasons, to witness the massive Caribou herds that still roam the Arctic tundra there. Near the very end of their trip, having seen everything from a majestic Arctic Wolf to a creepy stalker-Grizzly Bear to big, shaggy, otherworldly Musk Ox, they finally got their wish. Crossing the Thelon and swarming up the opposite shore was a herd of Caribou beyond number. When the thousands of ungulates had disappeared over the horizon, the only sign of their passing was a white film of hair that coated the waters of the Thelon for a short time before washing downstream.

As the lights came up on the slideshow I felt saddened and inspired at the same time. I was reminded that the value of wilderness is not just as a wildlife preserve or a proving ground for the mentally and physically tough. Wilderness is not something we survive, but something that we experience, appreciate and which then survives in our memories and our spirits. And if we appreciate what wilderness gives to us, we will hopefully be reminded of our reciprocal responsibility to give back by helping to protect the vulnerable places that inspire us.

Gretchen and Andrew's Thelon trip was certainly an inspiration to me. Even though the pictures couldn't have done it justice, their slideshow transported me to Arctic tundra. I felt the stinging wind, the frigid water and the grit of sand between my teeth like I had been there myself. It wasn't until I was walking out the door that I remembered a different sensation: the persistent hum of thousands of miniature wings and the insistent prick of tiny teeth. Perhaps it wasn't time for me to venture north again just yet. 



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Dagger's belief in paddling "Wherever there's water" is made possible by the hard work of the staff and volunteers of American Whitewater. For years AW has been fighting battles on behalf of river users throughout the United States to ensure our right to float and to conserve valuable resources.

AW has stayed true to its mission of keeping rivers free and helping paddlers retain the right to float some of the most spectacular stretches of whitewater in the world. From the Chattooga in the Southeast to portions of the Colorado River and countless miles of river on the West Coast AW always has an eye out for the things that matters most—our country's rivers.

We at Dagger Kayaks are very proud to support the ongoing work of American Whitewater and their endless pursuit to protect our whitewater environment. If you paddle, you should join AW. It's that simple.





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



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



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



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



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



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



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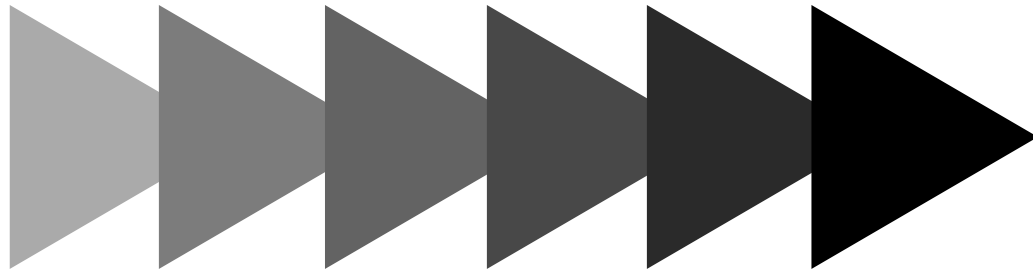
In 2006 Smith Optics continues its support of American Whitewater's river stewardship work and membership.

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

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

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

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- \$1,000 Legacy Membership\* (Receive AW's exclusive Kokatat Gore-tex Drytop FREE)
- \$2,500 Steward Membership\* (Receive AW's exclusive Kokatat Gore-tex Drytop and Pants FREE)

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

#### Organizational Membership Types

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

#### Additional Donation

- \$5.00    \$10.00    \$25.00   \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Other
- \$24.99 Kayak Session subscription (Add Kayak Session to your membership at a 40% discount)

#### Amount

Membership subtotal \$ \_\_\_\_\_       Do NOT Mail me the AW Journal. I will read it on-line.  
 Donation subtotal \$ \_\_\_\_\_       Do NOT share my name with like-minded groups.  
 Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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

#### Transaction Type

Cash    Charge    Check# (payable to American Whitewater)  
 Card Type: MC   Visa   Discover   AMEX  
 Card Number \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_  
 Name as it appears on card \_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_

# Affiliate Clubs

# AW's Original Purpose

by Carla Miner

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

This is the fifth year that Clif Bar makes possible the AW / Clif Bar Flowing Rivers grants. Paddling clubs must be current AW Affiliate Clubs to be eligible for these \$500 grants. Clubs across the country have embarked on many wonderful programs as a result of this program (See [americanwhitewater.org/content/article/view/articleid/102581](http://americanwhitewater.org/content/article/view/articleid/102581) for the 2006 grant recipients). Make sure your club is an AW Affiliate Club and encourage them to apply for this grant for a local project important to paddlers in your area.

