



AMERICAN WHITEWATER

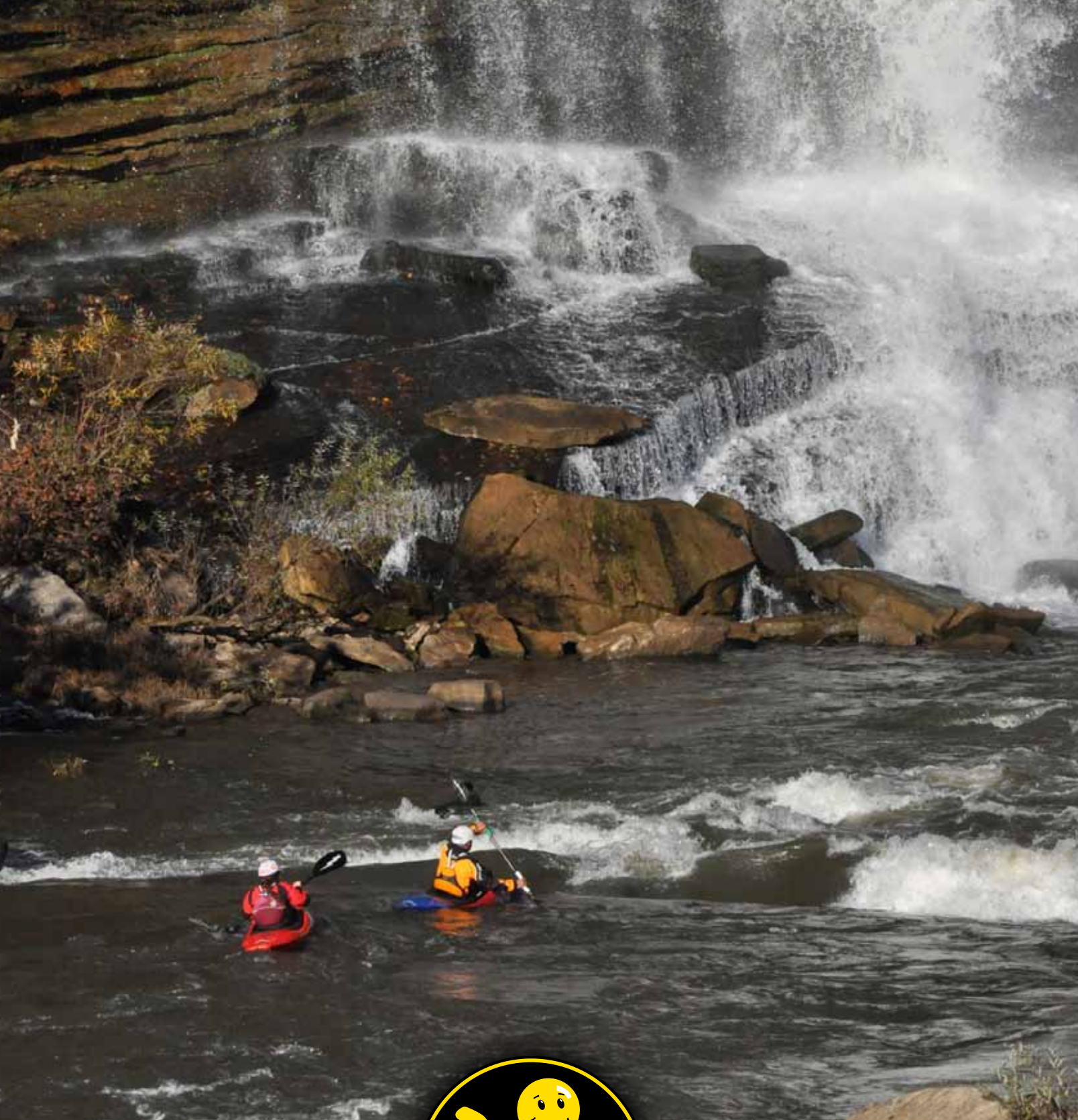
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Winter 2017

THE TOP TEN RIVER STEWARDSHIP ISSUES OF 2017

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AMERICAN WHITEWATER

A VOLUNTEER PUBLICATION PROMOTING RIVER CONSERVATION, ACCESS AND SAFETY

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The North Fork Blackfoot is a Missoula-area Class IV creeking staple and part of over 700 river miles in Montana. AW is working to designate Wild and Scenic.

Photo by Kevin Colburn

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PURPOSE

RIVER STEWARDSHIP: AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

whitewater rivers, as well as river recreation, conservation, access, and safety. This is accomplished through our 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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Founded in 1954, American Whitewater is a national non-profit organization (Non-profit # 23-7083766) with a mission "to conserve and restore America's whitewater resources and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely." American Whitewater is a membership organization representing a broad diversity of individual whitewater enthusiasts, river conservationists, and more than 100 local paddling club affiliates across America. The organization is the primary advocate for the preservation and protection of whitewater rivers throughout the United States, and connects the interests of human-powered recreational river users with ecological and science-based data to achieve the goals within its mission. All rights to information contained in this publication are reserved.

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THE JOURNEY AHEAD



WELCOME TO THE first *American Whitewater Journal* of 2017. In this issue we discuss the Top Ten River Issues on our immediate horizon. It would be irresponsible to roll right into these issues without first acknowledging that our political landscape shifted markedly at the end of last year. The November 8, 2016 election shifted the balance of power to a single party. The election will certainly have implications for conservation and public land policy, and with 43% of paddling in this country located on public lands, how these lands are managed will have an impact on our community of whitewater paddlers. While specific policy positions of the forthcoming administration remain largely unknown, we expect that we will be defending longstanding public land and river designations, the hydropower licensing process that currently gives “equal consideration” to power and non-power values that include recreation, and laws that protect water quality and quantity. We will also be alert for opportunities. Passage of the Outdoor REC Act in Congress demonstrates that embracing and strengthening the outdoor recreation economy is something that enjoys broad bipartisan support. Investing in infrastructure to support access to rivers and public lands is at the core of our mission and consistent with promoting enhanced opportunities for outdoor recreation.

Participants in a past AW Rouge River trip enjoying scenery, companionship, and shared appreciation of wild rivers.

Photo by Thomas O'Keefe

The election demonstrated that our country is politically divided. Honestly, that is not unlike our American Whitewater membership. Our supporters are divided in their politics, with the number of our members who lean conservative being equal to those who embrace a more liberal perspective. American Whitewater membership includes segments that are died-in-the-wool conservative and other segments that are far-out-leaning liberals. But what we all have in common is that we all value rivers with equal intensity. I see this often at local put-ins around the country where there is a pickup truck with the NRA sticker, parked next to the Bernie van, that is parked beside the SUV with the now four-year old Palin sticker. Yet on the river we are all one tribe! Paddling melts away the political differences within our community and brings us together as a single team to traverse remarkable landscapes.

For American Whitewater to be successful in this new political landscape we are going to need to do a better job telling stories about the positive economic benefits of rivers and our stewardship project outcomes. A key to better storytelling is data, and we need better economic information on the benefits of rivers and

the impact they have on local communities. It's not enough anymore to simply say that the outdoor industry generates \$646 billion in consumer spending and supports 6.1 million direct jobs (which it does, according to the industry trade group, Outdoor Industry Association). We need more granular economic data to assist our storytelling. That information needs to be hyperlocal, specific to rivers, watersheds, and local communities. With better data we can answer the “what's in it for me?” question raised by many rural residents when they learn about river stewardship projects in their backyard. A move in the right direction occurred late in 2016 when both House and Senate passed legislation requiring the Department of Commerce, in consultation with federal land management agencies, to provide annual statistics for the outdoor industry and its contributions to the economy. As I write this, we are celebrating the passage of the Outdoor Recreation Jobs and Economic Impact Act of 2016 into law. With the passage of this legislation, the contribution of the outdoor recreation economy to the national GDP will be measured consistent with other economic sectors. And, in the end, what gets measured gets acted on.



THE JOURNEY AHEAD

In a time of political division, American Whitewater's regional grassroots approach to river stewardship is positioned for success. Yes, we do anticipate challenges. For example, the movement to privatize national public lands continues to find traction in Western states. These public lands should remain in public hands; they belong to the American people. And, more importantly, these lands are part of our shared natural heritage as a country. Our federally managed lands contain whitewater runs that are important to all of us. Transferring public lands to state ownership has historically led to private ownership and lost access.

As an organization and a community, we are going to have to step up in a big way and play a leadership role crafting common ground. The whitewater paddling community has a great story to tell about

the importance of rivers and water on public lands, and about the ability of protected public lands to generate economic benefits for rural communities. As an organization with a rich history of working across party lines, we have a tremendous responsibility now to share the importance of rivers in the national dialog and continue to advocate for land management practices that maintain whitewater rivers for future generations to enjoy and cherish.

Onward,



Mark
Executive Director, American Whitewater

PS - If you happen to be looking for a way to deepen that connection with wild rivers,

join me on the American Whitewater Rogue River trip on June 13-16, 2017. Thanks to support from Northwest Rafting Company, American Whitewater members have the opportunity to join staff and board representatives on an exclusive four-day trip down Oregon's Rogue River. We invite you to come learn more about what we're up to, while having a great time enjoying one of our nation's first Wild and Scenic Rivers. The trip will be fully outfitted by Northwest Rafting Company with professional guides, exceptional food, transportation to and from Galice, and all equipment. You will have the option of bringing your own boat, renting a boat, or joining as a passenger on one of the rafts. Bookings can be made online at www.nwrafting.com/rogue and select the June 13-16 trip with American Whitewater. For more info about this great trip, check out page 43.

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TOP TEN STEWARDSHIP ISSUES 2017

BY AW STEWARDSHIP STAFF

Introduction

It is difficult to overstate the importance of paddlers like you speaking up for rivers as we look ahead to 2017. Nine of our Top Ten River Stewardship Issues for the coming year are on-the-ground projects that are likely to yield exciting outcomes like dam removals, new access areas, and protections under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Each project involves American Whitewater staff pursuing a strategy for success, supported by the personal activism of our members, in the context of environmental laws and policies. We hope the projects we highlight in this article are inspiring to you, and we hope we can count on your support and participation.

Our tenth issue is a little different. As you will read, we anticipate that the environmental laws and policies that are the basis for much of our river stewardship work will be reconsidered in the coming year. These laws and the popular support behind them are the reason we have clean and free-flowing rivers, releases from dams, federal lands, and a say in how rivers are managed. As these issues come up for consideration, we'll be asking you to share your opinions with key decision-makers at key times. You can expect a smart bipartisan approach from American Whitewater that helps paddlers like you make a difference in the issues you care about.

Stopping the public land heist and protecting resources like the Dolores River (CO) is a challenge that American Whitewater is prepared to step up to in 2017.

Photo by Evan Stafford

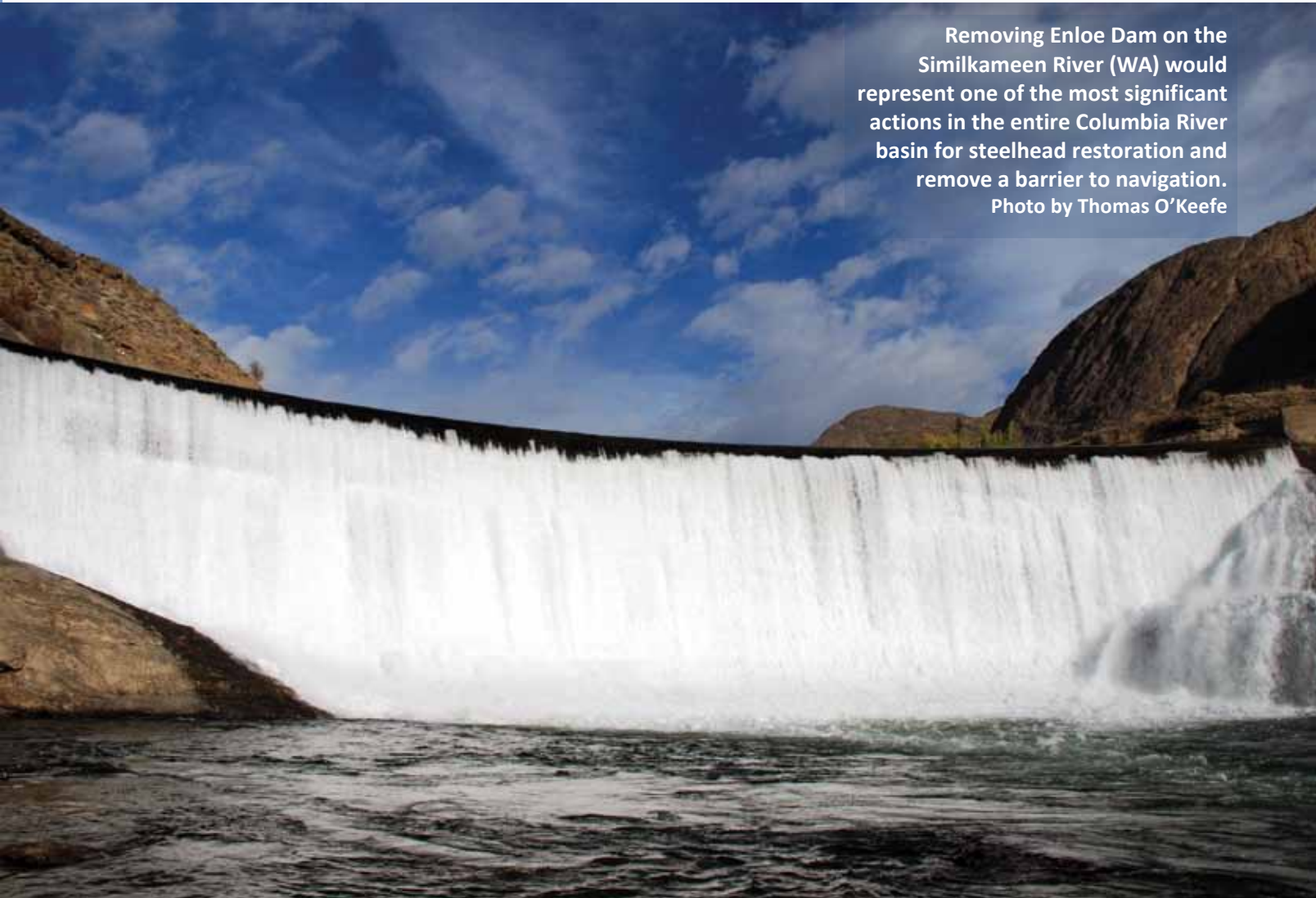
STEWARDSHIP TOP TEN

1. Northwest Dam Removals

WE HAVE SOME big plans for dam removal in the Pacific Northwest in 2017. For many years we have been advocates for restoring Sullivan Creek (WA). During the 1990s, when the local utility sought to repower an outdated hydropower project that had not generated electricity in decades, American Whitewater stepped in to participate in studies to quantify instream flow needs. When the utility then decided to walk away from the uneconomical project in 2007, we helped force them to clean up their mess. For the past decade American Whitewater has led the effort to remove Mill Pond Dam and the legacy hydropower project to fully restore Sullivan Creek for both recreation and native fish. As the end of a long process draws near, we are on track to remove the dam this year.

Sullivan Creek is not the only opportunity to restore rivers in the Pacific Northwest through removing deadbeat dams. In Washington, Enloe Dam on the Similkameen River and a dam on the Middle Fork Nooksack River both represent legacy infrastructure from the era of the typewriter. Removing these projects would provide significant benefits to salmon while removing hazards to navigation, and with little downside for other stakeholders. We will also continue to support the effort to remove dams on the Klamath River in Oregon, and are building the case for removing dams on the Snake River (WA) and from Tumwater Canyon on the Wenatchee River.

As we engage in these efforts, we will be working with partners in Congress on policy reforms and new initiatives that provide greater incentives for dam removal and restoring rivers nationwide. While our successful efforts to remove dams continues, fighting to protect rivers like the Skykomish and Chehalis from new dams and hydropower development will also be a priority. We will also stay alert for what we expect will be continued state and federal legislative attempts to incentivize new hydropower development that harms free-flowing rivers.



