



AMERICAN WHITEWATER

Conservation • Access • Events • Adventure • Safety

BY BOATERS FOR BOATERS
Mar/Apr 2015

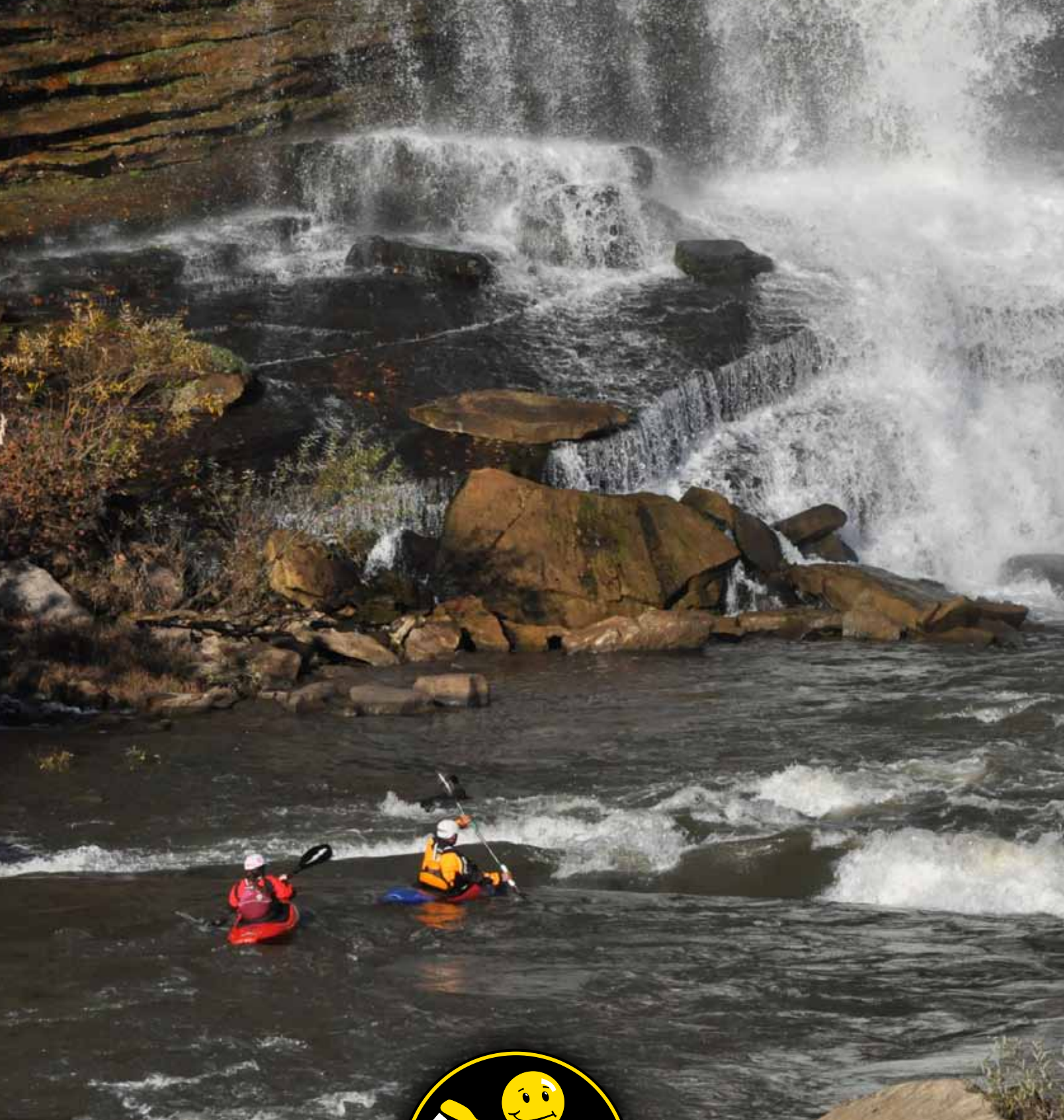
DROUGHT REVEALS A CALIFORNIA GEM ON THE FEATHER

WHITEWATER ADVENTURES

WINTER WHITEWATER IN THE OZARKS

BLIND KAYAKERS TACKLE THE GRAND CANYON

URBAN KIDS LEARN TO BE SURFERS, RIVER STEWARDS, FILMMAKERS



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AMERICAN WHITEWATER

A VOLUNTEER PUBLICATION PROMOTING RIVER CONSERVATION, ACCESS AND SAFETY

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Paddlers float through the idyllic pool above Oceana on Georgia's Tallulah River. American Whitewater was instrumental in securing recreational releases on the Tallulah Gorge, which began in the fall of 1997.

Photo by **Angela Greenwell**

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PURPOSE

RIVER STEWARDSHIP: AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

whitewater rivers, as well as river recreation, conservation, access, and safety. This is accomplished through our bi-monthly AW Journal, a monthly e-news, americanwhitewater.org, paddling events, educational events, and through direct communication with the press.

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

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



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Founded in 1954, American Whitewater is a national non-profit organization (Non-profit # 23-7083760) with a mission "to conserve and restore America's whitewater resources and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely." American Whitewater is a membership organization representing a broad diversity of individual whitewater enthusiasts, river conservationists, and more than 100 local paddling club affiliates across America. The organization is the primary advocate for the preservation and protection of whitewater rivers throughout the United States, and connects the interests of human-powered recreational river users with ecological and science-based data to achieve the goals within its mission. All rights to information contained in this publication are reserved.

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THE JOURNEY AHEAD

AS I WRITE this we are still in the depths of winter; soon the blooms will be out and another spring season of boating will be underway. As rivers surge with new energy they carry with them a sense of power and the ability to forge a new course. Here at American Whitewater, we are forging a new course in river stewardship. Our stewardship work falls into a handful of major focus areas. I want to take a moment to highlight these areas and remind readers that this work would not be possible without the support of our members.

Wild and Scenic

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act is one of the strongest tools American Whitewater uses to protect free flowing rivers. We are actively working on protecting rivers as Wild and Scenic throughout the country—from the rivers of the northeast including the Tarrifville Gorge section of the Farmington River, and rugged rivers like the Gallatin and North Fork of the Blackfoot in **Montana**, to **Southern** gems like the Nolichucky River. In the **Pacific Northwest**, we're leaders with the Wild Olympics Campaign on Washington's Olympic Peninsula. We're also using Wild and Scenic alternatives to protect rivers in **Colorado**, including the Upper Colorado River.

Dam Removal

We've witnessed the incredible restoration of the Tuckasegee River (NC) with the removal of Dillsboro Dam and the addition of flows to the Class IV West Fork Tuck. We now watch the Elwha and White Salmon Rivers (WA) heal after the removal of dams on those rivers that were in place for a century. American Whitewater continues to seek opportunities to restore more rivers and remove deadbeat dams. Over the coming year we will be preparing for the 2018 removal of Mill Pond Dam on Sullivan Creek (WA) under a plan that we played a key role in negotiating. Efforts to remove outdated dams on the Similkameen (WA) and Nooksack Rivers (WA) require continued pressure from our community.

Flow Protection

As big water utilities propose new dams and pipelines across the **Colorado River Basin**, American Whitewater is fighting to ensure that our rivers and the recreation opportunities that they provide are protected. Sustaining boating and angling activities go hand in hand with protecting and enhancing river health—and we are accomplishing these goals by securing permanent legal protections and negotiating policies that keep our rivers flowing. We're working alongside local governments, states, and federal agencies and hundreds of paddlers to define stream flows necessary to support recreation.

Flow Restoration

For the past two decades American Whitewater has consistently advocated for restored flows in rivers impacted by dams. In the **South** we'll finally see progress on the Catawba River, where lawsuits have delayed releases for nearly a decade. In the **Northeast**, American Whitewater is working to restore flows to dewatered sections of the Connecticut River, where hydropower dams have disrupted fish passage and eliminated whitewater boating for more than a century. The benefits of restoring flows to rivers impacted by hydropower continue to stack up, and all told have a profound effect on river recreation and river ecology nationwide.

River Management

American Whitewater is a national leader in advocating for the public in river management issues. Our work to open the **Chattooga River** to the public continues through a Forest Service planning process in North Carolina. In **California**, we'll be working with the National Park Service to reconsider their boating bans on certain river reaches in Sequoia-Kings National Park. And in **Virginia, South Carolina**, and **Colorado** we continue to advocate for the basic right to float rivers. American Whitewater serves as a partner to river managers across the country on your behalf, and the result is sustainable river

management that welcomes you to enjoy our nation's rivers and streams.

Safety

Safety has been a core issue for American Whitewater since 1954, and today we are leaders in accident analysis. We regularly advise legislative bodies and river managers on the best ways to educate whitewater users, which helps everyone enjoy our rivers safely. Thanks to long time board member, Charlie Walbridge, we maintain a comprehensive database of whitewater accidents that helps to inform river managers on risks associated with whitewater activities. We are working to develop safer solutions at the dangerous low-head Pit 7 Afterbay Dam on the Pit River in **California**. And in the **Northeast**, we are advocating for the removal of a similar low-head dam on the Connecticut River at Bellows Falls that is not only a safety hazard, but is also eliminating recreation opportunities and blocking fish passage.

As you can see, our stewardship work is tackling major challenges that impact the rivers we all paddle and love. This work is made possible through your membership support. As we enjoy spring flows, let's also remember that rivers need our community's renewed attention and engagement.

Take care of your rivers and they will take care of you,



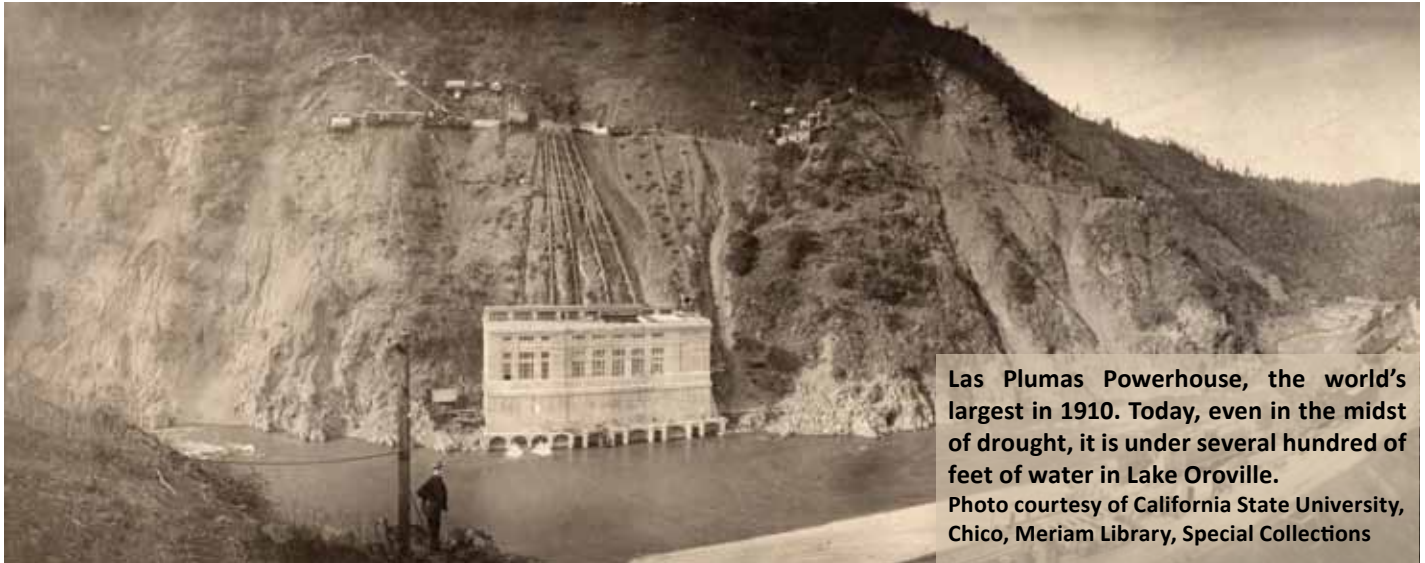
Mark Singleton

Executive Director, American Whitewater

STEWARDSHIP

WHAT LIES BENEATH IT? THE DROUGHT UNCOVERS A CALIFORNIA RIVER

BY DAVE STEINDORF



Las Plumas Powerhouse, the world's largest in 1910. Today, even in the midst of drought, it is under several hundred of feet of water in Lake Oroville.
Photo courtesy of California State University, Chico, Meriam Library, Special Collections

ODDLY ENOUGH, IT takes a drought to bring some rivers back to life. As most of California's reservoirs reached record low levels last year, many rivers began to reappear. One of the river reaches that emerged was the Big Bend run (a.k.a. Poe Run) of the North Fork of the Feather River as it descends into the bowels of Lake Oroville. As the reservoir has receded, a remarkable whitewater river has emerged. The Big Bend run is more than just a drought year whitewater excursion. Cutting through the ugly bathtub rings of California's second-largest reservoir, a trip through Big Bend allows us to look at both current and past human development along the Feather River.

The North Fork Feather originates in the spring waters that flow from Lassen Peak into Lake Almanor, a one million acre foot reservoir near the crest of the Cascades. The bulk of the water flows through PG&E's "Stairway of Power"—a system of six dams, eight powerhouses and numerous pipes and tunnels that run over 40 miles from the crest of the Cascades to the Sacramento Valley. The river finally daylights at the bottom of the system at

the Poe Powerhouse, just above the high water mark of Lake Oroville. In successive dry years, like we've experienced over the last three years, the still pool of the lake is six or seven miles downstream from Poe.

The Big Bend run on the North Fork Feather River has been popular with boaters for decades. This popularity is in spite of the fact that it is also one of the most elusive runs in California. For starters, it is only viable after multiple dry years. If the reservoir is too high, paddlers must face a very short whitewater run with a very long paddle or boat ride to get to the take-out. Secondly, flows on this reach are highly unpredictable. Virtually all of the water in the run originates from PG&E's Poe Powerhouse upstream and it is almost impossible to know for certain when the powerhouse will be generating.

One would think that with all of these challenges most boaters would simply give this run a pass. Yet once the reservoir gets to be 100 to 150 feet down from its maximum elevation, people start getting antsy for more information. Is it running? How can I find out the powerhouse flows?

How long is the paddle out?

Why all this buzz to run a river that's usually drowned?

Late in 2014, I contacted some paddling friends to see if they would be interested in this elusive river excursion. After a brief email flurry, it was confirmed that Kurt Kololige, Teresa Beynart, Will Funke and others would join me—most of whom had not done this run before. The Big Bend run is always fun, but taking first timers is a particular treat. As is the norm for any boating trip, we set a meet time and place; in this case it was the Lime Saddle Marina on Lake Oroville. A marina is an unlikely take-out, but this is where our boat shuttle would drop us off after our run. (Option B is a multi-hour paddle out across the reservoir.) After meeting up and spending a few minutes rearranging gear into vehicles, we were on our way to the put-in.

Arriving at the Poe Powerhouse, much to our collective disappointment, we saw that there was only a small amount of flow being released from the powerhouse. Most paddlers who do this run spend hours at

the put-in staring at the powerhouse tailrace, hoping to see flows emanating from the massive concrete structure. After staring and hoping in vain for some time, we decided that the flow, while low, would be enough to get us down the river.

To say that this run starts off with a bang would be a gross understatement. After leaving the powerhouse, we paddled across what seemed to be a very flat pond. Most paddlers are keenly aware that this does not just seem to be a slow spot in the river. After several minutes of paddling, and rounding a slight bend in the river, there was a quiet rumble and a river wide horizon line. This horizon line is actually the crest of Big Bend Dam. In 1910, Big Bend Dam, which was the first permanent dam on the Feather River, was completed to harness the mighty flows of the Feather River and divert it through a tunnel to the other side of the "Big Bend" and about 6 miles downstream to the massive Las Plumas Powerhouse. This dam, which was abandoned by PG&E when Oroville Dam was completed in 1968, was once the largest hydroelectric project in the world.

As we approached the dam, the roar of the river became much louder, but there was nothing to see other than water disappearing over the 200-foot wide horizon line. If you climb up on the dam abutment, you finally see what you are in for. Flows come over the top of the dam and then protrude out of a large notch, which was presumably cut in the dam crest after it was decommissioned. The result is a nearly vertical drop that cascades almost 40 feet onto the bottom apron of the dam, where it is forced out horizontally to form a huge reaction wave in the pool below. When they first saw the drop, the initial

reaction from some members of our group was, "Do we have to run that thing?" (This is the typical reaction when most people first see it.) The surprising reality is that it is truly a Class III move. On a trip earlier in the year, huckster Kyle Hull said, "This is like running a 40-foot waterfall without having to run a 40-foot waterfall."

But, just to be clear, while running Big Bend dam is not difficult, neither is it a let down.

Sitting in the dead calm water and knowing you're 40 yards from the lip of the dam is very surreal. As you begin to paddle towards the dam notch it is hard not to wonder, "Is this a good idea?" As you reach the edge of the horizon line, and the expansive view of the canyon below you opens up, your boat pitches down as you begin to freefall off the lip. After a brief moment of weightlessness, you will round out as you cross the bottom apron of the dam. If you stay upright as you go through the reaction wave, you'll notice that all of your vertical acceleration gets translated into horizontal speed, and you'll actually be skipping across the top of the water, no doubt screaming and giggling.

My typical move after running the dam is to beat feet for the right bank so that I can get out and take pictures of those that follow, and this trip was no exception.

For most of the intermediate paddlers, a picture of their first run over Big Bend Dam is a prized possession in their whitewater photo collection. Years ago, after looking at the photo of my first run over the right side of the dam, I realized I had run an old fish ladder. It was remarkable to me that in the ecological wisdom of 1910, when the dam was constructed, fish passage was a concern. Some additional research confirmed that this was in fact a fish ladder and that it was constructed because salmon were such an important food source for upstream residents. Unfortunately, such fish passage facilities were not included on any of the subsequent dams built in the Feather River Canyon, or for that matter, on any of the other major dams in California.