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

The AW Journal Club Affiliates by State:

## Alaska

Fairbanks Paddlers, Fairbanks

## Alabama

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

## Arkansas

Arkansas Canoe Club, Little Rock

## California

Central CA Canoe Club (C4), Nevada City  
Chico Paddle Heads, Chico  
River Touring Section, Angeles Chapter

## Colorado

Avid4Adventure Inc., Boulder  
Colorado White Water Association, Englewood  
Grand Canyon Priv. Boat. Assn, Englewood  
Pikes Peak Whitewater Club, Colorado Springs  
Rocky Mountain Canoe Club, Englewood  
University of Colorado Kayak Club, Boulder

## Florida

North Florida Whitewater Assoc., Ocala

## Georgia

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

## Idaho

Idaho Whitewater Assoc., Boise

## Illinois

Chicago Whitewater Assoc., Chicago

## Indiana

Ohio Valley Whitewater Club, Evansville  
Hoosier Canoe Club, Indianapolis

## Iowa

Iowa Whitewater Coalition, Des Moines

## Kansas

Kansas Whitewater Association, Mission

## Kentucky

Bluegrass Wildwater Association, Lexington  
Viking Canoe Club, Louisville

## Maine

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

## Maryland

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

## Massachusetts

Zoar Outdoor, Charlemont  
AMC - New Hampshire Paddlers,  
Honover

## Minnesota

Boat Busters Anonymous, Stillwater  
Charlie Sawyer, Maple Plain

## Missouri

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

## Montana

Beartooth Paddlers Society, Billings

## Nevada

Sierra Nevada Whitewater Club, Reno

## New Hampshire

Mt. Washington Valley Paddlers, Franconia  
Merrimack Valley Paddlers, Merrimack

## New Mexico

Adobe Whitewater Club, Albuquerque

## New York

ADK Schenectady, Schenectady  
FLOW Paddlers Club, Rochester  
Housatonic Canoe & Kayak Squad, Ossining  
Town Tinker Tube Rentals, Phoenicia  
Zoar Valley Paddling Club, Dunkirk  
KCCNY, New York  
Wildrivers, Millwood  
St Lawrence University, Canton

## N. Carolina

Appalachian State University, Boone  
Carolina Canoe Club, Raleigh  
Mecklenburg Regional Paddlers, Indian Trail  
Warren Wilson College, Asheville  
Western Carolina Paddlers, Asheville  
Watauga Paddlers, Boone  
Dixie Division ACA, Tuxedo  
UNCG Outdoor Adventures, Greensboro

## Ohio

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

## Oregon

Oregon Kayak and Canoe Club, Portland  
Oregon Whitewater Association, Beaverton  
Willamette Kayak and Canoe Club, Corvallis  
Lower Columbia Canoe Club, Portland  
North West Rafters Asso, Portland

## Pennsylvania

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

## S. Carolina



Foothills Paddling Club, Greenville  
Palmetto Paddlers, Columbia

#### Tennessee

Appalachian Paddling Enthusiasts, Gray  
Eastman Hiking and Canoeing, Kingsport  
E. Tennessee Whitewater Club, Oak Ridge  
Memphis Whitewater, Memphis  
Tennessee Scenic River Assoc., Nashville  
Tennessee Valley Canoe Club, Chattanooga  
University of Tennessee Knoxville, Knoxville  
Chota Canoe Club, Knoxville

#### Texas

Bayou Whitewater Club, Houston  
Houston Canoe Club, Houston  
Kayak 4 a Kure, Amarillo

#### Utah

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

#### Vermont

Vermont Paddlers Club, Jericho

#### Virginia

Blue Ridge Voyageurs, Reston  
Blue Ridge River Runners, Lynch Station  
Canoe Cruisers Association, Arlington  
Coastal Canoeists, Richmond  
FORVA, Roanoke

#### Washington

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

#### West Virginia

West VA Wildwater Assoc., S. Charleston

#### Wisconsin

Hoofers Outing Club, Madison  
NE Wisconsin Paddlers Inc. Appleton  
Sierra Club / John Muir Chapter, LaCrosse

#### Canada, British Columbia

Vancouver Kayak Club, Vancouver

## Discounted AW Memberships for Affiliate Club Members

by Carla Miner  
Membership Coordinator

AW offers discounted AW memberships to whitewater enthusiasts who are also members of one of our Affiliate Clubs.

