

Journal





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**AMERICAN
WHITewater
JOURNAL**

VOLUME 63

Nº1

A volunteer publication
promoting river conservation,
access, and safety

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On the cover: A group of Indigenous kayakers from Maqlaqs Paddle float the spring-fed headwaters of Oregon's Wood River, an upper tributary to the Klamath River. After four dams are removed on the Klamath River (see story on pg. 30), spring Chinook salmon will be able to return to the Wood River and other upper Klamath tributaries for the first time in over 100 years, and all river users will benefit from clean water and new opportunities to enjoy the restored Klamath. Maqlaqs Paddle and Ríos to Rivers developed Paddle Tribal Waters program that's preparing a group of Tribal youth to be the first people to navigate the Klamath River after removal of its four lower dams. Photo by Paul Robert Wolf Wilson.

PURPOSE

RIVER STEWARDSHIP: AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

Our mission: "To protect and restore America's whitewater rivers 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.

Founded in 1954, American Whitewater is a national non-profit organization (Non-profit # 23-7083760) 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.

EDITORIAL DISCLAIMER

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

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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Horizon Lines

Clinton Begley

Little North Santiam River (OR) before the 2020 Beachie Creek Fire.
Photo: Clinton Begley

WELCOME TO THE FIRST EDITION OF THE *American Whitewater Journal* for 2023! In this issue I'm excited to unveil the updated *American Whitewater Journal* layout, featuring our new logo, and fresh look and feel. A lot of hard work has gone into the update of our visual identity, and I'm proud of the team that has helped make it happen. New Year, new look!

As you read through the 2023 Top 10 Update, and look ahead to our Top 10 Stewardship Issues of 2023, I hope you will take note of how many of these projects have required years, even decades, to take shape. On one hand, that is entirely too long. Our world is changing fast and many of our most threatened rivers, and the communities that depend upon them, don't have decades more to wait for action. On the other hand, it is an incredible testament to both the vision and the endurance that this work requires. I also hope you'll also take a moment to recognize how big most of these issues are. Some are downright gargantuan! The Klamath, the Colorado...these efforts aren't for the faint of heart. Despite the massive scales of time, bureaucracy, and concrete, change is inevitable. Part of our job is to make sure it is the right kind of change, at the right time. Thank you to all of our donors and members who gave big at the

end of 2022 to ensure we have the resources and community support to keep pushing! We can't do it without you.

In addition to significant strides for our favorite rivers, last year ushered in big change for our organization too. Mark Singleton stepped down as Executive Director after an incredible 18-year run, and has been a valuable asset and resource as I've launched into the job head first. Chris Neuenschwander and Brian Jacobson have completed their terms as Board President and Treasurer, respectively, and will be remaining on the board in at-large capacities. Those who know something about nonprofit administration will understand the importance of the relationship between the Executive Director and the Board President. Even in my short time here I have learned a lot from Chris and am grateful for his support and guidance as I've gotten up to speed. In that same spirit, I'm pleased that Brent Austin has stepped into the Board President position beginning in 2023. Brent has served on the board for a long time already, has deep relationships in the paddling community, and is sharp on the issues. I am stoked to be working alongside him.

Joining Brent are our other new Executive Committee officers Erin Savage (Vice President), Bruce Lessels (Treasurer), and Megi Morishita (Secretary). Each of them has served on the board already and bring significant knowledge and experience to these important leadership roles. But above all, they each bring their unique brand of care and thoughtfulness to the team, and I'm grateful for that. We are also welcoming a new member to the board this year. Lily Durkee was nominated by the board and affirmed by our membership to begin her first term in 2023. Lily is a PhD candidate in Ecology at Colorado State University and has been whitewater paddling since she was just nine years old in the Washington, D.C. area. Lily is also co-founder of the nonprofit organization Diversify Whitewater, and we are excited to have her enthusiasm, expertise, and voice on the team. We also bid farewell to Christopher Hest who had served on the AW board for an incredible twelve years. You can read more about Chris' significant contributions and lasting legacy on page 38. He is already missed.

As paddlers who spend as much time as possible in chaotic currents and dynamic river systems, we are accustomed to change. But in spite of recent changes, American Whitewater's commitment and service to whitewater paddlers and the rivers you care about remains bedrock solid. And the entire team is raring to go in the season of renewal and growth that a new year brings. Thank you for joining us on the ride in the year ahead and I'll SYOTR soon!



Clinton Begley
Executive Director, American Whitewater

P.S.: If you're looking to make paddling plans in June, check out the opportunity to join me alongside our Southern Rockies Stewardship Director Hattie Johnson and Membership Director Bethany Overfield on a trip down the Wild and Scenic section of the Rogue River in Oregon. For several years now Northwest Rafting Company has generously worked with American Whitewater to arrange this special opportunity for our members to spend time on the Rogue with our stewardship staff, learn what we are up to, and experience one of this country's most spectacularly beautiful rivers. The trip is June 20-23rd and you can learn more on how to book your spot on page 40.



Lily Durkee on the Yampa River (CO).
Photo: Jake Jarnik

An underwater photograph showing a rocky seabed with numerous small, shimmering bubbles rising from the surface. The lighting is dim, creating a blue and green color palette.

Top 10 *Stewardship Issues*



2023

From kicking off the biggest dam removal in US history to addressing an uncertain future for the Grand Canyon, these are ten of the key issues we'll be facing this year....

Photo: Thomas O'Keefe



Klamath River (CA), Wards Canyon. Photo: Scott Harding



1

Klamath River Dam Removals (CA/OR)

With the issuance of a License Surrender Order by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, the final regulatory step for the removal of four dams on the Klamath River has been completed. Dam removal is set to get underway in 2023. American Whitewater engaged in the process and took a leadership role in developing a vision for how the public will interact with and enjoy a restored river. The results of these efforts have been incorporated into the Recreation Management Plan and we will be working to ensure implementation of that plan stays the course as dam removal gets underway. We will also be using the experience of Klamath Dam removal, and its uncertain, two-decade-long regulatory process, to inform necessary changes to federal policy and regulation allowing dams to be more efficiently removed in cases where environmental and social justice impacts outweigh any benefits they provide.



Catawba River (SC). Photo: Kevin Colburn

2

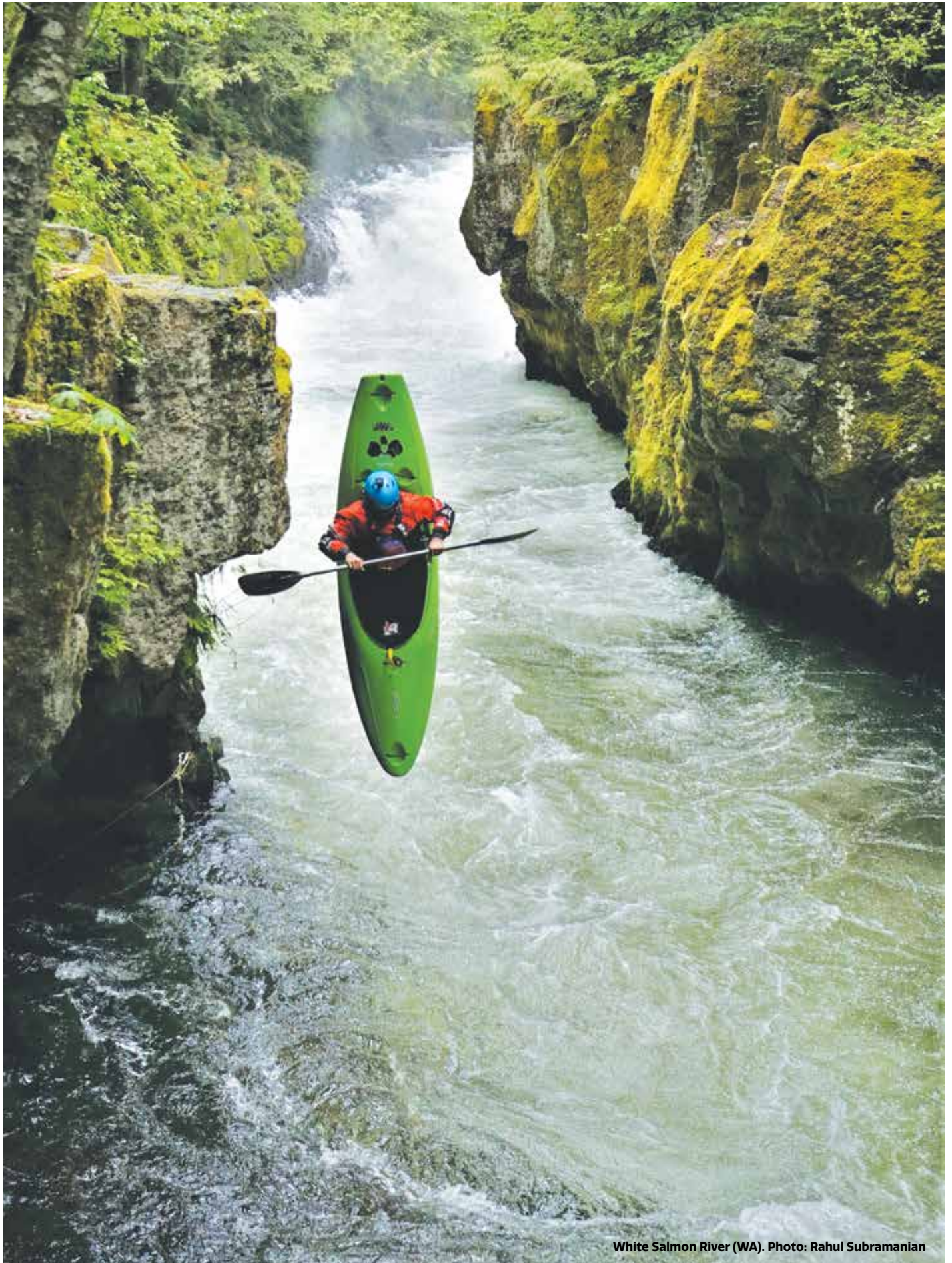
Catawba River Restoration (SC)

Based on two full decades of working closely with Duke Energy and other local groups, the Class II-III Great Falls of the Catawba will finally see restored flows and a full suite of access enhancements by March of 2023. American Whitewater invested many hundreds of hours into exploring the dewatered remnants of Great Falls and the related islands in the early 2000s, and negotiated a sweeping plan for the area that included restored flows, new trails, and new public access areas. One of our ideas that was rejected at the time was an innovative man-made channel that would carry water and people through a notch in a diversion dam down into the once-dry river. Over the past few years we dusted that proposal off and worked with Duke Energy to bring it to fruition. We also returned to the area to explore and map proposed trails that have now been built, along with a vital new access area that we advocated for. Sometime this winter flows will begin—albeit irregularly—and in March the access areas will open and scheduled releases will begin. Dry for the past 116 years, the Great Falls of the Catawba is on the cusp of becoming a river again!