After successfully completing the Big Bend Dam stunt, we were treated to a series of Class III, and III+ rapids downstream. Considering that this river reach often spends years underwater, we were surprised that it is still quite aesthetically appealing. Many cliff and step rock formations extended up from the river's edge, and large boulders dominated most rapids. While we were always aware of the distinct bathtub ring above us, it was interesting how much of this river canyon was still intact.

Lake Oroville as seen in early 2015, with a photo of Las Plumas Powerhouse and the Feather River as seen after 1910.

**Photo by Dave Steindorf and CSU, Chico, Meriam Library Special Collections
Composite designed by Grant Peterson**



STEWARDSHIP

A few miles downstream, we encountered one of the most significant rapids on the run. Boxcar is named for a piece of railroad infrastructure that is stuck in the left hand side of the rapid. The boxcar has obviously been in place for some time, because the railroad was rerouted when construction on Oroville Dam began in the early 1960s. As we continued downstream, there were several more good rapids, including one that can contain Grand Canyon sized waves. We noticed an abandoned railroad bed that began to creep into the bathtub rings of the reservoir. There are several old railroad tunnels that have seen years of inattention and reservoir inundation, most of which have collapsed. There are also several large retaining walls that are at least 100 years old, which I suspect were built by Chinese immigrants. Although these walls have been battered by weather and waves from the reservoir, they look like they could have been built yesterday.



Kurt Kololige negotiates one of the many Class III rapids on the Big Bend run. Note the bathtub rings of Lake Oroville just beginning to appear.

Photo by Dave Steindorf

AW STEWARDSHIP

BIG BEND

BY DAVE STEINDORF

In 2006, American Whitewater signed the Settlement Agreement for relicensing Oroville Dam, the tallest in the U.S. and head of the California State Water Project. Unlike most of the projects we work on, this one had very little whitewater below the dam. However, we knew that there was whitewater under the reservoir that would appear in dry years. The problem was in that the run required paddling out across the reservoir. Even when the reservoir was low, this could be 2 to 3 hours. American Whitewater negotiated a boat shuttle to be a part of the marina concessionaire's contract. In dry years, such as what California has been experiencing lately, the Big Bend run is one of the only whitewater opportunities in Northern California.

Towards the end of the run, my friends and I noticed a series of unfamiliar rapids. I have done this run numerous times over the last 20 years and I was certain that I had never seen these rapids before. There were big holes, big rocks, and one rapid with a classic skyboof. The interesting thing is that the reservoir actually has been at this level before, but we realized that it took several years to clear out all of the sediment that had been deposited in these rapids. The constant push of the water had re-created this part of the river, just as it had been before the dam was built. It made us wonder what the river was like before the dam.

Running around the next bend, we discovered the river of sediment that had previously clogged the upstream rapids. A giant river of ooze was slowly making its way deeper into the reservoir. You dare not even think about flipping over in this substance, which was clearly too thick to drink and, just barely, too thin to plow. It is clear that someday all of this will fill this massive reservoir to the brim, but how long will it take? 50 years? 100 years? Considering that this reservoir is less than

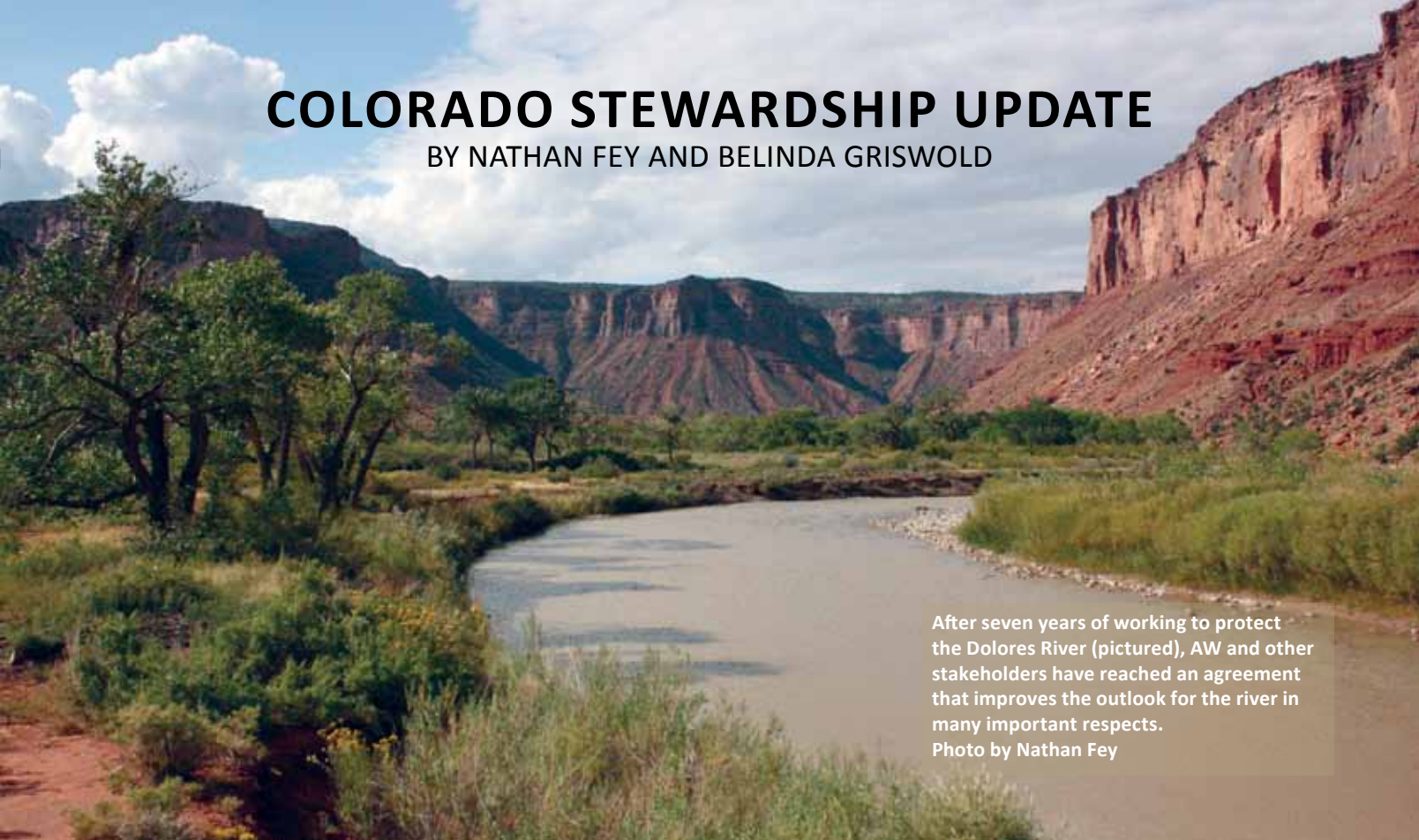
50 years old, maybe less time than we originally thought.

The end of fun came as the motionless water of Lake Oroville eventually swallowed up the river. Down lake a bit, our boat shuttle from the marina awaited us to take us back to our cars at the take-out. We passed a Gold Rush era miner's trail, retaining walls and bridges still intact. Eventually we saw scant remnants of the Las Plumas Powerhouse, which was the destination for the water that had been diverted from the Big Bend Dam.

Gold Rush era trails, turn of the 20th century dams, powerhouses and a railroad, all built by the best engineers of their day. All this lay at the bottom of a reservoir built by my father's generation. As we face the grim realities of California's current water conditions it made me wonder, what will we leave behind? Will we bury something in order to build something "better?" One thing I do know with certainty—whatever choices we make in the future, the one thing we did not create, the river, will still be there, moving from its source towards the ocean, pushing the Earth, and freeing itself as it goes.

COLORADO STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

BY NATHAN FEY AND BELINDA GRISWOLD



After seven years of working to protect the Dolores River (pictured), AW and other stakeholders have reached an agreement that improves the outlook for the river in many important respects.
Photo by Nathan Fey

OUR COLORADO RIVER program has been hard at work all year, and 2014 was a big year! For our stewardship update, we'd like to share three big victories, and one ongoing challenge, for the wild and beautiful rivers of Colorado:

1. We've been working for seven years on a plan to protect and restore the beautiful Dolores River in Southwestern Colorado—and we finally have an agreement between water users, paddlers, local communities and government agencies that brings water back to the river, helps restore fish runs, and ensures enough water for boating. It's been a long road, and we still have a ways to go to implementation, but the bones of an agreement are there, and we're confident this treasure will be protected in the coming year.
2. Speaking of collaboration, the Upper Colorado Wild and Scenic Stakeholder group, of which AW is a founding member, has also come to a comprehensive agreement on how to protect this treasure. What's most amazing for us at American Whitewater is that the plan will protect the river better than a Wild and Scenic designation (the holy grail of river protection) could have. The kind of joint decision-making and collaboration among folks with very different views has brought us to a stronger place than any conservation campaign could alone. For this, among many other reasons, American Whitewater continues to be a stakeholder in this groundbreaking work.
3. And speaking of the Upper Colorado, let's turn to the Gore Canyon Whitewater Park, where, in a rare and hopefully more common expression of collaboration, water agencies, paddlers, local officials, and BLM officials worked together to fast-track this great project. The new whitewater park will provide important benefits for river recreation and river health, in Grand County and for many miles downstream. It also provides certainty for downstream water users, creates new opportunities for paddlers and anglers, and compliments many other river management actions currently being developed across the Colorado River Basin.
4. Now about that challenge: AW has been deeply involved in the federal Colorado River Basin Study for the past three years. It's been a long, slow road to find common ground with the basin states, the federal government, and many other diverse stakeholders. The second phase of the Basin Study is due to be released early this year, and we'll let you know all about it when it is available. We'll continue pushing for a more comprehensive, basin-wide approach to the Colorado River, which sustains more than 35 million people, and draws paddlers to its tributaries throughout the West. The Colorado is the lifeblood of the West. Preserving it may be one of the greatest challenges we face today, and we hope that federal and state decision makers can start to embrace the kind of systematic thinking that will help us solve that challenge.

STEWARDSHIP

THE FIRST STEP IN REPAIRING THE COLORADO RIVER'S BROKEN WATER BUDGET: SUMMARY REPORT¹ COURTESY OF THE COLORADO RIVER RESEARCH GROUP

INTRODUCTION

BY NATHAN FEY

As many paddlers know, the future of the Colorado River is fraught with competing demands to pump and pipe water to far-away cities, and with efforts to protect what little water is left in the river. It's rare to see unvarnished assessments of both the scale of the problem, and the most promising solutions that face all seven Colorado River basin states as the climate warms and dries, and population grows. Now, a group of well-respected academics convened by University of Colorado Professor Doug Kenney has released a very brief, very plainly worded white paper on the challenges facing the river. The Colorado River Research Group includes experts from around the basin, and has one of the most clear and succinct takes on the scale of the river's woes, and the obvious solutions within reach. With a focus on conservation, instead of on new pipelines and dams, the paper lays out an inexpensive, reasonable path to living within our means on the mighty Colorado. American Whitewater is proud to reprint this important paper in its entirety, with many thanks to the CRRG for their permission to do so.

TO SAY THAT the Colorado River is important to the semi-arid Southwest would be a vast understatement: it's a partial water supply for 40 million people, a source of irrigation water for 5.5 million acres, the driver of 4,200 megawatts of hydropower generating capacity, and home to more National Parks and recreation opportunities than any region of the country. It is, as many writers have observed, the "American Nile." It is also, however, an incredibly overworked and threatened resource, and virtually all research to date suggests that the situation is likely to worsen without significant reforms.

As university-based researchers focused on the river, those of us comprising the Colorado River Research Group (CRRG)² are encouraged by the public attention the river has received in recent years, and applaud the numerous studies that have delved deep into the relevant issues. However, we cannot help but observe that the mountains of new data and technical studies may have unintentionally hidden what is, in reality, a conceptually simple problem with an equally simple and

inescapable solution: water users consume too much water from the river and, moving forward, must strive to use less, not more. Any conversation about the river that does not explicitly acknowledge this reality is not helpful in shaping sound public policy. On the other hand, embracing this reality opens the door for countless innovations and reforms that can sustain the economic, environmental and social benefits that we desire from the Colorado. But in dozens of cases throughout the basin, water user groups continue to pursue more and more consumption from the river, and the "hard truths" about the basin's water budget go unheeded.

THE WATER BUDGET: OUT OF THE FRYING PAN

No image better conveys the troubling hydrologic reality of the Colorado than the "bathtub rings" that now encircle Lakes Powell and Mead. Well over 100 feet high in Lake Mead, the rings provide an inescapable visual reminder the reservoirs of the Colorado are in a sharp decline threatening all the values associated with full reservoirs, including water supply reliability, hydropower generation, and

recreational opportunities. From 1999 to 2004, these two reservoirs—the largest in the United States—lost half of their water, an amount enough to sustain present-day Las Vegas for over 80 years. Conditions improved somewhat due to a very wet 2011, but the reservoirs have not refilled and curtailments to water users remain a growing likelihood.

Why are the massive reservoirs throughout the Colorado River basin so empty? A reservoir is a bank, no different than a savings account to which you make deposits (inflows) and withdrawals (outflows). Throughout most of the 20th century, inflows into the storage banks of Powell and Mead consistently exceeded outflows. However, demands have grown over time, and by the turn of the 21st century, had caught up with supplies (see figure below). When the latest drought hit, the result was predictable: we lost much of our savings. And it's not just the reservoirs. Greater losses have been measured for our aquifers than the reservoirs. The combined forces of growth and drought have busted the water budget.

Our prospects for improved streamflows in the future do not look good. Hopefully the current drought ends soon, but a recovery to the “normal” of the 20th century seems unlikely. In fact, the latest synthesis of the climate science indicates flows could decline 5 to 35 percent by midcentury. To put that in perspective: the drought conditions we have experienced since 2000 could, in fact, become the new normal, and the baseline from which future drought events would more frequently occur. These are projections, not facts, but this is the best science, and the region has already warmed 2 degrees F in just the last 3 decades.

(13 percent). In almost every case, the high growth scenarios are at least double these figures. Additionally, consumption is expected to increase among the basin’s many tribes, using water that has been reserved in law if not in physical reality. Depending on the scenario, total increases by states and tribes are expected to total 1.2 to 3.4 million acre-feet per year, or about 8 to 23 percent more than current levels. Still other evidence of an expected growth in

“THE COMBINED FORCES OF GROWTH AND DROUGHT HAVE BUSTED THE WATER BUDGET.”

Fortunately, the demand side of the water budget equation is something that can be managed. So what is the plan? According the Basin Study—the detailed review of conditions and projections compiled by the federal government and basin states in 2012—the plan is to increase consumption by 2060 in every basin state. Figures vary widely by scenario. The minimum increases identified in study scenarios are: Arizona (4 percent), California (4 percent), Colorado (6 percent), Nevada (63 percent), New Mexico (13 percent), Utah (10 percent), and Wyoming

consumption is found in the pending claims (permits and conditional rights) found in state water rights databases. Some of these totals are absurd—70 million acre-feet in Colorado, 4.3 million acre-feet in Utah—and cannot be construed to represent anyone’s honest appraisal of expected future action. But the larger message is clear: additional depletions from the Colorado are in the plans of many water user groups.

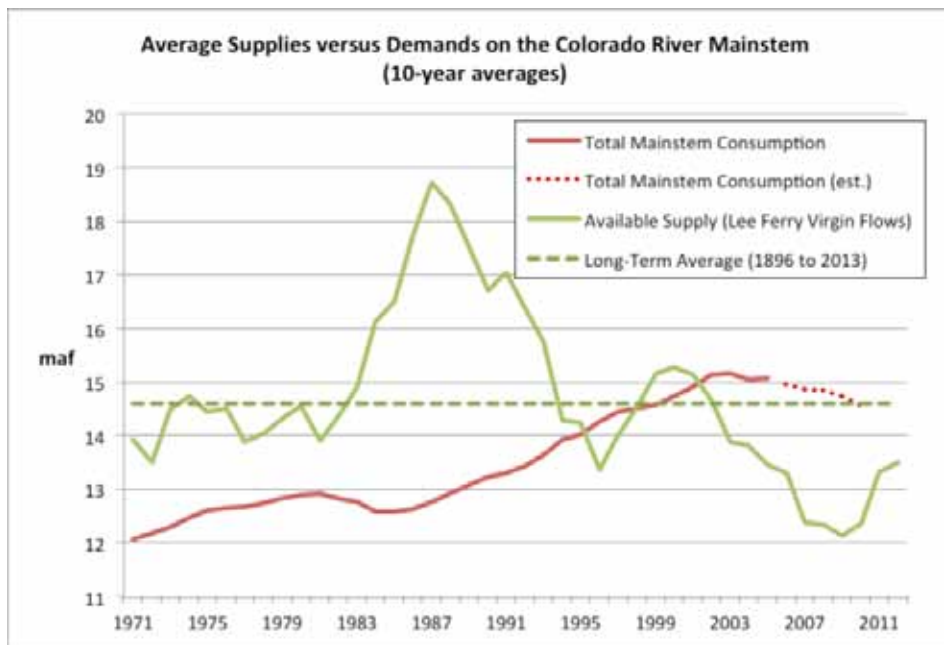
How is this growth in consumption possible? In short, it’s not, and those water

managers that look at the numbers through a basin-wide lens know this. But decisions about which projects to build or not build are rarely evaluated through this lens, and the decision-makers tend to be individuals representing cities and other small pockets of the basin who assert that one more little project won’t make much of a difference. And except for the really big projects, they are usually right; it’s the cumulative impact that is of concern. Those in the upstream states—Colorado, Wyoming, Utah and New Mexico—are also often correct when asserting, typically with the impassioned backing of state leaders, that they have legal rights to more consumption. But this doesn’t change the math and it doesn’t repair the water budget. If everyone takes what they believe is deserved and promised, then everyone loses out on the economic, social and environmental benefits that make the river precious.

Some cling to the idea of offsetting new consumption by bringing in new supplies. We don’t share that enthusiasm. While supply augmentation is viable in some limited contexts (e.g., desalination to drought-proof an urban center), significant system-wide augmentation cannot occur quickly and is likely to never make sense from an economic, environmental, or political perspective, and focusing on this goal is counterproductive to implementing better solutions. The good news is that there are many better ways to solve the problems we face.

