



AMERICAN WHITEWATER

Conservation • Access • Events • Adventure • Safety

BY BOATERS FOR BOATERS
Mar/Apr 2012

PROTECTING THE CHETCO

RIVER STEWARDSHIP IN PERFECT CLARITY

ALSO...

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS





We make FUN! [We also make Heroes, Rockers, and Stars.]

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AMERICAN WHITEWATER

A VOLUNTEER PUBLICATION PROMOTING RIVER CONSERVATION, ACCESS AND SAFETY

American Whitewater Journal Mar/Apr 2012 – Volume 52 – Issue 2

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Lunch Break at Taggart's Bar on the Chetco River (OR). For more on this whitewater gem, check out pg. 14 of this issue.

Photo by Zachary Collier



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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 bimonthly *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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THE JOURNEY AHEAD

OVER THE LAST few years the non-profit world has been on a real roller coaster ride. A couple of well known river conservation groups and partners have closed their doors and are no longer operating and a few others have had to scale back their staffing. Uncertainty, triggered by the economic melt down of 2008 and a very slow recovery, has caused folks to ask, "How is American Whitewater doing?"

To answer this question, remember that about seven years ago AW went through a very tough reorganization that trimmed a considerable amount of administrative overhead. This was done when the economy was still strong and provided the foundation for AW to operate very efficiently with staff living and working in communities where we have active stewardship projects. Politics starts at the local level, and this regional approach helps our staff members be viewed as a part of the local community within their stewardship work plan. This decentralized approach to our river stewardship efforts allowed AW to get ahead of the economic downturn by employing a very lean business model when the financial markets turned south.

Through a lean administrative model and simultaneous on-the-ground project success, we have been able to expand our base of financial support to include major foundations and significant corporate partnerships. One of the things that eluded us through the economic downturn was membership growth. Still, even during the recession, we fortunately did not see a drop off in membership numbers. Our members remained very loyal and supportive (some even kept their memberships up to date after they lost their jobs).

Last year American Whitewater made growing our membership a top priority. The AW Staff and Board worked very hard to build membership throughout the year and we were extremely

successful! At the end of the year we saw a 13% increase in membership revenue for 2011 over 2010. Membership growth demonstrates confidence in the mission of AW and our ability to achieve successful outcomes on projects that are near and dear to the hearts of whitewater boaters and friends of wild rivers. Growth in membership places increased responsibility on AW to demonstrate leadership on key stewardship issues and to adequately report on developments in those areas, as well as how membership resources are being applied.

Size matters; membership numbers are one of the key metrics government agencies and elected officials use to determine the capacity of an organization to reach their constituents. Increasing AW membership empowers the American Whitewater River Stewardship Team to be even more effective in driving outcomes that protect rivers and increase recreational opportunities for all paddlers. A growing membership base gives the organization greater credibility on the national scene.

The American Whitewater membership value proposition is compelling. Each membership dollar that AW receives is leveraged to generate \$5 in total funding directed at supporting river stewardship. The \$1 to \$5 ratio is achievable because core membership allows AW to attract support from foundations, private donors, advertising opportunities, events and corporate partnerships. As a result each membership dollar goes five times as far in

the protection of whitewater rivers. Where else can you stretch your money like that?

On each project on our work plan, AW seeks land and water conservation, public river access, stream flow information, and flow releases that benefit the aquatic ecosystem as well as recreation. We have a proven track record of success with each of these goals. These enhancements create a triple bottom line: they provide local communities a sustainable economic base, they result in healthier rivers, and they provide opportunities for healthy nature-based recreation. Reconnecting people and communities with their rivers creates an enthusiastic and lasting constituency for river conservation.

So, how are we doing? Currently, American Whitewater has a healthy balance sheet, membership is growing, and we have staff strategically positioned around the country to work on important river stewardship projects. The bad news is that rivers face increasing threats and we need to be strong to take on new challenges that are important to the boating community.

If you are reading this publication and you are not a member of American Whitewater, please consider supporting our work. We know that most readers of the *AW Journal* are members, and we thank you for your support. Please pass this issue on to a friend. The Staff and Board of American Whitewater look to continue the trend of growing membership in the coming year and ask for your assistance in that goal—

bring a friend to the party! There has never been a better time to be a member of American Whitewater.

See you on the river,



Executive Director, American Whitewater



STEWARDSHIP

HAS AMERICAN WHITEWATER GONE TO THE TREES?

BY DAVE STEINDORF

YOU MAY WONDER why American Whitewater would be out on rivers looking at trees and shrubs. No, we're not trying to move onto the turf of the Native Plant Society; we're trying to address the challenges that trees and shrubs can pose to whitewater recreation. Most paddlers know the problems that occur when riparian vegetation starts to take up residence in the middle of river channels. Too many of us have gotten whacked in the face by a tree branch or shrub while paddling down a river. Over the past several years, many paddlers have been commenting on the dramatic increase in the amount of riparian vegetation that is choking many California Rivers. Not only is this a serious safety hazard for paddlers, but it also degrades important habitat for fish, frogs, and other aquatic creatures.

In December, California stewardship director Dave Steindorf worked with the Forest Service and PG&E to plan a field visit to survey and discuss vegetation on the North Fork Feather River. In addition to the North Fork Feather, we also visited the Middle Fork Feather River and Butte Creek. Joining us on the trip was PhD riparian plant expert David Merritt, who works for the Forest Service in Colorado. Representatives from several other entities also attended the site visit, including the California Department of Fish and Game,



The photo on the left is from the Cresta reach of the NF Feather in 2005, 8 years after a major flood event, when there was little riparian encroachment. In the photo on the right, taken just 4 years later, there is already substantial riparian growth.

Photos by Dave Steindorf

the State Water Resources Control Board and several staff members from PG&E.

When the group first met, we reviewed a photo record of the North Fork Feather River that had been compiled by Dave Steindorf over the past 10 years. It showed the obvious effects of the last large flood event, which occurred in 1997. As expected, this 100-year flood scoured virtually all of the vegetation from the river channel. What was more surprising was that there was little vegetation growth, particularly from alders (a low, woody shrub), until 2006. Since 2006, alders and willows have come to almost completely dominate the entire shoreline of the North Feather.

Once we arrived in the field, we took samples from the alders along the riverbanks in order to count their growth rings. These samples confirmed that virtually all of the alder growth has occurred since 2006. This

Dr. David Merritt of the USFS and Dave Steindorf examining the growth rings on a sampled alder tree.

Photo by Peter Barnes

brought up an interesting question for the group: Why was there so little alder growth in the 9 years from 1997 to 2006 and a virtual explosion of riparian growth after that period?

The group then visited the Middle Fork Feather River, which is a free-flowing river just to the south of the heavily regulated North Fork Feather River. The difference between the dam-regulated system and the free-flowing system was readily apparent. Here, we found far less vegetation at the water's edge. We also found far more diversity in the age class of the trees that were there. (For more about why, see "Bringing Spring Runoff Back to Rivers," *AW Journal* Nov/Dec 2011.) We took samples here as well and compared them to the ones that we found on the North Fork Feather.

The group spent some time discussing possible changes that we could make in the regulated flow regimes found on the North Fork Feather—as well as on other regulated river systems—that could help minimize the level of the vegetation encroachment.

Klamath Wild & Scenic Map.
Map by Bill Cross

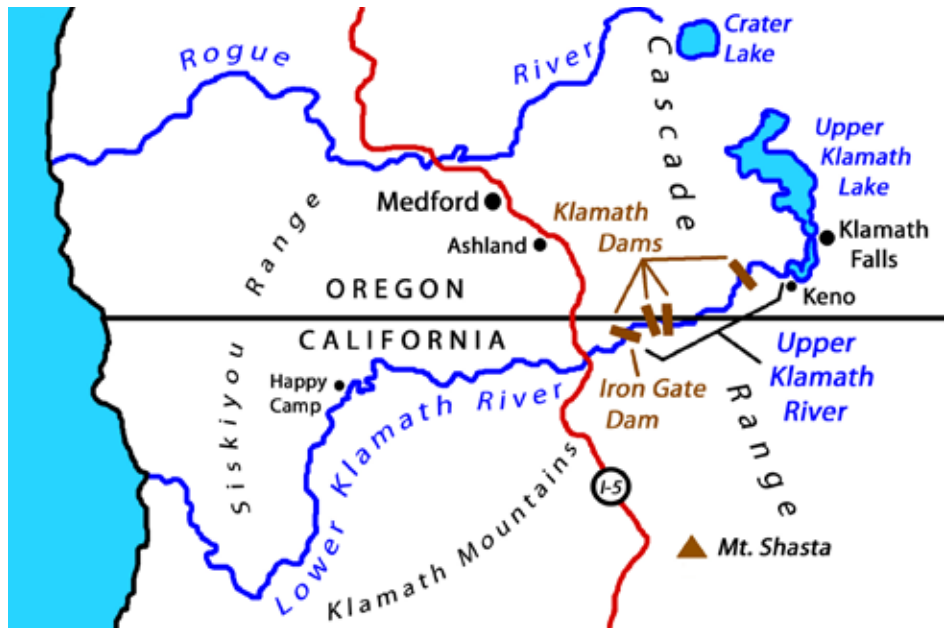
Dr. Merritt agreed to write up some of the observations from our trip and make some potential recommendations to the group. We will be reporting these results in upcoming issues of *American Whitewater Journal*.

American Whitewater has worked to be seen as more than just another recreational user group. As paddlers, we see the rivers we love and how they change from one year to the next, and our observations give resource agencies valuable information about the health of the systems they are managing. Pulling together experts to discuss this important issue is a result of our intimate knowledge of these rivers systems. We believe that the information gathered from this meeting will be an additional tool that we can use to help promote more dynamic flow regimens that will improve the health of rivers in California and across the country.

AMERICA'S LONGEST WILD & SCENIC RIVER*

BY BILL CROSS

THE KLAMATH IS the perennial bronze medalist of American rivers. This great waterway of Oregon and California always languishes in the shadow



of its more famous brethren, usually winding up with an honorable mention when the superlatives are handed out.

Consider:

- The Klamath was once the nation's *third*-most productive salmon river (before dams, diversions and overlogging decimated its fisheries).
- The Klamath is one of only *three* rivers that cut through the lofty Cascade Range (the Columbia and the Pit are the others).

- The Klamath is the *second*-biggest river in California (after the Sacramento).

Admittedly the Klamath takes silver in that last category. But never, it seems, does it garner the gold. Even the Klamath's sister river to the north, the Rogue, gets into the act, regularly upstaging her southern sibling. For example, although the Klamath was officially recognized as one of the nation's most outstanding rivers in 1981, when 190 miles were designated as a National Wild and Scenic River, that protection came a full 13 years after the same honor was bestowed on the Rogue.

All of which begs the question: When will the Klamath get its chance to shine in the top spot on the podium?

As it turns out, we're working on that. American Whitewater wants to make the Klamath America's *longest* Wild and Scenic



Paddler rafters on the Boyle Bypass Reach of the Upper Klamath. This dramatic Class IV+ stretch is normally dewatered by JC Boyle Dam, but was briefly runnable during a Recreational Flow Study in 2002. If JC Boyle Dam is removed, this reach could become a National Wild and Scenic River.

Photo by 2002 Recreational Flow Study



Kayaking Wards Canyon on the Upper Klamath. This dramatic Class IV reach is normally dewatered by Copco 2 Dam, but was briefly runnable during a Recreational Flow Study in 2002.
Photo by 2002 Klamath River Recreational Flow Study

River. To do that, we need to remove four hydroelectric dams from the river's upper reaches. Those dams, owned and operated by PacifiCorp, flood or dewater nearly two dozen of the river's first 43 miles. This reach, known as the Upper Klamath, begins at the town of Keno in southwestern Oregon, crosses the California border, and merges with the Lower Klamath at Iron Gate Dam (see map). The Upper Klamath takes in all of the river's frothy passage through the Cascade Range, where deep canyons and high gradient hold tremendous whitewater potential. Unfortunately, most of this reach is either buried beneath reservoirs or dried up by hydroelectric diversions.

Currently, only one 11-mile section of the Upper Klamath enjoys Wild and Scenic protection, leaving 32 miles undesignated. But if the dams are removed, the entire 43-mile Upper Klamath can be designated. When combined with the existing 190-mile Lower Klamath, designation of the upper river would create a contiguous 233-mile Wild and Scenic River stretching from Keno to the sea. And *that* would be the nation's longest: for in a true photo finish, the Klamath would eclipse—by just over a mile—Wisconsin's Saint Croix River, which has held the title since the birth of the Wild and Scenic System in 1968.*

Why the asterisk? Because, as usual, somebody has come along to steal the Klamath's thunder—in this case, a couple of

interlopers from the Land of the Midnight Sun. Technically speaking, the Klamath wouldn't be America's longest Wild and Scenic River because there are a couple in Alaska that are even longer than the Saint Croix. But whatever. If the Klamath dams come out and the entire river is designated Wild and Scenic, we'll just put an asterisk after the Klamath's title. And then we will hail the spectacular, magnificent, undammed Klamath as America's longest Wild and Scenic River.*

** In the Lower 48.*

The Klamath won't mind a bit: it's used to it.

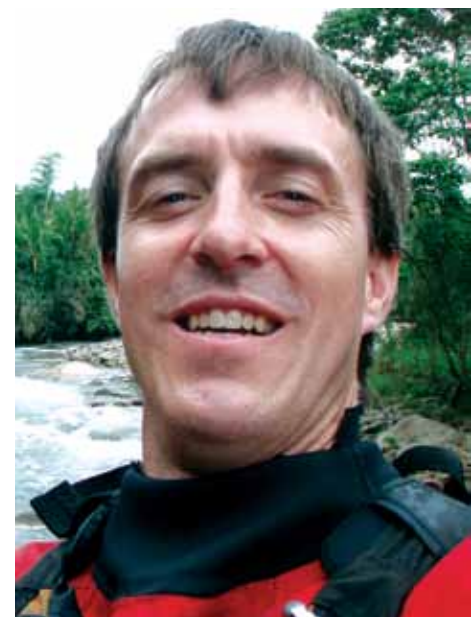
MATT TERRY- MAKING A DIFFERENCE FOR ECUADOR'S RIVERS

BY JULIET JACOBSEN KASTORFF AND MEGAN HOOKER

RIVERS ACROSS THE world face immense threats from hydropower and water diversions. While there's no lack of work to be done on that front within the United States, a sea change *is* underway here. The value of free-flowing rivers has been codified in some of our federal and state laws and policies, and many passionate advocates work long and hard to restore instream flows and take down dams that no longer make sense. And

while the process can be cumbersome, we do have an opportunity to give voice to our opinions, passions, and concerns through public process.

Internationally, many countries still lack the laws and regulations to protect rivers. Around the world, we are losing incredible whitewater rivers at an unprecedented rate. In many cases, development projects are presented to meet nascent political agendas, studies are contracted after the fact to justify proposed projects, and



Matt Terry, founder and director of Ecuadorian Rivers Institute.

Photo by Matt Terry

STEWARDSHIP

sometimes project alternatives are not even evaluated or discussed.

Matt Terry knows about these issues firsthand from his work to protect whitewater rivers in Ecuador. He's driven by a deep understanding that there's a lot paddlers need to do to preserve special paddling destinations around the world. For the last 15 years Terry has dedicated his life to promoting environmental awareness in Ecuador, and in 2002 he founded the Ecuadorian Rivers Institute (ERI). Through ERI, Terry is leveraging a robust recreation economy and his connection to the local people to protect Ecuador's rivers.

In the mid-1990s, Terry was working in Chile, where he witnessed the loss of the Royal Flush Canyon on the Bio Bio River to the construction of the first stage of the Panguel Hydroelectric Complex. He was also at the Futaleufu River when Chris Spelius began his efforts to get locals and the international paddling community involved to help save some beautifully unique sections of that river from being dammed. These experiences had a deep impact on Terry, and left a striking impression about the future of whitewater rivers throughout the world. He knew that if paddlers were going to protect the places they love, they needed to step up.



Widespread illegal gravel mining throughout Ecuador has triggered substantial head cutting, lateral bank erosion, sediment loading, and channel migration on the country's rivers. In response, the government has built "gabions," or walls, in the name of flood control. The gabions, which are prone to failure and disconnect the river from its natural floodplain, were built without any formal study or environmental permits. Above, a failed gabion on the Pano river.

Photo by Matt Terry

Terry continued to build his knowledge of the threats that international rivers face while he lived and traveled in Central America and Southeast Asia. When he arrived in Ecuador in 1997, the country was just starting to open up as an international paddling destination. With the support of

the Polartec Challenge and other industry sponsors, he organized a series of paddling expeditions, through which he explored and documented rivers all over the country. Fortunately, Terry found that Ecuador was about 20 years behind the rest of the world in developing its rivers for hydropower.