3

White Salmon River Access (WA)

The sale of approximately 100,000 acres of private timberland in the Columbia Gorge, primarily in the White Salmon and Klickitat watersheds, has created a unique opportunity for conservation outcomes with provisions for public access. American Whitewater is a partner in efforts to establish state, federal, and private funding for conservation and stewardship of lands along these rivers. Securing public access to the Green Truss run is a priority we will be working toward. In addition, PacifiCorp has indicated an interest in selling lands they own that are associated with the former Condit Hydroelectric Project, including Northwestern Park. We will take advantage of the Land and Water Conservation Fund that was recently permanently authorized with full funding. This important tool for investing in public access was previously used to acquire the BZ access to the White Salmon when the private owner was interested in selling.



White Salmon River (WA). Photo: Rahul Subramanian

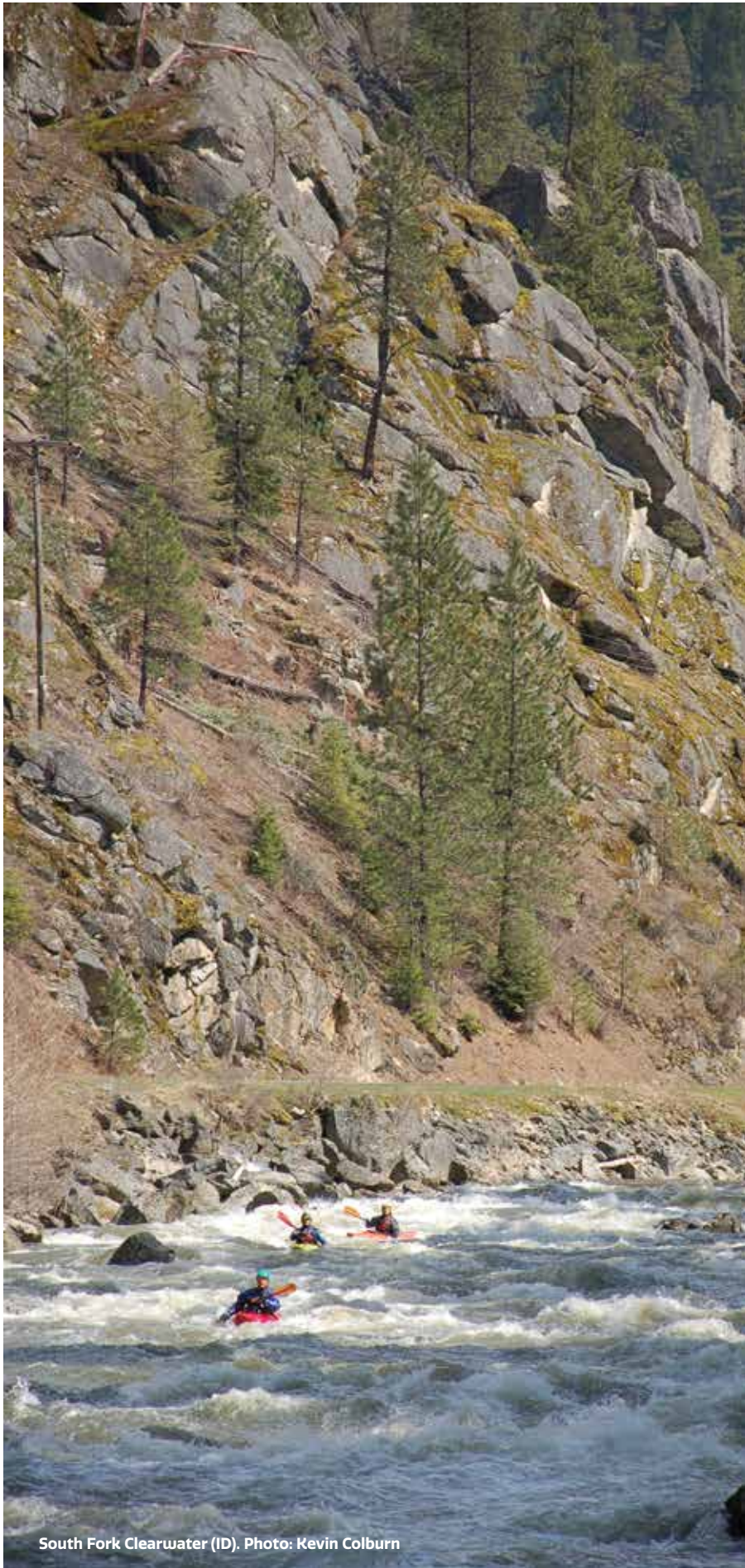


Cascade River (WA). Photo: Thomas O'Keefe

4

Outstanding Resource Waters Designations (WA)

States have the ability to protect their most exceptional water resources as Outstanding Resource Waters under the Clean Water Act and we are working to implement this tool in a number of Western States. In the coming year, Washington State will be the focus of our efforts where we have joined partner organizations in filing a petition for the state's first Outstanding Resource Waters to include the Cascade River in the Skagit watershed, Napeequa River in the Wenatchee watershed, and Green River in the Toutle watershed. We believe this underutilized provision of the Clean Water Act can be a model for river conservation that we can use to strengthen protections for a number of our nation's most exceptional whitewater resources known for their high water quality.



South Fork Clearwater (ID). Photo: Kevin Colburn

5

Lochsa and Clearwater Area River Protection (ID)

The Nez Perce Clearwater National Forest is a treasure chest of whitewater rivers beloved by paddlers—world-class rivers like the Lochsa, Selway, Golden Canyon on the South Fork Clearwater, and Lolo Creek. You would hope the Forest Service would be quick to protect these important salmon-bearing rivers and their tributaries in their forthcoming Forest Plan. Unfortunately, they appear determined to do the opposite. American Whitewater has been pushing the Forest Service to protect the over 750 miles of streams that they have found eligible for Wild and Scenic designation throughout the decade-plus forest planning process, which is the same process every other National Forest must undergo. Over 760 paddlers asked them to do just that in comments on their draft plan. Instead the Forest Service is not even considering protecting half the eligible rivers, and in all likelihood will release nearly all of them from protection in their new plan, due out in spring 2023 (however, it's been perennially delayed). When the plan drops, American Whitewater will need to respond, most likely by filing a formal objection to it.



A kayaker in a red and blue kayak is positioned in the lower-left foreground of a river. The river flows through a rocky landscape with a steep, craggy cliffside in the background. The cliff is composed of light-colored rock with some sparse green vegetation and a few tall evergreen trees. The water is clear and reflects the surrounding environment. The overall scene is a natural, outdoor setting.

6

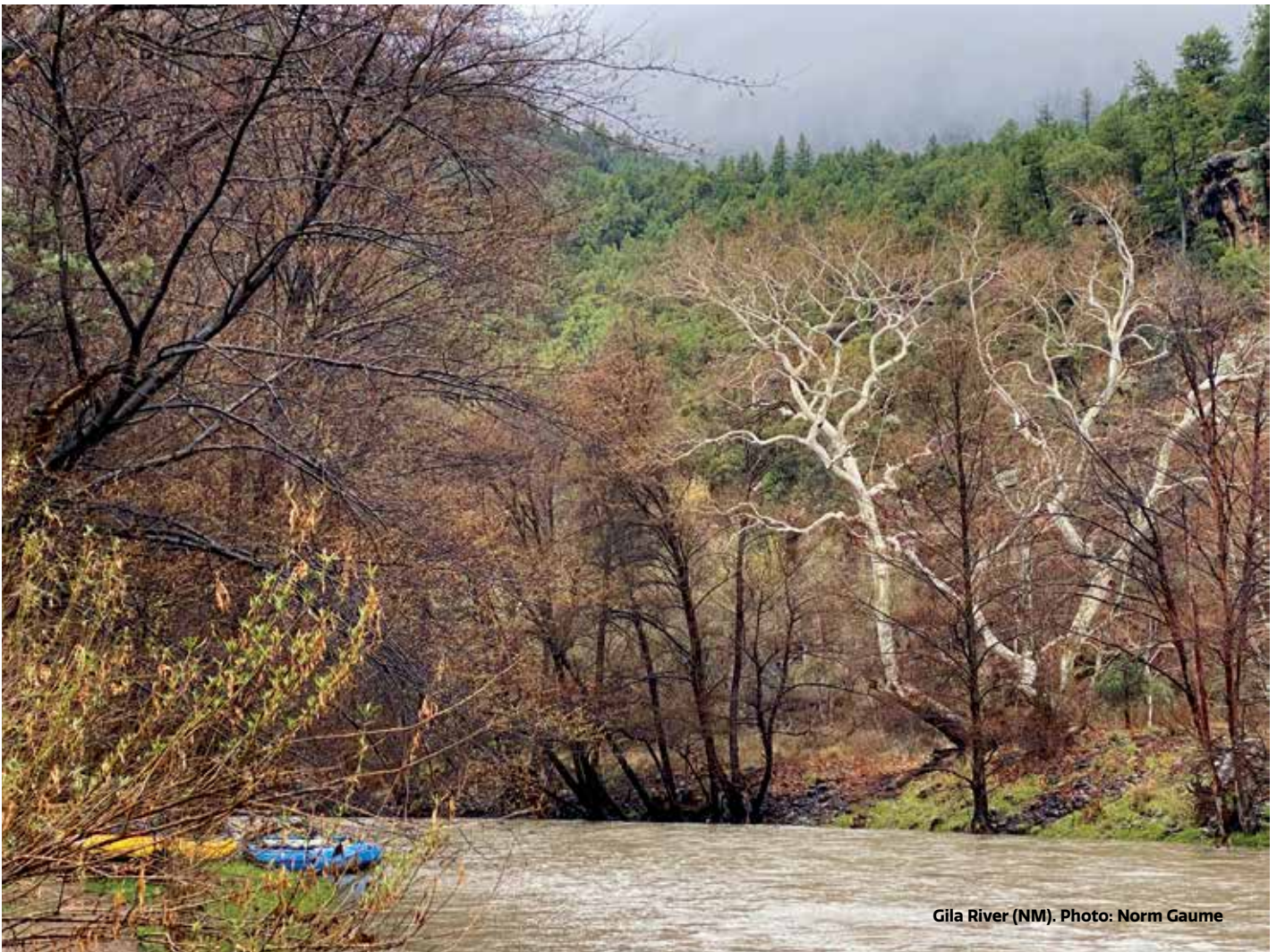
South Fork Salmon River (ID)

The fight over a massive gold-antimony mine project in the headwaters of the South Fork Salmon River continues, despite findings from the Environmental Protection Agency, US Forest Service, and the mining company itself that the mine would result in significant harm to the protected water quality of these treaty-reserved Indigenous fishing grounds and the classic whitewater paddling in the drainage. The Forest Service, in late 2022, released a Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) for the project, which describes the effects of the mine. Perpetua Resources has been referring to the project as a restoration plan, as this area has previously been mined and some reclamation of the site is proposed. However, the SDEIS shows that these new mining activities will, without question, degrade fish habitat and the vastly improved water quality in this wild and beautiful watershed enjoyed by paddlers from across the country and world. The Nez Perce Tribe, Forest Service, and EPA have already invested millions of dollars to address the pollution at this historic mine site, and had secured millions more for further efforts before new mining claims were purchased. American Whitewater will be helping our local partners determine the vast effects this mining project would have on recreation, and will be working to inform the public and rally our community to make a ruckus in public comments.