THE PATH FORWARD

Our review of the Colorado River’s broken water budget has been sobering. Despite the complexities associated with the legal issues, system operations, water accounting nuances, information shortages, uncertain climate and demographic projections, and so on, two simple truths have emerged. First, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that the current water budget is unsustainable; it clearly is unsustainable given ongoing drought conditions. The buffers that have historically protected



STEWARDSHIP



Paddlers enjoying a float on the Upper Colorado from State Bridge to Burns. Like many other whitewater stretches in the Colorado River Basin, flows for this run will remain threatened unless the western U.S. pursues logical, sustainable, comprehensive water planning moving forward. Photo by Nathan Fey

water users from fluctuating inflows have largely been eroded. Second, to pursue new depletions in this environment is exceedingly risky.

As the search for solutions intensifies, we will look with skepticism to all proposals that call for taking more water from the river; simultaneously, we will support ongoing efforts to promote conservation throughout the basin, both in the municipal and agricultural sectors. One of the great (but largely ignored) regional success stories is that many large and rapidly-growing western cities use no more water today than they did a quarter-century ago. Efforts to ratchet such efforts up to a basin-wide scale are emerging, as evidenced by the new Colorado River System Conservation Program and the ongoing work of the municipal and agricultural conservation work groups formed as the “next steps” to the Basin Study. And provisional data suggest a recent dip in basin-wide consumption. These are reasons for

optimism. But it all means nothing if we ignore the problem of new consumption.

“WATER USERS CONSUME TOO MUCH WATER FROM THE RIVER AND, MOVING FORWARD, MUST STRIVE TO USE LESS, NOT MORE. ANY CONVERSATION ABOUT THE RIVER THAT DOES NOT EXPLICITLY ACKNOWLEDGE THIS REALITY IS NOT HELPFUL IN SHAPING SOUND PUBLIC POLICY.”

In future reports of the CRRG, we will explore other elements of the path forward. In general, we will advocate for those options that are flexible and iterative, use science and economics, and that feature a sound collaborative structure that allows constant reassessment and adjustment over time. We see great potential in a greater use of markets and incentives, believing that the historic failure to manage water with respect to sound economic principles is not merely a problem to lament, but is an opportunity to exploit. And we contend that everyone who has received benefits from the river

has a responsibility to support solutions through conservation, funding and other suitable mechanisms. No water user should assume their depletions—either current or projected—are not part of the problem, and none should expect a “free pass” in the search for lasting solutions.

¹ *The issues in this Summary Report are explored in more detail in a supporting Technical Report, which includes links and citations for the material presented herein. (See www.coloradoriverresearchgroup.org.)*

² *The CRRG is a “self-directed group of 10 veteran Colorado River scholars assembled to provide a non-partisan, academic voice on matters pertaining to science, law and policy on the Colorado River, helping all those with a stake in the river identify, justify and implement actions consistent with long-term sustainable management.”*



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MENTAL GAME

KAYAKING BLIND THROUGH THE GRAND CANYON

STORY AND PHOTOS BY ROCKY CONTOS



Lonnie, often bold, lines up to surf a huge wave in Zoroaster Rapid.

AS WE APPROACH Badger, the first major rapid in the Grand Canyon, some in our group are still wondering how our blind kayakers Erik Weihenmayer and Lonnie Bedwell will fare. Commands are delivered: “Hold that line.” “Hard left.” “Small right.” “On me.” Along with some audible roars of water splashing about in holes and crashing waves, such basic vocal commands are the core feedback that someone without vision must use to navigate a big rapid successfully. Erik and Lonnie both run Badger with remarkable style—not even coming close to flipping. After regrouping, our team ventures farther into the bowels of the Big Ditch, one of the most spectacular river runs in the world. We wonder how our blind teammates will fare in the bigger, more intimidating rapids that we’ll encounter later on the 21-day trip to Pearce Ferry.

Erik Weihenmayer originally conceived of the goal to kayak through the entire

Rob Raker fixes the two-way radio that Erik uses in the bigger rapids because it is often difficult to hear simple shouted commands.

Grand Canyon in 2006 while on a Grand Canyon raft trip with kids with disabilities. On that AzRA-led trip, guide Harlan Taney suggested that Erik hop in an inflatable kayak and tackle some of the rapids, which Erik found quite doable and thrilling. Harlan then suggested that Erik might be able to learn hardshell kayaking well enough that

he could kayak all rapids in the entire Grand Canyon someday.

Erik was already a renowned blind athlete whose life was described in the biographical book *Touch the Top of the World* (also made into a movie). Erik completely lost his vision by age 14 due to the congenital





Lonnie Anderson practices an Eskimo roll just after launching at Lees Ferry on September 7, 2014

disorder of retinoschisis, which made him frustrated and depressed. However, various events led him to realize that he could still live a full and meaningful life, and after an introduction to climbing and a set of friends willing to help him in his endeavors, he achieved feats previously thought impossible for the blind. This included the first blind ascents of dozens of technical walls such as El Capitan, as well as the highest peaks on each continent, including Mt. Everest in 2001. Propelled to stardom by his Everest climb, Erik was able to retire from his job as a teacher and now devotes his life to inspiring and motivating others through speaking engagements and other activities associated with the non-profit organization No Barriers, which he co-founded.

Erik's climbing friend Rob Raker, who was also a kayaker, took on the challenge of teaching Erik how to kayak. After Erik mastered the Eskimo roll, the two started tackling easy river runs in their native Colorado and shorter expeditions such as paddling through Desolation and Gray's Canyons on the Green River. They also trained at the U.S. National Whitewater Center in North Carolina. Rob contacted me because they were looking for big, warm rivers to help Erik train on during the winter. Through the organization

SierraRios, I led Erik and his team on expeditions to Río Usumacinta in Mexico (in 2011 and 2013), to Ríos Apurimac and Yanatile-Urubamba in Peru (in 2012), and to Río Marañón in Peru (the Grand Canyon of the Amazon, in 2013), and also took him for kayak training in the Southern California surf. On the expeditions, I was inspired by how motivated and courageous Erik was at achieving his goal despite the frequent challenges of getting spooked by the water after swimming. Fortunately, on these trips he could hop on the raft to recover and still enjoy the adventure.

Erik was hoping to do his main full kayak run of the Grand Canyon initially in 2012, and then 2013. I offered to organize a private trip for Erik and the team—either as the full run or a training run with friends and family—but we didn't win the lotteries, and a labyrinthine NPS bureaucracy had to be navigated to officially produce a documentary film of the trip (one of the goals of the project). Fortunately, Fred Thevenin, the owner of AzRA, offered to be a partner on the project, which led to a planned trip in April 2013. We all knew that the delays in trip scheduling and the news breaking of Erik's plans could have unintended consequences, like others trying to jump in and beat Erik to the goal. Late in 2012, I had heard from friends of

mine who worked with Team River Runner (TRR) that another blind guy named Lonnie was contemplating kayaking the entire Grand Canyon on a TRR trip. After mentioning this news to Erik and the team, I was impressed at Erik's magnanimous and cheerful reply: "That's great that Lonnie might kayak through. I'd much rather work with Lonnie to accomplish the goal together than us competing against each other. Can we reach out to him?" I made some attempts to get in contact with Lonnie, but to no avail.

Thus it turned out that in 2013 there were two blind kayak runs through the Grand Canyon. First was Erik's 12-day April 2013 AzRA raft-supported Grand Canyon trip that actually materialized into more of a training pre-run through the Canyon. Second was an August TRR trip in which Lonnie Bedwell kayaked through the entire

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MENTAL GAME

Grand Canyon guided by sighted veterans. Erik kayaked through nearly all of the bigger rapids, but left three to be done later: Lava Falls, Horn Creek, and Upset. Interestingly, Lonnie swam in Upset and Lava, two of the three big rapids that Erik left for the later trip. Lonnie's accomplishment made some small news, which allowed Erik to get in contact directly with Lonnie and invite him on the next trip materializing for 2014 that would be documented in a movie and covered much more thoroughly by the media. It was on this 21-day AzRA-led Lees Ferry to Pearce Ferry September 2014 trip that I finally met Lonnie.

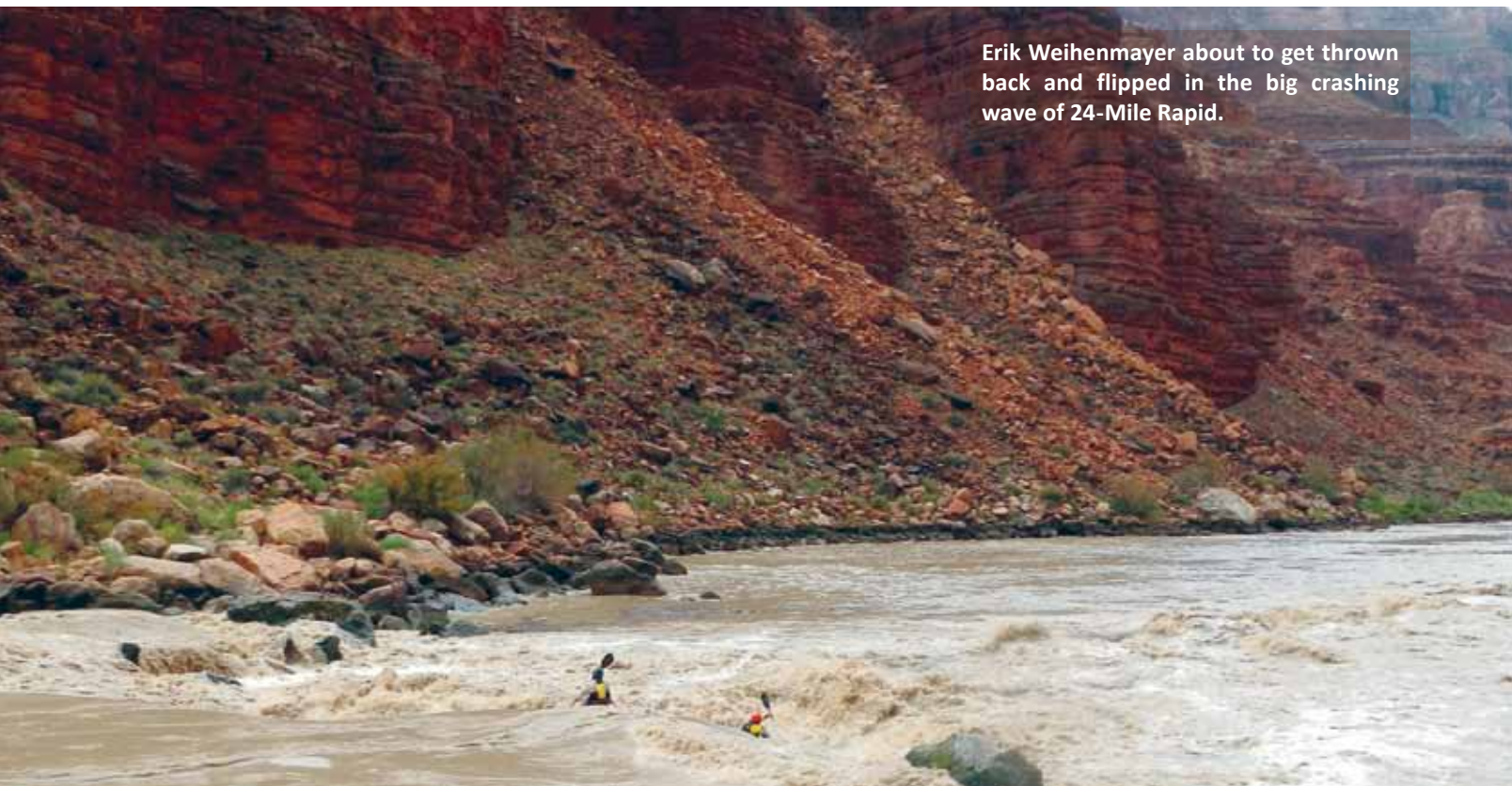
Lonnie Bedwell's story is an inspiration in the face of dismal circumstances. A veteran of the U.S. Navy and National Guard, Lonnie lost his vision in 1997 when his best friend accidentally shot him in the face with a shotgun while the two were hunting turkey near Lonnie's home in Indiana. Lonnie almost died in the accident that left 85 shotgun pellets in his head—mainly in the eyes and sinus areas. But he survived, albeit with a total loss of vision and shotgun shells left in his head. I was amazed at Lonnie's upbeat attitude about life. He described how three months after the accident,

when he was getting frustrated at his inability to find his own barn, his 5-year-old daughter offered to help him. It was the most inspiring experience in his life, underscoring the love others had for him, and how with a little help, he could still lead a normal life. He went on to raise his three daughters and do volunteer construction work. Still with an adventurous spirit in 2012, he took advantage of a Team River Runner offer to train vets how to kayak, and soon learned the Eskimo roll. When a 2013 TRR Grand Canyon trip opportunity arose for him to go through on a raft, he said he'd go, but wanted to kayak the whole thing. Joe Mornini (head of TRR and organizer of the trip) said maybe, but Lonnie would have to prepare. Lonnie had to have a solid roll on both sides (he promptly practiced more, counting 1500 rolls in his local pond) and do more whitewater training at USNWC and other runs in the East (Nantahala, Pigeon, Yellowstone, Russell Fork Rivers). He didn't know of Erik's intended run.

I ask Lonnie about his experiences in the rapids. He says, "What often gets me are the laterals. I often don't know they're coming and they can flip me over." I ask, "What about the whirlpools and eddylines

at the bottoms of the rapids?" He replies, "Those can be even worse!" Erik has similar thoughts about kayaking through rapids on the Grand Canyon. Adding to that, he says, "When we started, I often couldn't hear my guide yelling commands to me in a rapid. Not knowing where to go can be frightening."

There are several ways to guide a blind kayaker on a river. One simple way is to have a bell or songs (playing from an iPod) on a lead kayaker provide a constant audible sound to follow. In rapids, where more anticipatory moves need be made, other methods must be used. The most basic way is for the guide to be nearby (preferably just behind) and shout commands. However, this method has its problems when whitewater noise makes it difficult for blind paddlers to hear clearly. Realizing this problem, Erik and team tried numerous radio systems over the years, and settled on a waterproof set-up that seemed to work well with a range of about 200 yards. While the radios generally allow clear commands to be heard, they suffer from their own set of issues, often becoming scratchy, shorting out, or getting clogged in the microphones.



Erik Weihenmayer about to get thrown back and flipped in the big crashing wave of 24-Mile Rapid.



Lonnie Anderson and Erik Weihenmayer at Redwall Cavern. The two blind athletes jointly tackled the challenge to successfully kayak through every rapid in the Grand Canyon of the Colorado.

It's hot and sunny in September in the Grand Canyon. We enjoy another fine breakfast prepared by the AzRA guides camping by 75-mile canyon. James Q Martin, Michael Brown, and Andy Maser race ahead in the raft to fiddle with and set up their camera equipment for a shot of the kayakers going through Hance rapid. Steve Mace leads Erik and Lonnie to the scout point with iPod songs blasting from his lower back. After our scout, we descend to the river, and Timmy O'Neil and I kayak through first, setting up safety below. Erik then paddles down, led by Harlan Taney giving commands to him through a two-way radio, while Rob Raker and Steve Mace paddle down nearby.

Lonnie follows, led vocally by his kayak guides Seth Dahl and Chris Drew. Skyler Williams, Erik's assistant most of the time in his normal work, kayaks through last. We all make it through without a hitch, but the big waves still should make some impressive video shots.

We all know there's a lot more to Grand Canyon trips than the big rapids. Erik and Lonnie also enjoyed numerous side hikes from the river. In fact, I was quite impressed with how fast each of them could walk and climb up some of the challenging passages. They did a

great deal in camp, helping unload the rafts, washing their own dishes like the rest of us, and setting up their own tents (though often they would graciously accept some help from others). We had scintillating discussions and listened to improvised songs (inspired by Timmy O'Neil!). I left the trip with a host of new friends, grateful to have shared that incredible place with them all.

You're probably still wondering how Erik and Lonnie did in Upset and Lava Falls. Did Lonnie's skirt implode again, leading to additional swims? Well, I'll let you find out by looking at the No Barriers website and watching the upcoming documentary movie. Regardless of that outcome, the main message to take home is that Erik Weihenmayer and Lonnie Anderson kayaking through the Grand Canyon together have provided a great inspiration

not only to the blind but also to others with various barriers in their lives that inhibit them from achieving goals.

No Barriers is a non-profit organization inspiring veterans, youth, and folks suffering from disabilities to have more meaning in their lives by overcoming perceived obstacles to enjoyment of outdoor recreation. All participants of the No Barriers "Kayaking Grand Canyon Blind" trip want to thank sponsors Nature Valley, Jackson Kayaks, Watershed Drybags, Goal Zero, Werner paddles, Astral, Kokatat, Scarpa, Mountain Hardwear, and Native Sunglasses, as well as partner Arizona Raft Adventures and Discovery (AzRA) for guiding the trip.