Terry gained insight into the state of rivers in Ecuador and became well known around the country during his travels. Today, he sees his recognition as an opportunity to have real influence over the development of Ecuador's rivers. Of course, there are also a few factors about Ecuador that make his work possible. First, the country is a tropical whitewater paradise with year-round paddling on an endless variety of accessible rivers with amazing rapids and scenery. Tourism is one of Ecuador's most

ERI volunteer Cristina Almeida watches in amazement as gravel mining destroys a popular swimming beach in an attempt to patch a failed gabion on the Tena River.

Photo by Matt Terry

STEWARDSHIP



Illegal gravel mining on the Tena River. ERI has filed legal complaints in a effort to stop illegal mining activities like these.

Photo by Matt Terry

AW AND OUTDOOR ALLIANCE PARTNERS HOST PARTNERSHIP SUMMIT

BY KEVIN COLBURN

DO YOU EVER wonder why you feel graciously welcomed at some federally managed rivers and feel like you should fly under the radar at others? Chances are this difference is caused by one-on-one relationships (or lack thereof) formed between paddlers and agency personnel. These relationships can, in special cases, lead to successful river conservation and access partnerships while helping to avoid conflict. So what are the magic ingredients that lead to great partnerships? That question was tackled in December of 2011 by an unprecedented gathering of outdoor recreationists and agency personnel. The first ever Outdoor Alliance Partnership Summit was the forum for this discussion, and took place at the American Mountaineering Center in Golden, CO.

The summit was convened by the Outdoor Alliance, a coalition of six national, member-based organizations, including: Access Fund, American Canoe Association, American Hiking Society, American Whitewater, International Mountain Bicycling Association, and Winter Wildlands Alliance. The coalition represents the interests of the millions of Americans who hike, paddle, climb, mountain bike, ski, and snowshoe on our nation's public lands, waters, and snowscapes. Collectively, Outdoor Alliance has members in all fifty states and a network of almost 1,400

Opposite: *The Outdoor Alliance Summit attracted well over 100 leaders in managing human-powered outdoor recreation and the places we all enjoy exploring.*

important sources of jobs and revenue, and river-based activities are a big part of what Ecuador has to offer foreign visitors. Also, the local people have significant social and cultural ties with rivers for fishing, swimming, bathing and floating. And, when Terry first arrived in Ecuador, the country met about 50% of its electricity needs from just a handful of hydro projects that happened to be located on rivers that were relatively low on the scale of whitewater paddling interest.

The balance began to shift in favor of hydroelectric dams around 2000, when there was clear interest in developing new hydro projects on Ecuadorian rivers that were important paddling destinations. Fortunately, rafting and kayaking were significant forces in the local economy by then. Terry organized the Napo River Festival in 2001, bringing people together to raise awareness about the value of the last free-flowing tributary of the Amazon with protected headwaters. In 2002, the non-profit Ecuadorian Rivers Institute was born out of the momentum that came from the Festival.

ERI helps to give voice to those who cannot speak up in favor of free-flowing rivers for fear of legal, political, and other reprisals. According to Terry, developmental

interests in Ecuador dominate the decisions that are made there regarding resource management and environmental considerations. There is a great deal of corruption within government, and Terry believes that this remains the biggest obstacle to ERI's work.

Through ERI, Terry continues to be committed to protecting unique watershed resources in Ecuador for the benefit of future generations. ERI has a vested interest in river conservation, and is the only organization which works to protect the interests of recreational river users and specifically addresses watershed issues in Ecuador.

Terry partially credits American Whitewater's work for inspiring him and showing what is possible to achieve in river stewardship given the proper experience, support, and dedication. At AW, we're equally inspired to see one of our members doing for the rivers of Ecuador what we do for the rivers of the United States.

Juliet Jacobsen Kastorff is co-founder of Endless River Adventures in North Carolina. For more information about the rivers ERI is working to protect, check them out on Facebook or at www.ecuadorianrivers.org.

local clubs and advocacy groups across the nation. Recreationists in attendance included national and regional staff from these and other organizations, as well as on-the-ground volunteers who are integral in specific featured partnerships. American Whitewater volunteers in attendance included Sam Drevo, Louis Geltman, Susan Hollingsworth, and Theresa Simsiman.

For each of these featured partnerships, the agency staffer most deeply involved was also invited to attend, along with regional and national agency leaders. The Bureau of Land Management, the Forest Service, the National Park Service, the Army Corps of Engineers and the Fish and Wildlife Service were all well represented at the summit. Even in the climate of wilted federal travel budgets, the agency staff rallied to attend, in some cases on their own dime.

The Summit kicked off with a video address by Senator Mark Udall (D – CO), and an introduction by Outdoor Alliance Policy Architect (and American Whitewater board member) Adam Cramer. In big plenary sessions and in small groups, pairs of agency staffers and recreationists told their partnership stories, followed by discussions aimed at digging deeper and finding common themes between stories. American Whitewater staff gave talks with agency partners on the Cheoah River (NC) and the Middle Fork Snoqualmie (WA).

At night we all gathered for dinners, some New Belgium brews, and on the final evening for an inspiring keynote address by Peter Metcalf, the founder of Black Diamond Equipment. Metcalf's talk tracked the intertwined human-powered recreation movement and environmental movement through the past several decades—a path that led to the room in which we all stood, and most importantly to the people filling the room.

The final day we collectively tackled a present partnership opportunity on the Yampa River (CO), putting the lessons we all learned to work and offering advice to Yampa stakeholders. Then we parted ways, back to the challenging conflicts and fulfilling partnerships that define our careers, and the special recreational experiences that fuel our spirits. Outdoor Alliance staff are now in the process of pulling together the notes from the summit into a report aimed at offering advice to recreationists and agency personnel interested in fostering partnerships. Keep an eye on the American Whitewater website for the report!

Your membership in American Whitewater helps us fully participate as a steering committee member of the Outdoor Alliance. Through our work with this coalition of likeminded organizations, our members have a powerful voice in national recreational and environmental issues.

WHITewater RECREATION RECOGNIZED IN NEW LICENSE FOR HYDROPOWER PROJECT ON WISCONSIN'S FOX RIVER

BY THOMAS O'KEEFE

IT WASN'T UNTIL recently that people found Wisconsin's Fox River attractive for recreation. Historically, the river was an important corridor for trade and commerce because it was a key link between the Great Lakes Basin and the Mississippi watershed. As the industrial revolution got underway, the importance of the river continued to grow for commerce as a series of locks and dams were constructed to improve navigation and harness the power of the river. In fact, in 1868, the river was the site of the world's first hydroelectric facility, the Vulcan Street Plant, which served a system of private and commercial customers. Industrial activity intensified in the late 19th century and the river emerged as the preferred location for several paper mills that processed timber from the Northwoods.

Needless to say, all that industrial activity resulted in a heavily polluted waterway. Little was done to address the situation until the passage of the Clean Water Act in 1972. Although work continues to improve water quality and river health, sediments remain contaminated with PCBs that have been traced to past industrial activities along the river.

Fortunately, conditions have improved and people have started to reconnect with the river. Local paddlers have identified some opportunities in recent years, including a higher gradient reach that flows through the City of Kaukauna. This stretch of river provides some outstanding play boating opportunities in the spring. It's a natural whitewater play park and is a highly significant regional resource, considering that many communities around the country



STEWARDSHIP



A concrete wall and chain link fence limit access to the Fox River (WI). American Whitewater successfully negotiated for a formal access point as part of the new license for the City of Kaukauna's hydropower project.

Photo by Thomas O'Keefe

have invested millions to build what naturally occurs on the Fox. During most of the year, however, flows were diverted around this reach and into a powerhouse, leaving the natural river channel dewatered. To add insult to injury, public access to the river has been and continues to be blocked by a concrete wall and chain link fence.

When American Whitewater learned that the local utility was planning to rebuild their powerhouse and apply for a new license that would divert additional flow from the river, we intervened in the proceeding. With the help of the National Park Service Rivers and Trails program and the support of the River Alliance of Wisconsin we were able to successfully advocate for formal public access to the river (i.e., a gate through the

fence), access to flow information posted on the utility website, and scheduled days when the powerhouse will be shut down to allow the river's natural flow to stay in the channel for public use and enjoyment. While the utility fought us every step of the way, we were successful in making our case to FERC that the Federal Power Act requires "equal consideration" of power and non-power values of rivers. We hope our success represents the start of a new community relationship with the Fox River—one in which the industrial past is recognized as part of the region's cultural heritage and where the recreational amenities of the river are enjoyed and actively embraced as part of the region's future. It is an evolution we have witnessed in dozens of other communities across

the country, and we believe it's possible here too.

After exhausting their appeals, the utility finally agreed that they would need to implement the terms of the license addressing whitewater recreation and sat down to meet with American Whitewater in December 2011. We are optimistic that we will be able to transition from an adversarial relationship and find ways to work together to implement the new license. We recognize that responsible hydropower provides very real benefits to communities and one of those benefits is enhancement of recreational opportunities along the river.

In late spring of 2012 demolition of the old powerhouse will begin and the river will flow freely for a couple of years. Once the new powerhouse is up and running we will be sad to see more of the river diverted. The benefits of the new license are significant however, with improved instream flows for fishery resources and formal recognition and accommodation of whitewater paddling needs.



The Island Street Wave (Fox River, WI) can be lots of fun!

Photo by Thomas O'Keefe

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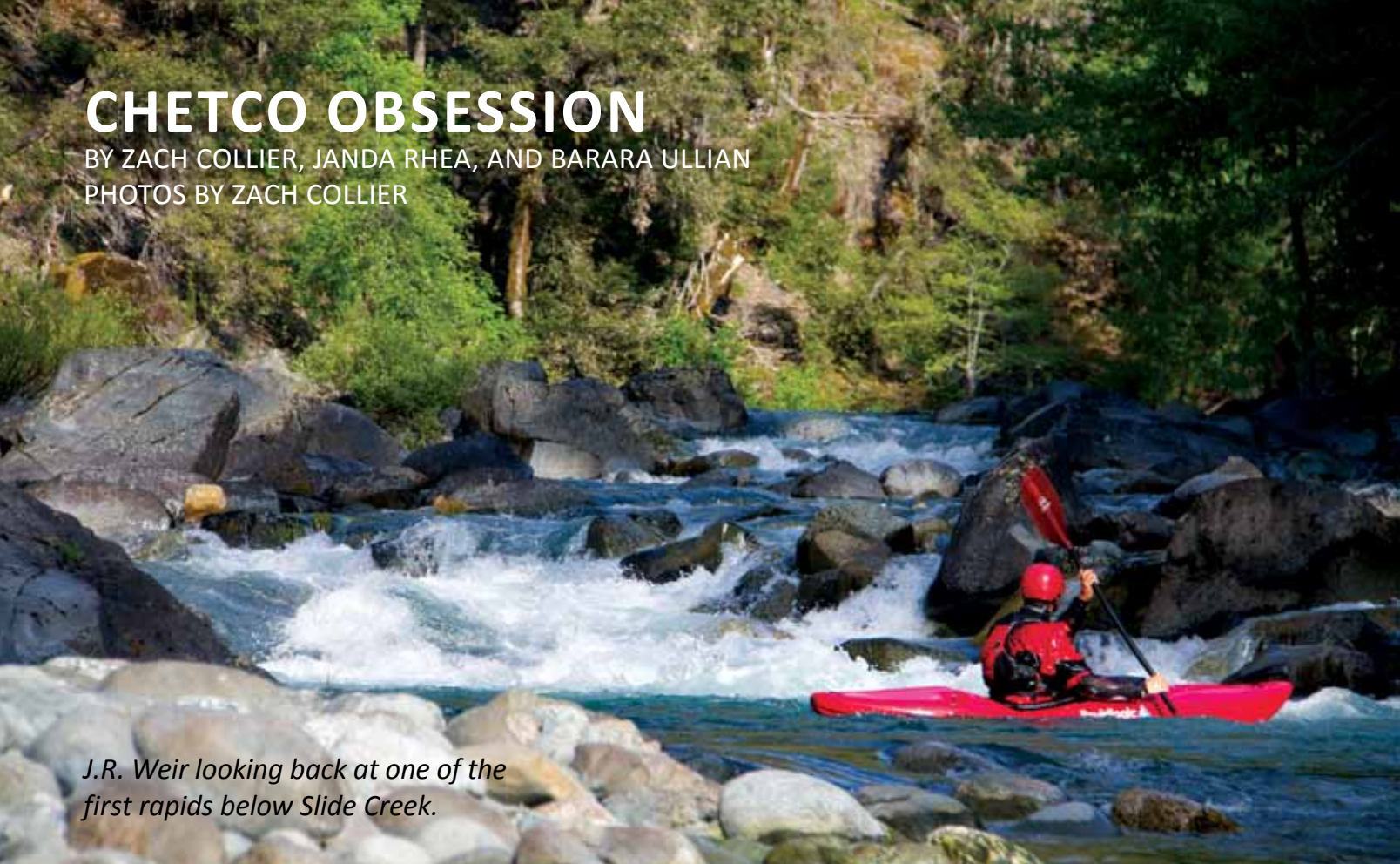
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CHETCO OBSESSION

BY ZACH COLLIER, JANDA RHEA, AND BARARA ULLIAN
PHOTOS BY ZACH COLLIER



J.R. Weir looking back at one of the first rapids below Slide Creek.

“The love of wilderness is more than a hunger for what is always beyond reach; it is also an expression of loyalty to the Earth ... the only home we shall ever know, the only paradise we ever need — if only we had the eyes to see.” — Edward Abbey

I'M NOT EXACTLY sure when running the Chetco River became an obsession. Hidden deep in the canyons of southern Oregon's rugged Kalmiopsis Wilderness, the Chetco had a reputation for exceptional water clarity, stellar rapids, and remote wilderness location but I knew little else about the river. Nestled between the North Fork of the Smith River to the south and the Illinois River to the north, two of my personal favorite whitewater runs, the Chetco remained a mystery of emerald green waters and raw wildness, largely because information about access to the river proved hard to come by.

My obsession with paddling the Chetco grew after hearing in 2010 that it had been named one of the nation's most endangered rivers. Kavita Heyn, formerly of American Rivers, gave a great presentation

at our annual Wild Rivers Night in Portland, Oregon. This event is designed for boaters, outfitters, guides and conservationists to come together in support and celebration of wild rivers.

Kavita's photos of the Chetco portrayed it as the perfect combination of the Smith and the Illinois. She discussed how the Chetco was threatened by a number of gold mining proposals, despite its designation as Wild and Scenic. Her description of suction dredge mining, outlawed in California in 2009, really got my attention. Using what is essentially an underwater vacuum cleaner, silty river beds are sucked up and run through a separation system to recover gold before being redeposited back to the river. This practice not only alters the shape of the riverbed and disrupts the ecosystem of the microorganisms that call the silt home, but it can also release mercury that is harmful to young salmon and lamprey.

How could it be? One of our nation's protected rivers threatened by gold mining? I knew little about the still operative 1872 Mining Law, which essentially makes the

extraction of minerals the dominant use of most of the public's lands and rivers. I learned that even in Wilderness Areas, which are withdrawn from the antiquated law through legislation, if an existing mining claim is found to be valid (meeting all requirements of the law) it can still be mined.

Most of the thousand or more mining claims existing in the Kalmiopsis Wilderness prior to Congress' inclusion of it in the Wilderness Preservation System had been eliminated through attrition or buyouts. In 2010, three claims on the Chetco River remained in the Kalmiopsis, with six more outside the Wilderness area. In total, these claims cover almost half the length of this Wild and Scenic River. Interest in the Chetco River's gold was re-awakened by the metal's skyrocketing price, from a low of \$280/ounce in 2002 to an all-time high of \$1900/ounce last year. However, it wasn't the glitter of gold that drew us to the Wild Chetco.

My friend and kayak instructor, J.R. Weir, was similarly obsessed. Like me, he had

WILD RIVERS



paddled his way around northern California and southern Oregon, having grown up in nearby Crescent City, but he had never ventured to the wild stretches of the Chetco. We talked about making the trip on the first day we met and probably every day we kayaked together after that. Visions of legendary whitewater and transparent pools beckoned from afar.

It turned out that 2011 was the year. We invited our friend Billy Miller to join us on the adventure. Billy is a fun-loving river guide from Terlingua, Texas with an awesome attitude and an unmatched passion for rivers. We also invited friend and filmmaker Andy Maser to document the trip. Local conservation groups, Kalmiopsis Audubon and Friends of the Kalmiopsis, are working hard to protect the Chetco, but they had few photos and no video of its wildest reaches. Andy's talent as a world-class filmmaker could provide everyone with much needed media.

We chose early June because the Port Orford cedar gate, at the beginning of the old mining road that's used to access the Wilderness reach of the Chetco, is typically closed through May. The wet season closure is an attempt to prevent the introduction of a non-native pathogen that kills these beautiful, stream-side cedars.