Removing Enloe Dam on the Similkameen River (WA) would represent one of the most significant actions in the entire Columbia River basin for steelhead restoration and remove a barrier to navigation.
Photo by Thomas O'Keefe

STEWARDSHIP TOP TEN

2. Montana Headwaters

JUST LIKE RUNNING many of Montana's rivers, passing new Wild and Scenic legislation in the state requires a long approach but is well worth the effort. It requires the right crew, the right rivers, and skill and endurance. Our work in Montana has each of these essential campaign elements in place. As we approach the 50th anniversary of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act in 2018, our primary goal for this year is to get a bill introduced in Congress that will protect upwards of 700 miles of new Wild and Scenic Rivers in Montana.

American Whitewater will continue our coalition efforts to collect endorsements and push for legislation in 2017. We'll be co-hosting events around the state, making some short films with our partners, and travelling to Washington DC to advocate for rivers. If and when a bill is introduced, you'll see a big push to get as many citizens and businesses from around the country to support it as possible.

At the same time we'll keep up our work to secure Forest Service protections for rivers across Montana, as well as Idaho. Paddlers will play a vital role in sharing their knowledge and passion for streams with the Forest Service as well as with Congress. We'll keep you posted on how you can help. As a first step, you can endorse our coalition's Wild and Scenic Citizen's proposal at: www.healthyriversmt.org.

Upper Twin Creek (MT) is a remote and beautiful stream flowing through cave-riddled limestone and mudstone gorges and is part of Wild and Scenic legislation American Whitewater will be advocating for in 2017.
Photo by Kevin Colburn



3. Western North Carolina Forests and Rivers



American Whitewater is deeply involved in Forest planning efforts in North Carolina which will affect a number of whitewater stretches, including the Elk River. Photo by Dennis Huntley

WE'VE SPENT THE past three years sharing the paddling community's love for rivers and creeks in Western North Carolina with the Forest Service and a diverse group of regional interests. In 2017 we'll finally see a Draft Forest Plan, and paddlers will have a chance to respond to it and push it in the right direction. We've asked that the new

plan protect the area's best whitewater runs with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and that conservation, restoration, and recreation be central themes of the plan. We'll share opportunities for you to send in comments, attend public hearings, or attend fun events to learn more.

We also continue to seek agreements among more than two dozen groups that could lead to congressional designation of new Wild and Scenic Rivers, Wilderness Areas, and National Recreation Areas in the area. This region has almost 400 dams and only three Wild and Scenic Rivers. It is time to change that ratio and protect more rivers!

STEWARDSHIP TOP TEN

4. Ocoee & Hiwassee Rivers (TN)

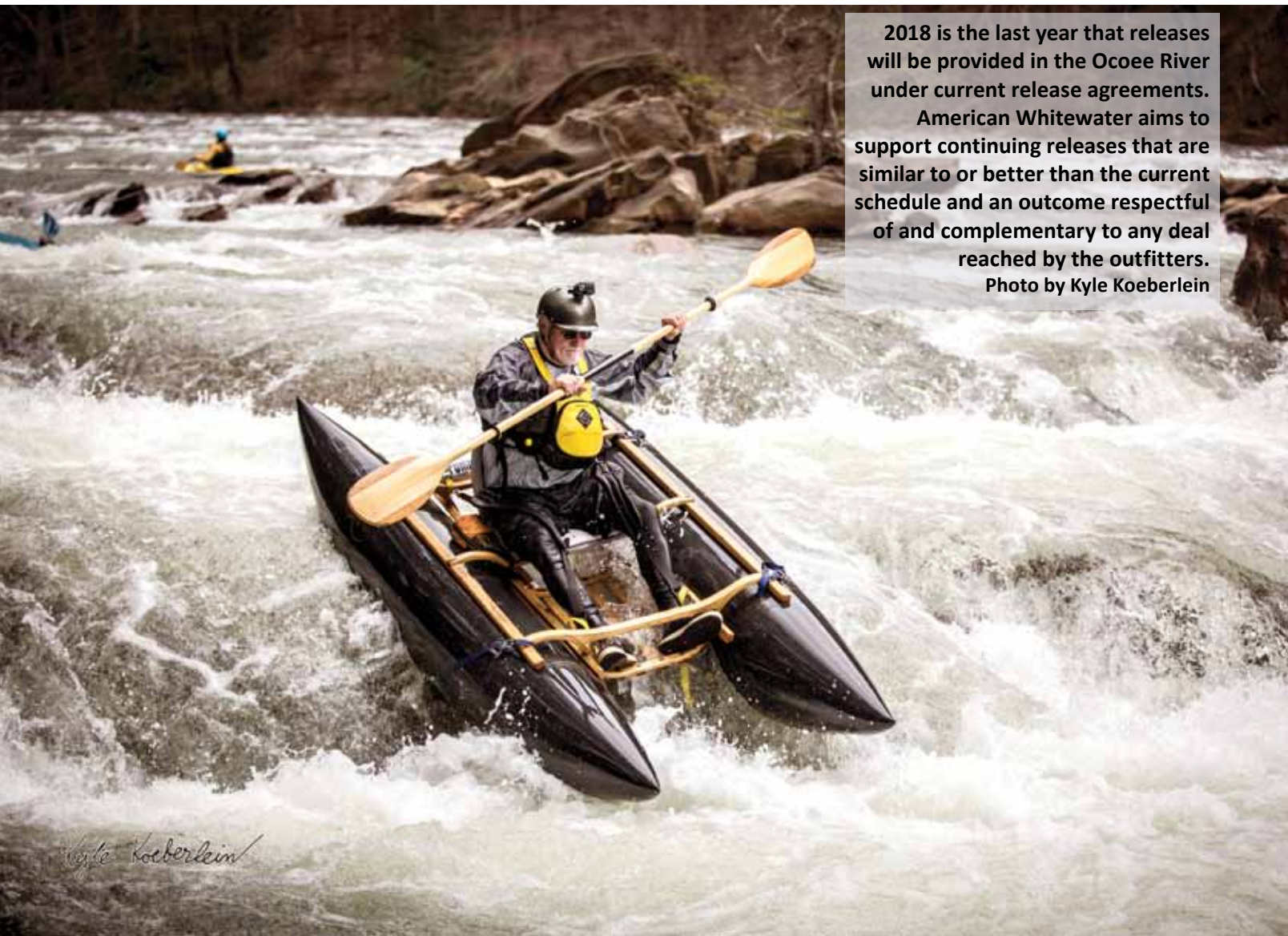
UNDER CURRENT WATER release agreements, 2018 is the last year that releases will be provided in the Ocoee River. These one-of-a-kind agreements have required outfitters to pay the Tennessee Valley Authority (a federal agency) to release water from dams on the upper and middle sections of the river for many years. As 2016 draws to a close the outfitters and TVA are trying to negotiate a new agreement behind closed doors. Whether a deal is struck or not, TVA will have to analyze a range of alternative management scenarios starting early in 2017 through a public review process.

Paddlers will have ample opportunities to weigh in, and we'll help keep you informed and engaged. The outcome will affect boating on the Ocoee for many years to come.

American Whitewater does not believe that the public should have to pay TVA for releases. The water and the dams are public resources, and releases are the highest and best uses of those assets. We support continuing releases that are similar or better than the current schedule and aim to pursue an outcome that accomplishes that goal while being respectful of and

complementary to any deal reached by the outfitters.

Just over the hill from the Ocoee is the river's nearly forgotten neighbor: the Hiwassee. TVA's Apalachia Dam dewateres an excellent 13-mile Class III+ (IV+) big-water gorge on the Hiwassee and provides no releases. The public, along with rare plants and fish, suffer the consequences. In addition to working to ensure the Ocoee River's future, American Whitewater will be exploring opportunities to restore the "Hiwassee Dries" in 2017.



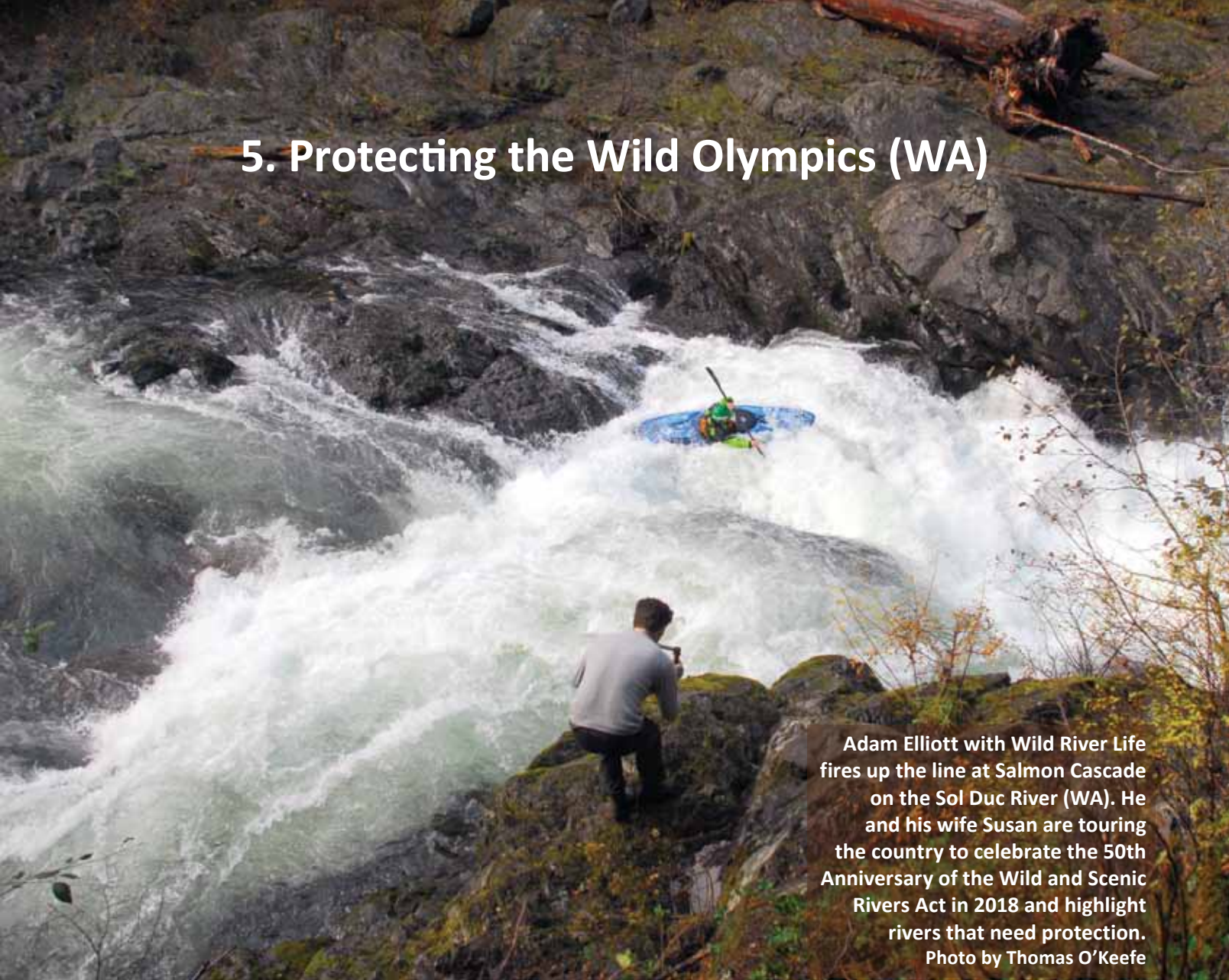
2018 is the last year that releases will be provided in the Ocoee River under current release agreements.

American Whitewater aims to support continuing releases that are similar to or better than the current schedule and an outcome respectful of and complementary to any deal reached by the outfitters.

Photo by Kyle Koeberlein

Kyle Koeberlein

5. Protecting the Wild Olympics (WA)



Adam Elliott with Wild River Life fires up the line at Salmon Cascade on the Sol Duc River (WA). He and his wife Susan are touring the country to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act in 2018 and highlight rivers that need protection. Photo by Thomas O'Keefe

FOR MORE THAN two decades American Whitewater has advocated for long-term protection of the spectacular free-flowing rivers of Washington's Olympic Peninsula. These rivers cascade through deep gorges and ancient forests where Sitka spruce and Douglas fir tower overhead and maidenhair ferns and mosses blanket the canyon walls. We have seen dam proposals for some of these rivers come and go over the years; now is the time to secure permanent protection for this place where opportunities for epic whitewater adventures abound and salmon and steelhead still find high quality habitat. Our Wild Olympics legislation, which is the result of a broad coalition effort led by local

residents, includes 19 major river systems on the Olympic Peninsula, representing 464 miles of opportunities for new Wild and Scenic Rivers.

Support for permanently protecting these rivers and the forests they flow through continues to build. Through our conservation work and under the leadership of Representative Derek Kilmer we have also built new relationships with the timber industry. We are working together to develop a common vision for conservation that benefits outdoor recreation and enhances quality of life. At the same time, we are working to develop sustainable approaches to using natural

resources. Our collective efforts will provide local economic benefits.

We are optimistic that we are well poised for success with our Wild Olympics legislation and are pleased to hear that our Congressional champions, Senator Murray and Representative Kilmer, have both enthusiastically identified our legislation as a top priority in the coming year. We will continue our efforts to secure legislative protection, and after we are successful, transition to developing management plans that recognize the important values of these rivers.

STEWARDSHIP TOP TEN

6. Colorado Forest Planning

COLORADO'S HIGH MOUNTAINOUS creeks and cold rushing rivers surround places like Crested Butte, Telluride, Breckenridge, and Salida. This year, American Whitewater is proposing that the Forest Service protect a significant number of these rivers and streams as "eligible" for Wild and Scenic designation. The opportunity to secure this protection comes only once every 15 to 20 years when a Forest updates its management plan, and we are seizing it.

Last year we started gearing up for the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison (GMUG) National Forest and the Pike-San Isabel National Forest plan revisions. In 2017, American Whitewater will coordinate with a diverse group of stakeholders to develop recommendations to the Forest Service that 287 miles of whitewater paddling be considered as eligible for Wild and Scenic River protection. We will also work with recreational partners to advocate for a plan that celebrates the diverse paddling, mountain biking, climbing, and hiking opportunities that exist across the Forests.

Protecting the places we play helps sustain over 15,000 recreation-related jobs in the Pike-San Isabel Forest alone. We are exploring many creative ideas for the future of this forest, including creating National Recreation Areas to protect our mountains and rivers while encouraging sustainable recreation. You can expect to see some exciting ideas for how the Forests could be managed in 2017, and we hope we can count on you to let the Forest Service know what you think!

American Whitewater is proposing to protect a wide range of rivers and streams as "eligible" for Wild and Scenic designation through Forest planning in Colorado, including Daisy Creek.

Photo by Brett Mayer



7. Flood Recovery in Colorado

THE FLOODS THAT hit Colorado's Front Range in September 2013 resulted in \$3.4 billion in damages, especially impacting towns and cities like Lyons and Longmont along Saint Vrain Creek. Rebuilding after the floods has been a long, expensive, and heart-wrenching process. Immediately following the flood, many governmental organizations prioritized stream reconstruction and channelization over restoration, and FEMA funding for emergency response does not allow communities to improve river access or paddler safety with federal assistance grants. At the same time, American Whitewater staff and volunteers connected with local communities and state and federal agencies to develop long-term legacy projects that, when fully funded, will restore our rivers, reconnect fish and wildlife habitats, and establish new river trails that celebrate how

important our rivers are to healthy and resilient communities.