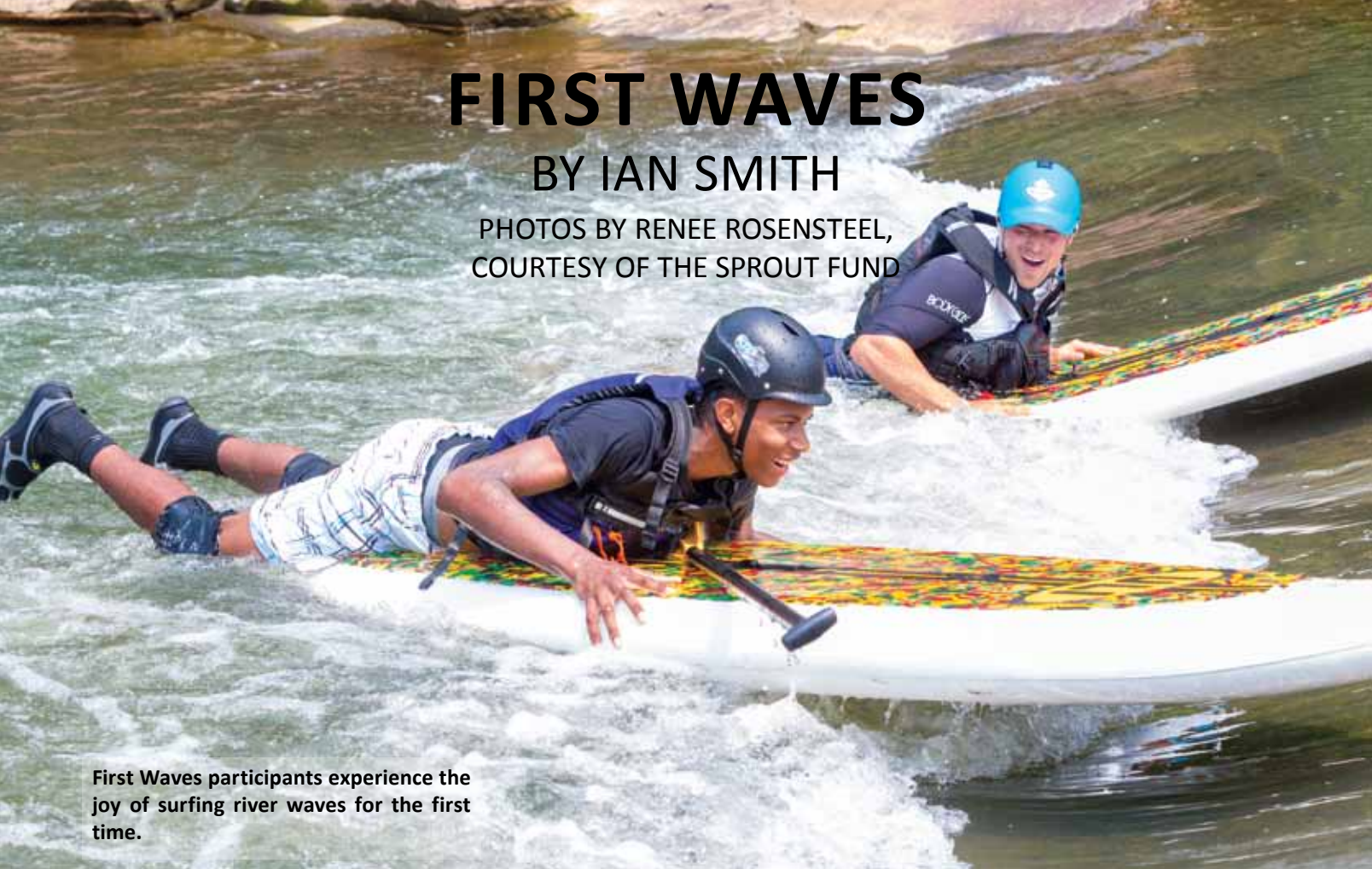
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FIRST WAVES

BY IAN SMITH

PHOTOS BY RENEE ROSENSTEEL,
COURTESY OF THE SPROUT FUND



First Waves participants experience the joy of surfing river waves for the first time.

Editor's Note: This story first appeared in the December edition of The Paddler.

"MOST PEOPLE ARE on the world, not in it—have no conscious sympathy or relationship to anything about them—undiffused, separate, and rigidly alone like marbles of polished stone, touching but separate."

- John of the Mountains: The Unpublished Journals of John Muir

The magic of surfing a wave or riding the current of rivers is that in a single moment our perspective changes and we become one with our planet. We quickly realize the futility of fighting the unwavering power of nature and lose ourselves in the grace and fluidity, letting it flow through us as we flow through it. As whitewater paddlers and river surfers, we are offered the chance to share these experiences and inspire care for an environment that we then see unites us. This realization was the motivation behind First Waves, a program that introduces

teens facing adversity to conservation and enjoyment of our waterways.

To ignite the program, building a strong team and relationships with community outreach programs was imperative. After meeting with David English, then of the Sprout Fund, I knew we had found an organization that could deliver exactly what we needed to make an impact. The Sprout Fund's mission is to "enrich the Pittsburgh region's vitality by engaging citizens, amplifying voices, supporting creativity and innovation, and cultivating connected communities." David's experience at Sprout helped fuse my passions for standup paddling, filmmaking, and conservation into an initiative with a reach beyond that of just Pittsburgh's youth. We formed partnerships with the Pittsburgh Filmmakers Youth Media, Paddle Without Pollution, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Body Glove, ULI Boards, and SurfSUP Adventures to create a first-of-its-kind program with a goal to enhance awareness of waterway conservation by teaching teens to catch their first waves and to document and

share the experience through filmmaking. Participants were selected from among the youth of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Pittsburgh, none of whom had any experience in whitewater or on standup paddleboards.

The inaugural phase of the program launched on August 9th, 2014 at Greenhouse Park near Johnstown, Pennsylvania. The park is situated on the shores of the Stonycreek River where a standing surf wave and Class II rapids provided a perfect venue for introducing river surfing, whitewater skills, and river safety. To kick off the program, Susan Howard and Louis Cappa of Pittsburgh Filmmakers Youth Media Group instructed the students on how to properly use a digital video camera, the elements of a quality shot, and how to conduct interviews. The students collaborated on open-ended questions and once everyone had been interviewed, it was time to get in the water.

A discussion about whitewater safety ensued and we divided the group into

KIDS & WHITEWATER



An important component of teaching kids about rivers is opening their eyes to human impacts on riparian ecosystems. First Waves also gives participants the opportunity to mitigate some of those impacts.

two teams. One team took to the water on their boards while the others shot footage of the experience and conducted interviews. Within minutes, any concerns or apprehension were replaced by intensity, focus, and enjoyment. Wild hooting echoed through the valley and ear-to-ear grins adorned us all, uniting our group in the experience. "I found that after I let myself fall into the water, I lost the fear of hurting myself," said one student, "...and you don't really have to worry, then it's all just you trusting yourself to not fall." Within an hour, every participant was able to stand up on a board and catch his or her first ride on a standing river wave. Some surfed prone while others were standing, but everyone felt the invigorating experience of being propelled by the force of the river.

Surfing and paddling, however, were not the sole source of the group's excitement. Simultaneously, the film crews waded in the water, clamored over rocks, and even swam through whitewater to get unique angles and capture the experience. They used a variety of technologies including

waterproof POV (point of view) and digital cameras. Once everyone was off the water, the students did a final interview to bring an end to the day's activities. With the footage in the can, the experience was an incredible success. Not only did the program offer an immersive education on filmmaking, paddleboarding, and whitewater, but also engaged teamwork, critical thinking, and an extensive workout and balance exercise. Residual benefits included overcoming the obstacles of being interviewed on-camera while also dealing with the environment of swift-water. These challenges are the foundation for growth and part of what makes whitewater such an effective environment for mentorship and recreation.

Two weeks after the river surfing and filmmaking workshop, First Waves began the second portion of the program. This time, instead of surfing river waves and running rapids, participants utilized their paddling skills to access difficult to reach sections of the Monongahela River in order to remove litter and pollutants. The

bustling streets of Pittsburgh's South Side and garbage-strewn banks of this industrial section of river proved a stark contrast from the surfing event.

David and Melissa Rohm of Paddle Without Pollution facilitated the conservation workshop and cleanup initiative. Paddle Without Pollution has found a way to not only rehabilitate local waterways and shorelines, but to make the process fun. Teen participants and adult volunteers alike competed to see who could find the most interesting, shocking, and potentially disturbing items. Additionally, prizes were given out to the person that hauled the most garbage on their board or kayak. Utilizing the balance and paddling techniques learned at the whitewater workshop, the First Waves armada could be seen with piles of garbage bags, several

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KIDS & WHITEWATER



First Waves gives kids an opportunity to capture those special moments of river discovery through video technology and film workshops.

tires, and a fully intact shopping cart atop their paddleboards and kayaks.

In addition to removing trash, participants continued to document their experiences under the guidance of the Pittsburgh Filmmakers. Shore-breaking barge waves, messy conditions, and wading in waist deep water forced First Waves to adapt their filmmaking plans. Despite challenging conditions, however, the team was able to use dry-bags, waterproof POV cameras, and their paddling skills to ensure they

were in position to get quality shots of the conservation efforts. Through the tenacity and hard work of First Waves and Paddle Without Pollution, their goal to remove at least 500 pounds of pollutants from the waterway was far exceeded. In total, the event amassed a heaping pile of trash in excess of 1 ton at the 18th Street Boat Launch at South Side Riverfront Park.

To conclude the First Waves program and further extend the influence and reach of the program, participants took part

in an editing workshop at the Pittsburgh Filmmaker's Youth Media headquarters. Their ambition was to communicate what they learned in a film that showed the exhilaration of paddling, surfing, and whitewater while also expressing the importance and need to protect the waterways that connect us all. This was not something that had to be explained or preached, but rather it was something the students felt intrinsically. During her interview after the cleanup, one participant remarked, "We saw a guy drop his trash and just leave it there. We said something but he just lit a cigarette and walked away... That's what made me angry."

While Muir may have been right about the disconnected society we have become, First Waves has shown this is not a fate we are condemned to. We are capable of understanding and sharing how special our world is and facing head-on the challenges presented to make it a cleaner and better place. The camaraderie, exhilaration, and satisfaction we attain from paddling and filmmaking is one way to inspire these aspirations. Catching our first waves can propel us towards a future where our polished stones lie together as the foundation of the rivers that connect us, provide us life, and make it one worth living.

This project supported in part by the Hive Fund for Connected Learning at The Sprout Fund. The student-filmed videos are available online at www.firstwaves.org. You can learn more about the organization and follow them on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram @firstwavesorg.

We would like to thank our partners; Paddle Without Pollution, Pittsburgh Filmmakers Youth Media, Body Glove, ULI Boards, and SurfSUP Adventures for their efforts in the First Waves project.

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KIDS & WHITEWATER

RUSH

BY LIEM SWANSON



Liem Swanson is in the zone on a local wave.
Photo by Eric Swanson

THIS WAS THE hardest rapid on the run. Period.

I was only a yard away from it.

I had already been lucky enough to make it to this point, but I wanted to push myself a little more. Running all of the South Fork of the American River had seemed out of the question before this season (fall 2013). Now I needed to answer the question: Would I want to mess up? You'd probably say "no," but I would probably have to wait for a whole year before I had this opportunity again.

This rapid is very long with gigantic waves and bony drops. It's very shallow and you could get bruised badly. I had done this rapid before, but I followed someone the first time. This time it was another story. I wanted to lead myself through it. This

meant I would have to pick my own line through the rapid, avoid obstacles, and find my own way out of problems. As I paddled around the last curve before the rapid I made my decision. My heart was racing; I was ready for war. There was no going back.

As I entered the rapid, I bounced down shallow drops and seemingly endless seas of waves. Other kids were probably playing video games. This was no video game. I looked downstream and noticed the eddy that signified the second half of the rapid. I charged to the right of it to avoid dangerous sieves and undercuts. I battled with all I had and made it to the right of the eddy.

I leaped downstream over a pour-over. I was pleased I had made it this far and got snapped out of that thought when I was slightly tipped off balance. I reacted with

one quick stroke and braced myself in time before I screwed the whole thing up. I was worried this would happen again, but I knew I had to push those thoughts out of my mind. Those were things that really messed people up.

I tried to imagine what the end would be like. I knew there were ominous waves. Everything rushed by. The roar of the river ricocheted off my eardrums. It was a magnificent thing just to watch the river and hear the rush of the river.

I shouldn't have been thinking about the consequences. Flipping over was a part of having fun. Soon I would be in the car regretting the fact I wasn't enjoying the moment. Just watching the miles flying by. I was only yards away from the end. I looked downstream at the menacing waves. At that point I just had to set my mind to it. I

AW STEWARDSHIP

HITTING THE RIVER RUNNING

Theresa Simsiman

In 2014, FERC issued new operating licenses for the Upper American River and Chili Bar Hydropower Projects on the South Fork American River. Since 2001, American Whitewater has participated in relicensing negotiations and studies, successfully securing recreational flows, river access, funding for recreational resources and flow information. In addition to 1-6 days of recreational flows on the South Fork Silver Creek Ice House reach and 6-7 Days on the South Fork American Slab Creek, there are new staff gages at critical points on the runs. (Locals can look for these gages on the Highway 193 bridge abutment for Chili Bar, and below Ice House and Slab Creek Dam.) Additionally, comprehensive streamflow and reservoir level information for the UARP project will be available online. Since the license was issued last summer, we've worked closely with our partners to prepare for the whitewater releases that, depending on water year type, are expected this spring. (Come on rain and snow!) As we look forward to more adventures on the South Fork American, our work continues. Public river access is an ongoing issue, and we'll be working with the utilities this spring on a few promising leads!

knew there were two possible outcomes. One, I would screw the whole thing up. Two, I would have one heck of a story to tell. Either way, I would have a great ride.

As I approached the final segment, I knew it was the most difficult. I knew I had the skills to make it through. I just had to make sure I didn't get over my head—I was almost done.

As I paddled downstream, my mind thought random thoughts about kayaking. I thought about the challenge ahead. I thought about the adventures I had already had. There is something special and unique about kayaking that makes me think about the world I live in. Though it seems like there are few natural places left in this world, kayaking leads me to these amazing places. It leads me on new adventures and leads me to try new things and push myself outside my comfort zone. When I'm out in nature doing this, it's one of the only things I do that I consider being in the real world. When you paddle, you learn how to avoid obstacles or get out of problems.

The next moment I noticed someone flip over, which wasn't very encouraging. Just as I paddled up to the lip of the drop,

everything seemed to slow down. It felt like my brain froze. I wasn't able to register how big the first hole was. But the next second, I crashed into the first hole hard. The waves and holes that followed came like punches to my stomach. All I could see were white holes, one after another. Green waves were swallowing me up, one after another. "How

was the run?" people asked me. I felt like I had been washed in a washing machine. "Awesome," was all I could muster.

Liem Swanson is 12 years old and loves being on the river in his kayak.



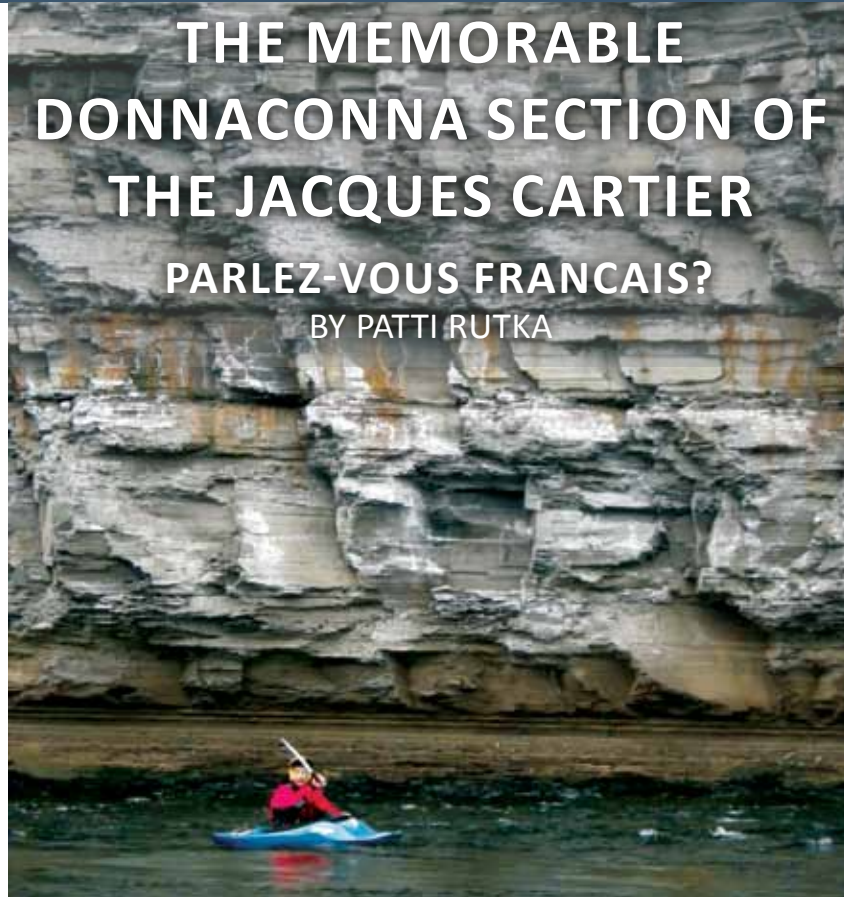
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MENTAL GAME

THE MEMORABLE DONNACONNA SECTION OF THE JACQUES CARTIER PARLEZ-VOUS FRANCAIS? BY PATTI RUTKA



The Wife. E. Coyote wall above the Donnaconna Gorge.
Photo by Bill Blauvelt

SHUTTLE STUPIDITY AND Rapid Amnesia affect a small percentage of paddlers each year. The toll is costly; both are insidious conditions and may have their origins in genetics. The FDA has not yet found a drug that works for either condition, but harking back to the past for clues might yield a breakthrough in treatment.

My father lay face down across an orange velour footstool in my mother's '70's screaming orange-and-red floral upholstered living room. He intended to help me with my high school algebra, what he called the "new math," but we collided. At 48, with a bald patch ever broadening like an Arctic ice shelf, my father didn't have much hair remaining to tear out. At 15, I had enough tears to bring our living room to flood stage. I'd stomp upstairs to my bedroom with my math book and homework. Thirty-five years later, figuring out what boats go on which cars multiplied by the number of drivers divided

by the cost of a car's oil pan feels like a Machiavellian word problem my father left me. I don't figure out shuttles, and to this day I can't remember how I completed that homework.

Which reminds me of other things I forget, like rapids. Most rapids on most rivers fade from my memory as soon as I've crested the apex of a wave or been slapped around a gnarly hole. When other boaters stand around, beer in hand at the take-out, regaling each other with the succession of drops, I get the creepy feeling that I've inherited my father's Alzheimer's at a record-setting young age because such recall capability evades me.