7

Gila Wild and Scenic (NM)

In 2023, we will achieve swift reintroduction of the M.H. Dutch Salmon Greater Gila Wild and Scenic River Act. The bill has a strong record in the last Congress, passing out of committee and receiving support from both sides of the aisle. The groundwork we have achieved over the past few years will be instrumental to get this bill across the finish line, and this river protected for good.



Gila River (NM). Photo: Norm Gaume



West Canada Creek (NY). Photo: Kevin Colburn

8

West Canada Creek (NY)

We're working to create new boating opportunities on West Canada Creek in Prospect, NY and on the Beaver River at Soft Maple, where hidden whitewater gems have lain inaccessible behind powerhouse gates and NO TRESPASSING signs. Whitewater boating studies are underway on several rivers that these dams have dewatered and we are continuing our efforts to secure flows, river access, and real-time river flow information. With more than a dozen hydropower dams on the rivers of upstate New York in the midst of relicensing, including the Moose, Beaver, and Black rivers, we have the opportunity to protect some of the most treasured whitewater runs in the Northeast for future generations.





South Fork American River (CA). Photo: Trevor Croft Rafting Mag

9

South Fork American River Flows (CA)

The El Dorado Irrigation District (EID) has a new point-of-diversion proposal that has the potential to impact over 50 miles of instream release flows on the South Fork American River, one of the premier and most used, year-round whitewater recreation waterways in the United States. Changes in flow levels could reduce opportunities to paddle reaches like the easily accessible Kyburz section or the iconic Golden Gate section. It could also impact scheduled recreational release flows required by the hydropower licenses for Slab Creek and the year-round recreational flows below Chili Bar. American Whitewater will be engaging our community and defending these instream flows that have restored the South Fork American River and provide an incredible resource for paddlers in the region.

10

Grand Canyon Flows (AZ, UT, CO)

The water crisis in the Colorado River basin continues to worsen, leading the federal government to put unprecedented pressure on basin states to make drastic reductions in use. The two largest reservoirs in the country, Lakes Mead and Powell, are both less than 25% full. As levels in Lake Powell get closer to reaching the minimum power pool—the elevation at which hydropower can no longer be generated—bold discussions are taking place to rethink how the system is operated. This could have dramatic effects on water flowing through the Grand Canyon. The Bureau of Reclamation is working to develop new operating guidelines for the river system to avoid that situation. American Whitewater is working to ensure that the recreational and environmental values that make all the basin’s desert rivers—but especially the Grand Canyon—so special are protected in the face of this uncertain future. We are developing tools to achieve multiple goals for the rivers so affected by the management of the Colorado River and engaging with the planning processes that will direct how water is moved starting in 2023 and into the future. ■





Colorado River (AZ), Grand Canyon. Photo: John Ward

Update on

2022 Top





Top Ten Issues

1. Climate – Implementing the Infrastructure and Jobs Act and Future Goals

Update for 2023: In Colorado, American Whitewater has been working to identify hazardous low-head dam structures ripe for projects that could improve water use efficiency or restore rivers. The Infrastructure and Jobs Act, as well as the Inflation Reduction Act, are providing unprecedented levels of funding that will be used for these projects. We continue to work on policy that would incentivize downstream water deliveries that enhance flows for paddling and keep rivers healthy.

2. Wildfire

Update for 2023: Through our advocacy in 2022, we were able to get 23 closed rivers reopened to public access after wildfires, including the Clackamas (OR) and Middle Fork Feather (CA). We'll continue to track closures and are actively pursuing policy and legislative changes to ensure that land managers don't default to closing rivers and lands after wildfires. We're also working to protect rivers in burned areas from post-fire land management projects such as salvage logging and tree removal.

3. Access to Rivers on Public Land

Update for 2023: In 2022 American Whitewater celebrated a huge state supreme court win, lead by the Adobe Whitewater Club, protecting the right to paddle rivers in New Mexico. We also filed a formal objection to the outdated Chattooga paddling limits in the new Nantahala Pisgah Forest Plan. Finally, we supported the successful conservation purchase of the SDS Lumber Company lands along the White Salmon River in Washington.

4. Clean Water Act

Update for 2023: 2022 was the 50th anniversary of the Clean Water Act and it was a big year for the landmark law. American Whitewater was one of the signatories to an amicus brief in a case that was heard by the US Supreme Court that will likely change which rivers are covered under the Act, and we were a speaker on an EPA roundtable regarding the

James River (VA).
Photo: John Woodward



Middle Fork Feather River (CA). Photo: Greg Lee

proposed rules for which streams are covered. At the state level, we played a leading role in securing Outstanding Waters protections for 25 streams and over 520 miles in Colorado. Outstanding Waters is the highest possible level of water quality protection administered by the state and in accordance with the Clean Water Act.

5. Wild and Scenic

Update for 2023: As the 117th Congress came to a close we were pleased to see Wild and Scenic legislation for the York River in Maine and Housatonic in Connecticut included in a year-end package establishing 70 miles of newly-protected rivers. We were disappointed that bills to designate rivers in Washington, New Mexico, Oregon, Montana, and California were not included.

6. Forest Planning

Update for 2023: Delay was the name of the game in National Forest planning in 2022. American Whitewater filed an objection to the Nantahala Pisgah plan in North Carolina in August, and the final decision is expected early next

year. We'll likely see the plan released in 2023 for the Nez Perce Clearwater National Forest in Idaho next year, too. Also in 2023, we expect final plans for the Gila National Forest in New Mexico, the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forest in Colorado, and a draft plan for the Manti la Sal National Forest in Utah. While we continually work around delays, we haven't stopped building relationships and working in the background to secure important outcomes for rivers in these forests.

7. Furthering our Safety Program

Update for 2023: American Whitewater launched our new river signage package that aims to standardize river signs describing difficulty, access, dams, and other features. In addition, we produced two more films in our river safety series: Tools of the Trade—Choosing Your Craft, and Furthering Rescue and River Running Skills. Finally, we started a project to completely update the American Whitewater Safety Code.



8. Flow Restoration, Protection and Enhancement

Update for 2023: The Weber River in Utah kind of stole the show in 2022, as local paddlers ran laps on the river's first-ever recreational releases. But other rivers remain on its heels: The Great Falls of the Catawba (SC) was delayed in 2022 but will start running in March of 2023. Beyond these milestones, much groundwork was laid in the Northeast for a brighter paddling future with progress on hydropower dams being relicensed in the Adirondacks and in northern Maine. Protecting and expanding releases on our favorite rivers and discovering hidden whitewater takes time, but American Whitewater never sleeps.

9. Dam Removal

Update for 2023: Here at American Whitewater, we are thrilled to have negotiated a nationwide inventory of low head dams in federal legislation that we expect to pass by year-end, which will boost public safety and inform dam removal efforts.

10. Engaging With and Diversifying River Recreation Participants

Update for 2023: In 2022, we participated in and supported a number of events that introduced diverse participants to paddlesports across the country. We also worked to deepen our relationships with Tribes who've historically been stewards of the rivers and their watersheds where we recreate and work. We supported an incredible effort led by Rios to Rivers to give Indigenous youth an opportunity to be the first to paddle a free Klamath River, and we continued to provide a platform for Tribal communities to tell their stories in their own words in our *Journal* and online. ■





River of No Return

acrylic painting on wood by Kelsey Dzintars

Painted after guiding her first season on the Middle Fork Salmon (ID), this piece marked a big leap both in her artistic style and life path in general. "The 'River of No Return' for me has been true to its name; there was no going back to the life I once knew after I floated this corridor for the first time." Dzintars is a fine art painter and illustrator, avid public boater, and guide based out of Bozeman, Montana. Her work includes commissioned acrylic paintings, murals, archival giclee prints, notecards, stickers and more (kelseydzintars.com). American Whitewater is working hard to protect and restore the Salmon River watershed, fighting to stop a massive new mining operation in the headwaters of the South Fork Salmon and advocating for the removal of the four lower Snake River Dams which create a nearly insurmountable barrier to fish migration into the critical spawning habitat found in the upper reaches of the drainage.

Not One, Not Two, But Four Klamath River Dams Now Set for Removal!