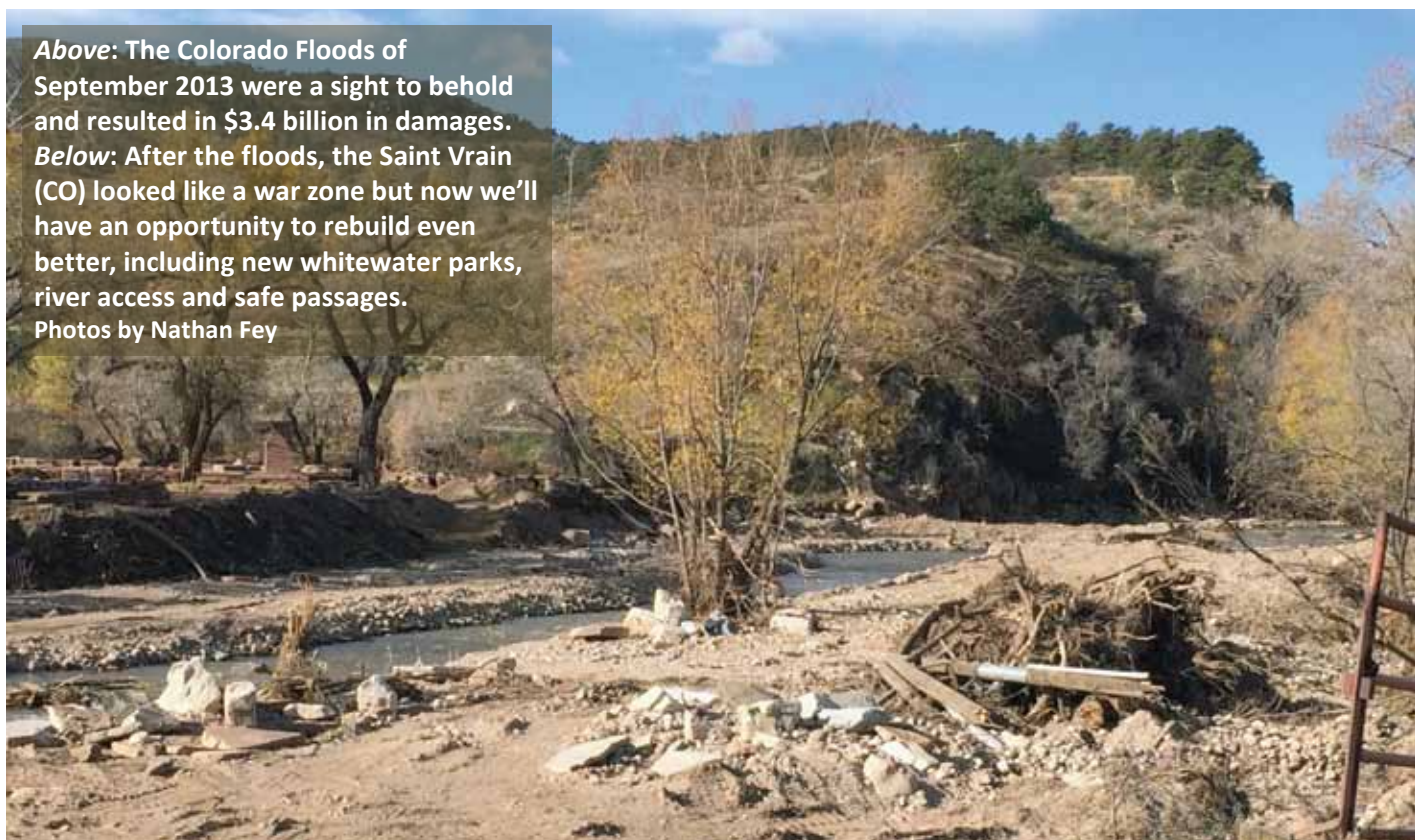
The effects of the 2013 flood were tremendous; typical high water in Lyons during spring runoff is 700-1,000 cfs. However, a massive storm dropped approximately 20 inches on the area in one day, creating a torrent of about 37,000 cfs that washed through the tiny town. The flood destroyed roads in the canyons and scoured the river beds 10 to 15 feet down to bedrock in some cases. In many cases, the river created new channels through neighborhoods and fields. Both rivers and towns were forever changed.

Now we have a great opportunity to rebuild, better. In 2017 we will work with the City of Longmont to create a new whitewater park, and to establish safe passage for fish and paddlers at the city's low-head dam, which

supplies water to the city's treatment plant. In Lyons, we are working with the Saint Vrain Creek Coalition and various funders to remove debris and deposited sediment to restore the floodplain, and to rebuild river access, opening several miles of the Saint Vrain to public enjoyment. We invite you to celebrate with us at the Lyons Outdoor Games in 2017!



Above: The Colorado Floods of September 2013 were a sight to behold and resulted in \$3.4 billion in damages. Below: After the floods, the Saint Vrain (CO) looked like a war zone but now we'll have an opportunity to rebuild even better, including new whitewater parks, river access and safe passages. Photos by Nathan Fey



STEWARDSHIP TOP TEN

8. Flows and Access At Northeast Dams



HYDRO DAMS ACROSS the Northeast are in the midst of relicensing through FERC, and American Whitewater is engaging in the process to ensure that we have adequate flows and access to our rivers that have been blocked by dams, dewatered entirely by hydropower operations, or restricted by misguided state regulators. On the Green River (VT), opposition to whitewater boating by the state has led to restrictions that will reduce natural boating opportunities and eliminate scheduled ones for the next 30 to 50 years. American Whitewater and the Vermont Paddlers Club have appealed the decision and are seeking to overturn the state's restrictions.

On the dams and pumped storage projects on the mainstem and tributaries of the Connecticut River, we will be working

Boaters enjoy the Green River (VT) where misguided state regulators are seeking to restrict whitewater boating.

Photos by Eric Adsit

hard in 2017 to restore natural flows to dewatered river reaches, remove dams that damage habitat and prevent recreation, increase boating opportunities, and create new and improved access. Flow studies on these rivers identified optimal boating flows and offer us an opportunity to create new and improved boating resources

at Turners Falls and Bellows Falls on the Connecticut River and on the Fife Brook section of the Deerfield River through the FERC hydropower relicensing process. Although this effort will take a few years to come to fruition, 2017 will be a crucial year as we begin the negotiation process with the relevant power companies.





9. Protecting Access to the Upper American River (CA)

Boaters wait under the Mosquito Road Bridge as they enjoy the first license-required releases on the Slab Creek reach of the South Fork American River. Photo by Max Blackburn

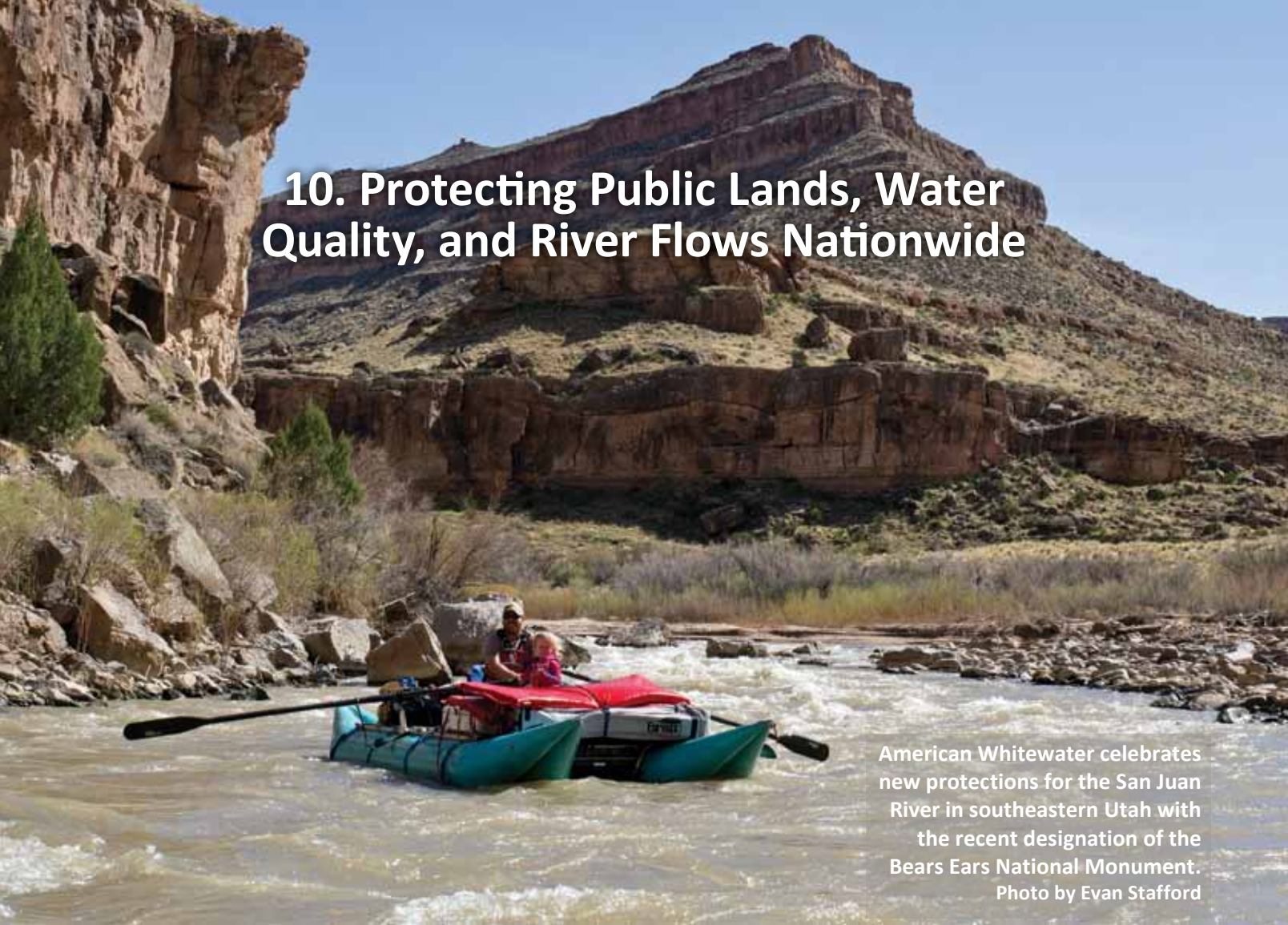
A NEW FEDERAL LICENSE for the Upper American River Hydropower Project was issued in the summer of 2014, and since that time, American Whitewater has worked to ensure that what we negotiated in the license is actually implemented on the ground. The spring of 2016 marked the first recreational flow releases on the South Fork American River below Slab Creek that was required by the new license. During planning for these flows, American Whitewater worked in collaboration with Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD), El Dorado County, Bureau of Land Management, and the Forest Service to tackle a variety of issues, including setting appropriate flow levels, protecting ecological resources, and ensuring adequate put-in/take-out access

and parking availability. Our work will continue in 2017 as we face new challenges with restoring paddling opportunities to this great river.

A primary take-out for the Slab Creek reach on the South Fork American River has historically been at the Mosquito Road Bridge. This access site is threatened as El Dorado County is making plans to replace the bridge and eliminate the current parking and access at the river in the process. Further downstream, SMUD has delayed plans for a long term take-out near the White Rock Powerhouse. Recreational flows won't mean much if there is no feasible take-out access, and American Whitewater will be advocating for workable solutions in the year ahead.

Additionally, SMUD will begin construction of a new powerhouse and a specially-designed \$4.5 million boating flow release valve between September and December of 2017. This new facility will be located just below Slab Creek Reservoir and will simultaneously help SMUD provide more power, provide ecological flows, and meet future recreational flow requirements on Slab Creek. American Whitewater will continue to prioritize protecting both ecological and recreational interests when SMUD presents the construction proposals for this project.

10. Protecting Public Lands, Water Quality, and River Flows Nationwide



American Whitewater celebrates new protections for the San Juan River in southeastern Utah with the recent designation of the Bears Ears National Monument. Photo by Evan Stafford

THE NATIONAL ELECTIONS have granted one political party control of the Presidency, the House of Representatives, and the Senate. This combination makes changing laws, regulations, and policies easier than when Washington is under mixed control, and can lead to more dramatic and rapid changes. American Whitewater is fortunate to have a politically diverse membership that shares common interests in rivers and their enjoyment. As an organization we always approach issues in a non-partisan way, which in practice means seeking bipartisan support for good outcomes for rivers and paddlers. We strive to support good policies and oppose bad policies regardless of their political origin or base of support. It is in this context that we see some challenges that we have a long history of engaging on flowing towards the paddling community.

First, we believe strongly that public lands should remain in public hands. Our National Forests, National Parks, and BLM lands are paddling treasure troves that belong to all of us. With this said, there is a growing movement among some Western states to have the Federal government transfer public lands to state ownership, which would in many cases lead to private ownership and lost access. This terrible and unpopular idea commonly known as the Public Lands Heist has already made it into legislation. It will be up to people that know and treasure these public lands, from all around the United States, to convince our Congressional leaders to hold on tight to our treasured public lands and rivers. We'll work closely with other similarly-minded human-powered recreation groups at Outdoor Alliance to stop the Public Lands Heist.

Second, we know that water flows downstream, and that to ensure our rivers are safe to paddle, pollution should be carefully regulated in rivers and their upstream tributaries. The Clean Water Act is overseen by the EPA and implemented by the states, and the 2015 Clean Water Rule ensures it applies to the whitewater rivers we paddle, as well as tributaries and other upstream areas. It appears likely that legislative and executive actions will attempt to reduce or eliminate pollution controls in our nation's headwaters. Paddlers probably drink more untreated river water than any other US population—if drinking through our noses counts. We know headwater streams extremely well (especially at high flows). We are in a unique position to speak for clean rivers that are safe for outdoor recreation, and we have a long history of doing so. If the safety and health of rivers is threatened in the coming

STEWARDSHIP TOP TEN

year, we'll work with paddlers and political leaders to advocate for clean water.

The third big challenge we see coming relates to energy development, though the exact nature of those challenges has yet to come into sharp focus. What we know is that many hydropower companies want to build more dams and operate existing dams with less water allocated to paddling and aquatic habitat, and that the Department of Energy and some powerful lawmakers want to help them do it. We'll be working closely with our partners in the Hydropower Reform Coalition and our members to defend dam releases and free-flowing streams. We also know that pressure for all kinds of energy development is high on public lands, and that small changes in federal agency policies could open up many whitewater river corridors for

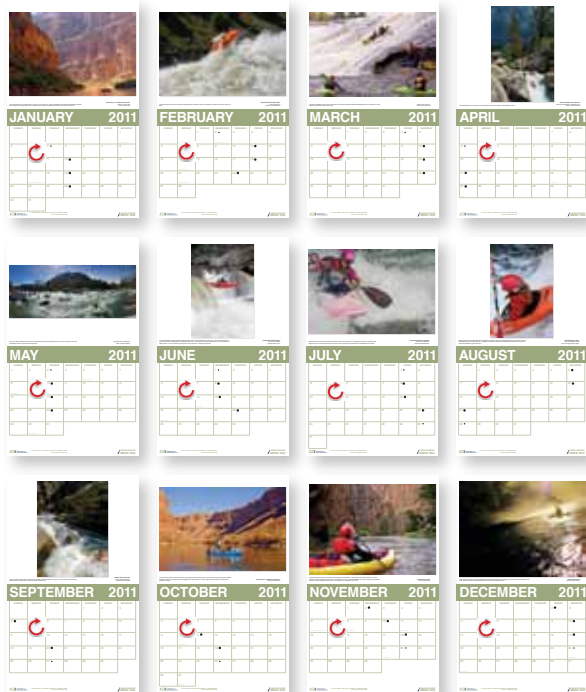
development. The photos, descriptions, and other information our members have added to our online whitewater database helps us share and defend whitewater rivers. If policies or on-the-ground projects threaten the paddling community's special places, we'll let you know and will organize opposition.

While the political winds constantly change their strength and direction, the paddling community's dedication to rivers is unwavering. We speak for rivers, and for the value of enjoying them. We see challenges and opportunities ahead, and will need your help defending against and capitalizing on those.

Conclusion

So there you have it, our 2017 Top 10! If you don't see your favorite project on the list, don't worry. We aim to push forward on many more projects in 2017 and beyond. We hope we can count on you to support these and other projects through engaging in American Whitewater's action alerts and volunteer opportunities in the coming year, and through becoming a member of and donating to American Whitewater.