However, that spring being unseasonably wet into June, we had heard rumors that the gate was not open. If true, that meant we'd have to pack everything an extra five miles up to Chetco Pass before the typical four-mile trek down to the put-in at Slide Creek. I gave everyone the chance to back out. No one did.

Sure enough, we arrived at McCaleb's Ranch to find the gate was closed. Despite a nine-mile hike ahead carrying kayaks, camera gear and supplies for five days on our backs, we were excited to get out of cell phone range and on the water.

On day one, we covered a steep five miles, climbing 2600 feet to reach Chetco Pass. On the rim of the Kalmiopsis Wilderness, the watershed divide between the Chetco and Illinois Rivers, we looked down into Slide Creek and saw the rugged upper watershed of the Chetco beyond—the river seeming little more than the faintest whisper below us.

The uphill slog hadn't dampened our enthusiasm and we were ready for the quick four-mile hike to the mouth of Slide Creek. We knew there had been no trail maintenance since the massive 2002 Biscuit Fire, and others had reported problems following the trail to put-in, but we were

We were constantly excited to watch the shadows created by our boats in the bottom of the river.

confident that it couldn't be much harder than the hike we had just finished.

The next morning we made it about a mile before losing the trail. Rather than continue through thick brush on a steep side-hill, we decided to lower our boats down to Slide Creek so we could camp near water. In the morning we tried following Slide Creek from above but the canyon walls became increasingly steep and full of brush. Longing for buoyancy, we opted to drop into the creek and muscle our way downstream.

Our GPS indicated the Chetco River was 1.2 miles away. We spent the next eight hours covering four miles of meandering creek, hauling our kayaks over logs and lowering them down waterfalls. At 4 p.m.



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WILD RIVERS

on day two, we finally reached the Chetco, exhausted but ecstatic. We were thrilled to finally see the translucent water and savage beauty of this river we had obsessed over for years.

We couldn't wait to hop in our boats to paddle a few miles before dark. After running a few great rapids in the fading afternoon light, we found a small place to camp at dusk and spent our first night beside this magical river, at peace in the deep starry silence of the Kalmiopsis Wilderness.

The next morning our day started with a long series of beautiful Class IV rapids. The Chetco, from Slide Creek to Taggart's Bar, is a whitewater dream, full of boat-scoutable Class IV/IV+ rapids in a tight

gorge. We stopped for lunch at Taggart's Bar to recover.

I didn't know it at the time, but in 1999, rather than let the Wilderness be mined, the Forest Service—with the help of Western Rivers Conservancy and Senators Gordon Smith and Ron Wyden—purchased the mineral rights to the patented 145 acre mining claim above us for \$3.2 million. In return, the patent holder, who'd previously paid the federal government just \$2.50 per acre for title to the minerals, relinquished all rights to over 2,000 acres of additional claims in the Wilderness.

The patenting provision of the 1872 Mining Law is basically only legal because Congress has yet to reform it, but the result of the buyout can't be argued. These lands and the

Wild Chetco above Taggart's Bar can never be mined. They've been returned safely to the public as designated Wilderness.

As we continued downstream, we encountered more Class II/III rapids, with a few big Class IVs thrown in to keep things interesting. Day 3 went by way too quickly, and we camped that evening at a lovely spot on river right about a mile below Tin Cup Creek.

Within a few minutes of pushing off the following morning, we passed Boulder Creek, the western boundary of the Kalmiopsis Wilderness. Here the river's classification shifts from a "Wild River Area" to a "Scenic River Area." However, between Boulder and Mislatah Creeks, the river is remote and barbarically beautiful

AW STEWARDSHIP

PROTECTING THE CHETCO FROM MINING

BY THOMAS O'KEEFE

American Whitewater is part of ongoing efforts to modernize the badly outdated General Mining Act of 1872 and protect the Chetco River from new mining claims.

We all use and benefit from the products of mining every day, and responsible mining can help provide much-needed resources to our nation. However, the current law governing mining on public lands crafted 140 years ago is badly out of date and does not adequately consider other beneficial uses of our nation's rivers. Hence, American Whitewater has been engaged in an effort to modernize this law. Mining on public land must be balanced with all other uses of public land, including clean water and outdoor recreation.

To date, the low mineral values of the Chetco River has meant that it has escaped the impacts of instream mining seen on other rivers in the region. However, the threat to this river—one of the real wild gems of the Oregon Coast Range—continues to increase with the price of precious metals.

Absent meaningful mining law reform in the near term, American Whitewater has joined with other organizations in submitting testimony to Congress supporting the Chetco River Protection Act of 2011 (S. 764/H.R. 1415). This legislation would withdraw the current "Scenic" and "Recreational" segments of the Chetco River from operation of the 1872 Mining Law, subject to valid existing rights.

TAKE ACTION!

You can help eliminate the threat of mining on more than 15 miles of the Chetco River and provide greater protection for the rest of this stretch. Please send an e-mail to your Senator urging her/him to increase protections for this outstanding wild river by passing the Chetco River Protection Act. For more information, check out <http://saveourchetco.blogspot.com/p/chetco-river-protection-act.html>



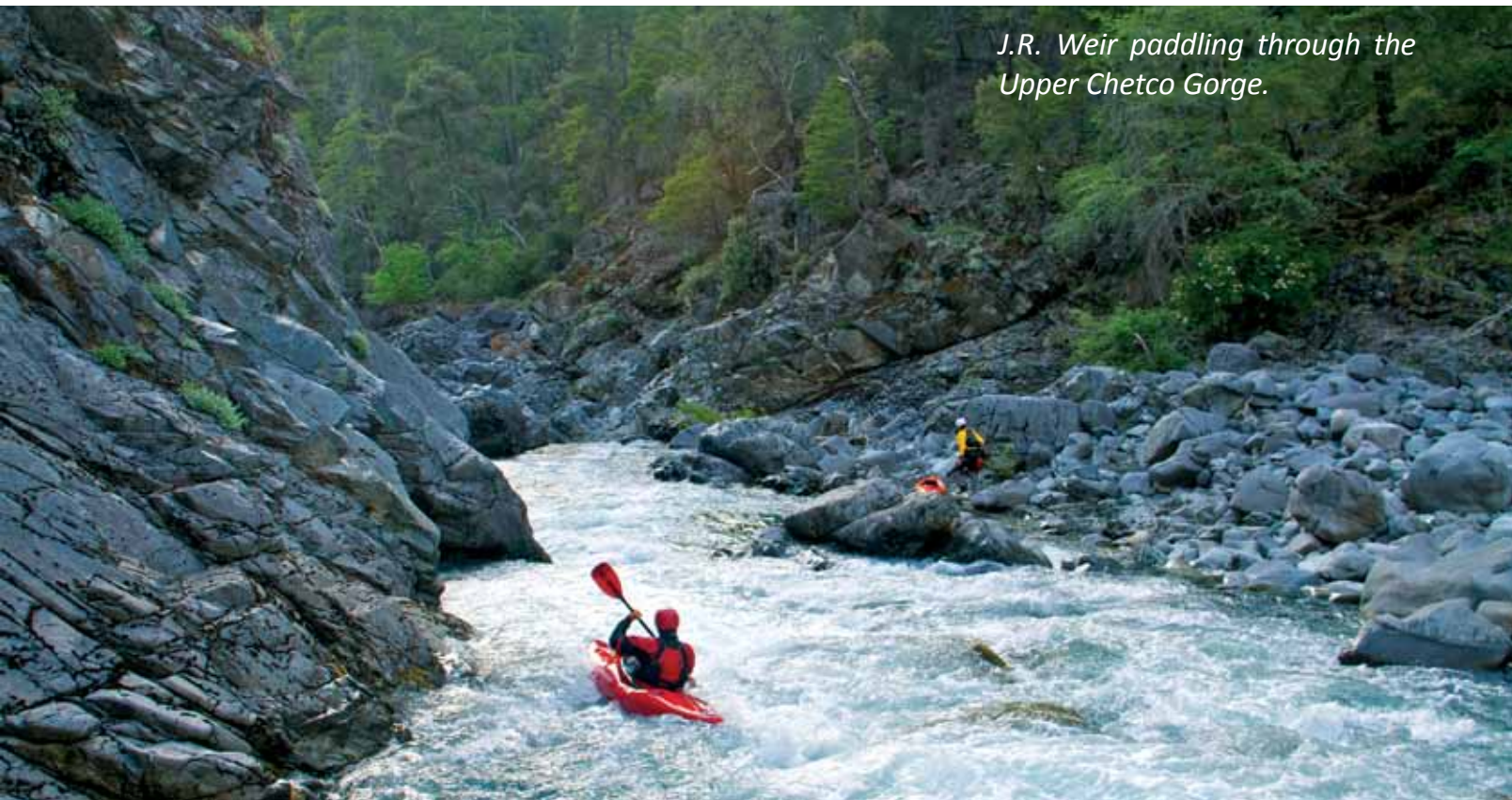
Billy Miller and J.R. Weir boat scouting one of the Chetco's many Class IV rapids.

with many great Class III and IV rapids; certainly deserving of a "Wild" designation. Proposed legislation known as the Chetco River Protection Act would re-classify that two-mile section of the Chetco as "Wild," automatically exempting it from the 1872 Mining Law.

The few people who run the Chetco usually take out just past Mislatah Creek at the Tolman Ranch (a private inholding). It's the only road access to the 33 miles of river above the steel bridge. But we weren't ready to leave our new friend just yet and decided to continue on to see the lower gorge of the Chetco and run two more Class V rapids that we couldn't resist.

The approximately six-mile reach of river between the Tolman Ranch and the steel bridge started off calmly enough, but quickly picked up with some fierce whitewater. The lack of roads or human intrusion demonstrates that this section is also deserving of a "Wild" classification. We paddled on to the Class V rapids, aptly named Conehead and Candy Cane, which we were able to boat-scout and run cleanly.

We took out at the steel bridge, though none of us were happy to be back on land. Although the hike in was heroic, the reward of experiencing the Chetco's uncultivated beauty left all of us longing to return. Our trip did so much more than simply satisfy our quest to paddle somewhere new. It reiterated why special places deserve special protections. As I mentioned previously, I have always loved the Illinois, and I often described it to fellow boaters as the Rogue River's big brother. After my trip to the Chetco, I began thinking of it as their little sister—delicate, fiercely beautiful, and in need of protection.



J.R. Weir paddling through the Upper Chetco Gorge.

HOW I GOT STARTED

THE TRIP THAT GOT ME HOOKED: A TANDEM OC, AN EX COLLEGE ROOMMATE, AND THE RAVEN FORK OF THE OCONALUFTEE

BY DENNIS PENNELL

GIL AND HIS tandem partner were eddied out downstream. My brother Dean (in the bow) and I (in the stern) came blasting down through the rock garden, doing our best to hit the tongues and miss the boulders. Most of the time we made it, but not this time. Gil said that Dean's eyes were as big as fried eggs when the 16-foot Blue Hole OCA canoe boofed the flat topped rock and landed in the eddy four feet below. Gil and his tandem partner were laughing like crazy, while Dean and I were just amazed to still be right side up and in the canoe. We were about half way down the Class III lower run on the Raven Fork of the Oconaluftee River, upstream of Cherokee, NC. It was the Sunday after Thanksgiving Day, November 30, 1986. It was sunny; one of those days when the temperature is just right for outdoor activities, including whitewater paddling. Most American men our age were inside watching football on television. But we were on our second and final day of a whitewater canoeing adventure with my old college buddy Gil.

Go back a few years to the fall of 1970. At the tender age of seventeen, I started classes at Western Carolina University (WCU) in Cullowhee, NC (current home of American Whitewater). Cullowhee is located in one of the most scenic parts of the southern Appalachian Mountains of southwestern North Carolina along the banks of the Tuckasegee River. One of the people I met soon after arriving at WCU was a guy named Gil from Cherokee, NC. I spent two and one-half years in Cullowhee. Always drawn to water, I visited the rivers and lakes in the area often.



Gil, circa 1987, before either of us were whitewater paddlers.

Photo by Dennis Pennell

Now let's go back to 1986. I am now thirty-three years old. Dean and I had done some flat and moving water canoeing over the last few years. But we didn't have much of a clue about how to control a canoe in fast current or rapids. We swam a lot. It was just part of the fun. I had bought my first canoe a couple of years earlier; a green 17-foot flat-water design. But I wanted to run whitewater. So I was stretching the limits of my ability and the capabilities of the canoe on easy Class II runs such as Reddies River, Yadkin River, Lewis Fork Creek, and Roaring River near Wilkes County, NC, where I grew up.

In October of 1986 my wife, two young daughters and I went to Cherokee for a mini-vacation to see the sites and enjoy the colorful fall scenery. I had not seen my old college friend Gil from Cherokee since about 1973, so I looked up Gil's phone number in the local telephone book. From our hotel room on the bank of the Oconaluftee River I gave Gil a call. We talked for quite some time, reminiscing and catching up on the 13 years since we had last seen each other. I was very interested in canoeing the local rivers that I had enjoyed seeing while in

college at WCU. So I asked Gil if he did any paddling. To my surprise, Gil told me that for the last several years he had been racing whitewater slalom canoes. Actually, he paddled almost every day. I later learned that Gil was in fact very good at slalom canoe racing. He won a national championship in tandem combined downriver and slalom racing a short time later in Wausau, Wisconsin. And he regularly placed high in both solo, tandem, and mixed tandem slalom events around the area.

Gil invited me to come back to visit him. He offered to take me whitewater canoeing and teach me the basics of maneuvering down a boulder choked whitewater river. I was fired up to go.

This was an opportunity too good to miss. So the following month, on the day after Thanksgiving, Dean and I made the three and a half hour trip from my parent's house in northwestern North Carolina to Gil's place between Bryson City and Cherokee in the southwestern part of the state. We were well equipped with lots of enthusiasm, a little apprehension, and my mother's leftover Thanksgiving turkey and pumpkin pie.

Gil, Dean, and I spent Friday evening talking about rivers and paddle trips. The next day Gil outfitted us with a Blue Hole OCA canoe equipped with a huge block of Styrofoam flotation in the center. Gil was paddling his Kevlar Mad River Cyclone outfitted for both tandem and solo. The Cyclone was about the hottest open canoe around at that time, and Gil was a master at boat control and paddle work.

We drove over to a local run on the Oconaluftee River near Birdtown, downstream of Cherokee. The rapids were similar, but more difficult, than ones I had done before. Plus there were more of them. But on this trip instead of paddling alone

like we usually did, we had the advantage of another boat with an expert paddler at the helm, offering good instruction and advice. It was a fun and informative day, and a small step above my comfort level. But this run was not especially scary or exciting.

That was reserved for the next day, when Gil hooked up with his tandem partner, and the four of us took off to paddle the Class III lower run on the Raven Fork of the Oconaluftee River, upstream of the town of Cherokee. The Raven Fork is a classic southern Appalachian large creek, with lots of granite boulders to form drops, chutes, and eddies. The scenery on the Raven Fork is exceptional. The section we did has a gradient of about 70 feet per mile, which

was very different from the 10-to-20 feet per mile runs we had done before. Needless to say, we were plenty concerned when the rapids came into view as we drove up the road to the put-in. The gradient of this run was a little shocking, but we were not about to sit this one out. It turned out it was the most fun I had ever had in a canoe. Under Gil's guidance, we only experienced one short swim. Our lines and technique were far from pretty. But wow, what a day! It was the best day ever on the water. I was so excited that I could hardly wait to get a whitewater capable canoe of my own. Luckily, I didn't have to. I had many great trips in that boat, a used 17-foot Blue Hole OCA. Running whitewater in all types of watercraft has been a major part of my life ever since.

Even now near the end of 2011, I frequently think of that weekend and relive in my mind that run down the Raven Fork. I owe a lot to my friend Gil, who gave generously of his time over the next few years. He taught me how to read the water, catch an eddy, peel out of an eddy, ferry, surf waves, and enjoy the thrills and excitement of a canoe on a whitewater wave train. We paddled the Nantahala River many times, along with the Ocoee, the French Broad, the Oconaluftee, Chattooga, Wilson Creek, and others.

But I never did get back on the Raven Fork.

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DECISION MAKING

STRANGER DANGER

BY PETE BELLANDE

WHEN WE WERE kids, our parents and teachers constantly warned us about how we need to be wary of unknown adults. The message got hammered home again and again that kids who weren't careful around strangers got kidnapped or worse.

While I knew all about "stranger danger," no one ever told me that I should apply this principle to choosing paddling partners. Sure, paddling a local run with someone entirely unknown to you isn't exactly like getting into a car with a guy in the clown suit promising candy, but it can definitely have some consequences.

The concept of whitewater boaters vetting their unknown peers was introduced to me as a novice kayaker in the late 90s. During those years, I cut my kayaking teeth on rivers in the Midwest (figuratively, of course—I didn't literally cut my teeth on a river until I moved to Colorado, over a decade later.)