By Scott Harding

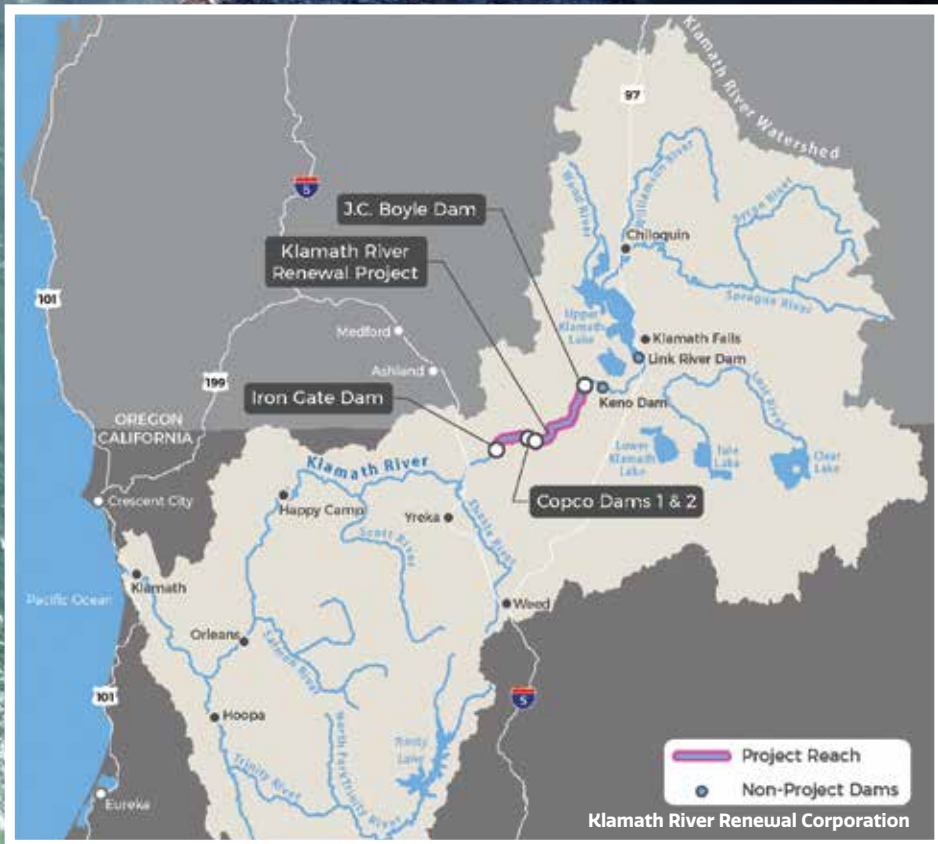
AFTER DECADES OF ADVOCACY AND YEARS of study, on November 17, 2022, federal regulators unanimously approved the removal of four outdated hydropower dams on the Klamath River straddling the Oregon/California border, setting into motion the largest dam removal project in history. These dams produce a comparatively small amount of electricity but have outsized environmental and social justice effects.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, the federal entity responsible for regulating hydropower projects, approved the surrender of the license to the four dams, an action that allowed dam owner PacifiCorp to transfer the license to the Klamath River Renewal Corporation (KRRC), the non-profit organization that will remove the dams. The states of Oregon and California are co-licensees with KRRC. On November 30, following license transfer, PacifiCorp also transferred full ownership of the dams and 8,000 acres of riverside land to KRRC and the states.

The victory of securing dam removal is the culmination of two decades of sustained effort led by several Native American Tribes and joined by conservation groups,



Salmon and Klamath rivers confluence on Karuk Tribe land (CA).
Photo: Scott Harding





Copco 2 Dam, Klamath River (CA). Photo: Thomas O'Keefe

commercial fishing groups, water users, and community members. The dams have blocked salmon from the upper half of the Klamath's vast watershed for over 100 years and have affected water quality on over 200 miles of river, all the way to the Pacific Ocean. The Klamath was once the third largest salmon-producing river on the West Coast of the United States, exceeded only by the Sacramento and Columbia, but its salmon runs are now less than 10% of their historic size.

Dam removal is essential to restoring the river's health, improving its ailing fishery, and addressing the injustices that the dams have caused Indigenous peoples who depend upon a healthy river and its fisheries for their sustenance and cultural identity. For over 100 years, the Klamath dams have decimated the river's fishery, affecting Yurok, Hoopa, Karuk, and Shasta people. For the Klamath Tribes of Oregon, the dams have blocked salmon from reaching their homeland entirely.

"Our people have been without c'iyaaals (salmon) for over a century. We welcome the fish home to the Upper Klamath Basin with open arms," said Klamath Tribes Chairman Clayton Dumont when the dam removal was approved.

Now that KRRC and the states own and control the dams, they are working quickly to orchestrate an enormous and

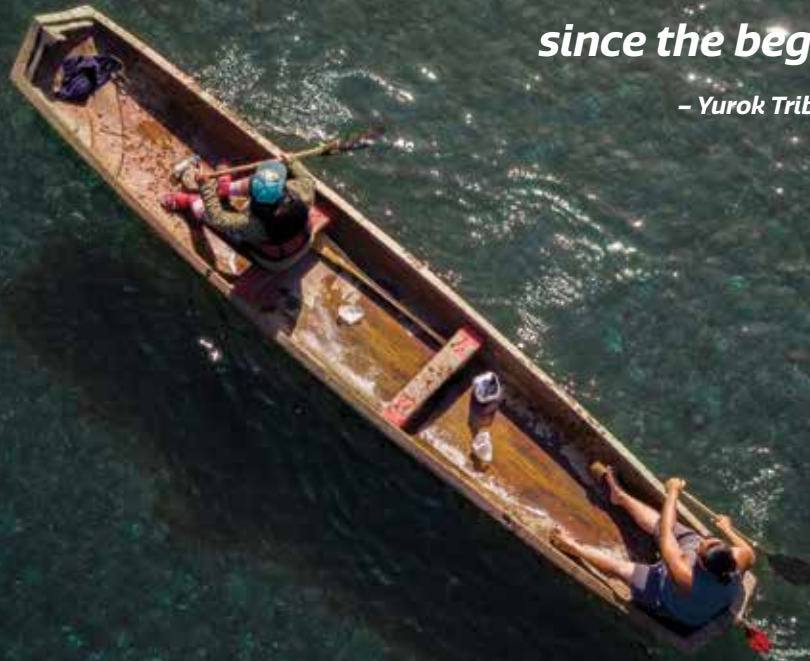
complex dam removal project. Preparation work will begin at the dams in early 2023. The smallest dam, Copco 2, will be removed first in fall 2023 and the other three will be removed simultaneously in 2024. Long-term restoration work will continue for several more years.

In setting the Klamath free, the 41-mile-long whitewater reach that spans the four dams will be transformed as flooded sections emerge from reservoirs and dewatered sections flow once again. The undammed river's flow will vary with natural cycles and will have both seasonal and year-round boating opportunities for all craft types, ranging from Class II to IV+. Without dams, it will be possible to boat 250 continuous miles on the Klamath—all the way to the ocean—making it one of the longer multi-day river trips in the country.

"The removal of these dams begins the Klamath's recovery from a century of dam-related impacts," said American Whitewater's Pacific Northwest Stewardship Director Thomas O'Keefe. "We look forward to the many ways that people will experience the renewed Klamath, including the new whitewater runs that will emerge when the dams come down. We are pleased that the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission recognized the many benefits of dam removal and, specifically, the benefits to river recreation."

***“The Klamath salmon are coming home.
We carry on our sacred duty to the fish
that have sustained our people
since the beginning of time.”***

– Yurok Tribal Chairman Joseph James



Peter Gensaw (Yurok) and Cami Suarez (Mapuche Pehuenche) paddle a traditional redwood dugout on the Klamath River. Photo by Paul Robert Wolf Wilson.



Taeliah Eggsman (right, Klamath & Modoc) practices her self-rescue roll with Shannon Finch (left) on the Klamath River. Photo: Paul Robert Wolf Wilson.

In addition to supporting dam removal throughout six years of regulatory proceedings, American Whitewater provided significant input during the development of plans that will ensure that river recreation benefits will be realized. We're now working with the Klamath River Renewal Corporation to plan several new river access facilities for the undammed reach and to address dam-related hazards in two sections of river that are currently dewatered but that will be excellent white-water runs after the dams come out.

Twenty years ago, following a devastating fish kill caused, in part, by the Klamath dams, a group of Indigenous activists met on a large river bar near Orleans, California to make sense of the loss and to ensure it would never happen again. They knew that the dams had to come down for the river, its salmon, and their cultures to survive and set to work to accomplish what many deemed an impossible outcome. We congratulate and commend them for their tenacity and hard work, against all odds, to un-dam the Klamath. ■

HUMANS ARE STRANGE CREATURES. WE ARE self-aware to an excruciating degree. We can anticipate the future. We think we are logical and rational, but science repeatedly reminds us that we are not. One illogical characteristic of humans is that we are unrealistically optimistic. This is called optimism bias and it seems to be human nature.

SAFETY MEETING:

What Could Possibly Go Wrong?

By Teresa Gryder



San Juan River (UT). Photo: Kaija Stafford

About 80% of humans display what is now called an optimism bias.¹ Optimism bias is overestimating the odds of good things happening, and underestimating the odds of bad things. This tendency toward inaccurate risk assessment could be devastating if you happen to be a whitewater boater.

In spite of easy access to statistics, most of us underestimate our risk of cancer and Alzheimer's. We overestimate our future earnings and expect our retirement savings to last. We think our marriages will last, in spite of a nearly 50% divorce rate. We believe that, because we've gotten through a bunch of rapids of a certain difficulty, we can keep doing that or even bump it up a notch without undue risk. Humans make all manner of mistakes because of this bias.

Optimism bias is observed as the difference between a person's expectations and actual outcomes. If the expectations are better than reality, the bias is optimistic. If you run a rapid thinking "It's cool, I got this" and then get destroyed, they'd say you had an optimism bias. But it's not just us. Scientists have documented that starlings² and mice³ also tend toward optimism, and suspect that other species probably do, too.

In spite of the wealth of examples of optimism bias in the world, around 20% of us don't have it. Your bias is pessimistic if reality usually turns out better than you expected. People who don't have positive expectations about the future tend to be mildly anxious and/or depressed. I live in this reality, which is probably why part of my mission is to enhance boater safety. I have seen the worst happen, and I expect it to happen again. I consider this to be realism, as opposed to pessimism, which has been pathologized

1 Sharot, Tali. The optimism bias. *Current Biology PRIMER* | VOLUME 21, ISSUE 23, PR941-R945, December 06, 2011, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cub.2011.10.030>

2 Matheson S.M.Asher L.Bateson M. Larger, enriched cages are associated with 'optimistic' response biases in captive European starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*). *Appl. Anim. Behav. Sci.* 2008; 109: 374-383

3 Harding E.J.Paul E.S.Mendl M. Cognitive bias and affective state. *Nature.* 2004; 427: 312

as one of the defining characteristics of Major Depression Disorder in psychology.

UPSIDE

A neurologist friend of mine (who is also a paddler) jokes that he has “always been a Pollyanna” and admits that he has cultivated a positive attitude because he believes it makes his life better. The science backs him up.

The benefits of the optimism bias are real and well-documented. Optimistic people are more motivated to eat right and exercise. They tend to be healthier and live longer. Optimists are better at persevering through challenges, work harder and longer hours, and as a result are more commonly successful in their careers. Last but not least, optimists are happier than realists or pessimists.

Being generally optimistic is one of the most widespread, dependable, and strong biases known in human psychology. It is seen across the world independent of gender, age, race, or nationality. Optimism must improve our survival or we would not have evolved to be this way. In science-speak, optimism bias is “adaptive,” meaning it helps us adjust to and survive changing conditions. More specifically, optimism helps us feel that we control our lives and fates, and this calms us down and makes us more functional. A 2009 review found optimistic illusions to be the ONLY group of misbeliefs that are adaptive.⁴

DOWNSIDE

Of course there is a downside to this bias, and it comes out in situations where there is a real risk of harm. Being unrealistically optimistic can lead to overconfidence. When you are overconfident it's easy to ignore or underestimate risks, which in turn leads to failure to prepare for them. If you don't do what you can to prevent bad outcomes, they are more likely.