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STEWARDSHIP TOP TEN

2016 Top Ten Update

1. Protecting the Tools We Use to Restore Flows

In 2016, American Whitewater continued to lead the charge in opposing dangerous hydropower legislation that favors hydropower companies over all other river values. Packaged under the guise of “modernizing” hydropower and making it “green,” the hydropower provisions with the Energy Bill would have compromised our ability to restore flows to rivers with hydropower dams. Last year, we engaged directly with members of Congress and their staff to educate them on the problems with the bill, and thanks to you, we pushed back hard on the hydropower industry’s wish list, defending environmental protections that support water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, public access, and flows for recreation. As we go to press, the Energy Bill just failed to pass Congress. If you are one of the many AW members that contacted your legislators about this issue in response to our action alerts, THANK YOU! You played an important role in protecting our rivers in 2016.

2. River Access: Virginia and Other Hotspots

Paddlers logged countless descents of Johns Creek last year without incident. At the same time, however, landowners sued the Commonwealth of Virginia in 2016 with the intent of closing down paddling on Johns. With a hearing scheduled this spring, American Whitewater is closely watching this case, and is ready to join the case to defend the right to paddle in Virginia if need be.

In California, the access below the Rock Creek Dam on the North Fork Feather River was completed in November. This access was fifteen years in the making, and will greatly improve the safety for paddlers accessing this reach of the North Feather during the summer recreational releases.

American Whitewater also worked with the California State Lands Commission on their new strategic plan in 2016. This plan will bring good things to those paddling the state’s rivers in the future because

it includes the development of a “Guide to Rights on, and to, California Navigable Waterways.” The Commission will also work to educate other state agencies on their responsibilities to protect and promote access.

3. Protecting Oregon’s Owyhee Canyonlands and Important Riverscapes

Through his term in office, President Obama demonstrated critical leadership in protecting places important to our community through the Antiquities Act. The designation of National Monuments like Rio Grande del Norte along the Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River, Brown’s Canyon National Monument along the Arkansas River in Colorado, and Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument that includes the East Branch Penobscot River in Maine, all represent important victories for river conservation. As we go to press, the President has taken action to establish a National Monument for the Bears Ears region of southeast Utah and



American Whitewater is working with local padlers to defend the right to paddle in Virginia.
Photo by Seth Lively

the San Juan River, while he considers expanded protection for the Grand Canyon and Cascade-Siskiyou in the Klamath River watershed. Our work remains to secure protection for the Owyhee Canyonlands in Oregon and Birthplace of Rivers in West Virginia. KEEN Footwear significantly raised the profile of National Monuments through their #LiveMonumental campaign. As we settle into a new Administration and Congress we will work with partners like KEEN and our colleagues in the conservation community to find the most effective pathway to secure permanent protection for these and other regions.

4. Washington State: Wild Olympics

Our Wild Olympics bill made important strides in Congress this past year as it had its first Congressional hearing before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. Local support for the legislation has continued to grow and our colleagues at Outdoor Alliance, Outdoor Industry Association, and The Conservation Alliance have prioritized Wild Olympics as one of the top pieces of legislation nationally that will protect high quality opportunities for outdoor recreation. Patagonia and REI put their outreach and communication resources behind the bill, promoting both the conservation opportunity and how to experience and enjoy this unique place.

5. Protecting Wild Rivers and Paddling in Western North Carolina

With conflicts brewing over wilderness and desires to cut more timber, the Forest Service slowed the forest planning process down to allow time for collaboration. American Whitewater used this time to secure broad formal consensus on the eligibility of 26 new Wild and Scenic Rivers, and a broad suite of recreational recommendations. We now expect the Forest Service analysis and proposed new plan to be out in the summer or early fall of 2017.



American Whitewater is fighting to make sure we can continue to restore flows through hydropower relicensing to rivers like the Tallulah in Georgia

Photo by Emrie Canen

6. Montana Headwaters Campaign

American Whitewater worked with Missoula-based Rick Potts in 2016 to ramp up our outreach efforts in support of new Wild and Scenic legislation. At the same time, we weighed in on proposed new National Forest Plans on the Flathead, Gallatin-Custer, and Lewis & Clark National Forests to earn agency protections. We still don't have a Montana Wild and Scenic bill in Congress, but have made progress and we aim to get one in 2017.

7. The Dolores (CO): "River of Sorrows"

Negotiations over legislative language to establish the Dolores River National Conservation Area continued throughout 2016. We put additional pieces of the Dolores puzzle in place this year—American Whitewater secured administrative protections under the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act for large sections of the Dolores River and its tributaries administered by the BLM. At the same time, the Colorado Water Conservation Board has recommended

STEWARDSHIP TOP TEN



To keep rivers like the San Miguel (above) and Dolores, healthy and resilient during implementation of the Colorado Water Plan, American Whitewater will remain continuously involved with local stream and watershed planning to ensure that new dams and reservoirs don't further impair paddling opportunities.

Photo by Paul Raymond

that the Bureau of Land Management rely on the recommendations from American Whitewater that protect existing recreational flows. The legislation is on track to be finalized and introduced in Congress in 2017.

8. Implementing the Colorado Water Plan

In order to keep the Colorado Water Plan from sitting on the shelf, American Whitewater began working with local groups to develop stream management plans across the state. In the Southwestern part of Colorado, we assisted the Colorado Water Conservation Board with a demonstration project on the San Miguel River, integrating American Whitewater's metrics for "boatable days" into the Basin's Water Needs analysis, and identifying new opportunities to protect river health. Our efforts were used by local counties and water developers to determine what effect proposed new diversions and off-channel

American Whitewater secured administrative protections under the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act for large sections of the Dolores River and its tributaries in 2016.

Photo by Evan Stafford

reservoirs would have on the river and its recreational values. We are positioned to continue this work on other rivers into 2017.

9. Navigating, Protecting and Restoring the Connecticut River Watershed (CT)

On the mainstem Connecticut River, American Whitewater continued our advocacy aimed at restoring dewatered,

inaccessible, and obstructed river reaches for habitat and recreation at Bellows Falls, Turners Falls, and Sumner Falls. We also advocated for removing a dangerous low-head dam and opposed the construction of a new dam. On the Deerfield River, we completed a flow study on the Fife Brook section and identified both the minimum boatable and optimal flows so that we can protect these resources for the next 30 to 50 years. And on the lower Farmington River, we made headway on designating this river reach as a Wild and Scenic River in 2016. The Senate passed legislation, and we will continue to work towards final passage this year.

10. Preventing Costly New Dams in California

Ongoing drought in California continued to keep American Whitewater busy battling proposals for ineffective and costly new dams in 2016. We met with legislators and agency staff throughout the year, including joining with other conservation organizations to spend a day at the State Capitol in Sacramento educating legislators about the importance of rivers and the mistake in thinking that we can dam our way out of drought. The proposals for these dams are far from gone, and we'll continue to work with our partners to protect California's rivers throughout 2017.



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RIVER VOICES

TALKING JOHNS CREEK

BY THORPE MOECKEL



Travis Overstreet III in Bambi Meets Godzilla,
Johns Creek (VA).
Photo by Brett Mayer

Editor's Note: Fighting for the right for anyone to float Johns Creek is high on AW's Stewardship priority list. You can read a review of our progress on one of 2016's Top Ten Stewardship Issues in this very magazine. Check out the update on issue # 2 on page 20 to learn more about our work on John's Creek

THE SKY WAS strange. Three weather systems were mixing it up over this nook of Western Virginia. The best rain had fallen the prior day and through the night. We were on Johns Creek now. We were near the end of the flatwater, about to enter the drops. It was early October, and temperatures had been mild, but the air felt ripe for change.

We were three open boats and four kayaks worn by five locals (Travis, Sage, Jeff, Renee, and me) and a couple of Great Falls chargers who'd motored down from D.C. to the Roanoke area for a run on the sublime gnar of Bottoms Creek, which was still blown out.

I like a little easy water at the beginning of a paddling trip. I like it, maybe, because at 45 years old and far from a charger-type, I require some warm up. Great Falls and Bottoms Creek are out of my league, in other words, which means Johns provides pucker-factor for me. I also like flat water at the start because it allows for the quiet, casual looking around, a bit of small talk among the crew.

When the water gets its loud talk on, as it soon would for us, we all know how paddlers use other ways to communicate than language—eye contact, hand-movements, paddle-waves, odd contortions of the mouth, tongue, hoots and hollers, and so forth.

Small talk in the quiet water of a local run lets you catch up with those paddling friends you don't see much off the river. It's settling. And if you're out there with new folks, it's nice to have broken the ice, exchanged a few words with who you're watching, who's watching you. To have a sense of where everybody's coming from deepens the vibe, the way knowing where

the water comes from, its headwaters, and where it goes, maybe something about the geology, some local history, and so forth, gives nuance to how one reads the water and to feeling how the water reads you.

Running rivers is neither a dance nor a meditation, but it's as close to both of these as it is close to being both a sport and a path, asylum and sanctuary. This is my experience, anyway, and I'm as permanently a canoeist as you'll meet, so feel free to take these musings with a shot of something strong, if not yummy.

We could hear the first rapid now. The guy from D.C. in the blue creek boat paddled up beside me. We started to chat. His name was Brett. We were roughly the same age, forties. Very soon, and I can't remember exactly the line of entry, we were talking about a place a thousand miles away and discovered we shared friends in common there. Such small world encounters are not unusual among the river running community, but that these particular friends were invoked made this encounter far from usual and far from small.

It was instant, like a sudden fever. I felt completely on edge. My mouth went dry. My boat felt like a tomb instead of a part of me. In my head, I said a lot of words that it's best not to repeat here. I looked at the bank. Maybe I was looking for a cave to climb into, a place to stay forever. No cave, but there were the first russet dogwood leaves, maples getting their blaze on. The whole atmosphere was churning, as if the sky had descended to hang out with the dirt and stones for a while. I had the sudden thought that this was the creek below Johns Creek; you know, every creek has an under-story, its ur-creek, its shadow self, the creek-below.

I had to get it together. We were making the entry moves into the first drop. Running rivers might be an endeavor rife with paradox, the way of things—intensely communal yet private, a negotiation and a letting go, rowdy and peaceful, hard (rocks) and soft (water), memorable and a blur, out there yet at home, etc.—but I had to pull it together. You can't get sloppy on Johns Creek. In truth, if you paddle Johns Creek, it's basically against the law to step out of your boat. It doesn't matter how many perfect little side hikes you see or places to chill out and enjoy the scenery, you have to stay in your boat. Many good people have worked and are still working, volunteering precious time, to change this, but the landowners on either bank don't want us on the creek, and there's a law from way back when Virginia was still under British rule they can invoke—and do—to make things messy.

This wasn't some open access public land through which we were boating. These landowners actually believe that they own the creekbed and therefore the water and that by paddling the creek you might as well be walking through their living rooms to help yourself to what's in their fridges. Still, Johns Creek, in the gorge, feels remote, soothing in its wholeness, intimacy, and indifference. There's minimal trash, a thriving, dense understory, and a fair bit of gradient.

I caught an eddy and let Brett, the D.C. fellow, paddle on. This guy was elegant on the water. He was, no joke, a very accomplished kayaker, and he had humble, good energy. But I was still vexed. The friends we shared, a thousand miles away—I couldn't begin to make sense of how sad and ugly the tragedy was in which I was tangled with them and some other key parties, and how unresolved—despite the distance, despite the time that had elapsed. It was like they were all there with us. I felt both ambushed and like an idiot. Sure, life deals its blows and sometimes you bear life's blows with a permanent limp. This is called change, growing up, and limp or no, one can still dance through the blows, and often with more grace. I kept watching Brett. I watched him like watching him would teach me something necessary and true. He had that sense of ease and connection with the water, a sense beyond both abandon and will. He was having a blast. There was no pucker factor. He was holding nothing back, and Johns Creek seemed to appreciate him, too.

I let the others go on through, as well. Eventually, I followed, caught up. Sandstone, tongues, froth. It went on like this. The limbs, the matted leaves. A sort of dreamtime, the creek narrow enough to feel, always, close. Now some drizzle, now some breeze. Heads down there below another drop, others still above; note them, their proximity, now peel out for the next little maze. Helmets and hulls, hips. Feathers of the blade. It went on—the feelings, the clean lines, how to keep them close, bring them through all your days. That bob, surge, rinse. Through Shoobaloo, Coke Island, Little Heinzerling, Bambi Meets Godzilla, Fool's Falls—it went on, so many crevices, creases, even in the sky, on which we all moved, always will.

We reached the take-out. I pushed off my knees onto the canoe's saddle and waited for feeling to return to my feet. Johns Creek rolled on, still at a good level. I watched and listened to it tumble towards its confluence with Craig Creek and then the James River,

eventually the Chesapeake. Far upstream, its headwaters were cutting into the ridge of its source, part of the Continental Divide, not far from the Upper New River, which in the future (in deep time terms) would be pirated by Johns as well as Craig Creek.

It was raining lightly in the parking lot as we did our thing, got in touch with our land legs again. At once, Travis said in his stoked, infectious way, "Bottoms is still huge, but Back Creek's running big—let's go run it!"

A crow flew over, headed in that direction. We looked at each other, and we looked around, fiddled with gear. It was Saturday. We had time. Something about the clouds said there'd be wind tonight, perhaps some wild colors in the final scraps of the front.

Back Creek was a hoot.



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FAMILY PADDLING

FAMILY FUN ON THE LOWER SALMON

BY ASHLEY LODATO



Snow Hole Rapid on the Lower Salmon.
Photo by Ashley Lodato

JULY 20TH, 2016, 1:45am, Hammer Creek launch on the Lower Salmon River. The white lights of a minivan illuminate our tent. The kids don't even roll over, but my husband Jon and I wake up.

"I think it's them," he whispers.

"Them" is John and Kirsten Rigney, whom we last saw in December of 2002 at the Diamond Creek take-out on the Colorado River after a blissful 23-day private trip from Lee's Ferry. At one time we all knew each other well. But for nearly a decade and a half, our interaction has been limited to Christmas cards and an occasional email. Trusting that the depth and longevity of our past friendship will trump 14 years of minimal contact, we are about to embark on a week-long family rafting trip together on the Lower Salmon River.

"We" is not just the four of us; it's the four of us plus six kids, two for us, four for them. When we last vacationed together, 14 years ago, none of us had kids. We had flexible work schedules, no mortgages, and ample discretionary time.

Fourteen years later, we are all yoked with the stresses and responsibilities of adulthood: jobs, house payments, and, most notably, kids. The fact that we are all now parents represents the single biggest difference between our Grand Canyon selves and our impending Lower Salmon selves. We can only hope that we've all made the transition to kid-pace at the same rate.

In the wee hours of our launch day for our Lower Salmon trip, we greet John and Kirsten in the dark, help them set up their tent, and lift their sleepy children out of booster seats and into sleeping bags. The

rest can wait until morning.

The fact that we don't really know each other anymore was not even the biggest obstacle to the trip. Coordinating their flights from Connecticut, a raft rental, and river gear for their first family rafting trip consumes the Rigneys, while we, in Washington State, organize food, kitchen equipment, and groovers. The logistical texts that fly between us hint at the fact that we haven't traveled together in ages ("Greek or regular yogurt?" "Beer or hard cider?" "Creamy or crunch peanut butter?"), but not once do we ask the questions that loom large: What do you value? How do you resolve conflicts? What is your parenting style? The unspoken assumption is that we are still enough of the same people we were 14 years ago to make this shared vacation work out.

There's something about friendships formed in the field that transcends typical obstacles and boundaries. All our years working at Outward Bound together created in us a common rhythm that we hope will be present on this river trip. Three of us spent many years together in our 20s and 30s at an Outward Bound basecamp in northern Maine, with no electricity and no running potable water, in the pre-cell-phone era. The Internet was hardly a thing yet, and with only one shared phone line, we couldn't waste the time a dial-up Internet connection took.

So we spent time with each other, with few distractions from the world outside. We were together from dawn until dusk, sharing work objectives, living quarters, and meals. On days off we headed to a nearby river to surf. In many years we spent between 60 and 120 days straight in each other's company. Surely we can manage it for seven days this time. But still, I bring three novels, just in case we can't find anything to talk about.

When we get up on launch day, the madness of any river launch ensues. This is familiar terrain for our family. After 20 years of whitewater canoeing, Jon and I went over to the dark side in 2013, and have been doing an annual raft trip ever since. But for the Rigney kids, this is new territory.