So when the spectacular Donnaconna section of the Jacques Cartier River in Quebec triggered only one of my conditions, Shuttle Stupidity, but not Rapid Amnesia, I was a little in awe at my own memory—I'd only run the river twice before.

When 10 people, "plus Francois," said our trip leader of our Quebecois friend, decided to paddle the Donnaconna on Memorial Day weekend, I loaded up on new plastic Canadian bills and fished out my passport for a trip north across Maine's border.

Rocks I'm not so afraid of, but big water, yes, and the Donnaconna is big water, if only Class III. We'd all been watching water levels after an immense winter ice-out. Eye-poppingly large numbers result in this mathematical conversion from cubic feet per second to cubic meters per second. My Mad River Outrage was the long, fast open boat to bring, though it handicapped me: with only one blade there was no way I would catch all the surfs the kayakers could in what arguably has to be the Northeast's best continuous surfing river.

Opposite: Upstream of the put-in on the Donnaconna the beauty of the canyon and the high volume of the river are apparent.
Photo by Patti Rutka

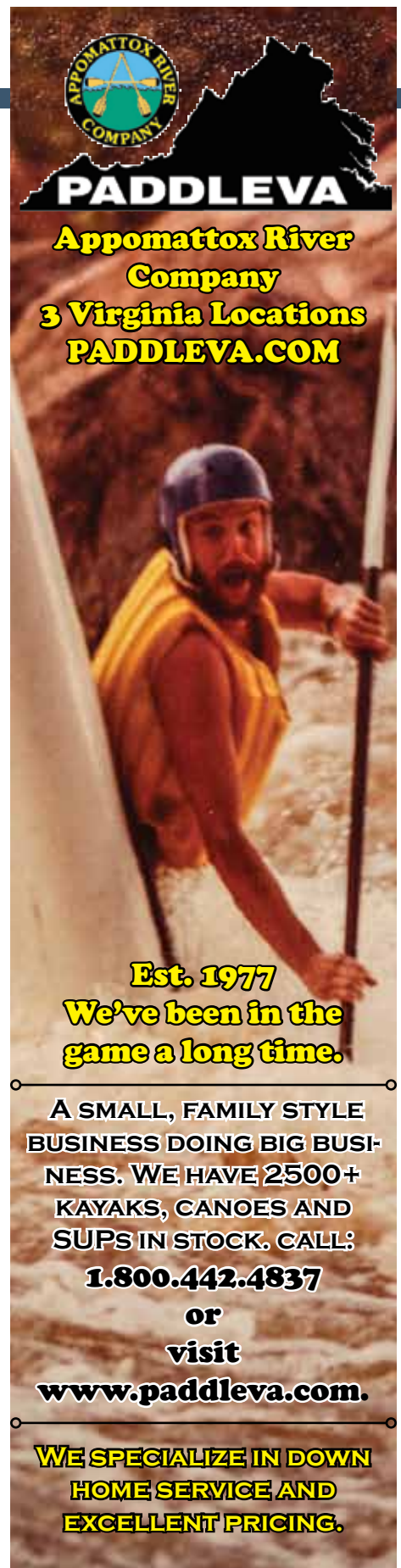
Shale bedrock tips at just the right angle to slide several thousand cfs (we had between 6,000 and 8,500 cfs for three days, a high runnable level) over a wide, broad riverbed that descends through a Shangri-la gorge dripping with waterfalls and hanging greenery. The Donnaconna's distinctive beauty must account for my ability to remember every pretzel-twist turn of the river, every surf worth its salt. Though it had been two years previous I'd run it, I remembered with remarkable clarity the river's progression.

The first drop is the hardest. Looking upstream of the put-in is enough to make Class III paddlers hurl when they realize the gorge immediately above must be cavernously deep to pulse eddy lines up to nearly three feet high. The gorge walls constrict in a wasp's waist to create a hole munchy enough to flip a monster raft. So boaters put in downstream, next to the hydro penstock, after a lengthy walk downhill from the good parking area at Pont Rouge.

Downstream of the penstock by about two hundred yards yawns a 200-foot

nearly river-wide hole. To avoid the hole, you head for the left side of the river, but the flow becomes a hall of mirrors as the riverbed slants crazily to first the left, then the right, making it difficult to figure out an angle of approach. Converging lines force most of the flow into an exploding haystack. Manage to calculate your approach properly, and you can cut across the shoulder of the haystack into a massive eddy at river center below the river-wide hole. Miscalculate your angle, and your options are to raspberry it down a shallow slide on the left, or you can aim (sort-of) straight for, first, a large wave/hole that waits to flip you end-for-end, then, second, a standing glassy wave that will back surf you if you don't have enough momentum. It'll mess with your head, if not your boat.

If you make it down the first wave train, then you can breathe more easily knowing you have only Raggedy Ann arms to look forward to, come the end of the 6-ish mile run because there are more surfing opportunities than even General Grievous in Star Wars could tackle. Still, there are a few spots to pay attention to in amongst all the surfing.

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MENTAL GAME



Jonathan Wheaton surfs a wave on the Donnaconna.

Photo by Ken Gordon

Before the Donnaconna's lower gorge constricts, a collection of waves on the right beckons. Once your arms have fallen off from playing that set, the river turns hard left in "iHighway Ends!" fashion. Wile E. Coyote would run smack into the looming gorge wall if he didn't know to stay off it, turn left, and eddy out on a sand beach for lunch.

After you've rested, consumed a snack, perhaps rolled a few times in the large pool at the beach, you then gird your loins to head down the throat of the gorge. The line is consistent and simple: left of center on the wave train. Do not stray from the wave train unless you are prepared for large, and in some spots very squirrely, eddies. Here my memory serves well. Part way down on river right there is a whirlpool. The whirlpool. Its proper name is Helicopter Eddy. The opposite eddy on river left is formidable enough, creating an optical illusion against down-sloping gorge walls of water rushing downhill but upstream, toward the top of the eddy. And yet, that's an okay eddy to both occupy and exit.

Not so the Whirlpool/Helicopter Eddy on river right. You don't want to be there. Period.

But that was exactly where one of our (squirt) boaters ended up when he chased another one of our very experienced kayakers who inexplicably swam. The first fellow, a boater of Tsangpo caliber, had to swim out of his boat when traveling 50 feet down the whirlpool produced no successful roll. Several of us witnessed his roll attempts as well as the subsequent mystery moves. The other fellow—well, let's just say his hike up to the top of the gorge so he could meet us and his boat downstream took him bushwhacking through a cedar tangle penance for not paying attention to the pour-over on river right at the gorge's entrance. His Hydroskin looked like he'd been muddin' all day on an ATV instead of paddling.

After an hour and a half of waiting for him, we finally figured we needed an emergency plan. Just then he showed up accompanied by two escort boaters as he progressed downriver on foot. As we say in Maine, we were some relieved. Being good friends,

we encouraged him to eat some chocolate. Then we helped him duct tape together two spare canoe paddles into a makeshift kayak paddle to replace the one he'd lost in the swim. He even surfed with that thing on his way out.

Once the gorge section is over, the Donnaconna calms down as the river broadens again for the remaining few miles to the take-out. This is surf heaven for kayakers and that progeny of the Voyageur, Canadian canoeists. Face it: those Quebeckers, like Francois, are just better than we are.

So I remember the Donnaconna well; perhaps I am not condemned to Rapid Amnesia for the rest of my life and my father's specter can disappear. But wait! Not so fast. What of Shuttle Stupidity? I think it may be terminal, and not only that, it's gone viral.

Someone in our group decided to take the local highway, Route 138, to the take-out in Donnaconna for setting shuttle. I agreed that was a fine idea. We would get to see the pastoral Quebec countryside. Instead, we happened upon a marathon congesting the road with runners supported by celebrity-size buses so that a 10-minute shuttle ended up stretching to 40 minutes. If only I had spoken up, seized the moment to make my father algebraically proud of me! And the regular route on the highway, only one exit down from Pont Rouge to Donnaconna, is so easy.

But never mind. Back at our motel of tissue-thin walls in Pont Rouge, right next door to a Canadian Police Station, we drank Le Fin du Monde (End of the World) beer on our Redneck Patio created out of a circle of lounge chairs we dragged from the motel rooms onto the gravel. We told lies in good river fashion. We hung out our gear on a throw rope strung between a Rav 4 and a telephone pole to flutter in a pre-thunderstorm Quebecois breeze.

At least, that's the best I can remember.

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CREEKING

RUNNABLE

BY MILES MURPHY



David running Nies' Pieces on the Green River Narrows.
Photo by Miles Murphy

"YOU UP, BRO?"

"I guess."

It's 7 a.m. on Monday morning. Not a school Monday morning, but a day-off-from-school Monday morning. Thank God for fall break. I answer Dave's call and pry myself from sleep's security.

"North Fork's running, man," David says.

"Really? I didn't think it rained that much. Heard it a little."

"It's like 435 cfs, man. Runnable's supposed to be 350 cubic feet per second."

"I gotta eat. I'll get packed up," I say. "And I got the Burb, so can we take Roxanne?"

"Sure dude. I'll come to your house. I'm leaving now. I'm paddling an AQ—you want one?"

"Longboat sounds good." I say. "Sure it's high enough?"

"Well, last time...I bet it won't be a problem," says David.

"See you there."

This could be fun.

The North Fork of the French Broad is a steep Class IV-V creek—one of our favorites. We run laps on it all summer. If it rains, we are there. Nothing can beat the seclusion, power, difficulty, and thick fun of the North Fork. It is dangerous, but we're usually somewhat cautious, and we run it so often that we know all the spots to avoid. However, summer is over. Fall's yellow leaves are here, and the river is far lower than either of us has paddled it before. But I'm psyched to paddle the fast, 10-and-a-half-foot-long old school boats called AQ's. Dave has two residing in his boat stable; they're the product of his parents' paddling prime. Boats have changed since the 80s, but the AQ's are long and fast, so Dave and I love to dust them off once or twice a season.

I take my damp gear off the line in my garage and throw my paddle, helmet, and

elbow pads on the rank heap. I eat my reliable Raisin Bran and tell my dad I'm going to the North Fork. The clock above the stove reads 7:30, and I am slightly more awake than I was when David called.

Roxanne, David's red Toyota Matrix, announces her presence in my driveway with an engine rev. We throw in my gear, make sure the boats are strapped on tightly, and leave within a couple of minutes. Nothing motivates a couple of teenage boaters like the river. I drive because my dad will let me drive David, but David can't drive me. This doesn't bother me in the slightest, though; Roxanne is a sports car compared to my Suburban.

After only 40 minutes, we pull up to the put-in on the side of Highway 215. Roxanne shortens the drive. To our astonishment, another paddler is parked in the gravel pullout.

"How's it going, man?" I say. "Know what the level is?"

"It's probably around zero. Like the lowest you can run Boxcar," he says.



David, Rutledge and Miles on the rock beside Gorilla.
Photo by Phil Murphy

He disappears down the trail to the river, and Dave and I unload our boats. In a few minutes we have our gear on and are on our way to the river. The hike in is as steep and overgrown as always, and the extra length of the long boats makes it more strenuous. After some slips, dropped boats, and hitting countless trees, we see the brown water of the North Fork. On the opposite side is the gauge. It reads -2 inches.

“That dude was wrong,” says Dave.

“We’ll be careful.”

We sit in the old plastic seats of the AQ’s and stretch our sprayskirts over the cockpit rims. The 20-year-old plastic is surprisingly comfortable, and my boat looks longer than I expected. Fortunately I have longboating experience, unlike David. I paddled an 11.5-foot long boat on creeks all last winter. David has paddled his AQ on a Class III-IV river a couple times. Longboating the North Fork can’t be that much different anyway. I push off the bank with my paddle and slide

into the brown pool. The water chills my hands.

“It doesn’t look that low,” I say.

The water carries us downriver like a conveyor belt without brakes. The first few rapids moisten our sprayskirts with splashes. It’s a nice warm-up, full of rock splats and mini-drops. On the last warm-up rapid, I set up to do my usual move of driving hard left, lifting up my bow with a boof stroke at the top of the five foot drop, and skipping into the eddy below. When I do this correctly, the top of the boat stays completely dry. I paddle hard and put in my boof stroke, but I pencil in at the bottom, submerging the bow. It’s probably just the extra couple feet of boat.

Dave and I spot the tree that hangs over the first and biggest rapid: Boxcar. We pull into an eddy and climb onto the rocks to scout. A focus-filled silence hangs while we analyze the rapid. From the scouting rock on river-left we have a clear view of the whole rapid: the initial 10-foot, nearly

vertical, slide into a 30-foot pinball machine finishing with a 10- to 15-foot vertical drop. Thoughts bounce around my head. Is it too low to run? Too rocky?

“What do you think, man?” David says.

“I’m concerned about the top slide, man. You think you’d piton because the boat’s so long?” I ask.

“Naw, I bet you’d be fine. I’m looking at that rock above the lip. Looks like the water pushes you into that right slot, though.” We continue to question and move around the bank until Dave makes up his mind. “I’m gonna run it if you run safety.”

“Ok, dude. Make sure you hit that right slot. You gotta hit that,” I say.

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He walks back upstream and pulls his boat down from the bank. I climb across the rock bank, grabbing rhododendron and driftwood from old floods to keep from falling backward into the river. My throw rope, our safety, looks like an old unhealthy cat with stray hair clumps protruding in various places. Smells like one too. It's stained the color of river water from its 10-plus years of service.

Dave is getting in his blue AQ. With his skirt on the deck, he peels out of the staging eddy, pointed toward Boxcar. He takes a big stroke off the first steep slide, maintaining his course for the right slot. The less steep slide pushes him right, like he hoped, and he leans into the rock that extends upward: the left wall of the slot. His final boof stroke throws him off the 10- to 15- foot drop and he lands in the froth below Boxcar. After this relatively clean line, I'm fired up to run it.

I navigate Boxcar with no issues, and we're once again paddling down the North Fork. The next rapid has a great rock to bounce off, but it's too low to hit. Everything looks lower now that we're in the gorge. My boat



David seal launching into Action Alley on Big Creek.
Photo by Miles Murphy

scratches bedrock like a car bottoming out on a steep driveway.

There is a log in front of me. I'm not breathing and I'm not stopping because I'm halfway down this slide. The log is the width of a fit man's bicep, but easily thick enough to stop a paddler dead. It is across the bottom of the slide, half submerged. My boat is about to go under it, and my body over it. A textbook log pin: it's drowning material. I dig into the water with my right blade and pull and lift my knees as hard as I can. The nose of my boat hits the log and slides over it. I turn around to yell at David to stop, but he is committed to the slide as well. He hits the right side and bounces over the log. I take a massive breath like I just swam all the way across the pool underwater. "Sweet Jesus," I say, but there's no time to chat. We make it to the eddy below this rapid, one of the easiest on the river, and drop our paddles and lie back in our boats. I just sit there and taste the air.



David Jaben getting a good boof on a drop on Action Alley on Big Creek in North Carolina.

Photo by Miles Murphy

Dave and I peel out of the eddy after talking down this near disaster. We justify that this scenario we just had wasn't really that treacherous. This can be a good coping technique because it cools the nerves. With my arms less shaky, I lead the next rapid: another series of slides. I style the last two big slides, rocketing off the pool at the bottom with my speed.

Dave has some speed coming into the last drop as well. He descends but can't properly lift his bow and plugs deep into the bottom pool. Thunk. His boat stops completely and his upper body whiplashes forward like a crash test dummy. I'm overcome with worst-case thoughts: He is pinned. That impact could break bones in his legs or pull a muscle in his back. He may have a concussion from the whiplash or the bow of his boat might crumple and

crush his legs, pinning him permanently. I'm downstream and won't have a lot of time to help him. This is like that carnage video on kayaksession.com. Finally, his bow returns to the surface. His face shows an arduous grimace. I stop strangling my paddle.

On the shore we examine two gaping holes in David's knees. They were thrust into the walls of his boat upon impact, splitting the skin on his kneecaps. Blood flows from his right knee in a steady stream. The wounds are deep, and neither of us has a first aid kit. "Holy shit, that's deep," is the only medicine we produce. We should hike out, but it would be faster to paddle, so Dave splashes some water on the red oozing gashes and we re-enter our boats.

The remainder of the run feels like driving on a back road after eating spicy Indian food

that's fighting with your stomach. We make only the necessary moves, no extra rock splats or boofs. Below Submarine, the last rapid, we get out and start the mile-long, nearly vertical hike out without a word. Rocks, leaves, and millipedes speckle the dark brown trail. Soft green ferns line the edge. Fifteen minutes and no breaks later, I drop my boat on rough gravel, half hoping it cracks or dents.

"I'm gonna be honest, I caught myself looking at leaves and smelling stuff hiking up, man. Like taking in the world because thank God I'm still alive," I joke. But I really was taking in my surroundings with heightened senses.

"Same here."