Going to school in the suburbs of Chicago left me with few paddling options and fewer paddling partners. Using nylon rope purchased from the local hardware store, I'd tie my Pirouette to the top of my dad's old Land Cruiser and drive about five hours north to the Wolf and Peshtigo Rivers in Wisconsin with the hope that I'd find someone to boat with. At the time, the intermediate level Midwestern boaters I met were pretty conservative and I always had to sell myself in order to be allowed to join groups paddling Class III and IV water. Section Four of the Wolf was legendary in those circles as being some of the toughest whitewater anywhere (AW's website calls it a Class III/IV). I'm sure that the Secret Service conducts less extensive background checks for its employees than some of these boaters did for anyone looking to paddle such classic drops as "Big Smokey Falls" and "Ducks Nest Rapids" with their crew. Somehow, through a combination



The author (foreground) surfing with some strangers on some unknown river in the Southeast or Midwest back in the day.

of charm and begging, these old-school boaters would eventually allow me join them—and then recommend I portage any rapid that even remotely looked like it would be fun. (It should be mentioned that I have since met some world-class creek and playboaters who live in the Midwest.)

Perhaps it was the overbearing conservatism (and general lack of inclusiveness) of older, more experienced boaters during my early days that has always led me to give the benefit of the doubt to anyone wanting to paddle with me. This, of course, has had a few unintended consequences.

Last year, after having one of the worst experiences of my paddling career I went back to Clear Creek in the Denver suburbs to redeem myself. None of my friends could join me, so I just drove to the takeout for the Black Rock section and waited for someone—anyone, really—to show up. The river was peaking. After about thirty minutes, a guy drove up with a boat on his truck who, like me, had no one to boat with and was looking for company on the river. His name was Max; he had done the Lower run a few times, he said, and was ready to paddle it again. Max reached into his cooler and handed me a beer while I contemplated the wisdom of doing this run at peak flow with a guy who had only paddled it a few

times and always with much less water. Once the beer was finished I decided to go for it. After all, I thought to myself, it's only the Lower run. What can really go wrong?

Without getting into the details, I will say that Max set a record that day for swimming about thirty seconds after leaving the put-in eddy. While rather long, the swim was uneventful. Once he was safely out of the water, I unsuccessfully tried to get his boat before the whitewater picked up again.

Going with the "lightning never strikes the same place twice" mentality, I decided to boat down with two other strangers who put in shortly thereafter. I saw Max's boat pinned farther downstream and these guys were kind enough to help me get it unpinned and back to shore.

Thankfully, it was in great shape. Max brought me a twelve pack when he picked it up at my house. We kept in touch and, later that year, did some backcountry skiing together. He and his girlfriend have since become good friends.

This same run—Lower Clear Creek (though with about half the flow)—is also the scene of another story involving a stranger with less than ideal paddling skills. Two years ago I made plans to meet some people at

the take-out and my buddy Juan brought a friend of his from Boulder. This friend (whose name escapes me) was paddling a boat that had been out of production for at least ten years. His drysuit looked like it had been made during the Clinton Administration.

During the shuttle, he told us story after story of all the Class V “gnarr” he’d been paddling that season in California, where he spends half the year. Since I, too, had paddled in California (but not on stuff as big as he was talking about), I enjoyed the banter.

Once on the water, this stranger looked a bit shaky, but at least he made it down everything all right. In the eddy above “Screaming Quarter Mile,” which happens to be the grand finale of the run, he asked me if we were going to scout. Since I had never heard of anyone scouting this rapid and since the move was pretty easy and straightforward (especially for a Class V boater from California), I gave him the same information about how to run the drop that I’d successfully given to countless other newbies on this run. After confirming that he understood me, I advised him to follow close behind before peeling out and running the drop exactly where I told him I would.

As luck would have it, my new friend somehow missed the boof, got flipped by the hole and swam after a few failed roll

attempts. Like other rapids named for their unusually long length, “Screaming Quarter Mile” makes for an unpleasant swim. And, as often happens to swimmers here, he found himself on the wrong side of the river and had to scramble across some cliffs to get to a point where we could rope him across.

Once out of the water, he immediately laid into me “I had no idea where I was going! We should have scouted! Its all your fault!” Really? I wanted to tell him, I figured all that “Class V” you have been bragging about running in California would qualify you to make a simple Class IV move. Instead, I apologized and told him that we had found his boat. It was pinned, but we could get it rather easily.

The boat had come to rest on a relatively big rock about fifteen or so feet from shore with a decent sized eddy behind it. To complicate matters, this was all about 50 meters upstream of a blown out low-head dam that, while probably not lethal, had a nasty hole/rebar combination best avoided by swimmers and equipment.

Without consulting us—his fellow paddlers—to formulate a plan, this stranger immediately waded into the current, paddle in hand, on his way to retrieve his boat. Why the paddle? Apparently his idea was to use it to swim more effectively out to the eddy. Never minding the fact that this was completely unnecessary and made

him look ridiculous, I tried to talk him out of it as he would have no place to put the paddle when trying to dislodge the boat. Ignoring me, he worked his way into the eddy with his paddle and I threw him a rope with a carabineer attached. Awkwardly (as he only had one hand to work with), he was able to reach under the boat and clip the ‘bineer to it. Then, standing downstream of the boat/rope system, this guy started pushing the boat off the rock. To anyone watching, it was clear that, as soon as the boat was loose, it and the rope would be pushed right into him by the current and he’d be on his way towards the dam. I yelled at him to stop and adjust the rope, but his skullcap and earplugs kept him from hearing me, so he kept pushing. There was now a small group of boaters surrounding me on this busy afternoon and one could almost hear the collective eye-roll. Eventually, we used some whistles to get his attention and he worked his way to the upstream side of the rope. We got the boat out a few minutes later and my new friend used his paddle to not so gracefully make it back to shore. Not only was this guy not a Class V boater, he was reckless, with no regard for communication or teamwork.

Yep, this guy was a stranger. While he had no nefarious intentions and never offered any of us candy, he was most definitely a clown.

At the end of the day, I don’t regret going boating with this stranger (whose name,



Screaming Quarter Mile at high water!
Photo by Ken Wealty

DECISION MAKING

Friends and strangers enjoying Happy Hour at the take-out for the Lower Clear Creek run (CO).
Photo by Ian Howells



again, escapes me). No one got hurt and the memory still makes me laugh two years later. I will probably continue to boat with strangers, but I will definitely boat a little bit more cautiously in their presence. Also, I have come to realize that whenever a new paddling partner regales me with stories of all of his Class V accomplishments, I probably need to triple check to ensure that my throw rope isn't tangled.

And, it needs to be added, there is no doubt that future good stories will come from paddling with those whose skills are uncertain. When I take these risks, sometimes I have to deal with clowns and sometimes I make lifelong friends and get free beer.

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INFLATABLES

OREGON RAFTING TEAM

BY TIM BRINK

WHAT IS THIS thing once described as a “charismatic body of energy” that often stumbles through life in the same manner a river crashes through boulders? Seven years ago raft racing was generally a one-day commitment in which a handful of guides working for the same company threw a crew together and paddled down a local run as fast as they could in an attempt to best a rival outfitter. Dropping a waterfall in a raft was a rare and downright suspicious activity (apparently a few yahoos got bored with life). Coordinating a series of river events may have been done for a season or so by an organization with vested commercial interests. Creating a pre-Facebook and Twitter social media tool such as a comprehensive website again was done via extrinsic versus intrinsic motivation. So what’s the deal? Why bother? Create and maintain something, a variety of things that as a whole has not been done before, for seven years.

We are what we are not. ORT has survived through relationships which in one manner may be described as a dependence, alliance, or kinship. We needed all of these likely as a result of our inability to attain these variables in traditional settings. An interpersonal relationship is an association between two or more people that may range from fleeting to



Start of the USRA National Championships on the Clackamas (OR).
Photo by Daniel Sutherland

enduring. Fleeting to enduring, that’s ORT. In 7 years we have had about 28 paddlers come through our ranks. In nearly each case we still communicate on some level, enduring. However it is also true that we do not have tight nuclear families, and only in some cases lasting marriages. Then what’s the glue? Competition? In part, a common goal that we can work collaboratively to achieve. Yet only a few of our paddlers have or had previously participated in organized team sports. Adrenaline? We don’t all drop big waterfalls, attempt first descents, and enjoy racing head to head or even against the clock. Acknowledgement, notoriety? Possibly. In our travels nationally and even globally we bump into folks who know us, but that’s not the primary innate force.

River; a natural watercourse, usually freshwater, flowing towards an ocean, lake, sea, or another river! That’s ORT! An alliance that is both fleeting and enduring. A wonderfully natural and pure connectedness, an everlasting sense of belonging that doesn’t have issues or expectations. As Bruce commonly says, “Expectations are

Head to Head R2 racing during the Western Whitewater Championship Series.
Photo by Tim Brink

predetermined resentments.” A river is an earthly manifestation of God’s soul that instantaneously replenishes our own. Water brings so many forms of life. Whitewater provides the platform for glory and humility. Life, death, and everything in between.

ORT shares its energy. Like a paddler picking up another thumbing a ride to the put-in, we give back. Our coffers are nearly empty at the end of each season. Events are run to cover costs, and fundraisers keep our vehicles on the road and make it manageable for our paddlers to participate. We sell or raffle gear below wholesale, hand out t-shirts and shwag, provide free barbecues and beverages at our events, and do a lot of darn work pulling it all together. The return is amazing. Paddlers are independent and self sufficient by nature yet we help lay the platforms to start and maintain relationships. The river is always the blessed medium. We hug each other after months and sometimes years of separation. Our stories make the camp fire glow. The water returns to the sea and comes back in another form to facilitate yet another adventure. So will we. ORT. Fleeting and enduring.

Oregonraftingteam.com

HOW I GOT STARTED

FROM CHLORINE TO CLASS V

BY SEAN BIERLE

“ I KNOW ALL ABOUT water... I’ve been a lifeguard at a pool for two summers!”

That was the response I gave when questioned about what qualified me to be a raft guide on the Payette River during an interview in March 2000. Looking back at my answer after a decade working in the whitewater industry, I now realize how ignorant I must have seemed to my future bosses, Kenneth and Anne Long of Cascade Raft and Kayak. I do remember saying it earnestly, and not facetiously, and them maintaining a straight face.

I had worked as a lifeguard for the two previous summers at a military base in Tampa, Florida. My primary responsibilities at the pool involved cleaning hair clumps out of the drains and applying a limited amount of sunscreen (I did want to have a beautiful tan, after all). It was the quintessential South Florida high school job, and I loved it. Oh, the excitement of nailing a one-and-a-half off the diving board!

At the time of my interview, I had never even been whitewater rafting. Nor had I done much camping or outdoor recreation as a child. My family was big into traditional sports like baseball and football, and my father’s career in the military had us bouncing all over the country without many opportunities to attend summer camps or consistently participate in Scouts. We did spend lots of time at the beach, during stints when my dad was stationed in both Hawaii and Florida, so I did love boogie boarding and felt very comfortable in open water.

One of my uncles, Chuck, lived in Boise and had been rafting with Cascade Raft several times. Knowing that I was looking for a summer job after my first year at the University of Florida, he told me that I should look into becoming a raft guide



The author leading a group of Alzar School students on down pristine Clear Creek in Northern California.

Photo by Katherine Edmonds

because “It’s a bunch of college kids and they all live in a tent city down by the river,” he told me. “It looks like a lot of fun!”

I don’t remember exactly what appealed to me so strongly. Probably it was just the chance for an adventure. I think that somehow I sensed that I was not cut out for the South Florida lifestyle and was looking for an alternative. I can now safely say that Idaho is about as different from South Florida as it gets.

So, per Chuck’s suggestion, I contacted Cascade Raft with several emails imploring them to check out my resume and give me a chance. I promised to be a hard worker, and touted my familiarity with water as a strong point. For some reason, they agreed to interview me if I came out to Idaho for my Spring Break. I later learned that they gave me the interview because (at the time) I was majoring in Nuclear Engineering. They thought this nugget would be attractive on their staff profile page of the company website. So they gave me an interview.

It is unlikely that I was particularly impressive in that interview, given my complete lack of experience, but the Longs took a chance on me, for which I am eternally grateful. It turned out that they frequently hired new guides with zero experience, knowing that they could train them in-house and have them develop experience on the relatively tame Main Payette, a nearby Class II-III run.

At the end of the semester, I loaded up my Ford Ranger and drove out West. I sailed across the country, excited for adventure. This would become an annual pilgrimage for me—I’d finish my last final at UF and then take off the same day. I almost always took the most direct route. It was exactly 45 hours of driving, which I always did in three 15-hour days, sleeping in the back of the truck at rest stations. It sounds like torture now, but I loved every drive out. (Heading east at the end of each summer for school was a different story.)

My first day on the river is etched into my memory. Casey, a guide for the company who had been kayaking since he was a young child, took me and another trainee down the Main in a raft with no clients. I was woefully underdressed and froze, but wouldn’t admit it. We passed by “eddies” and “holes” and Casey pointed them out, but I had no clue what he was talking about. It was exciting. It felt dangerous. It was so different from sitting on a lifeguard stand in 100% humidity, twirling a whistle while you wait for your hourly break. I was in love.

After that first day of rafting, I had the opportunity to move into Otter Slide, the campground leased by Cascade Raft for their guides to live at. This is the community my uncle had sold the experience on. I had bought a Wal-Mart tent that was huge and low quality, and it turned out, fragile. Two of the company’s experienced guides,

characters known as Captain Bob and Big Water Ben, watched as I attempted to set it up, snapping two poles and rendering it useless. I made a lap down to Boise and back, returning with a much smaller tent to use the rest of that summer. I'm sure Captain Bob and Big Water Ben had a good chuckle about that experience.

That whole first summer was an amazing learning experience. I gradually learned a new set of vocabulary adding words like portage, self-bailing, and wave train. I also learned to tell the standard raft guide jokes (anyone know the one about "Summer teeth?"). I worked as much as I possibly could, two to three trips down the Main a day, and when I wasn't working I jumped on more experienced guides' rafts on the South Fork of the Payette to begin training for Class IV whitewater. Cascade Raft also had the incredible benefit of allowing raft guides to attend kayak clinics and use their school gear, so I dipped my toe into whitewater kayaking as well. I learned to camp, to cook outside, to go days without feeling the need for a shower.

The highlight of the summer was a trip down the Lower Five, the bottom portion of the famous North Fork Payette. A group of the guides got together one evening and

coordinated a trip on this section. Through rock-paper-scissors, I won the last spot on the raft. Our group of guides powered down the section with no difficulty, lurching forward with every well-timed stroke. As a rookie, I added very little to the raft, other than great enthusiasm. Going through Juicer and Crunch, the two Class V rapids of the run, I experienced an adrenaline rush like I never had before. I have now run that section many times, in raft and kayak, but that first time was certainly the most memorable.

The level of immersion provided by this summer job hooked me into the sport completely. The first fall after guiding all summer, it was difficult to go back to Florida. I had a job lifeguarding at a lake owned by the university, but the profession had lost its luster. I daydreamed of guiding and wished I could trade in my apartment for a tent by the river. I had traded chlorine for Class V and rescue noodles for throw ropes. I was depressed by the fact that my summers were only three months long.

I was saved though, because Cascade Raft led trips to Chile in the winter, and agreed to let me wash dishes for them there. Down in Chile, I really got into kayaking, getting my first combat roll on

the Rio Claro in Los Queñes. Whitewater became an opportunity to see the world, ultimately taking me all over the United States, to Mexico, Canada, and Costa Rica. Whitewater paddling became an integral part of my lifestyle, giving me the opportunity to test myself. I worked hard on developing my skills and tackled some classic runs.

Now, I view whitewater paddling as an opportunity to give others the same experience I had. My focus has shifted from running increasingly difficult and remote rivers to teaching leadership skills. In 2004, I cofounded the Alzar School, a 501c3 nonprofit program for teenagers with a strong whitewater component. Our school explores rivers in Idaho, California, and Chile. We host an annual event for over 150 kids on the Nantahala River every summer. We work with the US Forest Service to complete river clean ups and restoration work. Many of our students come with zero experience, and it is extremely gratifying to expose them to the sport that undoubtedly changed the direction of my life.

Sean Bierle is the cofounder of the Alzar School (www.alzarschool.com), and whitewater enthusiast since 2000.



DECISION MAKING

“QUALITY HANGING OUT TIME” ON FISH CREEK

BY WILL VOLPERT

THE ENTIRE TIME frame of an adventure can be broken into bits and pieces and, in particular, dots that mark significant turning points. There is always a first dot, the starting point, and a final dot, which marks the end of your journey. Each decision you make (another dot) often has a profound effect upon the remaining dots yet to be made. If your adventure involves kayaking or rafting, your journey normally ends as expected, at the final dot, someplace known as a “take-out” or access point along the bank of a river.