Take the groover, for example. Having been on four other long river trips, our kids are comfortable with doing their "number 2s" in an ammo can topped with a toilet seat. But this is the Rigney kids' first river trip and John has been preparing them by trying to describe the groover system. A week before the trip he tells me that they still don't understand how it works, so I text him a photo of a friend utilizing the groover on our 1998 Grand Canyon trip. (The fact that we even have such a photo is illustrative of our pre-parenthood irreverent puerility.)

Below China Rapid on the Lower Salmon.
Photo by Ashley Lodato

The graphic serves its purpose. "They get it now," he reports.

The Rigneys mention having brought an inflatable for the kids, which brings to my mind an image of a small ring or a beach ball, so I think nothing of it until I see it on the loading ramp—a blow-up Orca the size of a VW Bug. Jon and I look in horror at what we are sure is soon to become a gigantic piece of river trash.

"I give it two days," he whispers to me.

"Two hours," I whisper back.

Jon and I eat our words, silently, numerous times throughout the trip, as Whaley

the inflatable Orca not only survives, but becomes the second-most popular member of the trip, right behind adorable 4-year-old Hazel Rigney.

Once we launch, any doubts we might have had about compatibility evaporate. We're just four old friends with a blissful week stretching out before us. Removed from their usual social environments and activities, the kids have no entertainment other than each other and the sand, rocks, and waves of this beautiful ribbon of water. And the river works its magic. Within 24 hours the three oldest girls from our two families have bonded, promising pen pal relationships and lifelong allegiance.



FAMILY PADDLING



Looking upstream on Lower Salmon.
Photo by Ashley Lodato

On our second day, we stop at an ancient pictograph site and see a dead sturgeon floating in the eddy. The fish is partially decomposed, but we can tell it is at least seven feet long. The smell causes us to minimize our time in the eddy, but the next day we have the opportunity to watch a group of anglers catch an eight-foot sturgeon just downstream. We float nearby while the five men take turns tiring out the fish so it can be brought close to shore for photos. It takes over an hour to land the fish, and when we are finally able to see it, both we and the kids are awestruck. As the fishing guide grabs the fish by the lip to flip it over, we see the entire great white length of this prehistoric-looking creature. When the sturgeon is released he darts down deep, presumably to his secret place in the river he calls home. We continue on, the pictographs and the sturgeon serving

as reminders that we are just guests in this canyon.

The rapids on the Lower Salmon are fairly mellow, and we navigate most of them without incident. We get wet, of course, and sometimes waves crash over our bows. But we take on water with glee, knowing our self-bailing floors are doing their job. Our early raft trips on the Colorado were supported by boaters rowing Outward Bound's old Avon Pro rafts, which did not self-bail. At the end of each rapid the hard boaters would look back at the rowers with pity, watching them bail bucket after five-gallon bucket of water out of the boat. One rapid dropped a record 50 bailing buckets

Kids at final campsite on Snake River.
Photo by Ashley Lodato

full into a raft. It took the rower much of the rest of the afternoon to bail out the boat.

But the rapids on the Lower Salmon have not posed any problems so far and thus, as we approach Lower Bunghole Rapid, we are not at all concerned. It's just another Class II rapid with a mild warning in the river guide: "wave gets steep at lower levels."

However, as we drop into Lower Bunghole Rapid, things happen quickly. First, we are slightly sideways, owing to my cavalier approach. Second, the wave is indeed steep; our whole 15'6" raft seems to fit in its trough. Third, my upstream oar dives down into the trough and is caught by downstream current. As the oar lifts me up by my stomach and tosses me out of the boat, I have only a split second to notice two things: 1) my husband throwing his full weight onto the downstream tube to prevent the raft from flipping and 2) the Rigney's nine-year-old son, Owen, who doesn't really like to get wet, going airborne as he is ejected from the boat.

Owen and I both pop up quickly and I can tell that he is okay the same way





The author SUPing on the Lower Salmon.
Photo by Jon Albright

that doctors can tell that a newborn is healthy—by the vigorous screaming. No water in those lungs! Jon hauls Owen back onto the raft and I swim to shore. Owen is understandably shaken but unhurt; I lament the loss of my sunglasses. But while Lower Bunghole bunged us up a bit, it didn't destroy us. Owen recovers with a good story to tell his friends back home, I dig out my spare sunglasses, and we all head on downriver.

One day we tie up the boats and walk up to a 100-year-old ranch that is now on state land. The historic buildings have been maintained and a caretaker lives on the premises, but he is not home that day, so we sit in the shade of giant old cottonwoods and wonder about the families who lived and worked in these rugged hills. For many people, camping life on a river trip constitutes "roughing it," but compared with what these early ranching and farming families endured to scratch out a living

from this harsh landscape, the rafting trip life is one of utter luxury.

And deluxe it is. Our hardships are petty, first-world complaints. There's sand in the tent. The drinking water is tepid. We are out of dried mango. None of this diminishes the simple pleasures of the spray of stars in an inky sky, the river's constant whisper, a week in the backcountry with people we love.

When the Salmon empties into the Snake, the tone of the trip changes. Jetboat traffic is a reminder that the Heller Bar take-out awaits us downstream. We linger in our final campsite, reluctant to acknowledge the trip's imminent end. As we deride Heller Bar, everyone is a little cranky. The adults know that this is merely a manifestation of our disappointment at the trip ending, but the kids don't understand this and they loll about griping and picking fights with each other. Fortunately the business of emptying

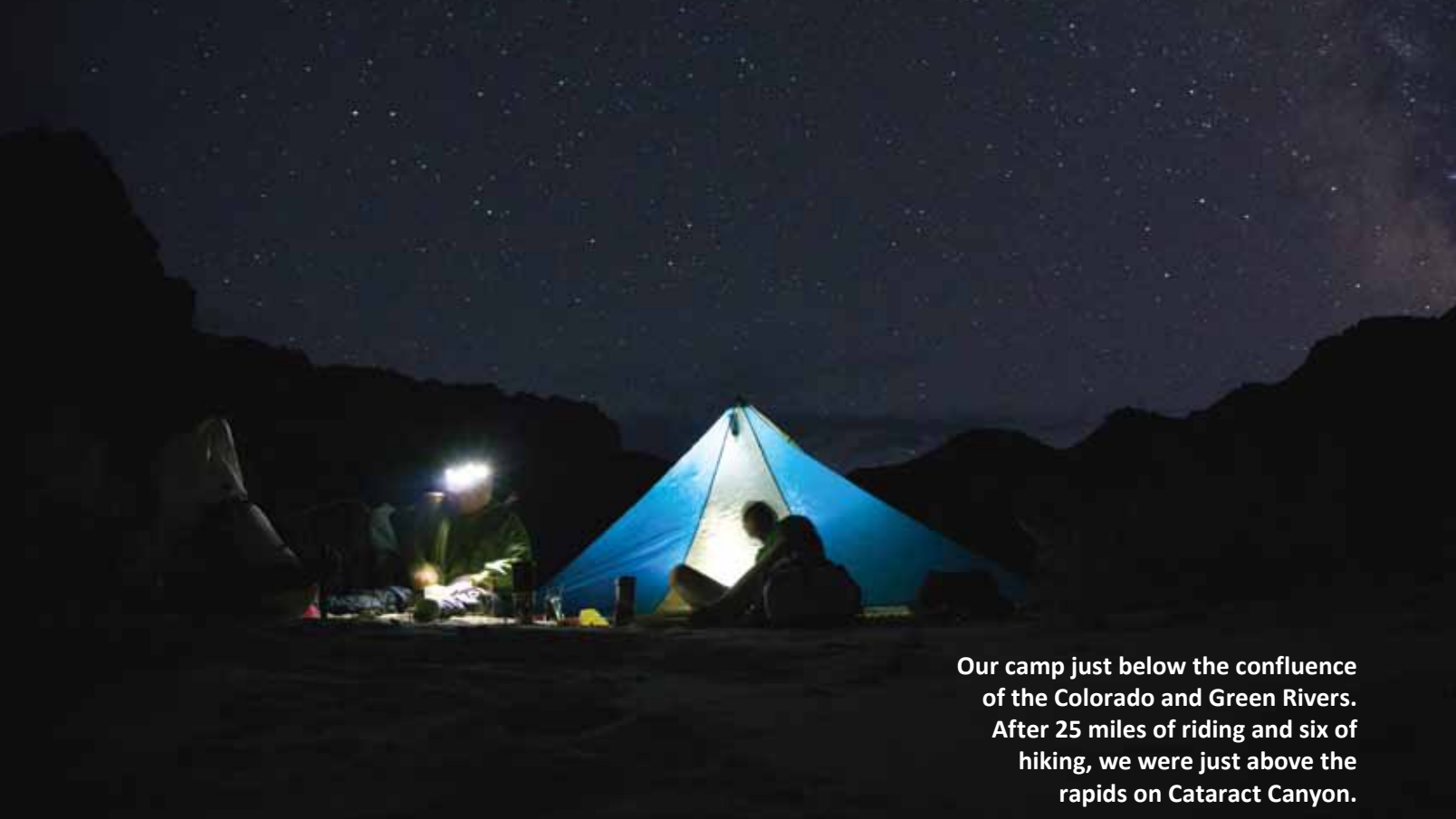
the groover at the SCAT machine has an inexplicably uplifting effect, and after 15 minutes of horrified fascination with the process, the kids have had their positive vibe restored. We eat Eskimo Pies in the parking lot and then hug goodbye, the promises of future trips just as sweet as the ice cream.

Prior to our trip, when local friends heard that we were about to spend a week on the river with two friends we hadn't seen in 14 years and whose four children we had never met, they gave us horrified looks. "How can you be sure you're still compatible?" they asked. "What if the kids don't get along? On a trip like that you'll never be able to get away from each other." We brushed away their concerns. "It will be fine," we said with confidence. "Maybe even great."

And it was.

PACKRAFTING CATARACT CANYON

STORIES AND PHOTOS BY JESSE SELWYN



Our camp just below the confluence of the Colorado and Green Rivers. After 25 miles of riding and six of hiking, we were just above the rapids on Cataract Canyon.

THE TRIP STARTED with me eating one quarter of a pumpkin pie for breakfast. Three days later, it ended at 1:15 am with my belly full of McDonald's fries and a pile of filthy, wet gear on the garage floor.

Fall was here, and though water was lacking in most of the rivers, flows were perfect for packrafting the bigger water in Cataract Canyon of the Colorado. But none of us had the time, nor the desire, to do a six-day trip, including 80 miles of flat water paddling and the long shuttle.

Herein lies the beauty of a packraft.

MC had done the trip a few years previously and planted the seed in my mind months ago. We would park outside of Canyonlands National Park, ride bikes to the park's

border, hike a trail-less side canyon to the river, run 14 miles of Grand Canyon-esque whitewater, climb out another canyon, travel back to the bikes, and then ride back to the truck. Three of us would accomplish this over three days, carrying everything (food, water, first-aid, packrafts, drysuits, tent, sleeping bags, clothing, means to pack out human waste, and trail shoes) on our backs and in our boats.

Dates were set, calendars swept clean, permit obtained. The gear list was created in my mind, thought about for days, psychologically packed and repacked, stripped of all but the necessities.

The day of departure arrived, the pack was packed and repacked (in reality this time) and heaved into the truck.

Heaved.

S&!#.

A hyperlite pack loaded with all the ultralight backcountry gear needed was far from weightless.

With the price to play known, we set off to sleep under the stars at the trip's starting point.

Back to pie for breakfast.

Following my pumpkin pie breakfast, under loads of ultralight gear, we set off to bike both active and abandoned 4x4 roads. Within 100 yards of turning down the first descent, we have our first casualty.

WILDERNESS PADDLING

We'd later find out there was a stickier bit of collateral damage from this crash.

While the majority of gravity-assisted riding is rideable, under the burden of packs some sections are too chunky to risk. It is a different story when gravity is against us. Had we not been burdened, we still would have been pushing. The 4x4 road mostly disappears, reclaimed by rock and sand, water and wind. Sweat flows. Calories burn.

Then it is all downhill on sandy roads. Four mostly easy hours of riding have us stashing the bikes in the junipers and rejoicing when wet chamois drop to our ankles.

Travis opens his pack and finds a drybag, now a wet-sticky-bag, full of root beer. (Prior to the trip, I planned to secretly pack in three cans of root beer to be passed around once we reached the river to conclude day one. Travis saw his surprise at the house. He got to carry his own can as punishment.) Not only had he crashed the bike, he did it with cameras rolling and killed the can. To his credit, he slurped the root beer out of the bag without alerting MC and started hiking.

Aside from short spans of what we came to name Hellweed (for the first time ever I was wishing for gaiters), the walk is fantastic. Strolling soft and sandy washes, weaving up and down, under and around boulders, laughing and sliding. The Colorado River appears far too soon for fun's sake and just in time for the waning light's sake.

With the tent pitched, we eat dinner, share root beer, and take advantage of Canyonland's reputation for being among the darkest locations in the US, eventually falling asleep under the Milky Way.

What the...rain. I scramble out of my sleeping bag and pull it into the tent,

Travis Anderson reflecting on his luck and what is to come on our egress from the canyon.

wedging myself between MC and Travis. Each rain drop falling outside the tent knocks a corresponding amount of sand from the inside of the tent and onto our bodies.

In dawn's light I wake with a jolt. What just ran across my face?

A few minutes later, Travis slaps something off his face. MC is next. Light increases and we see spiders running amok.

MC slams a closed fist into the sand. There goes Jimmy the spider.

We decide to start our day before the rain returns or Jimmy's siblings retaliate. With the universe in our favor we pack up, pull



WILDERNESS PADDLING



Mike Curiak, with boating gear on bike and back, pedaling into Cataract Canyon.

our boats into the water, seal our skirts, and ferry across the river. And then rain begins.

And the rain continues, complementing the subtle trepidation that exists when we float into the unknown.

Rapids appear slowly at first, a mile or so apart. There's time to admire the canyon walls and watch a rain-loosened boulder tumble 1000 feet down towards the river. Round a bend, and suddenly the canyon's louder, whitewater just splashing over the horizon line. Paddle pulling whatever water it can find, feet pointing to the sky as the boat crests a wave, butt hovering off the seat before accelerating into the trough between waves. Repeat two, three, five times. Giggle, smile, excitedly banter over the shared experience.

Being in the boat feels great and any feelings of unease drift off down the river. We pull to the shore with tips of toothy rocks and airborne water hinting at what lies below the horizon. It seems darker. Clouds must have moved in. Swirling in the eddy, I find feelings of unease.

Big Drop #3: complex; every tongue of green water leads to a standing tombstone and most rough lines end with a hole. There is, however, a line. From our vantage point, it seems as though it's the only line with any chance for clean passage. The line is intimidating and we spend 10 minutes discussing the best way.

MC asks if I've got my camera.

"Yep, you run it and I'll shoot it."

Relief and jealousy.

He squares up and runs it clean. Travis is up next, feeling nervous, but powered by camera courage, he gives the run a last look and paddles out as the rain returns. He must sense when I put the camera away, saving an insurance claim. He returns to shore, searching for a different way. Watching his nervousness, I notice my own confidence waver slightly.

"Hey man, you just want to follow me into it," I offer.

Travis agrees and we hop into our boats. I paddle out and the entrance to our line

appears very different than it had from shore. I almost enter too far right, narrowly missing a hole. I had expected a wave to hit me on the left, pulsing around a rock, but wasn't able to see the right lateral wave. Everything is bigger, steeper, and more chaotic than it looked. I paddle hard and fast, pulling through with more luck than skill. Cresting the last of the waves, I spin around in time to see Travis plug the hole at the entrance. MC and I watch for five long seconds before finally seeing Travis' helmet pop up. His boat and paddle get spat out, he kicks and swims and goes under again. As I turn to chase the paddle, I catch a glimpse of Travis flopping over a rock and out of the hole. MC takes off after Travis and the boat. We all pull to shore and take a breather. Exciting stuff.

We set off for the next rapid and I hear MC yelling "swimmer." Still shaken up and full of adrenaline, Travis flips in the waves. As he's entering his boat, MC asks "did you lose a shoe?" Travis, looking down at his bare foot, says, "I guess so."

Opposite: Mike Curiak bracing hard and staying upright in Big Drop 3.