Nate Herbeck



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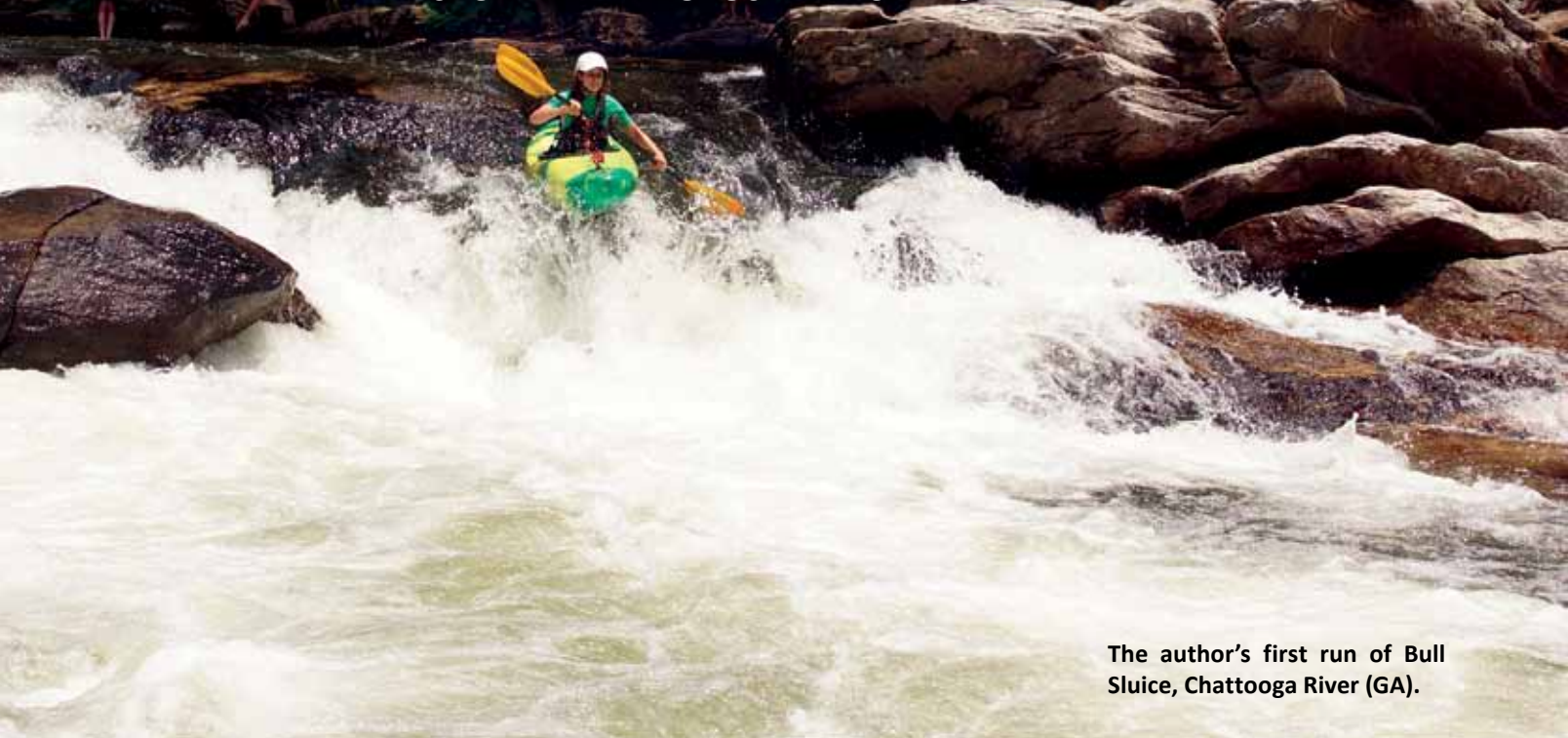


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EMERGING FROM THE FOG: ONE WOMAN'S JOURNEY FROM BEGINNER TO EXPERT

STORY AND PHOTOS BY ANGELA GREENWELL



The author's first run of Bull Sluice, Chattooga River (GA).

“IT’S A STEEP learning curve,” he said. “You are going to want to do things faster than you’ll be able to. You are going to get frustrated.”

The great thing about being a beginner is that you are enthusiastic and naive. Even as an adult, it is easy to hear but not listen, and if you do listen, to justify how it doesn’t apply to you. My first whitewater trip consisted of a float down an easy Class II river. I paddled in circles, roughly navigating the wide river forwards, backwards, and sideways. My shining moment was in not overshooting the take-out and ending up miles downstream. The two Class V boaters by my side calmly paddled next to me without judgment, without letting on about the expansive divide between our abilities. I was able to enjoy the float, endearingly calling myself a drunk duck. I felt confident and content. I am a fast learner. I have no agenda, no quantifiable goal. How could I get frustrated?

My floating bliss was short-lived. For three months I existed in what felt like a fog of

confusion and struggle. Nothing was clear. All that I knew was that I did not know. I understood that people “read” water but when I looked, all I could think was, “Read what?” There seemed to be no correlation between my paddling and what the boat was doing. It would spin when it wanted to. It would turn when it wanted to. All I wanted was to feel some slight sense of control over where I was going and to eventually paddle straight. My friends would guide me to an eddy, which felt like a child’s play pen, while they went and messed about in the current. Sitting there, I would think to myself, is it safe for me to leave? What will happen if I do?

Then there were the obvious (but not really) little, everyday details that go along with kayaking that I had to discover and contend with. From the first day, even when my new boat was in my car, I heard a sound I could not place. The previous owner took it for one last paddle before handing it over. Eventually, I realized there was water in my boat. My curiosity began. “Why would there be water in the boat? How do I get

it out?” I asked myself. And that was just the start to so many more obvious (but not really) questions: How do I put my boat on top of my car and tie it down? How do I pick up and carry my boat with all this other stuff? How do I put my skirt on by myself? How do I go from being on dry land sitting in my boat, finally ready to go, to being in the water—gracefully? You just dented my boat when you manhandled the straps. Is that okay? What is a river gauge? What do all those numbers mean? What’s a release? I have a creek boat. What’s a play boat? What’s a creek boat? What are those things on people’s noses? They look ugly.

With each new brick of understanding placed atop the previous, with each progression of skill and new experience gained, I seemed to develop a different set of questions and things to be confused about. Then one day I realized that the fog was gone. Wait a minute, I thought, I seem

Georgia Canoe Association Beginner Class, Eddying Up.

TEACHING

to have my hands around what this Class II-III boating is about. Don't get me wrong. I'm still learning and refining skills. I still need strong boaters to be there for me, but the helplessness and bewilderment seems to have gone. I have graduated from infant to beginner. And in recognizing this, I turn around and wonder, how did I ever get here? I don't know. It was such a confusing journey. But looking back, I wish someone had said the following things to me.

1. Embrace being a beginner.

Give in to the fact that you just don't know and you won't know what it is all about for a while. No one expects you to get it. You shouldn't either. Brick by brick, it will come. It is a beautiful thing to start at zero and begin something new. How often in your life do you get this chance? Know that it is only temporary and the infancy fog will clear.

2. Have patience with the process.

You can improve your rate of progression by working with solid boaters who are good teachers, putting in the "seat time," asking the dumb questions and focusing on your

skills, rather than just social-floating down the river. However, the process will be the process and it will take as long as it takes. It also isn't a straight line. You will go up and down and left and right in your progression. It is what it is so you can fight it or find a way to just accept it. I chose to fight it, to force my progress to be as fast as possible, and be frustrated. That's okay too. As my first instructor told me after watching me become annoyed by not being able to paddle straight, on day one of our beginner class, "Do you get paid to do this? If not, who cares? Have fun."

3. Surround yourself with the right people.

I will warn you that kayakers are passionate and opinionated people. Initially you will have no opinions of your own, and you will greatly rely on other people to choose the rivers you run, the rapids you portage, the skills you learn, and the experiences you have. Choose people who inspire confidence, who push you to learn at the upper end of your comfort level, who keep you safe, provide encouragement, and remind you to have fun. And when the people you choose disagree, do your best

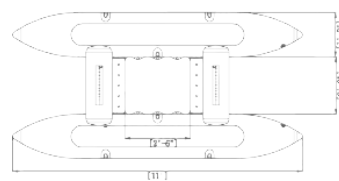


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TEACHING

to find the reasons behind their opinions and make your own choices. Ultimately, it is your experience and your life at stake, and the sooner you can start weighing the information and forming opinions of your own, the better.

4. Become friends with your fear.

At some point, you will be confronted with fear in any number of flavors: fear that you will flip, fear that you will swim, fear that you will get hurt, fear that you will look stupid, fear that you are not good enough, fear that you can't be in control, fear of the unknown, fear that you may die. Fear is normal but often holds you back. If you can acknowledge the fear and talk through what is the worst that can happen as well as the best that can happen, you can decide based on reason. Even with

reason, that doesn't mean it is easy to move forward. Getting comfortable with being uncomfortable when it makes sense will get you through the fog faster.

5. Have fun!

It is so easy to get overly serious and forget the fact that you are on a beautiful river, surrounded by the sounds and sensations of moving water, and with great people who are willing to be there for you. It is good to try to take it all in as often as possible, splash others with your paddle, jump in and swim rapids, and wet-exit your boat for kicks. The frustration of the fog isn't going anywhere. Everything will be confusing until it is not. In the meantime, find a way to balance improving your skills and gaining more experience with a little humor and play.



Awaiting a t-rescue after first attempted roll.

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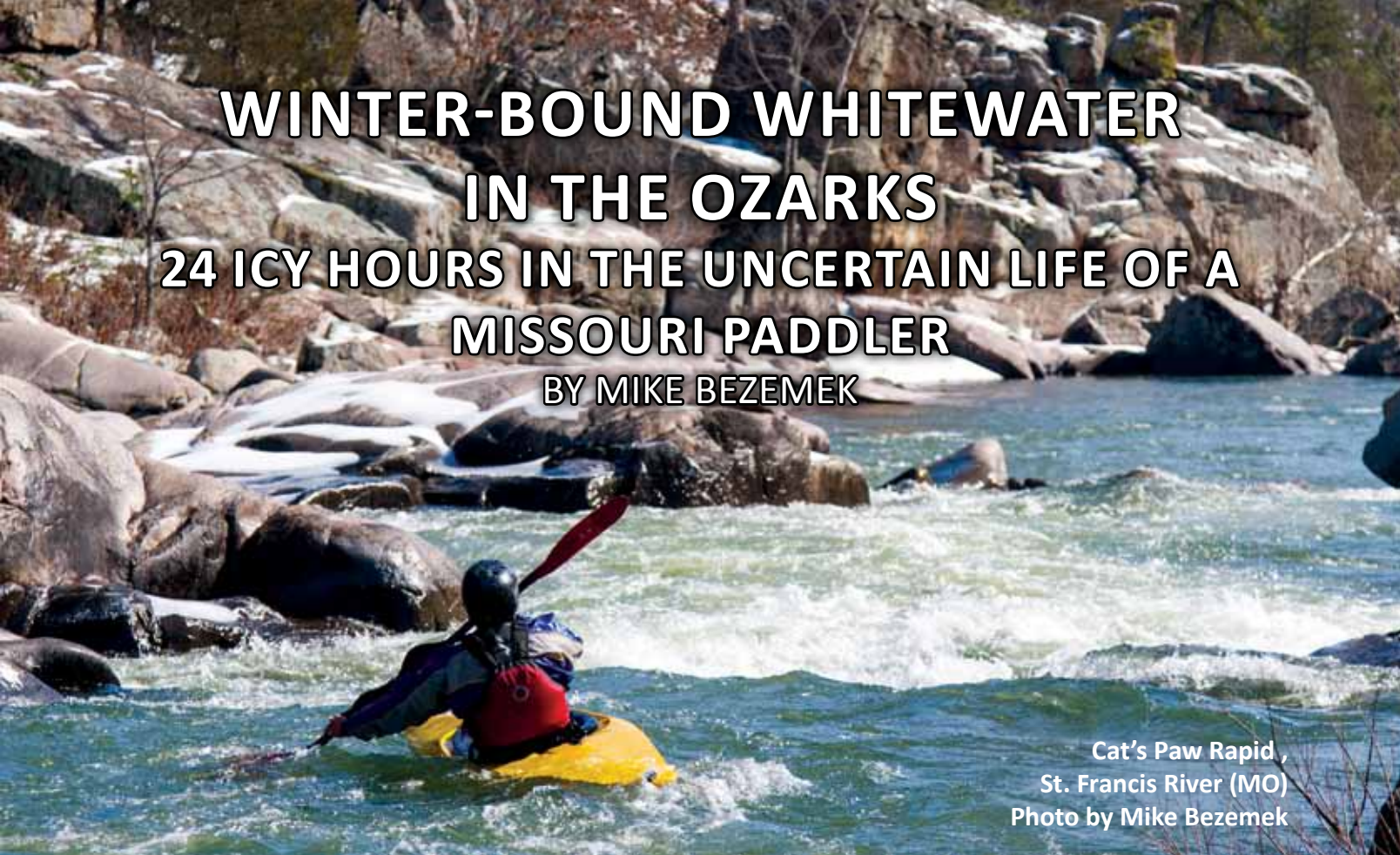
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WINTER-BOUND WHITEWATER IN THE OZARKS

24 ICY HOURS IN THE UNCERTAIN LIFE OF A MISSOURI PADDLER

BY MIKE BEZEMEK



Cat's Paw Rapid,
St. Francis River (MO)
Photo by Mike Bezemek

ALL THE COLDNESS of the Ozarks presses at my backside. The cold bites the dimming fire, grabs my exposed hand reaching for the bottle of Makers. Like orange embers in the 20-degree night, several of us haven't called it a night yet.

I swig and pass the bottle to Freddie, a mid-50s paddler with a silver-black beard protruding from a hooded wool poncho. The Saint Francis River's certified regular, he's talking about the Dominican Republic, where he was stationed with the Peace Corps and plans to retire.

"Ah, hell, brother. Gonna get a little ca-sa en los mon-tañ-as," he drawls. It's no definable accent, with Midwestern, Southern, West Coast, and Latin elements, a vocal road map of Freddie's travels. "Paddle los rios by day and drink rum punch in Jarabacoa at sunset." He exhales the warm description like a billowing fog turning to yellow-tinted ice crystals.

Bill's asleep on a picnic table in a jumbo winter bag puffed up like a rising bread

loaf that ignored the weather report. The temperature's dropped for two days, but Bill hasn't set up camp. He plans to stay six weeks. Under a tarp in the trees, Serfas has packed himself, plus sleeping bag and blankets, into a hammock suspended over his OC-1. Jim dozes in his camp chair, a Busch beer slushing up at his feet. It's time, after midnight, and we're paddling tomorrow. I hustle into the blackness, shivering as I dive inside my camper shell.

Come morning, I bundle up in campfire-infused clothes and walk to the old low-water D-bridge. Snow patches dust north-facing slopes. Ice crusts the slack water. The gauge reads nine inches. A low, rocky level for the Saint Francis, but at least there's water.

At the fire ring, Jim pours Baileys into coffee. He and I decide on the whole river. Everyone else grumbles no, so we toss play boats in his F-350 and take off. Jim's a burly guy in his early 30s who works concrete construction around St. Louis. He owns a plow blade to clear streets after those storms we're always waiting for.

We drive Route 72 through rolling hills, past ranch houses and double wides, grazing cattle and hay rolls. Seven years ago, I first gazed across the grassy fields and patchy forest of this endless rural landscape, and I wondered, where's the river? We cross Turkey Creek, a narrow, rocky stream that at high water is a Class IV luge into the Saint. Despite the lack of steep canyons or looming topography, there's more whitewater in these hills than meets the eye. Most of it requires a heavy rain or a dumping snow followed by a quick melt, which the season hasn't offered yet.

Paddling downstream from Route 72, we pass the confluence with Class II-III Stouts Creek, which runs a band of clear blue along the right bank of the darker green Saint. On a rock peninsula, two scraggly mutts bark and snarl.

At high water, Entrance Rapid is a field of choppy, brown, diagonal holes, and willow-tops quivering in current. But right now, it's more rock than water. We scrape our hulls, pin-balling to some surf waves.

CREEKING

“Low,” says Jim with a grin. “But I like the upper.”

“It’s pretty, and it’s here,” I agree.

Jim and I enjoy collecting miles. In the depths of summer—with the nearest whitewater eight hours away in Tennessee—we’ve paddled for miles on the Meramec River, searching for eddy lines to stern squirt. Missouri paddlers take what they can find.

During the harsh winter of ‘09, the Saint iced over during January. In mid February, Chuck, the local dentist, reported a possible break-up. The following Saturday, eight itching paddlers put on at Route 72. For a half mile we passed frozen shelves jutting over eddies. Ice chunks rafted by. In a riffle, I paddled onto a slab and rode it onto rocks where it shattered. Around a corner, a white field presented instead of a pool. Several of us younger guys, excited by our first frozen river, darted left to where it looked thin and crusty, slamming our bows up and down to break through. Meanwhile, Freddie examined a passage near the right shore. Suddenly, the hulk shifted. The passage closed around Freddie, who



Chuck McHenry paddles through snow
Photo by Mike Bezemek

yelped a curse. He pushed himself onto the encroaching mass. “I’m stuck on the ice!” he called out. We heard the groan of slabs grinding. I looked at the slow current pushing underneath the ice and shuddered.

Eventually a rope pulled Freddie safely to shore. Some learned, some were

reminded—stay off the upper when it’s frozen. Our group of eight, winter-wizened, hiked upstream through the forest. We reset our shuttle downriver for the steeper Tiemann Shut-ins, the Ozark term for miniature river canyons, hoping to leave the story behind on the ice, but knowing this was just the beginning.



Today, the upper is open. Ice-rimmed pools don’t fly, but meander, under our paddles. At Kitten’s Crossing—three tiered ledges—we eddy hop to make it count. At Land of Oz, we surf riffles and bump into rocks. At Fisherman’s pool, which shimmers from the low sun, we see two long, flatwater yaks playing upstream. We approach Chuck and his wife Di, who live in Ironton and spend their summers paddling endurance races like the Missouri 340. They rarely miss a day.

“What’d you paddle up there for?” says Chuck with a boyish grin. “All the flatwater you need is right here.”

Joey Heger eddies out near ice willows.
Photo by Mike Bezemek

“Hello, Jim! Hello, Cal Mike!” calls out Di. Underneath her skullcap, a big smile fills her face.

After a few more laps, she explains, they’re switching to whitewater boats.

Next comes Millstream Gardens, the start of the lower 2.25-mile Class III run. We beach our boats and walk up to the gravel lot. I pass the iconic pine tree tied in a knot—the ultimate symbol of a Missouri paddler. Its trunk rises 10 feet with a slight lean toward the river, as if it first grew trying to glimpse the water level. But once the tree got that look, it turned sharply west toward the Rockies. Finally, it accepted the journey as hopelessly long (14 hours if the tree drove 75 with only two pit stops), and then it somersaulted back up and branched out into the pale Ozark sky.