In a small clearing we rested. “How far above the creek do you think we are?” I asked Garret. The answer was maybe 100 feet or so. Not much, but it was steep and rocky, with a small cliff to start out, and we didn’t have a static line so our z-drag was going extra slow. It had taken three of us exactly three hours to move ourselves, our boats, and other miscellaneous items approximately 100 feet up and out of Fish Creek. We rested; and as we stared off in various directions I started picturing the dots that had led us to what was



Stoked to be back at the truck with all our gear.

Photo by Garret W. Smith

now a significant turning point in our little adventure.

It had started off about as normal as it gets for a group of people looking to get out on some of Oregon’s rivers for Memorial Day Weekend. We’d run the Upper Rogue and from there headed over to the North Umpqua. We still had Monday to go boating and on Sunday afternoon the itch for an adventure hit some of us like a bad case of poison oak. I remember specifically saying

something about wanting to find a creek off the beaten path. Willie, who is familiar with the area, said there was such a creek just six miles up the road from us. We drove over Fish Creek that evening and were ecstatic to see a good flow underneath the bridge. Our map showed a road that led right to the water and would give us about a five-mile run. Our adventure had been found; dot number one had sprouted.

Around the campfire that night we looked over our not-in-depth-at-all Oregon road map that had contour lines for every 300 feet in elevation. It seemed that there would be two particularly interesting sections on the creek. The first was within a quarter-mile of where we were putting in and the second was about a mile and a half into the run where the creek would drop 300 feet in less than half a mile.

The next morning we packed up and drove to the put-in. The creek looked great. Dana, who was doing our shuttle and not at all enthused about our fabulous adventure, always asks me what time she should call for help. “What do you think? Six hours?” she asked. It was 10 a.m. and the whole run was only five miles long. We were all

Maps make everything more exciting.

Photo by Garret W. Smith





*Portaging one of the first drops on Fish Creek (OR).
Photo by Garret W. Smith*

motivated to get it done quickly because the long drive back to Ashland awaited. I thought for a second and replied, “Don’t get worried until it starts to get dark.” We pushed off. She drove back to the campground. And so it began.

It wasn’t long before we came to a fairly significant horizon-line-jumble-of-rock/log-gnarl. We pulled over on river-left and hiked downstream about a third of a mile. We’d be lining and portaging this one—all of it. But other than the huge drops, sieves, and logs it looked like it would have been a great rapid! So there remained a glimmer of hope for what remained downstream.

That glimmer came to life briefly as we managed to scrape a mile or so downstream without significant portaging or lining. The rapids were tight and technical and a few had some nice drops. But we weren’t making good time. We stopped and scouted everything and we did get hung up in a few places. Then, very suddenly, we came to a corner that reeked of heinousness.

The creek pooled up as it rounded a left-hand bend and slipped underneath a pile of logs. We stopped again on the left bank and my brother Skip and I started hiking. I stayed high and went quite a ways downstream. It looked like we’d be lining this one for sure, and I couldn’t see the end of it as the creek disappeared around a right

turn. Garret joined us and mentioned he thought we could line along the left bank. It was now crunch time—we were definitely pushing the clock to get out before dark. It was after 2 p.m. and we probably had not gone more than two miles. If things continued like this we’d be in trouble. We decided to get back to the boats and begin the process of moving downstream.

Willie and Garret took to moving the small Avon raft while Brandon, Skip, and I worked on the much larger Vanguard. We moved as quickly as possible and had made it to where the creek began bending right when I heard a whistle blast, looked downstream, and saw Willie motioning for us to join him and Garret 100 feet down river. They did not look stoked. From where they stood the rapid not only continued to be huge, but it actually got steeper. In fact we were standing atop a significant waterfall and it appeared that there was another one just downstream. What time was it? Three in the afternoon, which meant maybe three more hours before it would start to get dark. We knew from looking at the map that there was a road on river-right roughly 500-600 feet above the river maybe one mile away.

*Day 2: getting ready to haul the boats out.
Photo by Garret W. Smith*

Our choice was to either to risk continuing downstream and maybe not getting out before dark (and probably footing a search and rescue bill) or bailing on the trip, sending two people out to contact Dana to let her know all is well, and hiking the boats and gear out. We chose the latter. Put a dot there.

The first step in the process was to get the boats from river-left to river-right above a huge drop. Garret and Brandon went back upstream, crossed over the logjam, caught throw bags that were attached to the rafts, and pulled them across the creek into a small micro-eddy at the base of a cliff. When we re-grouped on river-right it was decided that Willie and Brandon would hike out while Garret, Skip, and I would begin the process of getting the boats started on



DECISION MAKING

what was sure to be an absolute nightmare of an experience.

And so there we sat, three hours later, a measly 100 feet above the river in a small clearing surrounded by tall trees. "Well according to the map the road is in that direction," I said. We decided to go look for it. There was no way we would be getting the gear out tonight, we'd have to save it for tomorrow, but there was no reason for us stay with it until then, especially since we didn't know where the road was.

We started walking through the dense woods. "Holy shit," all three of us muttered. We tilted our heads upward and stared at an enormous 300-foot cliff that emerged through the trees. "Maybe there's a way around it if we go further downstream," someone suggested. We started hiking

along the base of the bastard. After about a half-mile we took a break and then heard whistle blasts from back upstream. Soon were reunited with Willie and Brandon. They had found a steep and narrow gully through the cliff, found the road at the top, hiked to the highway where they hitched a ride, and caught Dana as she was driving in the opposite direction to the Ranger Station. That was a huge relief. They showed us their route and it wasn't long before we were back in a truck headed to the campground.

That night we came up with a plan to get the gear out. The first step was getting a static line. Willie called a friend in Roseburg (Greg) who, not only lent us a rope and a bunch of extra climbing gear, but he drove it up to us that night. Our plan involved moving the gear in stages that would take

a few laps each. From the small clearing we would move everything to the base of the cliff. From the base of the cliff we would z-drag everything up the gully as far as the rope could go. We'd then reset the z-drag at the top of the gully and get everything to the top. From there, it would be a quarter mile to the road. I figured we'd be lucky to get everything to the top of the cliff and would have to come back later that week to get it the rest of the way out.

Of course it rained all night and was especially cold the following morning. We packed up camp and left around 8 a.m. and got down to the boats around 9. We rolled the Vanguard so that it had four carry loops and then "one-two-three'd" it for an hour and a half to the base of the cliff. Up and over fallen trees, gaining elevation over huge boulders, squeezing it between

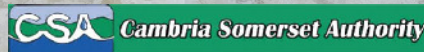
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And the portage-fest continues.

Photo by Garret W. Smith

things we made some good decisions after making one really bad one, putting on the run with limited beta.

We arrived back in Ashland around 8 p.m. that night. Skip had gone back to Eugene so Willie and Garret helped unload the gear into my yard. Garret was headed back home to Shasta. Other than this weekend, we'd hardly spent much time together aside from a day of touring breweries in western Montana (actually that's a good story too—maybe another time). When you go through an experience like we had it brings out everyone's character and spirit—shows who they truly are; which is maybe what he meant when he responded to my apology about putting him through such a physically heinous ordeal with "Don't apologize Will, I feel like we had some quality hanging out time together." He's right. When it comes down to it, all of us involved in this adventure did spend some quality time together—and we won't soon forget it.

narrow gaps between the cliff and trees, it somehow—magically—ended up at the base of the cliff. Next we went back for the Avon (which is about half the weight of the Vanguard) and the remainder of the gear. By 11:30 we had everything at the base of the cliff.

you must make decisions that make your future dots easier. Despite creating an absolutely heinous situation for ourselves, we did overcome a tremendous challenge in avoiding injury, getting 100% of our equipment out of a tough spot, and staying positive. In order to accomplish those three

The z-drag went smoothly. We had 180 feet of rope and nearly used the full length twice so the gulley was around 350 feet from top to bottom. It was 1:30 by the time everything was at the top. We were exhausted. It took two more hours to move everything to the road but we got it done by 3:30, exactly 24 hours after Willie and Brandon had begun their hike out to reach Dana.

There are few adventures I have been on where reaching the final dot has been so challenging and there are even fewer adventures I have been on where it has felt so rewarding. Normally, your final dot is at a place you've planned on. Perhaps the difference between an adventure and a misadventure is landing on a dot you weren't expecting. And when that happens

Doesn't look good upstream... or downstream.

Photo by Garret W. Smith



INTERNATIONAL PADDLING

MEXICO FLOATING IN MY MIND

BY DANIEL MEHREZ

THERE IT WAS, off in the distance, a straight steel beam with a single column dropping from its center to the river bottom below. The sun glistened off the guardrail and off an orange pick-up truck driving across.

“Haven’t seen one of those in a while,” I said, turning to glance at my companions in the group. Each had a satisfied grin on his face, and their bodies relaxed as they noticed what I had noticed: we had made it. This was the end of our three-day, two-night, self-supported kayak adventure down the Rio Santo Domingo in southwest Mexico.

As we floated downriver, nearing the bridge, and the end of our trip, the riverbanks became dotted with curious people. Five kayakers coming down the river is something of a rarity in these parts, and everyone, including donkeys and cows, stopped what they were doing to see this strange sight.

“Hola! Buenos tardes,” I said to each passing local with my bad Spanish accent, accompanying my greetings with enthusiastic hand gestures. Nearly everyone waved back and flashed a large smile, though some simply stood and stared, with quizzical looks on their faces (this was especially true of the donkeys).

We were now within a throw rope’s toss of the bridge and the river had really become the place to be. There were women washing clothes on the banks, teenage boys below the bridge, brooding on the rafters, and little kids frolicking on the river, doing back-flips off every semi-submerged rock. Watching their care-free spunkiness, I thought to myself, “Man, these little kids are fun.” Maybe I like kids, or I envy them, or I just want to be one, but whatever the reason, something drew me to go play with them. I paddled over to them and said in my



Tom starting the trip down a stretch of scenic flatwater.

Photo by Memo Guiloche

best Spanish, “Preguntan Kayakar?”

Nothing. They looked blankly at me, then at each other, then at me.

“Uhhh...” I made eye contact with one of them and asked again, “Kayakar? Tu quieres kayakar?”

A smile. I couldn’t tell if he understood and was excited or if he had no idea what I was saying and inside was laughing at me, but I swiftly plopped out of my boat anyway and brought it over to him so that he could try.

“Kayakar” I said again, “Es muy divertido!”

Success! He surely understood this time and with a quick grasp, a hop, and some floundering about, he managed to get his body into the kayak. The boat was about three times too big for him and the paddle looked even bigger. All that could be seen were his shoulders, head, and his hands as they flailed around with the paddle, splashing water in all directions.

I looked up to see the teenagers watching with smiles on their faces, which they quickly discarded when they noticed I had seen them. Typical teenagers. I turned my gaze from the sulking teenagers to the little

pip-squeak paddling my boat. He had no control of the boat but was thoroughly enjoying himself as the current pushed him towards the riverbank where women were washing clothes and the rest of my group had taken out.

Tom, our fearless leader, was out on the side of the river chatting with some of the women. Soap bubbles trailed from the dirty clothes and ran downriver. My pip-squeak friend charged straight through them and ran the kayak aground. He looked back at me with a big grin, then jumped up and splashed into the water. I stared at the soap bubbles floating down the river and then at Tom and at myself.

“Tom, we could use some washing ourselves couldn’t we?”

Tom chuckled as he ran his hand through a tuft of greasy, gray hair atop his head.

“Sure could,” he agreed.

Tom and I were covered with a compounded array of dirty, smelly layers which had accumulated over the last week. It began with a fifty-hour drive from freezing, snowy Washington, D.C. to the sunny airport in Mexico City, where we picked up the other three members of our group. From there it was a measly six-hour drive through winding desert roads to the town of Santiago Quiotopec, the put-in for the Rio Santo Domingo.

We pulled into town in a monstrous Ford van with dual rear wheels. Wind raced through the narrow dirt roads, whipping up dust and battering the kayaks on top of our van.



Kids at the take-out playing with the kayaks.
Photo by Memo Guiloche

Carefully, we opened up the doors and set foot in the world outside. Dust flew into any opening that we didn’t close. A man walked by tugging at two oxen, his eyes slightly squinted but otherwise barely taking heed of the wind at all. Tom asked him where the town leader was and the man pointed up the hill towards the central plaza. Several minutes later we were speaking with the leader, negotiating permission to kayak down the river. Voices were raised, but it was probably just because of all the sand in our ears.

That night, after several hours packing clothes, camping equipment, and food, into our kayaks (with much grunting, swearing, and some yelping), we strolled over to Olga’s house for dinner. Olga was a local woman of grandmotherly age

who had agreed to make us dinner that evening. In her simple home with blue walls and Christmas ornaments strung across the ceiling, we dined on tortillas with black beans and corn while dreaming of the upcoming days. Tomorrow we were embarking on our journey down the Rio Santo Domingo, a remote Class IV river winding through desert, mountains, and jungle.

We awoke the next morning at some indecent hour to the jolly crowing of roosters. The wind was still violently running through the streets, though perhaps a little less rambunctiously than the day before, and we were all giddy with excitement. We wasted no time organizing our belongings and drove to the put-in. There was a special feeling of excitement,

Scouting a rapid in the midst of the jungle.
Photo by Dan Mehrez



INTERNATIONAL PADDLING



A local looks on as our group prepares to embark on its journey.

Photo by Dan Mehrez

nervousness, and overall grade school giddiness as we waved one final goodbye to our shuttle driver, Jose-Lois, and peeled out into the current.

The river began with a good stretch of calm water as it snaked through the desert landscape. Large cliffs came and went, cows ran downstream beside us, and we waved goodbye to the last human beings we would see for the next three days. Soon the river steepened, narrowed slightly, and became littered with larger rocks. The trip had begun. We maneuvered our way down the rapids with frequent boofs and playful peel-outs; everyone in high spirits. The circus eventually ended as we came to our campsite for the night. Paddling clothes were slipped off while camping gear was forcefully extracted from the boats.

That night as we sat around a fire, dressed in warm, dry clothes, and chowing down on our freeze-dried dinners, we recounted our day and eagerly talked of the days to come. As we slid into our sleeping bags, tired muscles finally relaxed, and our sights turned towards the night sky. The mountains on either side of the river

framed the swath of brilliant stars that filled our vision as we drifted off to sleep.

The next day was full of rapids. Our rust had been sanded off by the day before and we joyfully proceeded downriver. There was only one ledge that gave us trouble, resulting in one swim and a portage. We floated to our campsite that evening even more exhausted, hungrier, and deeper in the midst of the wilderness. The freeze-dried dinners were doubly tasty and the stars beckoned us to sleep once again.

The third day was like the first in reverse. We started the day with several great rapids but soon the river began to calm and we were left with Class I/II boogie water until the take-out. With a mixture of

relief, accomplishment, and contentment we neared the take-out bridge where kids, teenagers, women, and now a group of dirty kayakers were all using the river for different purposes. After we recovered from the initial panic of not finding our van, we unpacked our things, changed into clean clothes, and enjoyed a warm meal from a family in town. Later, with full stomachs and sore muscles, we headed back to base camp to shower, eat, sleep, and sleep.

At home when my friends ask me about the river I say it was a lot of fun, but what I really remember is everything else. The fifty hour drive, the windy city, the man pulling oxen, Olga's homemade tortillas, our campsites along the river as we gradually left the desert and wound through the mountains into the jungle, and the nights spent around the campfire with good company in the middle of nowhere. And of course the people at the take-out—the frolicking kids, the brooding teenagers, and the hardworking women. These are the things that really stand out. After all, rapids in Mexico aren't all that different from rapids anywhere else. The scenery that envelops you, the companionship that binds you, and the collage of culture that is woven all around you is what really makes a paddling trip in Mexico a journey to another world.

The group fills up on tortillas and beans at Olga's house.