MC and I glance at one another.

Oh shit.

We've got major ground to cover by foot and bike, including some serious scrambling. Doing this without a shoe, or even a makeshift shoe, could be fatal.

MC paddles up searching eddies. Just then, two rafters float down and we chat with them.

One of the rafters offers him a cheap pair of beater river shoes.

Somehow, the only people we see in three days have a spare pair of shoes?

Not only are they shoes, they're a pair of sticky rubber approach shoes made for climbing and hiking.

We're dumbfounded.

Travis is part Irish.

We reach our take-out a short time later. Looking up the canyon we're planning on ascending, I'm suddenly much happier it has stopped raining. It's steep and covered in loose rock ranging in size from pebbles to cars. There are plenty of times when I'm not sure which pebble is holding up which car. Or which car is holding back the truckload of pebbles. Two hours of scrambling, using our hands as much as our feet, and we pop over the top of the canyon.

Now it's raining again and any decently flat spot for a tent happens to be part of the water course draining the massive area of slick rock. Getting washed down the 1200-foot canyon we just climbed up doesn't sound like our idea of fun. For two rainy hours, we search the cliffs and boulders for overhangs and caves, looking for a dry spot to sleep. At dusk, we find something.

Using paddle blades for shovels, we move dirt and rock for another two hours until we've got space to sleep. Travis has what

appears to be the most comfortable spot and he warms water for our dinners.

Sleep comes fast.

Drip...drip...dammit!

MC sits up. It's raining harder and water is clinging to the roof of our cave, dripping freely onto his shoulder. Travis' spot has become a shower. He pulls out our tarp and wraps himself inside. MC digs a flat spot to sit. I spin 180 degrees and go back to sleep. Rain teases us all night. The cave drips with each storm and then dries, lulling us back to our beds only to chase us away again with the next. The morning is beautiful, though. And dry. We watch the light play on the red cliffs across from us and pack up. For some reason, my pack hasn't gotten any lighter the last few days. Funny how rain does that.



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WILDERNESS PADDLING

We scramble up to the top of the plateau and hike the remaining four hours back to our bikes. Our first 10 miles pass easily and I'm thinking about the burger and milkshake waiting in Moab.

"You want to check out those ruins today?"

"Nah, maybe the next trip."

There's a brilliant flash, too close for comfort.

"I think you're meant to see these ruins today!"

We make a dash for the forest and ruins, setting up our tarp just in time for the hail to begin bouncing off the ground.

One storm passes and another follows. Eventually it looks clear enough to move. Less than a mile later and we're cowering

under another tree. The storm turns into a steady rain.

With three and a half hours of daylight and 20-plus miles to ride, we decide I'll go as fast as possible back to the truck and drive back to meet Travis and MC wherever they're found.

Luckily the rain stops once I'm out of the valley and my pace picks up. Thoughts of that burger and milkshake power my pedals as I start the climb up and over the pass. And then everything grinds to a halt. All the rain turned the road into clay. Within five feet, my bike couldn't roll and I was four inches taller thanks to the clay built up on my shoes. I cursed whomever or whatever was listening and carried my bike up the road 20 feet at a time. I thought it'd all be better once I got to the top and could race the final handful of miles down to the truck. Surely speed and momentum would keep my wheels spinning. That was partially true.

In between spooking elk and admiring the first snow on the La Sal mountains, I'd still have to wipe the wheels clean and carry the bike. But it was a beautiful night and my curse words were silenced.

I reached the truck and my forgotten stash of clean, dry clothes and drove back for the others. When we met on the road, both MC and Travis declined a ride and finished our adventure with the truck's headlights for illumination.

We were too late for real food in Moab. McDonald's was serving the only hot food in town. Strangely enough, I didn't find that meal very satisfying, instead wishing to be back beside the river watching shooting stars and flirting with feelings of the unknown.

Mike Curiak and Travis Anderson floating in their packrafts towards the fun that is big whitewater.



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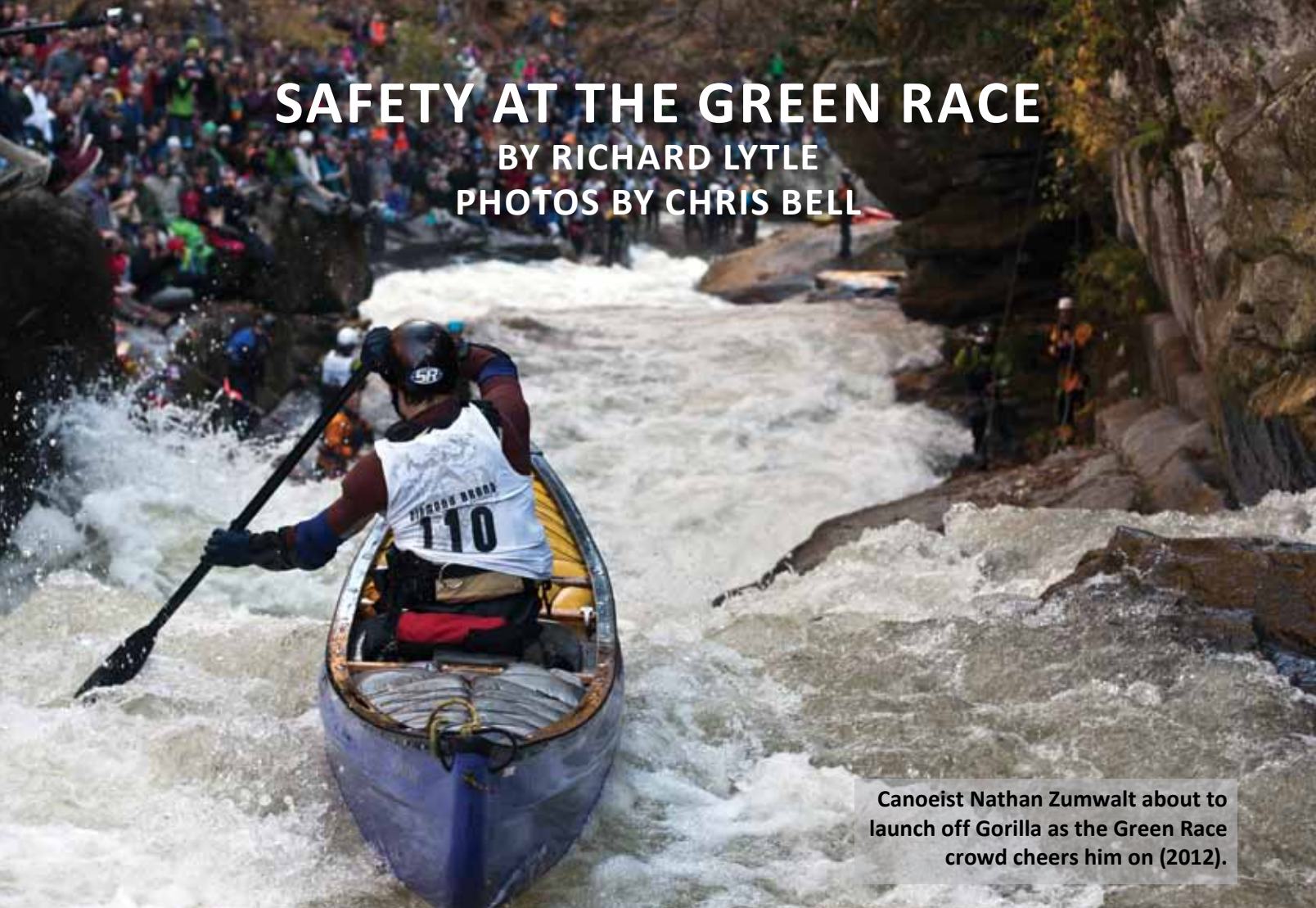
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SAFETY AT THE GREEN RACE

BY RICHARD LYTLE

PHOTOS BY CHRIS BELL



Canoeist Nathan Zumwalt about to launch off Gorilla as the Green Race crowd cheers him on (2012).

I'M STANDING AT Gorilla, looking over the lip of the 20-foot waterfall. Suddenly, a boat comes through the notch upside down. A figure pops out. This is the worst thing that can happen. Swimming over Gorilla is not a pleasant experience. Those who have lived through it have sustained injuries as serious as broken ribs and punctured lungs. Right now, however, all I can imagine as this kayaker is about to plunge over Gorilla is, "What got him to do this race?"

It's Saturday, November 5th, the day of the 20th annual Green Race, which is thriving more than ever. As I was hiking in, I saw Gorilla and realized that there were at least twice as many people as there had been last year. Signs like, "Legalize the Braap," and "Jackson did Harambe," are just some of the early clues that this is not your average kayaking race. Instead, it is like a normal kayaking race on steroids; people come out, drink beer, and ring cowbells.

Last year, a man in a Gorilla suit jumped the notch, which has Class V consequences if you miss.

Although the environment for the Green Race is different from many others, it doesn't mean the race is easy. In under a mile, kayakers are forced to navigate 14 Class IV and V rapids. It's physically grueling for kayakers to just paddle through the rapids at a normal pace. To race them takes a much higher level of preparation and skill. Plus, with hundreds of people yelling and screaming from the shores of Gorilla, it can make a racer distracted or confused.

In addition to Gorilla, the biggest rapid in the race is called Go Left and Die. To enter the rapid, you come in on a little rock slide, then turn left where the entrance meets the main drop. You go over a fallen tree, and then attempt to get left as well as you can. If you cannot make the move, there is a nasty hydraulic you will most likely get

stuck in and will very likely swim out of. If you make the move too fast, you will hit the left rock wall and possibly get pushed back into the hole, or get flipped and go through the last slot upside down. Sitting at the bottom of this drop is a huge rock. If you make the move well, you go directly between the rock and the river-left wall. If you don't make the move well, bad things can happen.

I have seen people get absolutely beaten up in the hydraulic right above the rock and to the side of the right wall. At last year's Green Race, a racer didn't make the move at Go Left; he hit the hole sideways and got pushed right back into the hole. His boat proceeded to get pinned between the right wall and the rock in the middle. His skirt imploded and he swam down the last slot. From my perspective, it did not look fun. I believe that kayaker would agree.

SAFETY

Go Left might be technical, narrow, and steep, but Gorilla is a monster.

Gorilla is the rapid that one usually finds when looking up the Green River Narrows. What many people don't realize is that Gorilla actually has five parts, and four of them are Class V in difficulty. The first drop is called Pencil Sharpener. This is not a very hard move, but does consist of two, five-foot drops immediately before The Notch. The Notch is by far the hardest part of Gorilla. Here, the whole creek narrows down to a 196-cm slot, just big enough for a kayak to go through. You must be perfect when going through the notch, because if you go too far left, you will flip and go down The Pad upside-down. If you go too far right, you will catch the eddy line and either flip, or go down The Pad backwards. The Pad directly follows The Notch, and you have to make a screaming left turn to set up right. The best line down The Pad is to go next to the left wall, boof, and hope for your life that you land well. The 10- to 12-foot waterfall is very unforgiving if you don't set up correctly. To the right is a rocky mess you don't want to get caught up in either. At the bottom of The Pad there is a hole that will flip you, but is relatively easy to get out of. If you have swum after The Notch, don't expect the bottom of The Pad to be the end of your swim. Directly after it are two more drops called Scream Machine and Nies' Pieces. These would be Class IV if they were not directly after The Pad and The Flume (the landing spot below The Pad). If you mess up on The Pad badly, you can easily get eaten alive in Scream Machine and Nies' Pieces. Scream Machine is about a 10-foot rockslide, which leads into Nies' Pieces, which is a 15-foot gradual rockslide. A swim on Gorilla any day of the year other than the day of the Green Race means there is a very good chance of swimming Scream Machine and Nies' Pieces, which makes these rapids Class V.

Green Race safety crew scrubbing the rocks below Gorilla before the event so that they can safely work at the water's edge.

Even beyond the two big rapids, Gorilla and Go Left, the Green Race is not easy. If you don't boof at Zwick's, you can get stuck in a very retentive hole. At Chief's, if you go middle, you can get vertically pinned. At Frankenstein, you can get caught under a nasty undercut rock. These are just some of the many unpleasant possibilities facing competitors on race day.

The Green River Race is held every year on the first Saturday of November. Racing presents a lot of issues for racers. As veteran Isaac Levinson said, "Going down the Green if you're racing it is completely different than running it." One way that the organizers try to bridge the gap is by having safety volunteers spread throughout the race. At Frankenstein, Boof or Consequences, Go Left and Die, Zwick's Backender, below Chiefs, and below the Notch and the Pad there is safety set up for racers who swim. Although it is meant to bridge the gap between casual paddling and racing, sometimes this precaution can have some unintended effects.

The safety at the race is world-class. If you are having trouble, the guys down at the

bottom will help. Normally there are three guys at the bottom of each rapid. One is attached to a throw rope and can jump into the water at any moment. The other two hold him while he jumps in, and can throw ropes as well.

Every year there are 10 swims, on average, during the race, and although anyone racing the Green has potential to swim, many people who swim are unprepared. The unprepared people often come in with the mentality that, "If I screw up, the safety crew will save me." Many people won't say that out loud, but someone I talked to before the race who was a first-time racer said, when asked whether he felt comfortable running Gorilla without safety, "Yeah, I feel more comfortable with safety." Another said, "Depends on the day."

A big part of racing for first-timers is deciding whether to go or not. Many first-time racers are very well prepared and are great, like Elias Longenecker. Elias has been training since summer for the Green Race, logging over 50 laps. Since August, he has been running the big three and practicing



SAFETY



Competitor upside down on The Pad. Note the safety crew on alert below Gorilla.

his race lines. This is the epitome of what people like Jason Hale and John Grace want first-time racers to be like. He finished the race with a 5:15 time which is very good for a first-timer. Although many people are like this, there are always some who are less prepared.

Some racers come to race who are maybe comfortable with running Go Left and Gorilla, but might only be willing to do so believing that safety will keep them from getting injured. Racers, old and new alike, don't like this mentality. Elias called this approach a "Kind of a selfish thing to do, because someone might mess up their time, if you're getting pinned somewhere. You're free to do whatever you want, you're free to make your own bad decisions." Veteran Pat Keller said, "If you can't pull into The Notch eddy (right after the notch and above the Pad), drink a cola, eat a sandwich, and peel out laughing, you shouldn't race."

Many veterans said that it would be better not to race than to push the limits. Chris Gragtmans said this about the issue: "It (Green River Race) will be there, and foundation is the most important. Build that foundation of skills far before you

try and push the limits on them." Even though Green Race veterans seem to feel this way unanimously, it doesn't prevent people from wiping out on race day, like the competitor described in the first lines of this article.

Flipping in the notch is not unusual. Rush Sturges, one of the world's best kayakers, flipped there on race day. He rolled up and went off The Pad fairly well. The man swimming below The Notch was also a very experienced and prepared kayaker. He flipped in Pencil Sharpener and could not roll up. As Keller said, "Yeah, he (Rush) rolled up. You need to be able to roll up in a situation like that." When the man in paragraph one wet-exited after The Notch, I thought he was going to sustain some injuries. By the skin of his teeth, he SWAM into The Notch eddy and was safe. He was extremely lucky that fortune turned his way

The crowd in the Gallimore Road parking lot before the 2011 Green Race.

at that moment. While no one is sorry that he was safe, it does show how dangerous the Green Race can be.

After the race, I glanced over the DNF list and saw that many of them were first-time racers. First-time racers have the problem of not knowing what the river is like on race day. Most probably train day in and day out for the race, and are very well prepared. Even so, some of the first-time racers showed that they aren't 100% confident that their skills will get them down. When asked about how prepared you should be, veteran Andrew Holcombe said, "You need to have experience running the Green and other Class V." An overarching theme among Green Race veterans was that race day is not the time to push limits. Sometimes people just need to look at their decisions to race a little bit harder. They might not get hurt, but they are putting the race in jeopardy if they don't believe they themselves have the skillset to get down cleanly on race day.

The issue of safety is something that is being handled the best it can be at this point. The safety people themselves are so good that a very small group of racers, made up mostly of first-timers, think that the safety will keep them from sustaining bad injuries. Granted, no one has died in the race's 21-year history. As Holcombe said, "Most of the time, the only thing that is hurt after a swim is your confidence."