You have to admit that bad things might happen before you'll do things like learning river rescue or setting ropes. We would much rather ignore possible bad outcomes and get on with it. Yet, failure to prepare or prevent leaves us vulnerable.

The problem with optimism is that, in reality, everything might NOT be OK. Fortunately, we can adjust our level of risk by changing our behavior. We can accumulate experi-

ence, develop tools for realistic assessment, and focus on prevention and preparation.

KAHNEMANN'S ADVICE

Nobel Prize-winning economist Daniel Kahneman has researched optimism bias and proposes two ways of mitigating its influence on our decision making. While his proposals are mainly geared toward businesses and organizations, we can adjust them to apply to river running decisions. His two suggestions are that we 1) take an outside view of our situation and 2) use a pre-mortem approach to assessment.⁵

Taking the outside view means seeing our situation from an outsider's perspective. This means seeking the opinions of others to guide your boating decisions. Should I do this run? Asking people who have more experience than you do is probably more useful than asking a novice, but in general just getting more perspectives will help you develop your own.

More specifically, Kahneman suggests that we look for “base rates” on which to anchor our judgments. A base rate is an existing statistic from a relevant scenario. In paddling, a base rate might be getting a good sense of how many people flip their rafts in a particular rapid at a certain flow. If a belief that “nobody ever flips here” gets adjusted to “20% flip here,” that could change your approach. Once you have a good idea of the base rate you can adjust it with the specifics of your situation. If you're a rookie rower with a small, light raft, your odds of a flip might need to be adjusted higher. If you're a seasoned veteran with the weight distribution in your raft just right and the perfect angle for hitting that lateral, you can probably adjust the flip rate lower for yourself.

The whole idea is that you can ground your expectations in something tangible, instead of living in some happy la-la-land in your head.

Kahneman's other tip for keeping optimism bias from ruining your day is the pre-mortem assessment. Pre-mortem literally means “before it's done,” or “before death.” The practice is to start at the end by visualizing a bad outcome and considering all the things that could make it happen. It's a way of predicting potential failures from the beginning.

On the river, a pre-mortem assessment would be when you look for hazards while scouting a rapid. That hole could surf you. That rock could flip or pin you. The runout

⁴ McKay R.T., Dennett D.C. The evolution of misbelief. *Behav. Brain Sci.* 2009; 32: 493-561

⁵ Kahneman, D. (2013). *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (1st Edition). Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

is fast and could sweep you into the next rapid. Noticing these things is what Kahneman suggests. The result is that any overconfidence you might have had will be whittled down to a more realistic assessment by looking for things that could go wrong. This adjustment in your attitude helps reduce the effect of optimism bias and allows you to make better decisions about what and how to run or portage.

CONCLUSION

It was a Naval officer during the Civil War who said, "Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead!"⁶ He was rewarded for his excessive optimism with a medal and promotions. Indeed, most of the time, cultivating an optimistic attitude helps us

do better in life. It can ease our anxiety enough to help us run rapids better. It can motivate us to work out so we are strong and agile. Focusing on the good is a worthy goal.

However, there's a big exception. If what you're doing is inherently dangerous, it's worth taking the time to think hard about the risks and do what you can to minimize them. River running has inherent risk that cannot be removed, only mitigated. We would be wise to take Kahneman's advice to seek outside perspectives and consider the possibility of something going wrong. For some of us this kind of thinking comes easily. If you are one of the majority with optimism bias, you might have to work at it a little bit. ■

⁶ https://www.bookbrowse.com/expressions/detail/index.cfm/expression_number/125/damn-the-torpedoes-full-speed-ahead



What to get for the paddler who has everything?

Give them the gift of rivers with an American Whitewater membership!

AMERICAN Whitewater

Give Your American Whitewater Gift Membership at americanwhitewater.org/membership

Photo by Cara Giannone

Photo by Austin Seback

It's never too early to think about leaving a lasting legacy to the rivers that made a difference in your life.



Become a member of the American Whitewater Enduring Rivers Circle, created exclusively to honor and recognize people who have helped to continue our river stewardship efforts through a gift to American Whitewater in their estate plans.

For more information about making a bequest to American Whitewater contact Bethany Overfield at 1.866.262.8429 or bethany@americanwhitewater.org

Chris running Big Drop 3 on the Colorado River (UT).
Photo: Hattie Johnson



Thanks For Your Dedicated Service Christopher Hest

By Clinton Begley

FOR THE LAST DECADE AMERICAN WHITEWATER'S board of directors has been enriched by the presence of Christopher Hest. In December of 2022 Chris completed his final term as a member of AW's board of directors, leaving behind a legacy of creativity and care in his approach to thoughtful governance. Chris was a key architect in setting up American Whitewater's Enduring Rivers Circle. The ERC honors and recognizes people who have helped and will continue to support our river stewardship efforts far into the future through a gift to American Whitewater in their estate plans, and help our members leave a lasting legacy to the special places that made a difference in their lives.. He also played a significant role in my hiring and onboarding as the new Executive Director, and continues to be an active American Whitewater member and supporter from his home in Northern California. Chris has given a tremendous amount of time, energy, and passion to American Whitewater over the last 10 years; we will be riding the good waves he has made on our behalf for years to come.

From the board and staff, thank you for everything Chris! ■

Farewell Meg Seifert

By Mark Singleton



Photo: Ambrose Tuscano

WHAT ARRIVES IN YOUR PHYSICAL OR digital mailbox five times a year, has articles that are relevant to paddlers cover to cover, is fully dependent on volunteer writers and photographers, and has been in continuous distribution since 1955? You got it, the *American Whitewater Journal*! In an ever-changing media landscape, the *American Whitewater Journal* delivers stories that embrace core organizational values of river conservation and restoration work infused with recreational knowledge and enthusiasm. The history and evolution of paddlesports in the US can be traced in the almost-70-year arc of the magazine.

The small American Whitewater staff leaned heavily on the husband/wife team of Ambrose Tuscano and Meg Seifert for magazine production. Ambrose Tuscano, our editor, has been involved with the *American Whitewater Journal* going back to his high school days in the '90s. Meg Seifert has been responsible for design and layout of the *American Whitewater Journal* for the last decade-plus. Together, Ambrose and Meg have made the magazine happen. They've shaped and honed content submitted on a volunteer basis and somehow consistently turned out a magazine highly respected by the paddlesports community.

Meg Seifert wears a number of hats; she is the co-founder and executive director of Headwaters Science Institute (a non-profit dedicated to promoting innovative science education) and a nationally recognized nordic ski race official. Now Meg will be removing one hat; 2022 saw her last issue of the *American Whitewater Journal* as the designer responsible for the look and feel of the publication.

In my years as executive director at American Whitewater, I greatly appreciated the many contributions Meg made to the *Journal*. Working with her was like sending a package via FedEx: she always delivered! As you can imagine, with a small American Whitewater staff scattered around the country, there are always deadlines and moving parts to coordinate in each issue of the publication. Meg corralled the moving parts without drama and interfaced with the printer to make it all look like magic.

In one of the most tangible signs of life from American Whitewater, five times a year you see that magazine magic show up in your mailbox just like it has for the last 68 years.

From all the staff at American Whitewater, thanks Meg for sprinkling a little bit of your fairy dust on the *American Whitewater Journal* for so many years! ■

Join American Whitewater On The Rogue River This Summer

By *Bethany Overfield*



Our trips are an opportunity to learn about our work but also have some fun. If you have a musical talent, bring your instrument. American Whitewater member Bryan Stewart shares his

FOR MANY YEARS, THE NORTHWEST RAFTING Company in Oregon has hosted an American Whitewater Rogue River trip celebrating Wild and Scenic Rivers. This trip has been a great opportunity to connect American Whitewater staff 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 setting to learn more about American Whitewater's river stewardship program. Staff members share current projects, challenges, and successes, as well as national policy work that affects Wild and Scenic rivers like the Rogue. Our new Executive Director Clinton Begley will be on the trip this year, so it's a great opportunity to meet AW's new leader. The Northwest Rafting Company provides professional guides, exceptional food, transportation to and from Galice (the put-in), and group equipment. Additionally, it's a great fundraiser for American Whitewater!

As an American Whitewater member, we invite you to join our staff and board members to 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 \$1,395, with a portion of the trip proceeds going to American Whitewater thanks to the generosity of the Northwest Rafting Company.

The trip, which will take place June 20-23, 2023, will be fully outfitted with professional guides and all group equipment. This stretch of river is suitable for all skill levels and is the perfect trip for groups of folks with varied skills. 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 requirement 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. The food is excellent, the scenery stunning, and the camping superb. This trip fills up quickly, so make your reservation soon to ensure a spot.

You can make your reservation directly through Northwest Rafting Company's website today at www.nwrafting.com/rogue; select the June 20-23 trip with American Whitewater under "Dates and Prices." We hope you join us on the Rogue River this June! ■

Jackson Kayaks supplied boats for the Paddle Tribal Waters program.
Photo: Paul Robert Wolf Wilson



PARTNERSHIP SPOTLIGHT:

The Jackson Foundation

By Bethany Overfield

ALTHOUGH JACKSON KAYAK IS A WELL KNOWN entity in the whitewater community, the Jackson Kayak Foundation is new on the scene. The foundation is the new nonprofit wing of the kayaking manufacturing dynasty. Tony Lunt, a co-founder of Jackson Kayak, is the driving force behind the foundation and his son Matthew Lunt is at the helm. The Jackson Kayak Foundation was “founded on the principles of holism and specializes in transformative, locally based initiatives so that humanity may better the world collectively.”

Tony immigrated to the US from Belgium in the 1970s and represents a classic American success story. Accustomed to paddling with wire cutters in his kayak to cut the myriad of fences dissecting rivers in his homeland, he was awestruck by the freedom of movement possible on the water in the US. He settled with his family in Arizona and started raising cattle in the Galiuro Wilderness. It was here that the Lunts found their love of nature and a fierce belief in its conservation.

After years of exploring American waterways, Tony eventually met Eric Jackson. They teamed up to create Jackson Kayak out of a belief that the company could do so much more than make outstanding boats. They saw it as a tool to help the planet and its people.

Born of that vision, The Jackson Kayak Foundation was founded as a Tennessee nonprofit to better serve the folks who work and live in White County, TN, where the Jackson Kayak Manufacturing plant is located. They started off small by donating products for local fundraisers at the request of staff, and then started supporting local nonprofits.