Jim chats with a few younger guys—the next generation of winter Saint River paddlers. Meanwhile, I take in the shut-ins. Trees turned to sticks without leaves—eddy-lining willows, silver bark river birches, the expanding tendrils of sycamores. Interspersed throughout, the green hulks of short leaf and yellow pines give the forest some color. The granite cliffs rise less than 50 feet. This river is old. The rocks clock in at over a billion years. In another million they might be gone, whittled away to gravel. The Saint is appropriately named—it’s the savior of Missouri whitewater.

I push off from shore and thrust my chilled hands into my pogies. We’ve been joined by Levi, Joey, Rory, and Connecticut Mike. They arrived in time to see “No-eddy” Freddie and his lime colored creek boat, nicknamed the Green Pickle, probing swiftly in front of Bilbo and Doc Fly.

“Probably at the take-out already,” jokes Jim.

The first quarter mile offers playful ledges and river-wide holes from a few inches to many feet over the bridge. We zip into

Freddie Carter on the ice.
Photo by Dan Hanson & John Niebling



eddies, camp out on surf spots, ferry to feel current under our hulls. Often, 30 minutes after putting on, with arms and lungs burning, paddlers look up and see the curlicue pine is still only a few hundred yards upstream.

No metaphors were harmed in naming Big Drop, the first rapid. Here the river funnels between bedrock cliffs and drops on both sides of a central island. Paddlers regularly milk it by cross-weaving upstream features, eddy hugging or boofing the island, dropping the junky left chute, or jamming far right into an alcove above the lip.

The biggest rapid is Cat’s Paw, which resembles five granite footpads looking to claw you. This can happen. At higher flows there are four ways to run the rapid upright, with dozens more inverted. With deep water chutes and boofs, rock splats or cheat routes, it’s common to re-run until you’re satisfied. But, as we eddy hop through, I notice the icy riverbank and nix hiking up. While Jim ferries over to the Z-route that tucks behind a granite island, I opt for the right chute that zig-zags over water-covered rock slabs.

While Jim plays in the surf below, Chuck and Di arrive. Chuck paddles his Sleek onto a standing wave. He claims he prefers spring temps and high water, but he’ll take winter chill and any flow available. A story still buzzing around the campfire concerns a hard rain followed by a cold snap, leaving Chuck and the regular high water junkies with 10 feet at 10 degrees. Pumping about 15,000 cfs, the river was a mini-Grand Canyon, with spiraling ice snakes in place of water lines.

The final large rapid, Double Drop, predictably offers two successive ledges. In the teens or twenties, the hole below is punchy and retentive. On the few warm days with water, the rocky shelf overlooking the rapid collects a rainbow of dry tops

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and kayaks. But today, the level is low like the sun dropping behind the trees. A stiff breeze picks up. We take turns ferrying into the shallow hole for a few surfs, before turning our sights downstream. Visible on both sides of the pool are the spiraling patterns of trees downed by a 2006 tornado that forded the river.

Tornadoes. Jim had a close call once. He and Scott were at D-Bridge, watching the sky turn from gray to black, debating if they could sneak in a run before the front arrived. Driving 72 again, they navigated their wind-buffeting trucks around downed limbs. When Jim's skirt flew out of the bed, Scott stopped. He hopped out, and the wind blew him back a few steps. Skirt retrieved from a ditch, Scott—an even buffer concrete worker—could hardly pull his car door open against the wind.

They took a hard right onto Highway K, heading away from the storm. A tree fell in front of Jim. He swerved. Another came down in Scott's rear-view mirror. They followed the road into a narrow valley where a massive oak lay across the road. An 80-year-old homesteader was dragging a chainsaw step-by-step through the wind. The sky turned from black to green, and all three men jogged toward the farmhouse to wait things out.

Midwestern weather. It's the X-factor in Missouri whitewater. Paddlers need it way



The knot tree at put-in.
Photo by Mike Bezemek

more than they need another hole in their boat. And beggars can't be choosers. It hardens a paddler, turning out winter after winter. I remember when I thought cold days were the off-season exception, not the in-season rule.

Paddling across Mud Creek pool, I hear the ice – it sounds alive. It crackles like metallic grasshoppers where the protruding edge, broken into shards, meets current. Cliffs of mottled granite rise. Behind them, a Class IV slide down a moss-covered slope represents the tail end of Mud Creek.

Just a few years ago, its entire watershed was a pig farm, until it was bought by the conservation district. The creek's name is a better fit now. The old, unofficial name—Sh*t Creek—was never appropriate for maps.

With the sun dropping, the heat has gone from the ambient air. My teeth begin to chatter like the ice. I clamp my jaw and quicken my paddle strokes. Suddenly the crackles stop. I let my boat drift through the silence. In a far off tree, I spot the white crown of a wintering bald eagle. But





Playing within sight of put-in.

Photo by Mike Bezemek

where did that sound go? Then I realize. The ice has frozen solid. It's eerie, calm, still. Another day is drawing to a close.

We paddle the last mile through willow gardens. We stop briefly at Silver Mines dam, where ominous granite blocks have been chipped away at for a hundred years. The dam has breached on the left, notched on top where arms of rebar reach out from crevasses. Below the breach, boils spin. At higher water, I've seen boats flipped end-over-end, paddlers snagged by the recirculation before they swim out. Depending on flow and skill level, it can be a recommended portage. At five feet over D-Bridge, the dam becomes a dangerous pour-over. In the middle-high range I've followed Chuck by boofing the right notch to land in a swirl of water below, glancing over at a ribbon of chocolate formula thundering through the breach as it collapses back on itself like a bow looping into oblivion.

Opposite: The Saint Francis in winter.

Photo by Mike Bezemek

Beyond the dam we paddle hard to the take-out. I glance at the new D-Bridge, built in the early '90s to reroute a highway that closed when the river was up, rising 20 feet above the river. The construction crew said it couldn't flood, which is like daring the river to flip your boat. Sure enough, within one year it went five feet under when 47,000 cfs filled Tiemann Shut-ins (visit youtube.com: "St. Francis Flood '93"), rolling boulders and stripping riverside pines from banks that still bear a layered look.

I drop my boat on the pavement with a plan to warm my hands. Chuck and Di load their van. On top, their flatwater yaks are mounted like antlers, and inside there's enough gear to survive a zombie apocalypse while holed up on a river. Bilbo has the post-river giddiness. A lanky 61, he's the least Hobbit-like paddler to carry the nickname. He puts on a jumble-pattern snuggie with the hood up and gestures at me like a wizard with a jug of mead—or growler of IPA.

Freddie's at the fire, chatting with the younger guys, clutching his trademark

squirt bottle. Ice dam day hasn't come up. Yet.

After the hike out that day, Freddie decided he'd had enough. A few of us ran Tiemann shut-ins, instead of the ice-filled Saint. When we were done, we found him here, at the fire ring, same squirt bottle in hand. By then the story had grown. It was no longer just a slab of ice. "The whole damn river shifted," he'd said. "I was sealed in the ice....trapped!...lucky to make it out at all." Eventually someone tossed out a comparison, chuckling: "The Shackleton Expedition." The name took. A week later, a photo taken while Scott pulled Freddie to shore was passed around, with a mysterious, previously unseen pack of polar bears surrounding Freddie on the ice. Years later, the tale still echoes

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Levi Rhodes in Big Drop Rapid.
Photo by Mike Bezemek

through these woods whenever winter paddlers meet.

That night at the campfire, we huddle close as the cold stabs at our backs. Bill has set up his canvas tent with a stovepipe chimney. Crazy Jerry missed out on paddling but he's come to hang out. He tosses a log on the fire from the wood pile he drives in each season. My first Missouri creek came with Jerry. Doc Fly and I had come for a high water February day and found the lot nearly empty. Some stragglers mumbled something about the Castor River. Intrigued, we followed them past Fredericktown along gravel roads into the middle of nowhere.

We parked and followed a footpath through Ozark forest. After a half mile, we stood atop pink granite bluffs looking down on the cutest gorge I've ever seen. Frothing turquoise water pulsed between sheer walls only 20 feet in height, with several Class III drops in a run only a quarter-mile-long.

"Mind if I join you?" I asked a compact man.

He looked me up and down. Some blond kid in a hooded sweatshirt with

a funny California accent. He shrugged his shoulders. "Awright," he said. "But I wouldn't follow me. They call me Crazy Jerry because I don't always paddle the safe lines."

I looked down at the Castor "River" that had roughly one line per rapid.

We pushed into current 20 minutes later, dropped the first short falls one by one, eddy hopped, played some waves, boofed ledges. After the final, boulder-choked rapid, which ends in a big, flume-like drop, we came out all grins.

"Thanks for letting me tag along," I said, as we hiked back up to run it again.

Jerry gave me a friendly nod. "Anytime," he said.

Crazy Jerry, you're noticeably sane, I thought. Other than the season you paddle in.

Four runs later, I called it quits, having hiked twice as much as I paddled. Worth every step. Who woulda thought there's a pink granite creek run—granted, in miniature—in the middle of the Ozarks?

The half-finished bottle of Makers continues circling the fire. Stories meander through the years and rivers, from the '80s to the '00s, from the Gauley to the Ark, and back to the Saint. Winter is when Missouri paddling stories happen. It's also when these stories become myths, frozen in memory, while their tellers are waiting to make new ones.

There are few certainties in the life of a Missouri whitewater paddler. Boats might touch water any month of the year, yet in summer it is seldom, in fall it's no guarantee, spring could last three months or just a few weekends. In December, January, and February, when the ground is frozen, the runoff is for the rivers, not the trees. There's often rain or snow forecast eight to 10 days out, but when those days arrive it could be a dry spell or too cold for precipitation. Even when it's mostly rocks, Chuck, Di, and a few others will be on the river. All paddlers are welcome when there's a campfire going at D. Freddie will close it out.

And maybe, with some luck, there will be water.

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RIVER VOICES

I SWEAR IT SURGED...

BY JOHN AMTMANN



THIS PAST AUGUST, my three daughters, my wife, and I had travelled to Gardiner, Montana from Butte to spend a couple of days on the Yellowstone River and have some quality family time together.

My girls have all been kayaking since they've been about five, and they are fairly self-sufficient. My wife, Kelly, however, has always relied on me to take her down the river, usually in the front seat of our Jackson Dynamic Duo and on our local river, the Big Hole. I can usually weave through the janky stuff to give her a smooth ride. Though she hadn't been in the Duo more than a few times each of the last few years, I was confident I could give her an enjoyable ride on the Yellowstone, too.

The town stretch starts where the Gardiner River flows into the Yellowstone River, as the Yellowstone leaves Yellowstone National Park. Our plan was to run from town to McConnell's Landing, which is a nice four-mile float, go out for pizza afterward, and then just hang out together at the hotel –

we had a great room with a ground floor deck overlooking the Yellowstone from about 200 feet up the gorge-side.

It was a rough start. For some reason Kelly was a little scared. I guess she's grown somewhat comfortable running the Big Hole; the Yellowstone at 8,000 CFS through that section is not much different than the Big Hole at 8,000 CFS, but Kelly was, well, more than scared, she was petrified.

I tried to calm her down and let her know that everything was going to work out, but as we made our way through the first wave train I had my doubts. She was really stiff, making it hard for us to control our edges—she told me later that she was so scared she was closing her eyes. I was concerned. Though I had rolled with Kelly in the pool several times, I was sure that if we were flipped Kelly was going to have a bad experience, no matter what happened from there. I considered pulling over and taking out just a half mile downstream, but it was gorge-like, and not really an option. We were just going to have to head

downstream, and we were going to have to do it upright.

"Honey, we're going to be just fine, I promise," I said with pseudo-confidence, and we rocked our boat side to side to loosen our hips up a bit.

She tried to answer, but couldn't, she was getting choked up and couldn't really talk.

The girls were trying to calm her down as well, "It's going to be fine mom, just try to relax."

"We're going to be okay mom, don't worry."

As they paddled by me, they would add with a whisper, "give her a smooth ride dad," and "stay out of the big stuff, ok dad?"

Normally, Aidan (18), Hannah (16) and I (49) keep a close eye on our youngest family member, Devin (14). However, Devin had made quite a bit of progress this season and was looking really solid, and I gestured

to the girls, letting them know that THEY were going to have to keep a close eye on US. This was the first time in our family kayaking experience that I, along with Kelly, was the target to keep an eye on, the weak link.

The fact is, the waves decrease in size after the first mile and, combining that fact with our calming talk, things smoothed out quite a bit for us for the next three miles. Kelly was feeling much more comfortable and was able to talk and enjoy the ride a bit more.

“Sorry about that John, I was feeling pretty anxious, but I’m doing better now,” she had said.

“No problem, it’s perfectly natural to get a little worked up.”

So, before we took out at McConnell’s I had the urge to end the day of paddling on a good note, and I had the idea that I should take Kelly through a small wave I spotted about 100 yards downstream. Brilliant idea. Kelly agreed and, as we headed toward the wave I heard one of the girls say, “Dad,” but I couldn’t really catch the rest of it. I guess I should’ve listened. As we approached the wave, it surged. I swear it did. It wasn’t that big when I spotted it from up stream, but the girls disagree,

“It did NOT surge dad...”

As we hit the wave, it was at the peak of the surge. Unfortunately it slammed Kelly back onto the deck right in front of me.

“Dad!” Devin yelled.

“What the hell are you doing?” Aidan screamed

“Way to go, dumbass,” Hannah said.

They all paddled to Kelly to give her a three-way hug.

“Honey, I had a great time, but I don’t think I’m running anything but the Big Hole any more,” Kelly said with more assurance than I think I’ve ever heard her say anything before.

“I swear it surged,” was all I could say.



AMERICAN WHITEWATER ACCIDENT REPORT: JULY TO DECEMBER 2014

BY CHARLIE WALBRIDGE

THERE WERE 41 whitewater fatalities reported to American Whitewater in 2014, which is just below the decade's annual average of 45. This report, which covers the period from July to December 2014, includes 6 kayak, 1 canoe, and 6 rafting fatalities, as well as several tubing accidents at low head dams. Colorado had the highest number of deaths with 11; most were the result of long swims at high water. Pennsylvania came in second with 7. The report also includes three kayakers who perished after taking bad falls on shore. While these are not, strictly speaking, boating accidents, they are certainly connected to our sport. Each death gives us an opportunity to review our safety precautions and modify what we do accordingly.

Kayak Accidents

On November 30th renowned kayaker Xavier Engle was killed in Robe Canyon of the South Fork Stillaguamish River, a demanding Class V run in Washington State. Mr. Engle and two companions began their run through the canyon at mid-day on a chilly Sunday. All three had paddled the canyon dozens of times and were intimately familiar with it. The flow was dropping out from a recent major rain event and was still relatively high, but they had made the run at significantly higher water levels before.

Evan Buouchier, who was in the group, reports that trouble started in T1, the first big drop in the canyon. Mr. Engle flipped, was unable to roll and floated upside down through T2, the second big rapid, with one of his companions nearby. In the hydraulic at the end of T2, Mr. Engle's boat tangled with his friend's and both kayakers bailed out and swam for their lives. His friend managed to reach the steep bank on river left and pull himself out of the water immediately above Last Sunshine, the biggest drop on the run. Engle swam

through the treacherous river right channel of the rapid and flushed downstream through a half-mile of big whitewater. The third boater, coming from behind, gave chase and eventually caught up. When he finally got Mr. Engle to the shore he was unable to revive him with CPR. Mr. Engle's death was likely the result of hypothermia, drowning, and trauma in the last rapid. It's a tragic reminder of how unforgiving Class V can be, even for unusually skilled paddlers.

A second kayaking death occurred in Pine Creek Canyon, a short but intense Class V rapid on Colorado's Arkansas River. On July 11th the river was running at 1400 cfs, a medium-high level. That day a group of nine paddlers put in at Granite. A post on Mountainbuzz said that most of the paddlers elected to portage Pine Creek Canyon and they were just finishing the carry when Jonathan Kennedy, 40, flushed through from upstream. Several paddlers gave chase but had trouble catching up to him. Eventually they got him ashore, started two-man CPR, and dialed 911. State Park rangers and paramedics arrived with a defibrillator and continued resuscitation efforts for 50 minutes without success.

The very next day, on July 12th, another kayaker died on the Arkansas River above Brown's Canon. Details are sketchy; an article in the Chafee (CO) County *Times* says that people on shore saw a man bail out and swim for shore. He was paddling alone and was clearly in trouble, so they followed him for a mile and a half. Eventually they pulled him out and began CPR. Anyone with more information is encouraged to contact the Safety Committee.

Two other kayaking accidents occurred in easy Class I rapids. In one instance a New York woman was killed on the Lower Delaware River on July 5th. The *Washington*

Times reported that Jody Walker, 50, was trying to paddle onto a beach at Prahls Island near Lumberville, PA at high water. She flipped, "became stuck" in the boat, and couldn't get out. Family and friends jumped into the river, got her ashore, and performed CPR without success. This is a scary reminder to be sure that we (and all our friends) can bail out cleanly from unfamiliar boats.

Then, September 1st, Scott Hart was paddling a double kayak with his wife when they hit a tree on the Snake River in Western Idaho. The tree was very visible but they weren't able to avoid it. The force of the water flipped the kayak and Mr. Hart, 26, was trapped between the tree and his boat. Although his head was above water the current pushed the kayak against his body with crushing force and suffocated him. His wife hung on to the tree for 30 minutes until rescuers arrived. It took a swiftwater rescue team almost two hours to recover his body.

This year three kayakers died after bad falls on shore. On July 28th William Forshey, 54, swam after pinning his boat on a boulder in the "Miracle Mile" section of Colorado's Arkansas River. He apparently got to shore safely, but was later found floating unconscious in the river. On August 2nd Daniel Lowry, 62, died after falling 50 feet into Oregon's Deschutes River while scouting Benham Falls. Lastly, on August 19th, Beth McVey fell to her death after a bad swim on Colorado's Gore Canyon. Friends said that while this Class V run was near the limits of her skill she'd run it many times previously. This time she had difficulties above Gore Rapid and decided to hike out, but later changed her mind and continued downstream alone. She swam above Pyrite Rapid, reaching shore with her back to steep cliffs. She fell trying to climb out over those cliffs. This type of accident

is extremely uncommon. All three of these paddlers were boating alone so there was no one nearby to help. Two were recovering from nasty swims and were probably not operating at their best.