Nonetheless, there have been serious injuries, and the potential exists for worse. It is a great thing that the safety is so good, and quite frankly, all of the first-time racers I knew who were prepared styled the race. The race organizers already ask the younger racers whether they think they have the ability to run the race. Some will obviously say, “yes” even if they’re not prepared, but this is still a great step leading racers to introspection. The race organizers are doing their best to limit the risk inherent in the race by informing first-time racers about the risks involved, and asking them about their confidence.

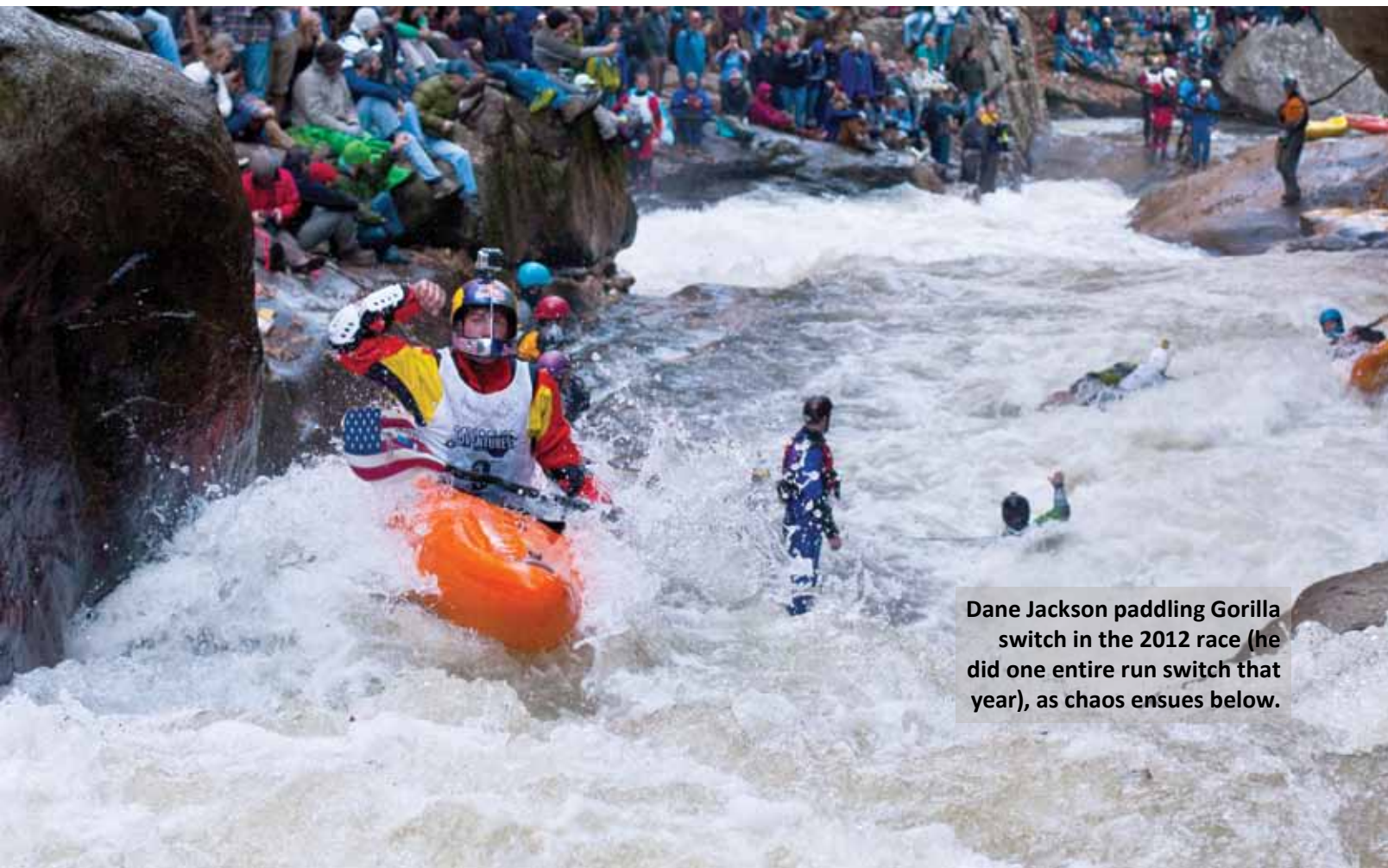
Despite some concern about underprepared racers, paddler safety at the Green River Race is top notch. After talking to veterans, I got the impression that they’re less concerned about the safety of the racers than that of the spectators. This is just part of the great job that John Grace and Jason Hale are doing with this race, taking it to a whole new level. Every year they pick

up a few more racers, and every year the racers become more diverse. This is, in my opinion, the best kayaking race in the world, and I don’t see it being surpassed any time soon.

To all readers: keep shredding, come out to the Green Narrows, train hard, be aware of the risks, and hopefully race in this one-of-a-kind whitewater race someday.

Richard Lytle is a 9th grade student at Christ School in Arden, NC. He got into whitewater kayaking two years ago at his middle school, called French Broad River Academy, and has since paddled rivers in North Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, and Costa Rica.

2016 Men’s Results				
Place	First	Last	Category	Time
1	Eric	Deguil	Long K1	0:04:11
2	Pat	Keller	Long K1	0:04:12
3	Brad	McMillan	Long K1	0:04:23
4	Isaac	Levinson	Long K1	0:04:24
5	Geoff	Calhoun	Long K1	0:04:25
6	Matt	Anger	Long K1	0:04:26
7	Holt	Mcwhirt	Long K1	0:04:31
7	Billy	Jones	Long K1	0:04:31
7	Hunt	Jennings	Long K1	0:04:31
10	Michael	Ferraro	Long K1	0:04:33
10	Stephen	McGrady	Long K1	0:04:33
2016 Women’s Results				
1	Adriene	Levknecht	Long K1	0:04:35
2	Emily	Shanblatt	Long K1	0:05:31
3	Rowan	Stuart	Long K1	0:05:39
4	Moriah	Heaney	Long K1	0:06:02
5	Cody	Stokes	Short K1	0:06:10
6	Genevieve	Royer	Long K1	0:06:17
7	Mary Katherine	Fields	Long K1	0:06:24
8	Kendra	Kaiser	Long K1	0:06:25



Dane Jackson paddling Gorilla switch in the 2012 race (he did one entire run switch that year), as chaos ensues below.

RIVER VOICES

BRIARS, BARE FEET, AND FISH: MY FIRST RUN ON THE LOWER BLACKWATER

BY JERRY SPENCE



Steve, Russ, Ernie unloading our millineum Falcons for the trek to the Lower Blackwater
Photo by Jerry Spence

IN MY EXPERIENCE, reflection is a natural response to becoming older and paddling less. As an aging paddler approaching 60, I often find myself thinking back on my many memories of a paddling career that began in 1980. One story that I return to frequently is about the first time my paddling crew of many years and I paddled the Lower Blackwater in West Virginia. If you participate in adventure sports long enough, eventually you will have a trip that could be described as epic. This trip definitely qualifies as epic.

In 1981 the Upper Blackwater and North Fork Blackwater, which are now commonly-run Class V rivers, were not being paddled; the standard run on the Blackwater was the lower section. There were no Internet gauges, so instead of browsing to American Whitewater to find out what the river levels were, you had to watch the weather on television, make a guess about flows, and

drive to the bridges where the gauges were. In those early days, the definitive guide to paddling rivers and creeks in West Virginia was Bob Burrell and Paul Davidson's *Wild Water West Virginia*. Our group's goal was to paddle as many of the rivers and creeks in that book as we could. One page that we kept coming to in the Cheat River Basin was the Lower Blackwater. The guidebook's description of the difficulties of the run really caught our attention: "To single out any part of this trip as difficult is ludicrous. Everything about it from getting to the put-in to the take-out is difficult beyond the scope of all but the expert paddler." I was in my second year of kayaking at the time and did not consider myself an expert paddler, but I had done the Upper Gauley and Upper Yough and figured I was ready for the run.

Ernie, Russ, Steve, Don, and I decided it was time to venture down the Lower Blackwater in the early summer of 1981. There had

been rain in the area and we considered the chances good that it would be running. We drove to just outside of Parson's West Virginia on a Friday and camped at a church pavilion. We camped there frequently when in the area and had previously gotten permission from the church to do so. We woke up Saturday morning and drove into Parson's for breakfast and then drove to the take-out bridge in Hendricks. We had heard from kayakers from Friendsville that if it looked like you could float at the take-out it was probably running, but if it looked high and all the rocks were covered it was on the high side and to be careful. The river at the take out bridge looked low but it appeared we could all get down it. Now we just had to find the put-in.

The words from the guidebook, "getting to the put-in," kept resonating in our minds as we headed for the river. We drove to the town of Douglas and followed the road as



The author punching a strong hydraulic
Photo by Russ Kiefer

far as we could. The description seemed sort of vague to us. We saw a dirt road that continued up a hill for a bit and also a railroad track, so we split up into groups. Don and Russ went down the railroad tracks while I walked up the road leading uphill for a bit with Steve and Ernie, until eventually we split up. Things were about to get very challenging and entangled. From my vantage point, to get down to the river valley, I had to bushwhack. I would push my boat down the mountainside through masses of briar bushes and deadfalls and then go retrieve it. I repeated the process until I eventually ended up on the railroad tracks. It was hot out, so I was wearing only a t-shirt and shorts, and I'd been lacerated from head to ankles by the briars. I sat down on the tracks to rest. It was then and only then that I realized I should have taken the path of least resistance: the railroad tracks! Eventually Don and Russ came walking up to me. They just stared at me and laughed. They commented that I looked like I encountered many cats and lost. We saw no signs of Steve and Ernie and decided to walk down the tracks to where we could see the Lower Blackwater. As we rounded a bend we saw Steve and Ernie ahead of us and walked up to them.

They told us of their challenges getting to the railroad tracks and of having to climb down cliffs by standing on each others' shoulders to get down the cliffs. Now that we were regrouped, we looked for a trail to the put-in. We did find a path that appeared to be used and it went to the river. As we were working our way to the river we heard someone yell out "OOPS." We looked up in time to see a Seda Equipe slalom kayak glissading down the mountain towards and past us. It reached a lip of the river embankment and launched into the air and disappeared. We walked down to the precipice and saw Ernie's boat was safe on shore and undamaged. We put in above a rapid that would later be named Krakatoa. The water was on the low side and very technical but it was channelized. I had the heaviest boat of the group, a Prijon Sonnet made for me by Phil Coleman of Friendsville, MD. The boat was solid but a little heavy. I also had extraneous gear that I should not have brought, which would haunt me later in the trip.

We put on and started making our way down new waters. The level was below 0 on the gauge and was very technical with some very strong hydraulics. After a couple of thrashings in these hydraulics and

with the bushwhacking I had done I was beginning to tire out and decided to get off the river after swimming out of a strong hydraulic. Russ shared the same opinion. The only problem was that walking out meant scrambling a couple of thousand feet straight up to the railroad tracks. It was brutal and slow, but eventually we made it to the tracks. I lay down on the tracks completely exhausted and fell asleep to the sound of distant thunder. The rain began to come down hard and awakened me. To my surprise Russ was gone. He left no signs indicating which direction he had gone. I looked up the tracks and down the tracks and decided to go downhill. I had lost my shoes during my swim in the hydraulic so I was barefooted. The rocks that made up the base of the tracks were large and sharp. I tried to do a tightrope walk on the rail so as not to touch the rock and used

Ben Dann @ The Clark's Fork of the Yellowstone

RIVER VOICES



Blackwater Falls
Photo by Jerry Spence

my Backlund paddle for balance. I began to feel the weight of my boat—even though it was fiberglass and Kevlar I had brought too much extra gear. I was making slow, agonizing time and I kept looking at the river, hoping to see my friends still paddling so I could rejoin them. After an hour of barefoot rail rock hell I decided I had had enough and was going back to the river to paddle out.

I worked my way through fields and marshes and climbed over fences until I finally came to the river. The water level was coming up from the rain, but I was past the most difficult rapids—or at least I thought so. It was also getting dark by this point. I put in and guided myself down by the white of the water. After what seemed like a couple of miles I was starting to see the lights of town and the take-out bridge came into view suddenly. The water was rising quite rapidly. As I neared the bridge I heard a voice say, “There he is, grab him.” I was safe. Ernie, Russ, Steve and Don were

standing under the take-out bridge. They said they had hiked up the railroad tracks but did not see me so they assumed I put back in.

We went into Parson’s for dinner and then drove back to the pavilion by the church. When we arrived we instantly knew that something was wrong. The first clue was the strong smell of fish, the second

was Elvis Presley’s “You ain’t nothing but a hound dog,” playing on crackling, distorted speakers, and the third was the young children swinging on the pavilion poles, dancing to the music. The local fishermen, who were very nice, said they had a hundred pounds of fish to clean and it would take about two hours. They said they would clean it up the best they could but we would still probably have raccoons in our camp at night. I was not enamored with the scene and told everyone I was leaving. Don had set up his sleeping bag in the middle of all this and was asleep. Steve grabbed me by the arm and said, “Don’t leave without me.” I told Steve to wake up Don so that we could drive somewhere less congested. There was no disagreement amongst us. We drove a couple of miles down the road to a small roadside rest area and threw our sleeping bags on the ground. I fell asleep with the words “epic” and “ludicrous” repeating in my brain, and I could not forget the smell of fish.

All in all it was a great run in the days when whitewater paddling was very different than it is today. Yet with all the improvements to the sport since the 80s, there are still epic memories of this time living on in great stories.



Russ and Steve posing with the Whitewater Bible for West Virginia Whitewater:
Wild Water West Virginia
Photo by Jerry Spence

NEWS & NOTES

AW ROGUE TRIP 2017

BY MARK SINGLETON



FOR THE PAST several years, the staff of American Whitewater has joined with a number of our members to participate in a four-day float trip on the Rogue River in Southern Oregon. This trip has been a great opportunity to connect with members in ways that build a lasting understanding of the role of recreation in fostering a stewardship ethic. As one of the original eight Wild and Scenic Rivers in the country, the Rogue is an outstanding classroom for American Whitewater's river stewardship program. Staff members share current projects, their challenges and successes, as well as highlights of national policy work that impacts Wild and Scenic rivers like the Rogue. The trip is made possible through the support of Northwest Rafting Company. They provide professional guides, exceptional food, transportation to and from Galice (the put-in), and group equipment.

In June 2017, American Whitewater members will again have an opportunity to join American Whitewater staff and board members for this exclusive trip on the Rogue. We invite you to come learn more about what we're up to while having a great time enjoying one of our nation's first Wild and Scenic Rivers. You will have the option of bringing your own boat, renting a boat, or joining as a passenger on one of the rafts. The price for the trip will be \$995, with a portion of the trip proceeds going to American Whitewater to support our work.

The trip, which will take place June 13-16, 2017, will be fully outfitted by Northwest Rafting Company with professional guides and all group equipment. The trip is suitable for all skill levels. Last year we had paddlers representing the full range of skill levels from experts who are out every weekend, to folks who had not been in a boat for

a while, and some who were just getting into an inflatable kayak or raft for the first time. Everyone is welcome on this trip—the only experience you need is a love of rivers. One of the most important concepts the Rogue trip will reinforce is what we all know firsthand—it is our common love of whitewater that makes us such passionate defenders of rivers. Oh yeah, and the food is excellent and the camping superb. Last year, we had a full trip, so make your reservation soon to ensure a spot on the Rogue trip with American Whitewater this summer.

Make your reservation directly through Northwest Rafting Company's website today at <http://www.nwrafting.com/rogue>. We hope to see you on the Rogue River this June!

LILY DIPPING

BY PATTI RUTKA

PHOTOS BY HELEN HESS



Lily and her Uncle Kyle, taking the plunge together

“DRAW! DRAW! DRAW!” I bellowed at my bow partner as a 20-mile-an-hour wind gust snatched the stern of the tandem canoe out from behind me and swung it. Now the boat was sideways to the onrush of current, shoving us inexorably toward Fresh Meat, a precipitous four-foot ledge drop. Sideways, we’d get rock-slammed and pinned. I couldn’t do that to Lily.