Some of the nonprofits that the Jackson Kayak Foundation supports include Tennessee Clean, Tennessee Wildlife Federation, and Tennessee Green. They also support a few national and international organizations such as American Whitewater, Paddle Tribal Waters Project (Rios to Rivers), Heroes on the Water, and Soft Power Health.

When speaking about his dad and the overall objective of the foundation, Matthew Lunt said that the goal was to be “fierce advocates of localism.” The manufacturing plant is currently working with Tennessee Tech on an efficiency audit of their whole operation—a good chance to partner with a local school. The Lunts have some big goals when it comes to giving and are dedicated to “empowering people to positively affect their environment.” ■

A kayaker in a blue kayak is navigating a white-water rapid in a canyon. The water is turbulent and white with foam. The surrounding landscape is filled with trees in vibrant autumn colors, including yellows, oranges, and reds. Large, dark rocks are scattered throughout the riverbed. The sky is a clear, bright blue. The overall scene is dynamic and scenic.

PROTECTING THE UPPER YOUGH CANYON

By Jesse "Shimmy" Shimrock

Rick Haase Jr. sets up for the final move in Heinzerling rapid
Photo: Jeff Macklin



I WAS KNOCKING ON THE DOOR OF MY MOTHER'S

belly when the first Upper Yough Race was held. Somewhere around that same time, a handsome young fella named Jess Whittamore, along with his lady friend, had dinner at my parents' house. My mom hadn't picked a name for me yet, but after that dinner she landed on Jesse, and so my life began, lightly rooted in whitewater kayaking. As time moved on and I entered high school, my wrestling coach, avid kayaker Scott Stough, pulled me aside one day and suggested I try kayaking as a cross training sport. He saw that I had more energy than the practice room could contain and thought a healthy outlet would keep me on the squad and out of trouble. He was right.

I started paddling the Upper Yough a year or so later and decided to hike in with my dad to watch an Upper Yough race. Roger Zbel was the man to beat in those days. Watching him slice past in his wildwater boat was a thing of beauty, so fluid and fierce. One thing was for certain, I wanted what he had. Dad and I ended up trying to find an "alternative" route out of the canyon that day, and it turned into an all-afternoon, evening, and into the dark affair, but we managed. The Yough is wild. That was apparent from the beginning.

Racing was really fun to watch, but in the late '90s, a new part of the sport was taking over fast; freestyle kayaking was on fire. The rodeo kayakers were my heroes. I wanted to be one, and so I set off on a one-way track to do just that. For many years I was lucky enough to hold the old "pro card" and travel and compete on the Freestyle Kayak Tour all over the country. I was paddling for Wave Sport then, the golden years, collecting a salary, Chevy Avalanches, company gas cards, photo incentive checks, prize winnings, free everything. Man, we were in high cotton. Then the economy tanked, and the checks got smaller, and the trucks disappeared, as did some of the companies. It was time to move on. Burnout had set in, as well; it was time to take a break, time to get back the roots, the Upper Yough. Home.

For years, I didn't want to compete anymore. Doing so had taken away much of the joy that kayaking used to bring me. So, for many seasons thereafter, I paddled my kayak just for the fun of it. It was exactly what the doctor ordered. Traveling to new rivers, doing overnights, exploring, meeting new friends, following no schedule. Ahhhhhh, yeah, a van down by the river.

My frontal lobe must have been developing, because I started to hear the wise words of a voice from the past. My first trip to paddle the Green River in North Carolina was



Jay Moffatt exiting the Time Warp slot in Heinzerling
Photo: Jeff Macklin

in the late '90s. A big fella with an even bigger grin, Woody Callaway, would show me down that river for the first time. On a later trip with Woody, we finished the run and he said, "Jess, lemme show you something." We walked up to a wooded piece of ground near the take-out and he said, "This right here is the dream." I looked around at trees on a hillside and wasn't quite sure what he meant. Then he began to lay out his plan to build a home on that property, but more importantly a home "at the take-out of his favorite river." That stuck with me, and as time passed, it became clearer by the year. New goal.

The Upper Youghiogeny was the river I wanted to live beside, the one I felt like I could always find a new challenge on, the one I wanted to grow old as a paddler on. One day, that lovely piece of land by the put-in of the river came onto the real estate market. Rooted in whitewater history, it had been the same property owned by Appalachian Wildwater Rafting Company. It had an old barn up on the hill that, for many years, let river rats pass through its doors and wobble out the other side. I was still sowing wild oats on the West Coast at the time, but with the help of a good friend and my folks, I was able to purchase the land. It took

many more years before I was able to break ground on that property and build what I would hope to be my forever home. It happened.

I have lived there now for two years, and I have learned exactly what Woody meant all those years ago by "This here is the dream." He was spot on. Life on the banks of your favorite river changes everything...you and the river become one. When she is filled with water, I put my kayak on my shoulder and head for the canyon; when the sweltering dog days of summer take hold, I put on swim trunks and use her cool mountain waters to shed the heat. When the bug hatches fill the air around the yard, I grab my fly rod and play with the trout until the sun yields to the moon. If I'm feeling low, the river calms me. When I'm feeling high, she challenges me...and when I'm feeling invincible, she humbles me.

If you have a competitive nature, I'm not sure that inner bear ever really dies. It certainly hibernates at times, but it lives inside, resting. Last summer I paddled down to National Falls with a bunch of friends to hang on the rocks and watch the 41st annual Upper Yough Race. As I watched



many of my friends and other racers grind through the rapids with red faces and focused eyes, the bear inside me became restless. I realized that I had let all of these years pass without the stars aligning to give this race a solid shot. It was time. New goal.

I shifted focus from squirts and cartwheels to forward strokes and fast lines. I put a note card on the dashboard of my truck indicating the time I wanted to beat and when the sands of summer tried to divert my attention, I'd focus back on that card, and put my head back down.

The Upper Yough Race was supposed to take place in July, like every year, but for the first time in the history of the dam releases on the Upper Yough, one of the turbines was out of commission and there was no set date that the repairs would be made. Would there even be a 2022 Upper Yough Race?

The anticipation was grueling. Many of us would scrape down the river during these low-flow releases in the summer. Maybe it helped me find some faster lines by chasing little channels of water between giant boulders, maybe it

was just a way to keep the bear entertained. The carrot was still dangling and it wasn't getting closer. I was beginning to lose focus...and then, I saw a weird thing start to happen. Little bursts of test water seemed to be registering on the gauge...my optimism concluded that the turbine was fixed and they were testing it out. Gosh I love when optimism wins. Just like that, the Upper Yough was BACK!! With only two weeks until the race, which was rescheduled to the end of September, the long race boats started to fill the roof racks of the cars headed to the river. Everyone was putting in hot laps, chatter about the fastest lines filled the eddies. It was race time...and I felt good.

The morning of the race I woke up in my house by the put-in...looking out of the windows that frame in the canyon walls that narrow downstream to form the 30-plus-minute racecourse. I sat down, closed my eyes and visualized myself kayaking the course one more time. I opened my eyes and smiled; I was ready. The sunshine of the morning quickly faded to grey as ominous skies blanketed the canyon. You have to paddle for a mile and a half downstream

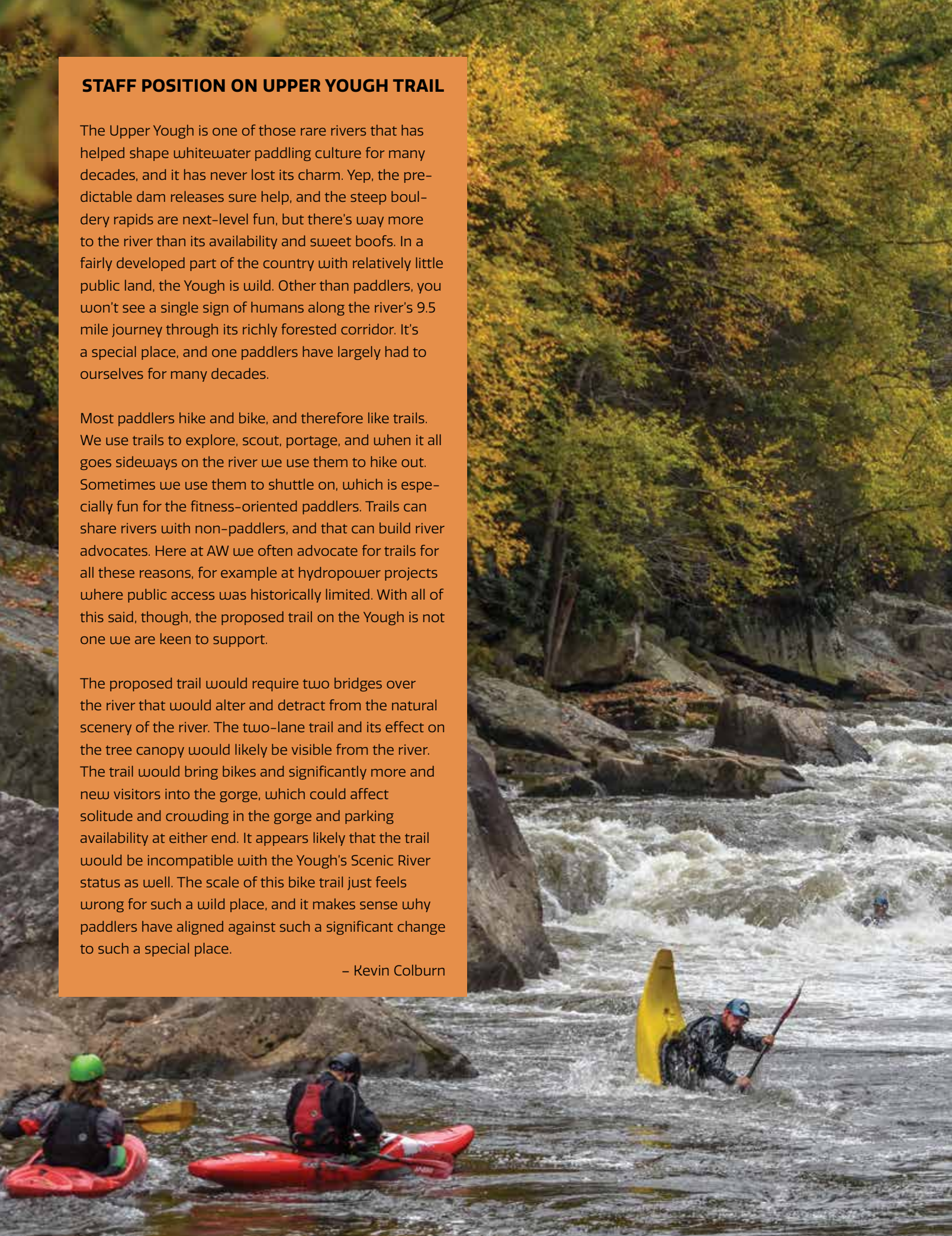
STAFF POSITION ON UPPER YOUGH TRAIL

The Upper Yough is one of those rare rivers that has helped shape whitewater paddling culture for many decades, and it has never lost its charm. Yep, the predictable dam releases sure help, and the steep bouldery rapids are next-level fun, but there's way more to the river than its availability and sweet boofs. In a fairly developed part of the country with relatively little public land, the Yough is wild. Other than paddlers, you won't see a single sign of humans along the river's 9.5 mile journey through its richly forested corridor. It's a special place, and one paddlers have largely had to ourselves for many decades.