Finally, 80 year-old Gerald Skinner passed away after a near drowning on Wyoming's Snake River. He was kayaking with his son on September 4th when his boat overturned and he lost consciousness. A story in the *Idaho Statesman* told how his son pulled him from his kayak and got him ashore. With the help of two firefighters who were fishing nearby, they began treatment and called for help. Rangers arrived and carried Mr. Skinner, who was breathing but unresponsive, to an ambulance so he could be life-flighted to the East Idaho Regional Medical Center. At first he seemed to be making a full recovery but he took a turn

for the worse and died suddenly several days later.

Canoe Accidents

The lone reported canoeing fatality occurred on July 28th. Two men encountered trouble on Elk Creek, a Class I-II stream flowing towards Lake Erie near Girard, PA. According to GoErie.com their canoe pinned on a fallen tree near the entrance of a culvert going under railroad tracks. Matthew Kaliszewski, 33, was trapped between the tree and the canoe. His companion tried to rescue him but was stymied by the high water and fast-moving current. The friend managed to swim to shore and walk out about a mile to get help.

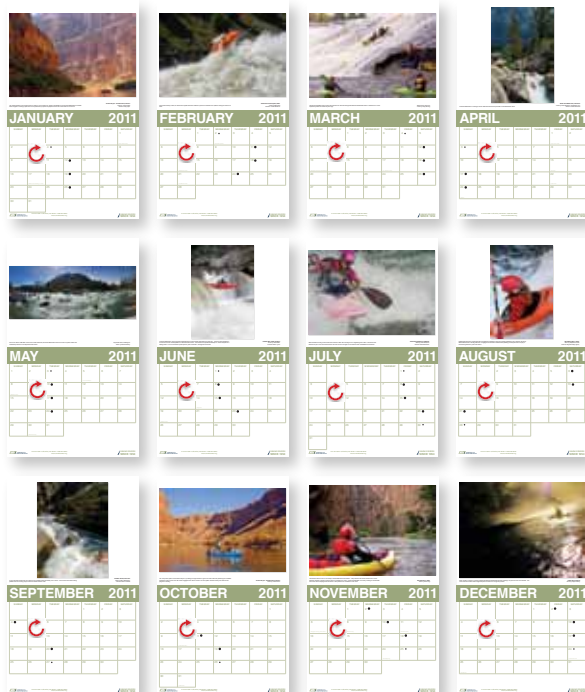
Rafting Accidents

Flush drownings occur when someone dies during a lengthy river swim despite wearing a PFD. Three rafters died this way,

two on private and one on a commercial trip, during the last six months. On July 13th Donna Viehman, 63, was rafting on the Snake River through Grand Teton National Park in Wyoming. The National Park Service reported that her boat hit a mid-stream obstruction and overturned. Afterwards, five of the boaters swam to a gravel bar where they were later picked up by a passing raft. Ms. Viehman was caught in fast current and swept downstream. Bystanders at Dornan's Landing saw her floating in the river, pulled her ashore, and began CPR. Although paramedics arrived quickly she was pronounced dead at the scene.

A commercial raft on Pine Creek Canyon of Colorado's Arkansas River was caught in a sticky hole after the guide fell out at the top of the rapids. The flow was moderate, about 900 cfs. The Gazette.com said that

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Each day American Whitewater faces new challenges that threaten our whitewater rivers. To aid us in this fight, we rely on support from members, donors, foundations, and partners in the industry. Companies throughout the whitewater and outdoor industries are stepping forward to support AW's River Stewardship work. American Whitewater urges you not to make purchase decisions blindly. When you buy your next piece of outdoor gear there are many factors to consider: quality, dependability, comfort, safety, and fashion. American Whitewater hopes you will add one more consideration to this list: corporate responsibility. Support companies that support your rivers.



Kokatat has been manufacturing paddling gear in Arcata, California for more than 40 years. At a time when many technical apparel brands were moving manufacturing offshore, Kokatat continued to invest in infrastructure in the United States.

Kokatat founder Steve O'Meara

was committed to the development of the finest and driest paddling apparel in the world and recognized the need to control and continually evolve the development of our dry wear. In the early days, Kokatat worked closely with W.L. Gore & Associates, makers of GORE-TEX®, to refine the sewing and sealing techniques required for full immersion suits and tops. Today, our hands-on approach to manufacturing continues to set the standard in paddling apparel. Into the water with Kokatat! Please visit www.kokatat.com and follow Kokatat on Facebook, Twitter (@kokatat) and Instagram (@kokatatusa).



Join



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

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Email _____

Phone _____ Member Number: _____

↑ _____ if you have one and know it

Membership Level

\$35 Standard

\$25 Member of Affiliate Club

Club: _____

\$25 Student

School: _____

\$50 Family

\$75 Affiliate Club

\$100 Ender Club (Shirt Size: _____)

\$250 Platinum Paddler

\$500 Explorer

\$750 Lifetime

\$1,000 Legacy

\$2,500 Steward

**For current member rewards
go to:
americanwhitewater.org**

Donation

Donation of \$ _____

Additional Subscriptions

\$30 Kayak Session Magazine - 4 issues per year (KS donates \$5 to AW!)

Journal Options

Do NOT mail me the AW Journal, email it to me <- Saves AW money, and trees! :)

Auto-Renew (No Renewal Notices!)

Auto-renew my membership each year on the credit card below

Payment

Credit Card Cash Check # _____

Card Number: _____ Exp. Date: _____

Name on card: _____

Signature: _____

the boat bounced and rotated, throwing several people out. Most swam ashore safely, but Mary Johnson, 57, washed downstream. She was pulled from the water by a safety kayaker who began CPR. EMS arrived quickly, but she was beyond their help.

Tennessee's popular Class III-IV Ocoee River gets big and rowdy when the water comes up, and large surges sometimes occur without warning on this dam-release run. On the afternoon of September 13th Chattanooga.com reported that the river rose suddenly to 3000 cfs. A commercial raft flipped in Tablesaw Rapid, throwing six guests and a guide into the river. One of the former, 50 year-old Gary Brown, washed downstream through several other rapids and was unresponsive when he was finally brought ashore. Last year two other deaths occurred during surges on the Ocoee, a trend that has professional outfitters very concerned.

Other drownings occurred when life jackets were not worn. On July 18th Charles McJunkin, 81, was fishing from a raft with two other people on the Bitterroot River in Montana. The *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* reported that the group's life vests were carried on board but not worn. This is common practice among fishermen but a bad idea in whitewater. Mr. McJunkin fell out of the raft above the Beartooth Drop. His companions tried to pull him back in, but were unsuccessful. Another rafter fell out as they went over the drop itself. She was recovered, but Mr. McJunkin floated on downstream and was later found by emergency responders. A second death occurred on Putah Creek in Northern California at the modest level of 300 cfs. On October 12th Lisa Nakamaru, 20, was rafting with a friend when they hit a midstream rock and capsized. Her friend survived; she disappeared. Sometime later paddlers spotted her under several feet of water in a pool downstream. The Woodland, CA *Daily Democrat* reported that no life jackets were found at the scene. We note that these were both one-boat

raft trips, leaving no one to make a rescue if trouble struck.

In a particularly tragic event, three year-old Tristan Iverson died on Montana's Bitterroot River. The *Missoulan* said that he was rafting with his father and his six-year-old brother on July 25th when their raft hit a log jam and flipped. His father and his older brother surfaced downstream, but the younger boy was trapped underwater. His father extricated him, began CPR, and called for help. A bystander called 911 and the child was transported to a hospital where he died the next day.

The Alaska Mountain Wilderness Classic is a long, grueling cross country race through some of Alaska's roughest terrain. The *Alaska Dispatch-News* notes that there is no set route and those who compete must find the best way to the finish line. Rob Kehrer, 44, had raced in 10 previous Classics. In this year's race, on August 11th, he launched a packraft (a small inflatable kayak) into the Tana River to avoid miles of frightful bushwhacking through alder thickets. He apparently got in the water too far upstream and hit some big rapids. People familiar with the river believe that his boat was flipped by the powerful, boiling eddy along a cliff where the Tana makes a 90-degree bend. A search ensued, and his body was found a week later on a gravel bar four miles downstream.

tubing Mishaps

Dam hydraulics are often deadly and, sadly, two tubers died at low head dams in July. On July 4th Roland Richmond, 58, and his girlfriend were trying to cross the Susquehanna River near Lock Haven, PA, on inner tubes when they washed over a low head dam and were trapped in the backwash. The woman survived, but he did not. Later, on July 20th, Andrea Zimmermann, 29, was one of four tubers who ran the Troy Mills Dam on the Wapsipinicon River in Iowa. The others survived; she was caught in the hydraulic and drowned.

Near Misses

Several good saves were characterized by heads-up rescue work. On July 26th there was a near drowning in Staircase Rapid on New York's Delaware River. The National Park Service reported that a young man who had been drinking attempted to swim from one raft to another without a PFD. A passenger in the other raft saw him struggle and sink in the water. Wearing his life jacket, he entered the water, grabbed the victim, and swam him to the Pennsylvania shoreline. The man was conscious, but weak and confused. The rescuer then swam across the river to the New York shoreline, ran to Kittatinny Canoes' Staircase Rapids base, and asked them to call 911. Park Rangers and EMS responded and took the victim to a hospital in Port Jervis, New York where he was treated and released.

Lastly, there's an inspiring story of how teamwork and skill saved the life of Tim Cahill, founding editor and current Editor at Large of *Outside Magazine*, who stopped breathing after a bad swim in Lava Falls in the Grand Canyon of the Colorado. Here's how he described it:

"Tossed out of the boat in Lava Falls, the biggest rapid. At the bottom, got hold of boat then ducked under to avoid getting crushed as the two of the 2 thousand pound rafts collided. Trapped under rafts and breathed in a lot of the Colorado River. Got to the surface and was dragged into a raft. Went to the sandy bank. I walked a few steps, sat down. Things went black.

"Up top, what my boat mates saw was that I was turning blue, that I had stopped breathing and about 30 seconds later, I had no pulse. Pretty much dead, in other words. CPR was started. Justin Kleberg did 30 one second compressions, Steve Smitts gave two breaths. After seven rounds of this—about 3 1/2 to 4 minutes—I woke up, saw a bunch of people way too close to me and started fighting. I excuse myself by saying that moments

before I was fighting for my life. Also, while I was out I did not see a bright light, someone beckoning to me, or the pearly gates. Just nothing between when I went down and when I woke up.

“Anyway, that is hardly any way to express my gratitude to all the people on that trip. Justin and Steve saved my life. The whole group saved my life. My gratitude is unbounded. All the docs I saw afterwards said I was very lucky to have that group of people with me. One of my docs called this resuscitation a near miracle. So I’m going to think of the boating party formerly known as the Harry Butler party as the Colorado River Miracle Team.”

The odds of surviving a cardiac arrest in the field, with only CPR and rescue breathing for resuscitation, are not very good. Fortunately, the group was able to contact the Park Service by satellite phone and a helicopter was sent. Forty minutes later Mr. Cahill was on his way to Flagstaff Medical Center by helicopter where he made a full recovery.

American Whitewater needs your help collecting accident information so we can share the facts and learn from them. Accidents teach us how to avoid trouble and manage emergencies. We can modify techniques, procedures, and river gear based on what we learn. Please help us out! To report a whitewater accident, near miss, or serious injury, please 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. I can also help you prepare a first person report. Thanks!

Charlie Walbridge,
American Whitater Safety Editor

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 Willamette Kayak & Canoe Club (WKCC) an outstanding Affiliate Club and longtime supporter of our mission to conserve and restore America's whitewater resources and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely.

The WKCC has been an important part of the paddling community in Oregon's mid-Willamette Valley for nearly four decades. The Club has a membership of over 200 and is based in the city of Corvallis. The Club's goals include but are not limited to - organizing river and surf outings for their members; promoting water safety; conserving, preserving, and protecting the free-flowing rivers of Oregon; and contributing financial support to worthy river conservation organizations.

Annual dues for the WKCC are an affordable \$12. Check the Club's website <http://wkcc.org/> for additional information on membership and more detailed information about the Club.

A big thank you to the Willamette Kayak & Canoe Club for their continued support of American Whitewater and our mission to conserve and restore America's whitewater resources and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely!

The AW Journal Club Affiliates by state:

Alaska

Fairbanks Paddlers, Fairbanks
Nova River Runners 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

Chico Paddleheads, Chico
Gold Country Paddlers, Lotus
IRIE Rafting Co, Truckee
Nor Cal River Runners, Chico
Sierra Club Loma Prieta Paddlers, San Jose

Colorado

Colorado Whitewater Assn, Denver
Dolores River Boating Advocates, Dolores
Friends of the Yampa, Steamboat Springs
Pikes Peak Whitewater Club, Colorado Springs
San Miguel Whitewater Asso, Telluride
Upper Colorado Private Boaters Asso, Glenwood Springs
Western Association to Enjoy Rivers, Grand Junction

Connecticut

AMC-Connecticut Chapter, Waterbury

Delaware

Wilmington Trail Club, Newark

Georgia

Atlanta Whitewater Club, Atlanta
Georgia Canoeing Asso, Atlanta
Paddlers4Christ, Ellijay

Idaho

Backwoods Mountain Sports, Ketchum
Idaho Whitewater Association, Boise

Illinois

Chicago Whitewater Assn, Chicago

Iowa

Iowa Whitewater Coalition, W. Des Moines

Kentucky

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

Maine

Penobscot Paddle & Chowder Society, Troy

Maryland

Baltimore Canoe & Kayak Club, Baltimore
Blue Ridge Voyageurs, Silver Spring

Massachusetts

AMC Boston Chapter, Boston
Zoar Outdoor, Charlemont

Minnesota

Rapids Riders, Minneapolis
SCSU Outdoor Endeavors, Saint Cloud

Missouri

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

Montana

Beartooth Paddlers Society, Billings
Butte-Anaconda River Runners, Butte

Nevada

Sierra Nevada Whitewater Club, Reno

New Hampshire

AMC New Hampshire Paddlers, Raymond
Merrimack Valley Paddlers, Nashua

New Jersey

AMC Delaware Valley Chapter, Oaks
KCCNY, Flanders

New Mexico

Adobe Whitewater Club of New Mexico,
Albuquerque

New York

ADK Schenectady, Schenectady
Colgate University, Hamilton
FLOW Paddlers' Club, Rochester
Hamilton College, Clinton
Housatonic Area Canoe & Kayak Sq., Ossining
KCCNY, Flanders
Zoar Valley Paddling Club, Buffalo

North Carolina

Base Camp Cullowhee, Cullowhee
Carolina Canoe Club, Raleigh
Davidson Outdoors, Davidson
Landmark Learning, Cullowhee
Mecklenburg Regional Paddlers, Charlotte
Triad River Runners, Winston-Salem
Western Carolina Paddlers, Asheville

Ohio

Columbus Outdoor Pursuits, Columbus
Keelhauler Canoe Club, Cleveland

Oregon

Eugene Kayaker, Eugene
Lower Columbia Canoe Club, Portland
Next Adventure, Portland
Northwest Rafters Association, Roseburg
Oregon Kayak and Canoe Club, Portland
Oregon Whitewater Asso, Portland
PNWKayakers.com, Portland
Willamette Kayak & Canoe Club, Corvallis

Pennsylvania

AMC Delaware Valley Chapter, Oaks
Bradford County Canoe and Kayak Club, Sayre
Canoe Club of Centre County, Lemont
Canoe Club of Greater Harrisburg, Harrisburg
Conewago Canoe Club, York
Holtwood Hooligans, Paradise
Three Rivers Paddling Club, Pittsburgh

S. Carolina

Foothills Paddling Club, Greenville
Palmetto Paddlers, Columbia

Tennessee

Appalachian Paddling Enthusiasts, Limestone
Chota Canoe Club, Knoxville
East Tennessee Whitewater Club, Oak Ridge
Tennessee Eastman Hiking and Canoeing Club,
Kingsport
Tennessee Scenic River Assn, Nashville
Tennessee Valley Canoe Club, Chattanooga

Utah

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

Vermont

Vermont Paddlers Club, Montpelier

Virginia

Blue Ridge River Runners, Lynchburg
Coastal Canoeists Inc, Richmond
Float Fishermen of Virginia, Roanoke
Hollins Outdoor Program, Roanoke

Washington

BEWET- Boeig Employees Whitewater & Touring Club, Bellevue
EPIC Adventures, Cheney
Paddle Trails Canoe Club, Seattle
Northwest Whitewater Asso, Spokane
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
Mason Dixon Canoe Cruisers, Berkeley Springs
WV Wildwater Assn, S. Charleston
WVU Whitewater Club, Morgantown

Wisconsin

Hoofers Outing Club, Madison
North East Wisconsin Paddlers, Inc., Neenah
Sierra Club/John Muir Chapter, Madison

Wyoming

American Packrafting Association, Wilson

British Columbia

Thompson Rivers Univ Adventure Studies,
Kamloops

Ontario

Kawartha Whitewater Paddlers, The Kawarthas

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. Support river access and restoration through the AW River Stewardship Team.
2. Be part of a national voice for the protection of the whitewater rivers your club values.
3. Tap into the professional expertise of AW staff for river issues that come up in your backyard.
4. Your club's members can become AW members for \$25. A \$10 savings!
5. Receive the American Whitewater Journal, the oldest continually published whitewater magazine.
6. Your club is recognized in the list of Affiliate Clubs posted to the AW website.
7. Recognize your club in the list of Affiliate Clubs noted in each bi-monthly AW Journal.
8. Post Club information on the AW Website to help paddlers find you.
9. Gain Club satisfaction from lending support to AW's stewardship efforts.
10. Improve your club members river karma.

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



AMERICAN WHITewater

Saving Rivers Since 1954

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

\$35 Cheaper than anything in your gear bag, twice as important.
americanwhitewater.org/join

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 a member-driven publication. If you enjoy reading it, please consider letting its pages tell your story. We are looking for articles about whitewater rivers of any variety, so let your imagination flow free!

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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