Photo by Peter Bross





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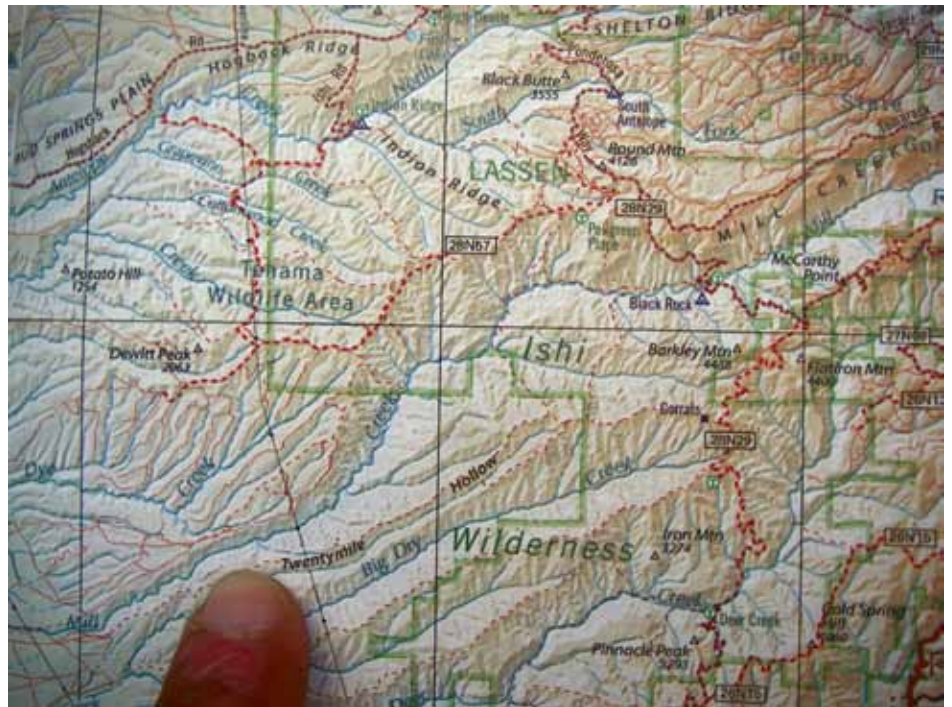
CREEKING

MILL CREEK, A THREE-DAY EXPEDITION ON A SIERRA NEVADA WILDERNESS RIVER

BY SAMMER ELIAS

MILL CREEK: WE prepared for it for days, we planned on the self supported expedition for months. But the goal actually was born on a very cold November day deep in a canyon of Colorado's mountains. Bryan and I were paddling one of our local favorites, a Colorado classic of big Class V water. There was no one else on the river that day, which was to be expected. It was late November, and it was cold. Giant ice platforms floated down the river along side of us. Ice constricted some passageways and was a hazard we were unaccustomed to. Sheltered in my mittens, my hands repeatedly froze to complete numbness. Bryan and I built a fire midway through the run, partly out of desperation, partly out of severe desire for warmth. It took a lot of determination to build that fire out of river sticks and old matches from our survival kits, but when that finally burned big and hot, it was the most glorious and beloved fire we had ever known. The scene was beautiful. We sat huddled around the fire on giant granite rocks as we watched the steam rise from our clothing with quick evaporation from the heat. The walls of the gorge towered around us almost 1000 feet high. I sensed my own fire within blazing, the one that continuously drives me to live life to the fullest. I was enjoying the challenge, the self-reliance, the clear nearness to the essence of living in that moment. Right then I told Bryan that we should do some remote overnight kayak expeditions. He agreed.

Three months later I emailed Bryan, Eric, and Tom, while I was kayaking in Ecuador with the proposition to go kayaking in California in the spring. Bryan brought the California plan to life, and on April 23rd we were packing our kayaks for Mill Creek, a



We took this photo of the map for a reference in case we needed to find our way out.
Photo by Sammer Elias

30-mile long, Class V river, deep in the Sierra Nevada.

There is not much that can fit into a whitewater kayak—less than what fits in a backpack. Additionally, weight is a big issue. The more weight it's carrying, the worse the kayak performs. We each chose our sacrifices: no sleeping pads, no rain jackets, no pillows, no tents, just a few pieces of clothing, a little food, and emergency/survival equipment. Even with what little we brought, we had wrestling matches with our kayaks as we stuffed and kicked our gear to make it fit.

Before we departed, we looked at evacuation routes through the mountains. We checked for vertical access out of the river canyon, and we checked for egress out of the mountains. It would take days of walking to get out; with an injury it would take even longer. No cell service, no way of contacting help...good. We didn't take a map, but I took detailed photos of a map with my waterproof digital camera, and the camera came with us. I added two days to

when we expected to be off the river, and told a friend that if she didn't hear from us by then, then it was time to contact rescue authorities. That gave us five days total, allowing for three days on the river, and two more for the unexpected. Injuries and mishaps are not uncommon on difficult rivers, usually resulting in a slow evacuation on foot. A loss of a boat or paddle has the same result. I didn't want rescuers to come looking for us just because we didn't show up when we expected to, hence the two days of additional walking time. Rescues are very expensive, and we are self-reliant; we can handle minor to semi-serious injuries, river rescues, and we can survive for a number of days beyond what was planned.

Bryan, Tom, Eric, and I, make up our kayaking team. We have been paddling together, in some combination, for anywhere from two years to seven years. For the past two years, Tom and I have partnered on almost every after-work river endeavor. Bryan has been there on almost every major Colorado river descent I've made in the past seven years. Eric and Bryan have

partnered many times, and in 2008, Eric, Bryan, and I kayaked the rivers of Ecuador for nine days, self guided. The four of us have shared many laughs and river stories, and we've also guided and protected each other's lives from numerous harms.

We all would be considered expert level whitewater kayakers, yet we each have our unique strengths that come to us in surplus, from which we benefit the most. Bryan has exceptional paddling form and stability, rare is the day when Bryan is upside down. Eric has great faith and even greater gusto, possibly the most desired and difficult to attain of all desirable whitewater qualities. Tom is always cool, calm, and relaxed in action. I am quick and aggressive.

While these qualities serve us each in our individual kayaking, we also contribute to the group by roles we naturally tend to take, and those roles are generated from other unique strengths that we each have.

Bryan is our beta man. Self initiated, Bryan will always gather as much information as possible on everything one might want or need to know for an upcoming river descent. This includes logistics to and from the river, current river flows and patterns, individual rapid descriptions, and personal accounts from previous trips. Tom is our veteran kayaker. While the other three of us are, roughly, on our tenth year of whitewater paddling, Tom is on his 15th, and with that comes good experience and a good eye; plus, Tom is not shy about vocalizing his veteran perspective. Eric's simple approach of pure determination and strength, and general faith in success, is refreshing and balancing for all of us. What I offer the group is a willing probe...on unknown rivers and rapids I am the one out front. I like the mental stimulus of being the lead/probe boater. It might be the heightened sense of ownership, commitment, or the excitement of the unknown—I'm really not sure—but

Tom running one of the larger Class Vs on the trip.

Photo by Eric Bryant



We misjudged this seal launch; it was over 20 feet high.

Photo by Tom Doherty

whatever it is, it puts me in a mental place that allows me to paddle my best. I don't think the others care too much what it does for me, they just think it's nice that someone else wants to be up front.

Driving to Mill Creek we first stopped where we expected to pull out of the river, a little town at the bottom of the mountains. There wasn't a good place to park one of our vehicles, so we knocked on the door of the house with the friendliest looking front yard. The good man welcomed us to park Eric's truck in his driveway. Then we headed for the put-in. We figured it

would take about an hour to get there, and were a bit surprised when two and a half hours of rough, mountain back-roads later, we arrived at our river. Far along that road journey, Eric realized that he had forgotten one of the two fuel canisters that we had planned to cook our meals with. The one fuel canister he did bring was only partially full. We knew what this meant... Bryan had already done all the calculations before hand as to how many BTUs each of our meals required, and therefore how many fuel canisters we needed. So, we were a bit quiet and stressed when we heard this news from Eric, but it was an understandable mistake. Bryan did more calculations: hot drinks were nixed, along with hot water bottles for sleeping bags, and a good amount of positivity was added.

We put in to the river late on the first day with a good sense of adventure. Within an hour we got sufficiently wet in some good whitewater, then pulled off to make camp. We did well enough with our campfire that we were able to boil all our water that night by wood fire alone, giving us even more hope for our lone fuel canister. We hung our food bags high with a rope to keep them out of reach of bears, then we settled down to relax.



CREEKING

We also didn't expect rainstorms. The weather forecast was for mostly sunny weather, with a 10% chance of precipitation, so we didn't bring much in the way of rain protection to keep our boats lighter. Though, as an old mountain man once told me, "Never mind the local forecast, the mountains make their own weather." As I've experienced often enough before, that saying held true. The others in our team all brought bivy sacks, while I packed an old fashioned tarp. After erecting my tarp tight and low that night, I watched the rain pour down inches from my face and body while I stayed completely dry.

Our second day found more dark clouds, rain, wind, and cold. We also found some bizarre, otherworldly looking, transparent pink salamanders. In addition, Mill Creek was a very strange creek in itself, varying from "river" size with significant rapids, then shrinking down in some places to a tunnel four feet wide. The entire river would pass through tunnels made of volcanic rock. Judging by the very slow speed of the water in these narrow areas, it was probably twenty feet deep. There is an area we had been warned about where

the river narrowed down to complex and steep channels only a couple of feet wide, and the water there didn't slow down. "Dead Man's Narrows," it was called. This was supposed to be the only mandatory portage on the whole journey. Especially as the lead boater, Dead Man's Narrows was on my mind all of the time. I was on the lookout for it, I didn't want me or us to stumble into it without being able to get out. During the first two days, Bryan would often remind me, "Sammer, be careful. Look out for Dead Man's Narrows," and I would assure him that I had not forgotten.

After a long day on the river, it was time to scout for a camp. We didn't find anything but cliff sides along the river bank, so we decided to climb the cliff wall and see what was above it. Bryan found flat grassy land above, and we decided it would do for a camp. We had to use our fingers and toes to climb the 30-foot wall—a little sketchy, but not too bad. Then we used a rope to haul up our gear.

As we hung around the campfire, Bryan decided that he needed some shoes, instead of walking around barefoot. One

of his ideas for reducing the weight in his kayak, along with cutting off half of his toothbrush, was to leave behind footwear. So he cut out rectangular shapes from a small piece of foam he was using as a sleeping pad. He attached some rope to the rectangular shapes and made himself a couple of primitive sandals.

Our third and last day was eventful, with some tense moments. For instance, I came around a benign looking turn in the river, and without notice, suddenly dropped into the entrance of a deep, dark, steep and ominous gorge: Dead Man's Narrows. I knew it immediately, but I was a moment too late to stop. I scanned for an eddy, but could not find one. Then I spotted a concave indentation in the canyon wall where the water slowed down a bit, and darted for it. With some precision and some luck I barely caught it, and paddled upstream aggressively to stay in it. I am not a person who will flail away trying to catch the backside of an eddy, or correct a line that I'm about to miss, only to get sucked into a rapid sideways or backwards without composure and drive. In such situations, after a few seconds of trying to do what I need to, I turn the boat directly towards whatever it is I am trying to avoid, and charge it head on. I was one paddle stroke away from doing that above Dead Man's Narrows, when I found that I was able to stay in the indentation in the wall. My next sickening feeling inside was realizing that my entire team of paddling friends was about to unknowingly paddle into the Narrows, as I had done, but with nowhere to stop. Bryan was next after me, and he had a sharp instinct to stop just before I did. There was still Tom and Eric. I saw a small eddy directly across the river from me, and I thought that I had a chance of ferrying across and catching it. It looked better than the spot I was struggling to stay in, so I immediately went for it. As I was



The entire river, with all of its water, narrowed down to just a few feet wide in places.

Photo by Tom Doherty



A nice big field to sleep in.
Photo by Sammer Elias

paddling across I saw Tom coming from upstream. I couldn't use my hands to give him a signal, and it wasn't appropriate to say anything casual, so I yelled out a lot of random intense curse words with severity. Tom got the message and eddied out well upstream. Eric did the same. I barely caught the eddy across the river. It was at the lip of the first major drop into the gorge, and as I ferried, I almost bailed out and turned to face and charge whatever the Narrows had in store for me. With determination and luck I made the eddy safely.

We all got out safely and collected on the river bank. Then we began our walk around the gorge. I stalled behind before walking. "Bryan, I almost didn't make it" I told him, when the others had already started the portage. I had to process this for a while on shore, dealt with it, before moving on.

As we hiked around the gorge with fully loaded kayaks on our shoulders, I wondered where and how we would get back into the river. *Enough of this hiking boats around*, I thought. *Loaded kayaks are such a burden*. I decided to myself that the first place I found along the top of the

gorge wall that had a clean vertical drop, with deep water below, is where I would enter. I walked directly to the wall, looked down, and I figured it looked acceptable—maybe a little on the high side. I called Tom over first because he was the most likely to approve and join me. I made it sound as positive as I could. "Oh yeah, it's good," I said. "Maybe a 15-foot drop with deep water below." He came over and looked, "Sure, I'll do that," he said. "It looks closer to 12 feet." Even better, I thought. Bryan came over, looked, then walked away. I guess he told Eric something discouraging about the launch spot, because they both went somewhere else. Meanwhile, I held Tom's boat for him as it teetered on the edge of the ledge. Tom launched, and fell for a surprisingly long time. Partly in surprise and partly in laughter, I watched as Tom and his boat rotated in mid-air, with Tom eventually landing on his head. The impact stunned him a little, and knocked him loose from his outfitting. It took Tom a couple of tries to roll up. I was still laughing. Then he pulled out the camera, and told me he was ready for my launch. That stopped my laughter. Even if it wasn't a great idea, as Tom's launch had illustrated, I couldn't

back out now. I climbed in, and focused on a strategy to avoid landing on my head. "Come on, I am waiting" he said, a bit bitterly. I knew it was going to happen sooner or later, so I picked sooner, and with strong reservations, I pushed myself off. Luckily I dove cleanly, and resurfaced moments later. We both looked back at the height of the drop...it was over twenty feet.

A few hours later and we were paddling back into civilization, a small version of it, at the base of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Looking at Mill Creek from where it passed benignly and gently under a small bridge, you would never imagine what fantastical characteristics, intensity, beauty, and adventure lie along its descent from the top of the mountains.

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The advertisement features a black background with yellow and white text. At the bottom, there is a photograph of two people in kayaks on a river. The text is arranged in a dynamic, overlapping manner, with the company name and phone number prominently displayed.

CREEKING

RISK...AND REWARD

BY LEO KASKEL

THERE I WAS, staring out of the passenger window down at the tops of hundred-foot trees. I was looking into a bottomless ravine in the middle nowhere on the side of a forgotten West Virginia mountain. Our pickup truck held three other people and had six boats stacked on top—oh, I almost forgot, there were two more people wedged in the bed of the truck. That fact escaped me because I had pressing matters to contend with. For instance, I wondered how they would ever be able to evacuate us if anyone were even lucky enough to survive the truck losing its grip and the calamity that would follow. The gravity of the situation brought me back from my daydream. As the front tires started to slide down a wash-out that cut the road in half, the rear tires were perched behind boulders. For icing on the cake, I replayed in my head the comment the driver made 10 minutes earlier: “I haven’t drove a stick in awhile, but I should be fine.” Sitting back I comforted myself with a thought: “If our cameras survive the fire ball, at least whoever finds them in the wreckage will know that we had a good time that Friday morning (though we all



Our whole crew on the river after a successful day in West Virginia.

Photo by Mark Zakutansky

know cameras never capture the best moments).” Yes, a good time indeed.

Early in the evening the day before, the Thursday before CheatFest, we were gathered around the campfire, wondering what we were going to run the next day. The first suggestion was Wonder Falls on the Lower Big Sand. As quickly as the idea was presented, it was confirmed. While waiting for the rest of our friends to show up for the CheatFest weekend we would do a quick run on part of the the Lower

Big Sandy. That Thursday night I could not sleep. I kept thinking about the drop and how to land it well. I had never even done a five-foot drop, let alone huck an 18-footer.

The next morning, I was all jammed up. I thought about how people had blown out their shoulder or mauled their face. Everyone assured me I would be fine: it was in my skill set and the consequences were minor—everyone except Dave Bassage, who said, “Oh yeah, there are no consequences as long as you do everything right.” Soon I talked myself into thinking the idea of running the falls was absurd. It was something for kids to do, not adults with logic and responsibilities.

We all left camp that Friday morning and piled in our shuttle vehicles. As we approached the Lower Big Sandy put-in we started seeing people carrying their boats a mile away from the put-in. I thought “how bad can these roads be?” I soon found out while I was pushing a Subaru’s fourth tire back onto the road. Sketchy...very sketchy. Well after the adventure of setting shuttle I found myself on the Lower Big Sandy. I had been told it was like the Lehigh’s No Way rapid...ummm, yeah not quite. There

Dylan Ruggiero running Wonder Falls on the Lower Big Sandy (WV).

Photo by Leo Kaskel



Leo Kaskel celebrates after running Wonder Falls for the first time.

Photo by Mark Zakutansky

was carnage everywhere. A couple of interesting swims in our group did not help my nerves, which were already shot.