Most paddlers hike and bike, and therefore like trails. We use trails to explore, scout, portage, and when it all goes sideways on the river we use them to hike out. Sometimes we use them to shuttle on, which is especially fun for the fitness-oriented paddlers. Trails can share rivers with non-paddlers, and that can build river advocates. Here at AW we often advocate for trails for all these reasons, for example at hydropower projects where public access was historically limited. With all of this said, though, the proposed trail on the Yough is not one we are keen to support.

The proposed trail would require two bridges over the river that would alter and detract from the natural scenery of the river. The two-lane trail and its effect on the tree canopy would likely be visible from the river. The trail would bring bikes and significantly more and new visitors into the gorge, which could affect solitude and crowding in the gorge and parking availability at either end. It appears likely that the trail would be incompatible with the Yough's Scenic River status as well. The scale of this bike trail just feels wrong for such a wild place, and it makes sense why paddlers have aligned against such a significant change to such a special place.

– Kevin Colburn



Fall colors frame Triple Drop (above) and National Falls (below)
Photo: Jeff Macklin





Making the boof at National Falls
Photo: Grace Hassler

of the put-in before reaching the start of the rapids, Gap Falls, which is also the start of the racecourse.

The mist settled in, the winds laid to rest by the canyon walls above, fog filled the small tributaries, the stage was set. It was cold, but the fire was burning. I was the fifth racer to start, and as the clock ticked down and I watched the racers who started ahead of me crest the lip of Gap Falls, the pre-race calmness settled in. I breathed deep. Five, four, three, two...one, and I was off, digging my paddle into the water like an ice pick.

I set a pace that I figured I would not be able to sustain for the entire race, but as time passed, I found myself hanging on to it, battling through cramps and mouthfuls of water. One by one I started hitting my marks through each rapid. As I neared the halfway point at National Falls, I looked up at the rock I sat on the year before and dug even deeper into the tank of motivation. I began to see the racer in front

of me and I counted off the time it took me to catch the drop I saw him go over; I was closing in.

Now began the chase. Each rapid ahead I would focus on a flawless line and try to add on a couple seconds until the racer ahead of him came into view, as well. I knew the pace was there, I just had to keep hitting my lines, and hold it until the end. As I passed through the last big rapid my focus shifted to a sprint. Only a couple more minutes of Class III paddling until the finish line. I didn't want to have anything left in the tank at the end. The finish line was ahead, people were on the banks hollering and cheering, and then it was over. I was toast, not a drop left.

I knew it was the fastest I had ever paddled through that canyon. I didn't have time to stick around, I caught my breath, cracked a celebratory beer with some of the other racers who had finished, and then headed downstream to dry out and run over to the local brewery to see a good friend play his first solo music gig. I was also distracting my mind from the anticipation of the results. Then I got a



text...it showed the top times...the weight on my shoulders began to lift. I'd done it! I won the Upper Yough Race. I felt like my life had finally come full circle. My name would now be on the trophy next to the heroes I looked up to when I began taking my first strokes in a kayak, the guy who inspired my name, rivals of years past, but most importantly, the race on the river that I chose to build my life beside. I hope one day to share the bond of this wild and magical river corridor with my child, which leads me to the primary reason for this long-winded story.

If you've made it this far, this river probably means something to you. This is just one story of one person who has been touched by the Wild and Scenic Youghiogheny River. There are countless stories to be told by others who have found their own peace along these river banks. The waters of this river are clean, the banks are filled with wildlife: otters, mink, beavers, squirrels, deer, fox, coyote, turtles. The canopy is home to bald eagles, osprey, herons, hawks, vultures, song birds, and many others. One passage through and you feel like you have stepped back in time,

like you are just a visitor in their home. It is the only place in Maryland like this—one of few places of its kind in the world, really.

But now, the lawful protection of this wild canyon is under attack; the powers that be have threatened to build an invasive bicycle byway all the way through, crossing the river with multiple bridges gutting the canyon from one end to the other. Not only is this proposal illegal, but it will undermine the protection of Maryland's only Wild and Scenic River, and once it is gone we will NEVER, NEVER get it back. THIS is the new goal: keep this river protected for you and the generations ahead to enjoy. It's essential. There are many ways to engage and I would be happy to share how with anyone interested.

Keep the Yough Wild. ■

Jesse "Shimmy" Shimrock is AW's new Upper Youghiogheny Steward, keeping a close eye on his home river for the benefit of all paddlers.



Seeking Joy

By *Bethany Overfield*

I'VE FELT BURDENED BY A SECRET SINCE I STARTED working for American Whitewater four years ago and I need to get it off my chest. I'm not an incredibly skilled kayaker. I started kayaking in my early 30s and immediately fell madly in love with whitewater. My personal life was incredibly turbulent at the time and being on the river gave my brain a much-needed break.

I immersed myself in the sport. I watched videos like they held the keys to enlightenment. I read guidebooks like they were spiritual manuscripts. My copy of Leland Davis' *North Carolina's Rivers and Creeks* had dog ears on half its pages. I had monthly goals focusing on my upward trajectory and kept a boating log. I spent over 200 days on the water—not bad for a girl living in Kentucky at the time.

I was a research geologist at that point, so kayaking was a perfect fit. I could see the natural world from a new angle (whoa geology!!!) and I could nerd out by researching every facet of every river I wanted to tackle. I got to be a solid Class III boater quickly and methodically started to bite off some Class IV rapids.

Then I dislocated my shoulder on the Little River in the Smokies. Determined not to let this injury halt my progress, I did lots of physical therapy and got my strength and confidence back. Only a few months later, however, I dislocated the same shoulder again on the Russell Fork Gorge (it was my personal first descent). I opted for surgery and worked hard to get my shoulder back in shape, but I really lost my mojo. When I did kayak, it was painful, and I was admittedly fearful in a way I hadn't been before the injury.

Although I stayed involved in the kayaking community (I was running the National Paddling Film Festival at the time) I started to migrate more towards mountain biking because it gave me the same escape and benefits mentally without triggering my newfound fear. After several years of laying low though, I missed the water (and the geology) so I started to kayak more, but stuck to Class II/III whitewater without any plans to go bigger.

My passion for being on the river in any capacity—hard boat, shredder, SUP board, raft—hasn't changed. But I often feel like an outlier in our community. I'm around skilled boaters all the time, especially working at American Whitewater, and at times, I feel really sheepish about my skill set. Like I'm a Class III girl living in a Class V world. I also feel like there's a basic assumption that I run harder stretches of river than I do. I can't tell you the number of times I have to break it to folks that I don't kayak the Upper Gauley at Gauley Fest—and every time, I feel a little embarrassed. I recently traveled to the Pacific Northwest to connect with AW Staff and swam three times in two weeks on Class III rivers. And I fretfully spent hours thinking about whether or not I could even work at AW with that sort of a track record (I can—I'm still here and I still love working for AW).

As I settle into the middle part of my life, with only the ambition to seek joy on the water (maybe I'm not goalless after all—joy is a splendid goal), I wonder if there is space for me in this community. I believe this sense of not belonging surfaces across many adrenaline-inducing outdoor sports like mountain biking, climbing, and whitewater. With the advent of social media, our attention is often directed towards big moves, big drops, and big personalities. In this big world, can I quietly choose not to push my limits, but to just embrace the flow—my flow?

My insecurity with my skill set, as well as my fear of being judged, can be extrapolated out to every skill level. We all want to belong and even the most skilled boaters have fears and worries. Portaging a Class III rapid or a Class V rapid have similar emotional elements. Passing on the

chance to run a harder river can make any boater wonder if they'll be shunned or left out the next time there's a paddling opportunity.

I've been grappling with all of this for a while and have discovered two components that really help me. The first is self-acceptance. My fears about being judged based on my skills (or lack thereof) are, admittedly, largely internal. I'm judging myself based on my perception of what others might think. If judgment is legitimately coming from others, that doesn't really have anything to do with me—that's on them. What I can control is my ability to accept where I am without judging myself. I'm trying this out in all aspects of my life, and it's been incredibly helpful. Now, I just have to get over judging myself on the fact that it took me decades to get here.

Perspective is the second resource I've been using. River time is supposed to be fun! It's the greatest privilege to be able to navigate through stunning landscapes by water, to be fully immersed and nestled in beauty. We're living in intense times and our natural world is often the only thing that makes sense to me. I don't have the desire to be the best boater right now; sometimes I don't have the desire to even be my best. Most of the time, I just want to take refuge on the river. I want to paddle with the flow and go downstream because that's the natural order of the world.

I want every whitewater enthusiast to know that you belong here, in this community of boaters, who love rivers, regardless of your skill set. You might need to hear that or you might not, but I do, and I must remind myself of it repeatedly. You can huck your boat off a Class V drop that's never been run before or you can navigate through your favorite Class II rapid. You can happily stay in your comfort zone, or you can push your limits and work on running harder rivers. Either way, and in all ways in between, you belong here. I'm hoping that we can all try extra hard at making everyone feel welcome in this sport. Find people who will let you do you and be the person who embraces everyone. ■



AW'S ORIGINAL PURPOSE

By Bethany Overfield

American Whitewater's original purpose since 1954 has included distribution of information among its Affiliate Clubs. We have over 100 current AW Club Affiliates and they are all doing great work on your behalf; if you don't belong to a club, consider joining one.

American Whitewater has two levels of Affiliate Clubs - a Supporting Affiliate Club or an Affiliate Club. Affiliate Clubs that choose AW's \$100 annual level are recognized in the AW Journal, on our website club page, and in our annually published Honor Roll. In order to be recognized at this level, a Club needs to maintain an annual \$100 contribution.