My newbie in the bow took the cue. “Draw! Draw!” I kept firing in staccato at the girl. Lily complied, drawing for her life, probably because my tone indicated that was, indeed, what hung in the balance. I laid so hard on a correcting pry stroke to wrest the boat around that between the two of us our nimble robin’s egg-colored tandem canoe couldn’t help but pivot on point like a ballerina in a blue tutu.

White pines and cedars waved and dipped their boughs against a cerulean sky alongside the Penobscot River’s West Branch (Seboomook section, ME). The dam

keepers had unexpectedly let fly at least double the volume of my group’s previous run, and I had my hands full, navigating Lily downstream on her second whitewater run ever. We were tucked so far up in the deep, hidden north woods to paddle the ledge-y, pool-drop river that it would have taken two hours to get to an emergency room, not counting rescue and camp pack-up time. The bottom line pressed in on me: keep the damn boat upright. No hurting the teenager.

My calculations of current and drift above Fresh Meat proved accurate. What I couldn’t have banked on, besides the wind, was Lily’s sturdy compliance that clinched our impromptu tandem partnership.

We’ll live! The ticker-tape scrolled through my head as the boat swooshed straight down the chute at the last minute, rock ledge inches from our heads. I had neither impaled the bow, nor smashed the gunwale, nor flipped us. I get a gold star! After the engulfing white rush, I cranked

the boat hard left into an eddy, where Lily and I erupted into giggles. I didn’t kill Kyle’s niece! Surely Kyle’s wife would be happy with me for not maiming her sister’s kid. Lily was visiting her Aunt Laura and Uncle Kyle from Texas, where her mother had relocated herself and her three girls in their recent move from China—without their father. Texas was a brave new world.

A newbie Lily certainly was, but at 14 she had adulthood in the crosshairs. The week before, Kyle had taken Lily to the local pond and taught her paddling strokes: the heroic draw she had just executed, the forward power stroke, even the awkward cross-bow draw.

Kyle, a lanky and accomplished Class V open boater, was not related to Lily by blood; Lily didn’t resemble her Appalachian-American uncle, but her mother and aunt. She was beautiful in the bow, graceful as the prow of a tall ship, with her mother’s aquiline nose and her Chinese father’s fawn skin and jet hair. Tall, yet not gangly, she was

INTRO TO WHITEWATER

an emergent Amazon who liked to draw pictures in her journal. She was a world traveler of sophisticated multi-cultural parentage who had wandered into the bow of my boat on a summer trip to the remote northwest corner of Maine during black fly season. She was a trooper, even helping me as we wrestled the canoe onto our thighs to dump water. “Lame” wasn’t in her vocabulary.

With some reluctance, I had agreed to be a “strong female role model” for Lily by captaining the tandem canoe. It had been years since I’d put on my mentor hat for Outward Bound youth, but politically incorrect or not, I’d rather have had a boy than a girl in the bow because they tended to be more capable in a boat, in my experience as an outdoor leader. What I would need was all the help Lily’s youth, and flexibility, and fine balance could contribute. As we worked through our paces on flat water at the put-in, I could see she would not be a liability. She brought strength and discipline to our partnership.

“So sometimes I may sound like I’m being kind of mean,” I explained as we drifted on quiet water past an eagle’s nest. “I’m not yelling at you—it just means I want you to give me all the power you’ve got, right when I say so. But most of the time, you can paddle more lightly than you might think,” I explained to her. Most of the time she could lily-dip, putting hardly any effort into her strokes, thereby avoiding a tug-of-war between the bow and stern.

As we slid past mysterious moose dens tucked deep in the fragrant woods, I ventured beyond the mechanics of paddling and invited Lily to sense the movement of water under our boat. “There’s more to paddling than just whooshing down exciting water slides,” I wanted to pass on to her. My mentor hat was pulled fully down over my ears now. “Feel the current,” I encouraged her. “Feel what it’s doing to

the hull of the boat. See if you can sense it beneath you.”

Whitewater had cleansed me in younger days, ushered me into its flowing serenity, and I hoped it could do the same for Lily, too. We weren’t just two women—one young, one old—thrown in a boat together. We were sisters. Like envisioning moose in the woods, my mind forged a kinship between us, since we both came from families we might wish had been different. Everybody’s got something, a friend told me once. At least Lily had been given the gift of a delicate name, and love, and her youth to choose a rich path ahead. As we listened to the blustery wind souging in the trees, the gliding and cascading water tumbling past an eons-old ledge, the beauty of the place made safe our not too dissimilar family stories—not secret, but private. In plunging off Fresh Meat’s

edge, Lily having saved us from my screw-up of losing the boat angle, she showed such flexible responsiveness to the urgent demands of the moment that I could only marvel. Who was the mentor now?

We finished the rest of the run without incident. Back in camp, I could barely contain my excitement as I told Kyle of Lily’s delightfully unexpected prowess in the bow. “You taught her well! Who knew she could be so effective?” as I hugged her and recounted proudly to Kyle and Laura how their niece had saved the day above the big drop. Whatever course corrections Lily might need to make throughout life, she had drawn for her life when she most needed to. I hoped she would continue drawing—on whatever medium worked for her, water or paper, in waters unfamiliar or known, lightly or earnestly. Drawing can make all the difference.



Lily learning to draw.

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AMERICAN WHITEWATER Today!

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

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

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

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

Join on-line today at <http://americanwhitewater.org/content/Membership/join-AW/>, call 1-866-BOAT4AW (866-262-8429), or fill out the form on the back of this page and mail it to:

Membership
P.O. Box 1540
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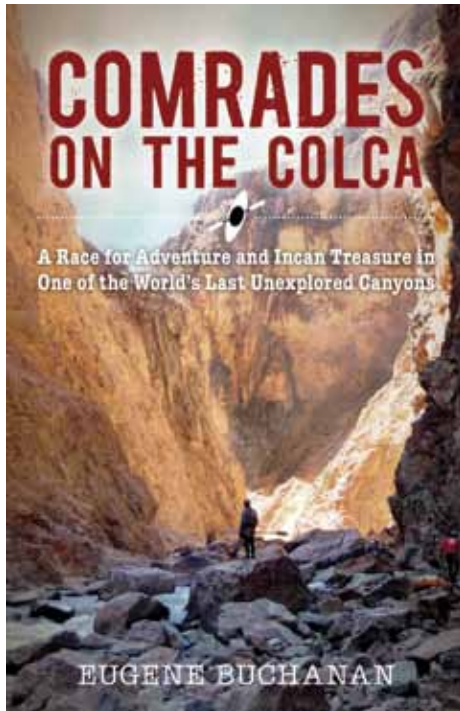
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BOOK REVIEW

REVIEW OF *COMRADES ON THE COLCA*

BY PATTI RUTKA



IF YOU LIKE reading about Peru and Incan history, and have ever wondered about daring Polish expeditions, Eugene Buchanan's *Comrades on the Colca: A Race for Adventure and Incan Treasure in One of the World's Last Unexplored Canyons* is a wild and crazy expedition tale that you should check out. It might have been entitled, *Polish Paddlers and Their Peruvian Pals* for all its zaniness. Buchanan, with stellar credentials in both writing and expeditions, is a former long-time editor for *Paddler* magazine, a contributing editor for *Powder* and *Canoe and Kayak*, and he's written for the *New York Times*, *Outside*, and *National Geographic Adventure*. With several first descents to his name, according to the jacket cover of this book put out by Conundrum Press, he has all the tools at his disposal to write an engaging tale.

In a follow-up to his *Brothers on the Bashkaus*, Buchanan whets the reader's appetite for a solid adventure story. To his plot-driven narrative he brings a reporter's

sensibility that at times prioritizes details over voice. Led by a team of colorful and quirky Poles, Buchanan is the lone kayaker, the "Little Train that Could," descending the top 12 miles of the Colca Canyon in Peru. In a 10,000-foot drop from Madrigal to Sangalle, with a gradient of 260 feet per mile, there ends up being more hiking than paddling.

Using a precise narrative style that races forward in a staccato of particulars, Buchanan at times eddies out for an extended look at facts and figures about the Colca and its history. Otherwise, the story is fast-paced, the author has done his homework, and he knows his stuff. Adding interest, the Colca descent is sandwiched between brief mention of other trips, in a cut-to-the-chase voice that no doubt will engage some readers sufficiently, but I found myself wishing he could hang out, surf for a time with the meaning of the voyage.

Despite the hardship of cold and rocky camps, a blistering plant substance that eats through skin, and a fiercely competitive Polish team that Buchanan's group happens upon along the way, Buchanan does express, at times, what of all of us who have been on expedition feel: "the unbridled freedom and realization that you're navigating the pulse of all life itself." I wanted even more of this reflection from him. I wanted to savor the feel of such a deep, remote place that I will never visit. I can only rely on the expertise of someone like Buchanan to paint a vivid, emotionally rich and character-driven picture for me, more rosy-cheeked than the parched mummies his group discovers. I am certain there are sought-after treasures on the Colca, like its rumored gold, but I tend to think the wealth buried deep within such isolation is an internal richness the author unearths, a wealth that inspires those of us confined to finding the pulse of all life much closer to home.

ON BOATING THE KENNEBEC GORGE AT NORMAL FLOWS

BY PATTI RUTKA

I do not boat it,
Sam-I-am
I do not boat it,
Since I swam!

Would you boat it
Here or there?

I would not boat it here or there,
I would not boat it anywhere!
I do not boat the gorge, no way
Not since I swam that yucky day!

Would you boat it on a broom?
Would you boat it in a Zoom?

I would not boat it on a broom.
I would not boat it in a Zoom.
I would not boat it here or there.
I would not boat it anywhere.
I do not boat it Sam-I-am,
I do not boat it since I swam.

Would you? Could you?
In a Shredder?
Boat it! Boat it!
You'll get better!

You may like it
You will see.
You may like it
You'll agree.

You do not boat it, SO you say
Try it! Try it! And you may.
Try it and you may, I say.

Sam!
If you will let me be
I will boat it, you will see.

Say! I boat the gorge, I do!
I boat it, Sam-I-Am!
But only in the bow of an OC 2 with John
Brower in the stern.

It's Easy to Support AW!

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

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

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- MissionFish: Sell your items through the MissionFish program on eBay and the proceeds come directly to AW.
- Other Assets: A gift of real estate to AW qualifies you for a tax deduction based on the property's fair market value. If it is not a river access point, AW will sell the property and use the proceeds to protect access and restore rivers. Acceptance of property is subject to certain conditions. You may also be eligible to receive tax benefits for gifts of real property. Art and jewelry are examples of personal property items that may be eligible. Interested donors should check with your financial and tax advisors and AW on the feasibility and tax considerations of such gifts.
- Securities: Donating appreciated stock to AW benefits both the donor and whitewater rivers. The donor receives two tax-related benefits. First, the gain on the stock is not subject to capital gains taxes. Second, the donor can deduct the value of the stock as a charitable contribution.
- United Way: All federal campaigns, and a few of the local campaigns will allow you to donate to AW. AW's UNITED WAY member # is 2302.
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Organization, Glendale

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Quebec

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DISCOUNTED AW MEMBERSHIP FOR AFFILIATE CLUB MEMBERS

By Carla Miner, Membership Manager

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

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

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

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10 REASONS TO JOIN AW AS AN AFFILIATE CLUB

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7. Recognize your club in the list of Affiliate Clubs noted in each bi-monthly AW Journal.
8. Post Club information on the AW Website to help paddlers find you.
9. Gain Club satisfaction from lending support to AW's stewardship efforts.
10. Improve your club members river karma.

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



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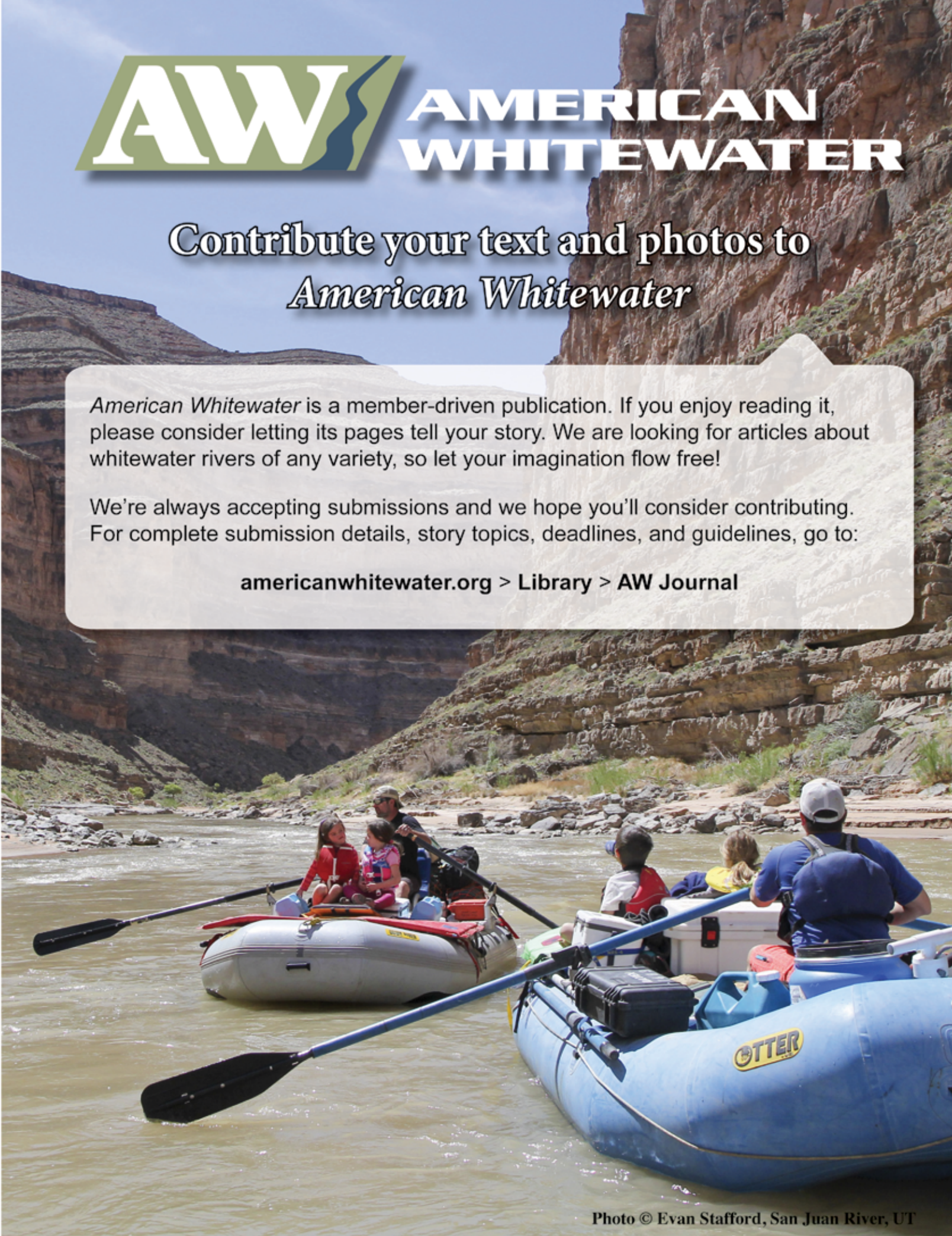
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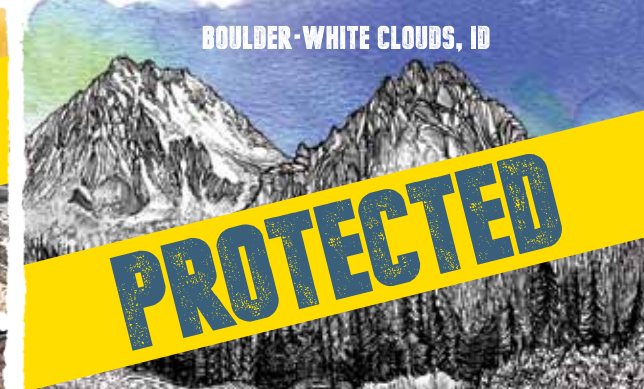
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