Then I saw the entrance of Wonder Falls from my boat. From that angle it really was a disquieting horizon line. Fear crept up my spine like a chill on an eerie night that allows one to believe in ghosts. I saw people disappearing over it like lemmings falling off a cliff into an abyss. I also saw two portages, people walking around the falls on river left. I thought, "What did I get myself into?" I wasn't sure if I should even scout it. I knew the line, there was no reason to scout it. But I had to see it. Maybe I would see something that would help me make a convincing premeditated decision. From the shore, I watched two friends succeed but then I saw a third who got worked so bad in the backwash that I almost put down my camera to grab a rope. I was on edge, as nervous as a timid fawn taking his first steps. I was on the bubble: what to do, what to do? I came up with plenty of good reasons not to do it. I waited for everyone else to go then as my friends waited for my final decision I thought, "now or never." I reminded myself that those who define the edge only do so by going over it. I don't even remember putting on my skirt but I do remember the reassuring smiles on my friends' faces. I ferried from river right



to the line on river left. I caught an eddy above the drop and then policed my line. I couldn't properly peel because my paddle was scraping. I was hung up on something; maybe it was my nerves or maybe it was the rocks or maybe it was both. I worked my way out into the current and then I crossed that barrier, that definitive moment when there was no going back. The focus on the task at hand calmly entered my mind and pushed everything else aside. No place to eddy out, I was going over these falls one way or the other. So I got aggressive, I planned out my strokes in my head (I was especially concerned with the one that would be my last). I was committed to my line now, no more foreign thoughts. All of life's irrelevancies and contradictions no longer existed. The fact that I was petrified

of heights had no room in my mindscape. With a couple moves I reached the lip. There are places in time when you just need to let go, times when you need to hold on, and then there are times when you should just get lost in a moment. This was all three of those moments wrapped up in one. As the everlasting moment passed, I rose out of the foam like a phoenix out of the ashes. I was revitalized, rejuvenated, and reborn. All the overwhelming fears I had before were replaced by adrenaline and euphoria. I shouted at the top of my lungs; my arms were raised in triumph. I felt vindication. All those pool sessions in the dead of winter, and dam sessions on Friday afternoons, were all worth it.

So what is the moral of this creeking story? I am not quite sure; that is up to you, the reader, to determine. The reader must decide who the more content man is, he who has braved going over the edge and danced in the storm of life or he who has stayed securely on the shelf and merely existed? Oh, and what about he who follows a thrilling waterfall descent with a potentially deadly shuttle ride? That's another story....



The author running Wonder Falls on the Lower Big Sandy (WV).
Photo by Leo Kaskel

REMEMBRANCE

A LIFE FULL OF LOVE AND ADVENTURE: REMEMBERING BOB NORR

BY BOBBY MILLER

I COULD SENSE BOB'S love for adventure the first day I met him and I knew right away that I had found a friend that I would share many kayaking adventures with. Our first paddling trip was on Upper Seneca Creek and it was an epic day that will be talked about among those who were there for years. Seth Chapelle and Matt Sloan had ridden with me and we were supposed to meet Bob in the town of Seneca Rocks. There was some miscommunication on the meeting spot so we wasted two hours trying to find each other. With daylight being limited, we decided to go for it anyway and bring some flashlights for when it finally got dark. We drove to the top of Spruce Knob, where the road was completely snowed in. From there, we hiked five miles through the snow to get to the creek. The creek was low and scappy but I assured the guys that things would improve when we got to the good drops. Seth and Matt had been on many low water adventures with me but I was unsure how Bob would feel. He approached this day as

he did every day that I spent with him, with good spirits and a big smile. Soon, the run channelized and the waterfalls started. We had a spectacular time running drop after drop going down one of the best runs in the state of West Virginia. There is a 25-footer early in the run and Bob aced the drop, which brought a huge smile to his face. At the time, that drop was the tallest plunge he had taken. Several hours and close to 1000 feet of gradient later, we paddled off the last 15 footer as the daylight started slipping away. We had a two-mile hike out in the dark but the full moon lit the way for us. We joked around and talked about the awesome day we had. The shuttle ride back to get my car was filled with smiles, laughter, and the sound of one of Bob's favorite singers (and one of mine too, if you must know the truth), Taylor Swift.

The next time I saw Bob was on a snowy day at the Top Yough race. He joked how Swallow Falls had his number on previous trips and was so excited when he aced it. A week later, he met me over at Paint Creek, one of his favorite runs in Pennsylvania. Before running this, we decided to go check out Hinckston Falls, a narrow 60-foot waterfall. He selflessly agreed to be in his boat for safety while I



Bob Norr (on the right) and Matt Sloan on the Middle Branch of the Oswegatchie (NY).

Photo by Sean Chapelle

ran it and was planning to make a descent of his own afterward. I came off the falls and the impact of hitting the pool injured my shoulder. He was the first one there to check on me and to help me get to shore. He decided to pass on the falls that day but had it high on his list of runs to come back and hit.



Summer brought plenty of runs down the Upper Yough and a trip to Great Falls of the Potomac. I took a few runs over the Maryland and Virginia sides of the falls and had to head home but I remember that Bob was so stoked to be out there. He and Matt stayed out and kept lapping the falls over and over. Labor Day weekend brought probably our best adventure when a large group of us headed to the Beaver River in upstate New York. We camped and paddled for three days and nights, dropping some of the craziest whitewater in the state. We hit all three sections of the Beaver, the Bottom Moose, and the Middle Branch of the Oswegatchie. The big drops kept coming

Bob at Great Falls of the Potomac.

Photo by Harrison Martin

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REMEMBRANCE

all weekend long and we all left saying what a spectacular time we had and talked about how we couldn't wait for next year's trip. We put together a video of the weekend, which Bob enthusiastically shared with his family and friends.

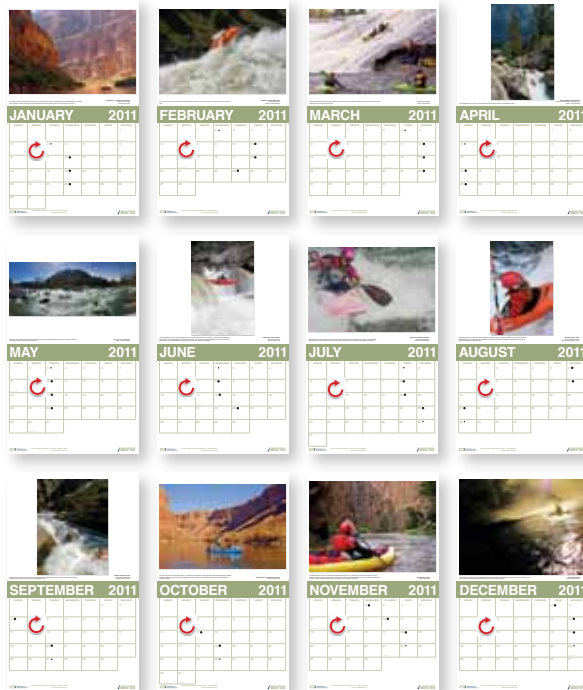
As fall turned to winter, we hit several classic runs like the Top Yough and Big Sandy. Warm weather brought a new experience for Bob, the Upper Blackwater, which is West Virginia's standard for challenging creek runs. I remember hearing the excitement in his voice describing his first time down, following our friend, Simon Braun, over the multiple drops and boofs. Bob and I headed there the next day for his second run and he was right behind me the whole way, styling his lines with the usual smile that he always showed.



Bob on the drive to New York.
Photo by Matt Sloan

As winter started to set in, we made plans to go to Wisp for a free day of skiing that was part of a Subaru promotion. However, the day before ended up being very warm, which melted snow and brought the Blackwater up. We decided to bail on skiing and go run the Upper B. This was the last day that I would get to spend with Bob. He was having a great day and we spent our time running good lines and joking together in the eddies between drops. That is how I will always remember Bob: the enthusiastic guy who was always up for an adventure and approached each challenge with a smile on his face. He lived his life to the fullest and made a positive impact on everyone he met. I will miss him greatly and I will never forget the fun times we had.

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And the faithful cleanse their souls in it.

-Stephen Strange

MOOSE MORNING

an achy body from the drive
the morning cold and grey
with fog and frost on lonely leaves
the winter's close today

a rainbow parade of plastic boats
drifting out of town
follows the sparkling tea-stained water
like bright leaves floating down

gearing up along the road
excitement and butterflies rise
scrambling down the muddy bank
cold air waters the eyes

an icy splash of frigid water
finally now, truly awake
drifting towards the horizon line
where a falls puts an end to the lake

hold down the butterflies 'til it's too late
let gravity tighten its grip
react without thinking, there's no time
for blinking
fly forty feet down from the lip

flawless or flailing, in seconds
you're down
look up towards the top from the eddy
take a breath in, feel your face grin
The River awaits, and you're ready.

-Stephen Strange

*The poet soul cleansing on Van
Campen's Mill Creek (PA).*

Photo by Jeff Ackerman

ACCIDENT REPORTS: SEPTEMBER – DECEMBER 2011

BY CHARLIE WALBRIDGE

THE RELENTLESS PACE of whitewater fatalities slowed considerably during the last four months of 2011. From September to December there were 4 kayak and 3 rafting fatalities; an additional death in a drift boat brought the total to 8. If we add three previously unreported deaths the yearly total is 77, including 23 kayak, 13 canoe, and 25 rafting fatalities. The kayaking and rafting numbers are the highest since we started keeping records 30 years ago. Three of the four recent kayaking deaths involved recreational kayakers, not whitewater boats. Many inexperienced paddlers who might have been in a canoe 10 years ago are now kayaking, and some are at risk in either craft. This year record Western snowmelt and powerful Eastern rainstorms resulted in high water conditions nationwide, and high flows always increase the number of accidents.

Kayaking Accidents

Paddlers attending the annual Moose River Festival in New York's Adirondack Mountains were shocked by a death on its lower section. The water level on October 16th was 5.65 feet, a medium-high level, making Tannery Rapid a significant Class IV drop with big ledges and powerful holes. According to an article in the *Adirondack Daily Enterprise* William De Angelis, 62, was enjoying the river with friends when one of them flipped and swam at Iron Bridge rapid. Mr. De Angelis chased his friend's boat downstream and washed into Tannery Rapid. He flushed over a ledge into a big hole and was caught in the backwash. Exiting his boat, he stayed in the hole and appeared to be losing consciousness. Nearby paddlers threw ropes, but he didn't grab hold. Using a live bait rescue, someone was able to swim out and grab Mr. De Angelis. After he was pulled ashore the group attempted CPR. Rescue personnel transported him to a hospital where he was

pronounced dead. Several days later the coroner reported that death had resulted not from drowning, but from a broken neck. He probably sustained that injury flipping violently in the hole.

Two other kayaking fatalities involved double kayakers in mild rapids. These touring designs lacked internal bracing; both collapsed during pins, each time trapping a paddler. On September 6th a K-2 broached and wrapped on the Watt Avenue Bridge over the American River in downtown Sacramento, CA. According to the *Sacramento Bee*, one paddler washed free after the boat flipped, but Joyce Tusan-Dalton, 57, was trapped underwater. Several onlookers waded out and tried to free the boat without success. A few weeks later, on September 22nd, a husband and wife team got into trouble on Montana's North Fork of the Flathead River in a two-person folding kayak. Water levels were moderate on this Class I-II run. A story in the Billings, MT *Gazette* reported that the kayak flipped after broaching on a mid-stream root ball. The man washed free, but Shawna Thomas, 51, was caught underneath the boat. Rangers and other first responders waded out in fast-moving knee-deep water to release the boat and recover the body.

Two other accidents could have been prevented by the use of properly fitted PFDs. The first was a drowning in the Bull's Bridge section of Connecticut's Housatonic River. The river was running at just over 2000 cfs on September 3rd, according to local paddlers, creating solid Class IV rapids. According to the *Hartford Courant*, Kenneth Wallace, 54, was paddling with two friends when he flipped, washed downstream, and disappeared. We have unconfirmed reports that he was paddling a rec-style kayak and was not wearing a PFD. There was a late report of a recreational kayak drowning on the Mulberry River in Arkansas this past May. Friends saw Jeremy Sanders flip and struggle to stay afloat before washing away in Class I whitewater. Fish and Game personnel who recovered his body said he

was not wearing a PFD, but relatives said it had been worn, but not fastened.

A kayaker paddling on Colorado's busy Blue River died suddenly for reasons that aren't clear. William Keen, 50, was paddling alone. The *Summit Daily News* reported that rafters who found him floating face-down in the river had seen him upright and paddling a few minutes earlier. They got him out, started CPR, and called 911. The coroner, who ruled the death an accidental drowning, noted that the man had a "bad heart" so cardiac problems could not be ruled out.

Rafting Accidents

Pillow Rock Rapid is a big, straightforward Class V drop that's considered one of the safer swims on West Virginia's Upper Gauley. On September 27th this rapid saw its second fatality in two seasons. A six person commercial raft flipped, putting everyone in the river. The guide and all but one guest were pulled from the water quickly, but Tammy Paczweski, 40, could not be found. Summersville Dam was notified and cut back its flows. As the water dropped rescuers spotted Ms. Paczweski pinned against a rock about 75 yards below the main rapid. She was about eight feet underwater. Hours later, after the flow dropped to 500 cfs, Ms. Paczweski's body floated free and was quickly recovered.

A Kansas man died on a private rafting trip through Arizona's Grand Canyon. According to the National Park Service Morning Report, Gary Aus, 64, was one of two men who washed out of a raft in Lava Falls on September 18th. This is a very big rapid with a long section of fast water below. After Mr. Aus washed downriver another raft intercepted him. He held on briefly before letting go and swimming towards shore. He was later found floating face down a mile downriver with his life vest pulled over his head. It's not clear if hypothermia or a personal health problem was to blame, but anyone who has swum a big rapid will be exhausted and vulnerable. On wide, cold rivers it's a good idea to get

swimmers out of the water as quickly as possible.

This past September there were back-to-back fatalities in Blossom Bar Rapid, a Class IV drop on Oregon's Wild and Scenic Rogue River. According to the Portland *Oregonian*, both incidents followed pins in the "Picket Fence," a line of rocks that's caused problems for generations of river runners. Both men were wearing life vests. In the first incident, William Martindale, 68, jumped out of his pinned raft holding a painter line. He got tangled in the rope and was pulled underwater. A few days later, as sheriff's deputies were recovering the first boat, a man and a woman were thrown out of a drift boat after it got stuck elsewhere on the Picket Fence. She managed to climb back on board, but the man, Mr. Nynam, was swept away. His body was found about 200 yards downstream.

Dowd Chutes on Colorado's Eagle River saw two fatalities this past June. The first, a kayaker, was reported earlier; the second, on June 22nd, occurred on a commercial trip. The *Summit Daily News* said that Patrick Bush, 66, was making his second run of the day when he was thrown from his raft. A safety kayaker reached him in less than a minute, but he was unresponsive. She pulled him onto her kayak and held his head above water for the remainder of the rapids. We don't have the autopsy results, but it sounds like a health issue like a heart attack could have been responsible.

Rescues and Near Misses

The Bottom Moose was the scene of an inspiring rescue after rains combined with dam repairs to put more than the usual amount of water into the river. On October 16th the rapid above Crystal had several big rolling hydraulics lined up in a row. A group of five French-Canadians were running through the drop when their fourth paddler got stuck in one of the holes. The fifth paddler back-paddled to avoid a collision, lost momentum, and was caught himself. He bailed out and recirculated for a minute and a half before

washing out. Two friends paddled out and grabbed him, but they hit a rock and lost their grip. The man sank and surfaced in front of Catherine Blanchette, who held his head above water and struggled to get him ashore. In an excellent report for AW's accident database, she describes what happened next:

"He was white, with deep blue lips, and eyes completely out of their orbits. That's where I really realized that we were in a big mess I started paddling to the right shore the best I could. I just had one hand, so I did not have much power. . . . I did not know what to do. I yelled so much so maybe someone could help me, but I was not in a really helpable situation with Crystal Falls' coming."

"I had reduced vision, centered on what was in front of me If anybody would have thrown me a rope elsewhere than right in front of me, I would not have seen it. . . . I was paddling when I saw a rope landing on my skirt It took me a second or two to release my paddle and grab the rope. . . . Someone told me that the short moment I hold on the rope prevented me going into the worst part of Crystal."

"Unfortunately, the weight of two people and one kayak was too much I choose the victim instead of the rope, found my paddle, and continued to paddle to the shore. I did a final drop (around 6') then the current was way less heavy someone jumped in the water and caught the victim and kept him from going over the next drop."

"When I did the final drop, I heard him groaning for the first time, and I told myself, he is breathing! a big relief. So when we reached the shore and got him out of water, we put him on his back to open his throat and give him the best chances to breath. I placed myself at his head, because I wanted him to hear a known voice, and in his mother tongue (French)."

"We took off his PFD, his helmet and cut down his drysuit. He was groaning more and more and then started to react to his environment and to move slowly. . . . Liquid started to bubble out his mouth so we tried to move him on the side to prevent suffocation. At that time, he really came back to our world He did not have consciousness of the past minutes."

He was quite alert and breathing well. He got back on his feet and He walked around 150 feet before sitting down, exhausted. The first responders reached us there. We gave him oxygen and he stayed there a couple of minutes Then he began to throw up. The liquid was red, so we began worrying about internal injuries. We asked him about it and he answered that he drank a lot of red Gatorade on the river. We laugh a lot... quite a relief for us!"