Affiliate Clubs that choose AW's \$400 Supporting Affiliate Club annual level are recognized in the AW Journal, on our website club page, and in our annually published Honor Roll as well as being listed as sponsors of an AW stewardship presentation each year. In order to be recognized at this level, a Club needs to maintain an annual \$400 contribution. A Supporting Affiliate Club can revert to the \$100 Affiliate Club annual level at any time.

An Affiliate Club that is already being recognized as an AW Lifetime member is recognized in the annual Honor Roll as a Lifetime member. They do need to contribute either at the \$100 or the \$400 level annually to be recognized as an Affiliate Club in the AW Journal and under the Affiliate Club heading of the published Honor Roll. Is your club missing from this list? It might have expired. Contact me at membership@americanwhitewater.org to square your club membership away!

SUPPORTING AFFILIATE CLUBS

Alaska

Fairbanks Paddlers, Fairbanks

Arkansas

Arkansas Canoe Club, Little Rock

Colorado

Dolores River Boating Advocate, Dolores
Colorado Whitewater Association, Denver

Georgia

Georgia Canoeing Association Inc, Winston

Kentucky

Association, Lexington Viking Canoe Club, Louisville

Massachusetts

Appalachian Mountain Club, Boston

New York

KCCNY, Brooklyn

North Carolina

West Asheville Canoe and Kayak Organization (WACKO), Asheville

Ohio

Keelhaulers, Cleveland

Oregon

Oregon Kayak and Canoe Club, Portland

South Carolina

Foothills Paddling Club, Greenville
Palmetto Paddlers, Columbia

Washington

Paddle Trails Canoe Club, Seattle
Washington Kayak Club, Redmond
Washington Recreational River Runners, Renton

AFFILIATE CLUBS BY STATE

Alaska

Nova River Runners Inc., Chickaloon

Alabama

Coosa River Paddling Club, Wetumpka
Huntsville Canoe Club, Huntsville

Arizona

Outdoors Unlimited, Flagstaff

California

Redwood Empire Paddlers, Santa Rosa
River City Whitewater Club, Sacramento
Smith River Alliance, Crescent City
Wildflower Sacramento River Trip, Sacramento
Cold Country Paddlers, Placerville

Colorado

Diversify Whitewater, Fort Collins
Friends of the Yampa, Steamboat Springs
High Country River Rafters, Wheat Ridge

Rocky Mountain Outdoor Center, Buena Vista
Royal Gorge River Initiative Org, Canon City
San Miguel Whitewater Asso, Telluride
Team Colorado Whitewater Racing Club, Longmont,
Upper Colorado Private Boaters Assoc., Glenwood Springs

Delaware

AMC Delaware Valley Chapter, Oaks (PA)

Idaho

Idaho Whitewater Association, Boise

Indiana

Hoosier Canoe Club, Brownsburg
Ohio Valley Paddlers, Evansville

Iowa

Iowa Whitewater Coalition, W. Des Moines

Kentucky

Elkhorn Paddlers, Lexington
Bluegrass Wildwater Association, Lexington +
Viking Canoe Club, Louisville

Maine

Penobscot Paddle & Chowder Society, Freeport

Maryland

Baltimore Canoe & Kayak Club, Baltimore
Blue Ridge Voyagers, Rockville

Minnesota

Northland Paddlers Alliance, Duluth
Rapids Riders, Eagan

Missouri

Missouri Whitewater Association, St. Louis
Ozark Mountain Paddlers, Springfield

Montana

Beartooth Paddlers Society, Billings

Nevada

Sierra Nevada Whitewater Club, Reno

New Mexico

Adobe Whitewater Club of New Mexico, Albuquerque

New Hampshire

New England Canoe and Kayak Racing Association, Contoocook

New Jersey

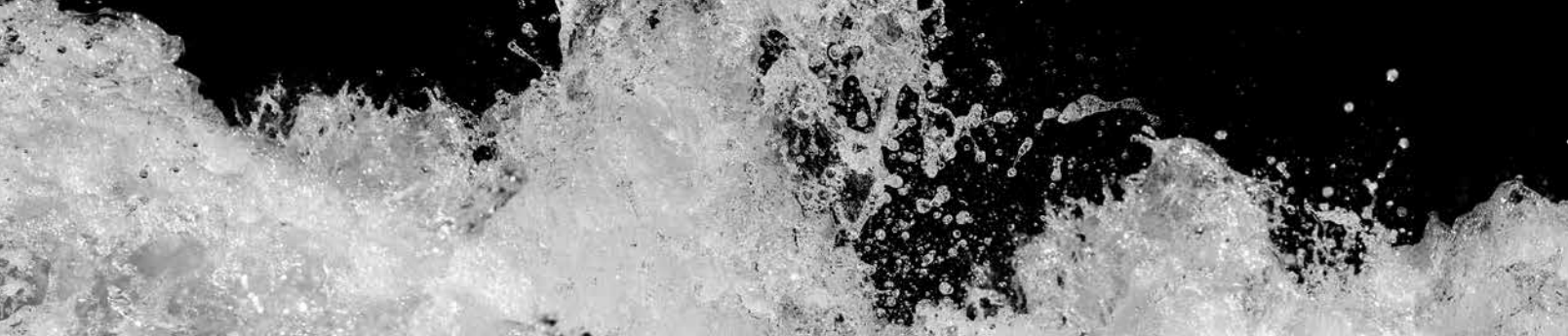
AMC Delaware Valley Chapter, Oaks (PA)

New York

Kuyahoor Valley Paddlers, Middleville
Zoar Valley Paddling Club, East Aurora

North Carolina

Carolina Canoe Club, Raleigh
Landmark Learning, Cullowhee
Mind Body Play, Asheville



Ohio

Friends of the Crooked River, Akron
Columbus Paddling Club, Columbus

Oregon

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

Pennsylvania

AMC Delaware Valley Chapter, Oaks (PA)
Canoe Club of Greater Harrisburg,
Lehigh Valley Canoe Club, Lehigh Valley
Three Rivers Paddling Club, Bridgeville

Tennessee

Appalachian Paddling Enthusiasts, Jonesborough
Chota Canoe Club, Knoxville
Clean Water Expected in East Tennessee, Sevierville,
East Tennessee Whitewater Club, Oak Ridge
Eastman Recreation Club, Kingsport
Tennessee Scenic River Association, Nashville
Tennessee Valley Canoe Club, Knoxville

Texas

Houston Canoe Club, Inc., Houston

Utah

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

Vermont

Vermont Paddlers Club, Montpelier

Virginia

Blue Ridge River Runners, Lynchburg
Canoe Cruisers Association, Middlebury
Coastal Canoeists, Richmond
Float Fishermen of Virginia, Roanoke

Washington

Northwest Whitewater Association, Spokane,
Spokane Canoe & Kayak Club, Spokane,
Yakima River Runners, Selah

Washington, DC

Canoe Cruisers Association

West Virginia

Friends of the Cheat, Kingwood
Mason Dixon Canoe Cruisers, Bolivar
WV Wildwater Assn, S. Charleston

Wisconsin

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

Wyoming

American Packrafting Association, Wilson
Jackson Hole Kayak Club, Jackson

National

Team River Runner

DISCOUNTED AW MEMBERSHIP FOR AFFILIATE CLUB MEMBERS

AW offers a discounted Affiliate Club membership of \$25, a \$10 savings. If you are renewing your AW membership or joining as a new member, select the Affiliate Club Discounted Personal Membership online at <http://americanwhitewater.org/content/Membership/join-AW/> Or, if you are renewing or joining by mail or telephone just mention the name of the Affiliate Club you belong to and you can take advantage of the \$25 membership. A list of AW Affiliate Clubs can be found on our website at <http://americanwhitewater.org/content/Membership/join-AW/>. If you do not see your Club listed here please encourage them to renew their Club membership or to join AW as a new Affiliate Club. Your Club's membership and your personal membership enable our staff to be active and engaged in the process of river stewardship. When you join or renew your membership your support is helping to meet the many challenges whitewater rivers face. If you have any questions about the Affiliate Club membership, please contact me. I can be reached at 866_BOAT-4AW or membership@americanwhitewater.org.

JOIN AMERICAN WHITEWATER AS A CLUB AFFILIATE!

10 REASONS TO JOIN AW AS AN AFFILIATE CLUB:

1. Support river access and restoration through the AW River Stewardship Team.
2. Be part of a national voice for the protection of the whitewater rivers your club values.
3. Tap into the professional expertise of AW staff for river issues that come up in your backyard.
4. Your club's members can become AW members for \$25. A \$10 savings!
5. Receive the *American Whitewater Journal*, the oldest continually published whitewater magazine.
6. Your club is recognized in the list of Affiliate Clubs posted to the AW website.
7. Recognize your club in the list of Affiliate Clubs noted in each bimonthly *American Whitewater 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 Bethany Overfield:

membership@americanwhitewater.org

...or sign-up on line: www.americanwhitewater.org/membership.

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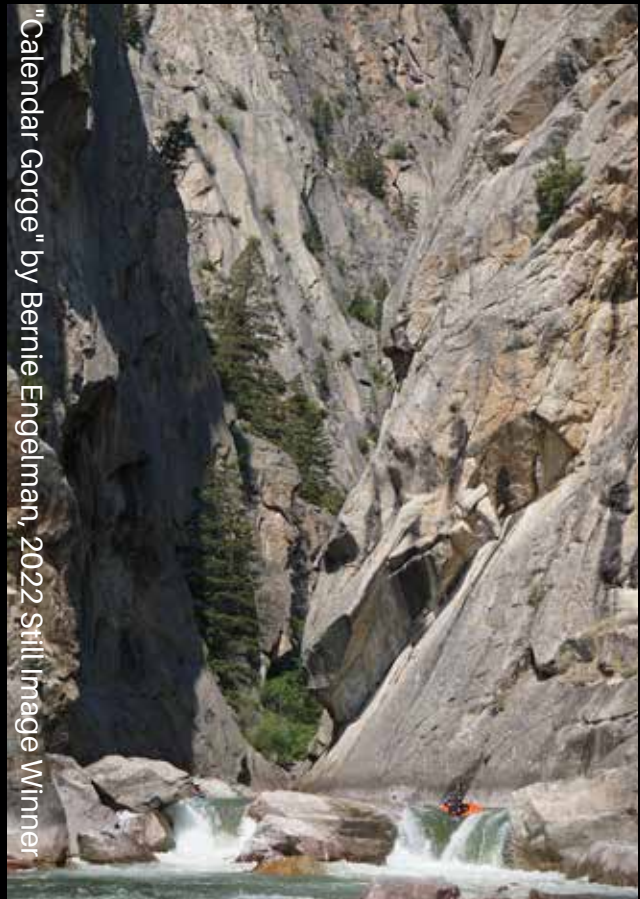
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