We supply a unique code that will automatically offer the discounted membership specific to your club allowing individuals to receive the discount on the normal AW membership renewal form or online at [www.americanwhitewater.org/membership](http://www.americanwhitewater.org/membership).

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

Discount codes are in place for all AW Affiliate Clubs and many members are enjoying the benefits of joining or renewing their individual AW membership for only \$25.

If you are interested in taking advantage of the Affiliate Club discount, please contact me and I will be happy to let you know your Club's unique code. I can be reached at: 866-BOAT-4AW or [membership@amwhitewater.org](mailto:membership@amwhitewater.org).

## Join American Whitewater as a Club Affiliate!

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

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

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

# Guidelines for Contributors



Please read this carefully before sending us your articles and photos! This is a volunteer publication, please cooperate and help us out. Do not send us your material without a release – signed by all authors and photographers (attached).

If possible, articles should be submitted on a 3-1/2-inch computer disk. (Microsoft Word if possible – others accepted.) Please do not alter the margins or spacing parameters; use the standard default settings. Send a printed copy of the article as well.

Those without access to a word processor may submit their articles typed. Please double space.

Photos may be submitted as slides, black or white prints, or color prints or electronic, digital photos, 300 dpi tiffs, Photoshop or high res jpegs minimum 3"x5." Keep your originals and send us duplicates if possible; we cannot guarantee the safe return of your pictures. If you want us to return your pictures, include a self-addressed stamped envelope with your submission. The better the photos the better the reproduction.

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

If you are writing about a commonly paddled river, your story should be told from a unique perspective. Articles about difficult, infrequently paddled, or exotic rivers are given special consideration. But we are also interested in well written, unusual articles pertaining to Class II, III & IV rivers as well. Feature stories do not have to be about a specific river. Articles about paddling techniques, the river environment and river personalities are also accepted. Pieces that incorporate humor are especially welcome. Open boating and rafting stories are welcome.

Profanity should be used only when it is absolutely necessary to effectively tell a story; it is not our intent to offend our more sensitive members and readers.

Please check all facts carefully, particularly those regarding individuals, government agencies, and corporations involved in river access and environmental matters. You are legally responsible for the accuracy of such material. Make sure names are spelled correctly and river gradients and distances are correctly calculated.

Articles will be edited at the discretion of the editors to fit our format, length, and style. Expect to see changes in your article. If you don't want us to edit your article, please don't send it in! Because of our deadlines you will not be able to review the editorial changes made prior to publication.

American Whitewater is a nonprofit; the editors and contributors to American Whitewater are not reimbursed. On rare occasions, by prearrangement, professional writers receive a small honorarium when they submit stories at our request. Generally, our contributors do not expect payment, since most are members of AW, which is a volunteer conservation and safety organization.

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



## Release for publication

I hereby release my work (literary, graphic or photographic) for publication in American Whitewater magazine

- I understand that my work may be edited or cropped at the editors' discretion.
- I understand that I will not be paid for my work.
- I accept responsibility for the accuracy of the information included in my submission. I have not libeled or slandered any individual, corporation, or agency in this work.
- I understand that all or some of my work may be reprinted at some future date in an American Whitewater publication
- I promise that this material has not been and will not soon be published by another magazine or publication and the rights to this material are clear and unrestricted.
- I understand that once this material is printed in American Whitewater it may be reprinted or reproduced in other publications if I wish, providing I notify them that it has already appeared in American Whitewater.
- I understand that the contents of American Whitewater Magazine, including my contribution will be archived on the American Whitewater website.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

This release must be signed by the contributing author(s), photographers(s), and graphic artist(s).

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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Send your material to:  
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[editor@amwhitewater.org](mailto:editor@amwhitewater.org)

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*Toby MacDermott (aka "Budget") hikes to harvest the goods of the Raven's Fork River in Tennessee.*

photo by Raphael Thiebaut

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