"He finally did the whole walk back to the ambulance by himself. First tests in the ambulance showed him in "perfect" shape As we all were from Quebec, going in an American hospital would have cost him a lot of money we decided to drive him quickly back up to Canada. Today my friend is in perfect shape and don't have any consequences of that accident. No water in his lungs, perfect blood tests, and he is not traumatized either."

"I was the one that held on to the victim in the water, so I may be remembered as the one who saved his life. But we were a group of five that day. . . . all of us four did what we could do, to save his life and I need to say that other paddlers helped us too. We all made that rescue a success and saved my friend's life."

Her entire report, along with other eyewitness accounts and a note from the rescued man can be found in AW's accident database. It's worthwhile reading!

Yahoo's SwiftH2O Chat room has many accounts of first responders rescuing inexperienced paddlers. This most often happens when they pin or lose their craft

continued on page 50

AW PARTNERS

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\$7,500 - Class II



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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
Cullowhee, NC 28723

*Note: AW will never share your information with others

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Phone _____ Member Number: _____

↑ _____ if you have one and know it

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Club: _____

\$25 Student

School: _____

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**For current member rewards
go to:
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Journal Options

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SAFETY

and become stranded in midstream, or on the wrong side of the river. Sometimes they have a cell phone along and call 911 themselves! Rescue squads arrive and do what skilled paddling groups routinely do for themselves: they get the people to safety and recover their gear. It's no surprise that these incidents give river runners a bad name!

Yet there are other times when kayakers step up to help inexperienced people and save the day. These stories don't always make the papers, but this one did. On September 7th a group of three boys were tubing the Patapsco River near Baltimore, MD. The water was running extremely high, and one of them washed into a pile of debris piled against a bridge pier. The powerful current was pulling him underwater; his friends swam out to the strainer (!) but couldn't help him. Fortunately Dale Griffeths, a local kayaker, was out for an afternoon paddle. He saw the boy's predicament, eddied out behind the brush pile, and climbed across his kayak

to reach him. The three were now able to pull the trapped boy free. Afterwards, two onlookers helped lift the youngster safely up onto the bridge.

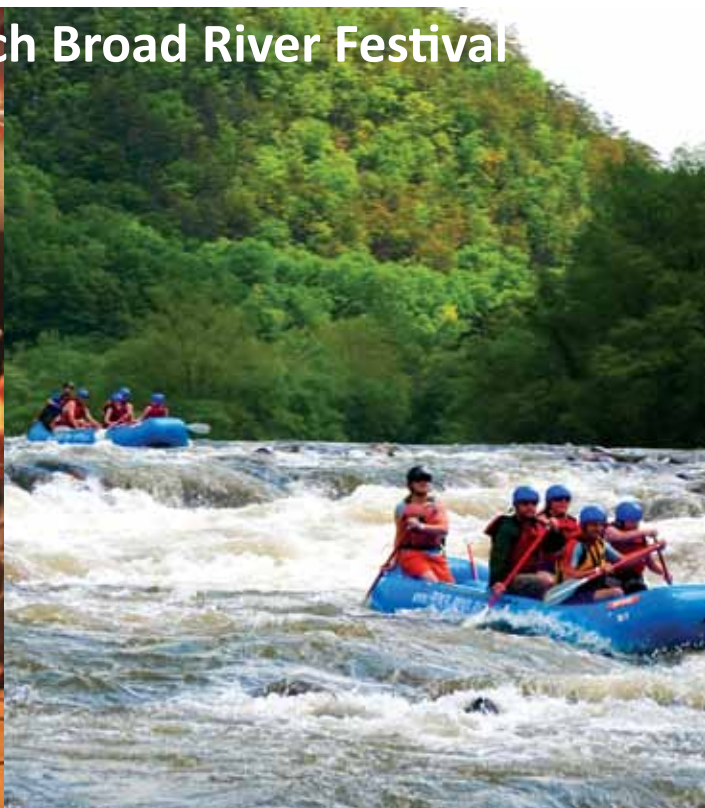
Lastly, we received another report of a kayaker breaking his back after running a big waterfall. On October 12th Joseph Grudger, 19, landed hard after running a 60-footer on Washington's East Fork of the Lewis River. He was in terrible pain afterwards. His two friends helped him ashore, then one stayed with him while the other left the river and to summon help. The Volcano Rescue Team, a volunteer vertical rescue crew, responded. They lifted Mr. Grudger over a 15-foot cliff before carrying him 100 yards to the ambulance. In case anyone is counting, that's broken back #6 for 2011!

This article summarizes accident reports taken from newspaper articles and chat rooms like Boatertalk, Mountainbuzz, and Boof.com. Other sources include Yahoo's SwiftH2O chat room, The IBWWW page on Facebook, The National Park Service

Morning Report, and regular incident reports from the U.S. Coast Guard Office of Boating Safety. Most importantly, we got several first person accounts from paddlers who were on the scene.

American Whitewater needs your help in collecting this information. Since most of us will never encounter a fatal accident in our paddling careers it's important to share the facts so we can learn from them. By studying accidents we learn how to avoid trouble and react effectively to emergencies. Our techniques, procedures, and river gear may be modified based on what happens in the field. Please help us out! To report a whitewater accident, near miss, or serious injury, go to the Safety page on the American Whitewater site, click "report an accident", and enter your information. You can also forward newspaper articles, chat room posts, and first person accounts to the safety editor at ccwalbridge@cs.com. Feel free to recommend any sites that you think would be a good source of accident information. Thanks!

Photos from the French Broad River Festival



NEWS & NOTES

FRENCH BROAD RIVER FESTIVAL DONATES \$5000 TO AW AGAIN

The 14th Annual French Broad River Festival was held on April 29th-May 1st, 2011 in beautiful Hot Springs, NC on the banks of the 3rd oldest river in the world. The festival featured three stages with nearly 30 bands, a whitewater raft race, a mountain bike race, a river clean-up, a kids' village with an inflatable obstacle course, a kids' bike race, face painting, a children's parade, a dynamic art gallery, a silent auction, food vendors, arts and crafts, yoga, combustible and aerial artistry and many, many good times. Last year's festival was a huge success and it is estimated that around 2500 people attended. The folks at the French Broad River Festival have raised many thousands of dollars for AW in the past and made another \$5000 donation to AW again last year. They also donated an additional \$7000 to local charities including The Hot Springs Community Learning Center. The diverse music lineup was headlined by BoomBox, The Bottle Rockets, Yarn, Ryan Montbleau Band, and Great American Taxi. As always there was also a kid's concert and parade led by Sol Driven Train. This year's festival will be the 15th Annual and is shaping up to be the best one yet! It will be held on May 4th-6th, 2012. The 15th Annual FBRF will feature musical acts such as Lukas Nelson and The Promise of the Real, The Gourds, The Legendary Singing Stars, I See Hawks in L.A., Balsam Range, Sirius B, Eyes of the Elders, and many more. So load up the truck, bring your boats, bikes, friends, and family and make plans to be there and help us support AW. The festival takes place at the take-out of Section 9 (Class II-IV) of the French Broad River at The Hot Spring Campground. There is also hiking, creeking, fishing and, of course, hot springs in the immediate area. The French Broad River Festival, Where Music, Art & Adventure Meet. Check out the website for additional info, band schedules and tickets: www.FrenchBroadRiverFestival.com

See photos on opposite page.

It's Easy to Support AW!

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

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

- Donate online today!
- Monthly Giving: Contribute a minimum of \$10 via credit card or electronic transfer from your bank account.
- Bequests: Include AW in your will or living trust. Bequests to AW are generally exempt from federal or state inheritance taxes, and subject to an unlimited deduction.
- Combined Federal Campaign: Federal employees including federal civilians, military personnel and U.S. Postal Workers can donate to AW through the CFC a once a year charitable fund raising program. Look for AW (Agency #11351) in the official CFC listing of eligible donors.
- Charitable Remainder Trusts: Convert a highly appreciated asset (such as real estate or stocks) into a lifetime income while minimizing income and estate taxes.
- Employer Matching: Many employers will match your donations to non-profit organizations. This includes membership payments, as well as additional contributions. Check to see if your employer has a matching program.
- MissionFish: Sell your items through the MissionFish program on eBay and the proceeds come directly to AW.
- Other Assets: A gift of real estate to AW qualifies you for a tax deduction based on the property's fair market value. If it is not a river access point, AW will sell the property and use the proceeds to protect access and restore rivers. Acceptance of property is subject to certain conditions. You may also be eligible to receive tax benefits for gifts of real property. Art and jewelry are examples of personal property items that may be eligible. Interested donors should check with your financial and tax advisors and AW on the feasibility and tax considerations of such gifts.
- Securities: Donating appreciated stock to AW benefits both the donor and whitewater rivers. The donor receives two tax-related benefits. First, the gain on the stock is not subject to capital gains taxes. Second, the donor can deduct the value of the stock as a charitable contribution.
- United Way: All federal campaigns, and a few of the local campaigns will allow you to donate to AW. AW's UNITED WAY member # is 2302.
- Vehicle Donations: Turn that extra car, truck, or RV into a tax deductible donation benefiting AW.

AFFILIATE CLUBS

AW'S ORIGINAL PURPOSE

BY CARLA MINER

The Affiliate Club Program lies at the very heart of American Whitewater's existence. American Whitewater's original purpose since 1954 has been to distribute information among its Affiliate Clubs. Our relationships with local clubs have provided the backbone for the river conservation and access work we accomplish. We have over 100 current AW Club Affiliates and they are all doing great work on your behalf. If you don't belong to a club, consider joining one.

Our Affiliate Club Spotlight this issue is on the Atlanta Whitewater Club- an outstanding Affiliate Club and long time supporter of our mission to conserve and restore America's whitewater resources and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely.

The Atlanta Whitewater Club was founded in 1978 by a dedicated group of Atlanta's kayakers and canoeists to provide events that increase the enjoyment safety, and skills of paddlers at every level of the sport. They are a very social club that often has an equally good time off the river as it does on the river!

As a member of the Atlanta Whitewater Club you will receive access to all Club events, discounts at many local outfitters and deeply discounted winter roll practice. If you live in or around the Atlanta area, consider joining and supporting your local club. Membership is an affordable \$25 for an individual and \$30 for a family. Check out their website at <http://www.atlantawhitewater.com/> and remember as a member of Atlanta Whitewater Club you receive a \$10 discount off your American Whitewater membership dues.

Thank you Atlanta Whitewater Club for your continued support of American Whitewater!

The AW Journal Club Affiliates by state:

Alaska

Fairbanks Paddlers, Fairbanks
Nova Riverrunners Inc., Chickaloon

Alabama

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

Arizona

Outdoors Unlimited, Flagstaff

Arkansas

Arkansas Canoe Club, Little Rock

California

California Floaters Society, Cameron Park

Chico Paddleheads, Chico
Gold Country Paddlers, Lotus
RTS Sierra Club San Fran Chapter,
Livermore
Sequoia Paddlers, Forestville
Sierra Club Loma Prieta Paddlers, San Jose

Colorado

Avid4 Adventure Inc., Boulder
Colorado Whitewater Assn, Englewood
Dolores River Action Group, Mancos
Friends of the Arkansas River, Canon City
Grand Canyon Private Boaters. Assn., Colorado Springs
Lower Dolores Boating Advocates, Dolores
Pikes Peak Whitewater Club, Colorado Springs
San Miguel Whitewater Asso, Telluride

Connecticut

AMC - Connecticut Chapter, Waterbury

Delaware

AMC Delaware Valley Chapter, Oaks
Wilmington Trail Club, Newark

Georgia

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

Idaho

Idaho Whitewater Association, Boise

Illinois

Chicago Whitewater Assn, Chicago

Indiana

Ohio Valley Paddlers, Evansville

Iowa

Iowa Whitewater Coalition, W. Des Moines

Kentucky

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

Louisiana

Sabine Whitewater Club, Lake Charles

Maine

Penobscot Paddle & Chowder Society, Troy

Maryland

Greater Baltimore Canoe Club, Cockeysville
Mason Dixon Canoe Cruisers, Boonsboro
Monocacy Canoe Club, Frederick

Massachusetts

AMC Boston Chapter Paddlers, Boston

Minnesota

Minnesota Canoe Assn, Minneapolis
SCSU Outdoor Endeavors, Saint Cloud

Mississippi

Memphis Whitewater, Hernando

Missouri

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

Nevada

Sierra Nevada Whitewater Club, Reno

New Hampshire

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

New Jersey

AMC Delaware Valley Chapter, Oaks
KCCNY, Flanders

New Mexico

Adobe Whitewater Club of NM,
Albuquerque

New York

ADK Schenectady, Schenectady
Colgate University, Hamilton
FLOW Paddlers' Club, Rochester
Hamilton College, Clinton
Housatonic Area Canoe & Kayak Sq.,
Ossining
St Lawrence University, Canton
Town Tinker Tube Rentals, Phoenicia
Zoar Valley Paddling Club, Buffalo

North Carolina

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

Ohio

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

Oregon

Lower Columbia Canoe Club, Portland
Northwest Rafters Asso, Roseburg
Oregon Kayak and Canoe Club, Portland
Oregon Whitewater Association, Beaverton
Willamette Kayak & Canoe Club, Corvallis

Pennsylvania

AMC Delaware Valley Chapter, Oaks
Benscreek Canoe Club, Johnstown
Bradford County Canoe and Kayak Club, Sayre
Conewago Canoe Club, York
Holtwood Hooligans, Paradise
Lehigh Valley Canoe Club, Lehigh Valley,
Lehigh Valley Whitewater Inc., Lehigh Valley
Mach One Slalom Team, State College
Philadelphia Canoe Club, Philadelphia
Three Rivers Paddling Club, Pittsburgh

S. Carolina

Foothills Paddling Club, Greenville
Palmetto Paddlers, Columbia

Tennessee

Appalachian Paddling Enthusiasts,
Limestone
Chota Canoe Club, Knoxville
Tennessee Eastman Hiking and Canoeing
Club, Kingsport
Tennessee Scenic River Asso, Nashville
Tennessee Valley Canoe Club, Chattanooga

Utah

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

Vermont

Vermont Paddlers Club, Montpelier

Virginia

Coastal Canoeists Inc, Richmond
Creek Freak Paddlers of Franklin County
VA, Rocky Mount
Float Fishermen of Virginia, Roanoke
Hollins Outdoor Program, Roanoke
Paddlers for Conservation, Vienna

Washington

BEWET, Bellevue
EPIC Adventures, Cheney
Paddle Trails Canoe Club, Seattle
Spokane Canoe & Kayak Club, Spokane
University Kayak Club, Seattle
Washington Kayak Club, Seattle
Washington Recreational River Runners, Renton

West Virginia

Dbl Z! Whitewater Club, Fayetteville
Redneck Kayak Club, Beckley
WVU Whitewater Club, Morgantown
West VA Wildwater Assn, S. Charleston

Wisconsin

Sierra Club/John Muir Chapter, Madison

British Columbia

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

DISCOUNTED AW MEMBERSHIP FOR AFFILIATE CLUB MEMBERS

By Carla Miner, Membership Manager

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

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

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

JOIN AMERICAN WHITEWATER AS A CLUB AFFILIATE!

10 REASONS TO JOIN AW AS AN AFFILIATE CLUB

1. Receive the American Whitewater Journal, the oldest continually published whitewater magazine.
2. Join the list of Affiliate Clubs noted in each bi-monthly AW Journal.
3. List club events in the AW Journal.
4. Your Club's members can become AW members for \$25. A \$10 savings!
5. Have technical expertise for your Club conservation and access committees 'on tap.'
6. Have access to technical and onsite assistance for your Club's event planning.
7. Enjoy VIP benefits for "Joint Members" at AW events.
8. Participate in exclusive AW Affiliate Club promotions.
9. Post Club information on the AW Website to help paddlers find you.
10. Eligible to apply for the 2009 Clif Bar Flowing Rivers grant.

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

The logo features the letters 'AW' in a bold, white, sans-serif font, set against a green and blue background that resembles a stylized river or wave. To the right of the logo, the words 'AMERICAN WHITewater' are written in a bold, white, sans-serif font, with 'AMERICAN' on the top line and 'WHITewater' on the bottom line. The background of the entire page is a photograph of two people in a blue raft navigating white-water rapids.

AMERICAN WHITewater

Contribute your text and photos to *American Whitewater*

American Whitewater is moving from a theme-based magazine to a more diverse model. Starting in 2012 we will be producing issues that are not concentrated on a single topic, but rather offer something for everyone.

We're always accepting submissions and we hope you'll consider contributing. For complete submission details, story topics, deadlines, and guidelines, go to:

americanwhitewater.org > Library > AW Journal



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Rok Sribar and friends, East Fork Kaweah, CA. © Darin McQuoid

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