



# AMERICAN WHITEWATER

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BY BOATERS FOR BOATERS  
Mar/Apr 2018

## DOES HYDROPOWER HAVE A PLACE IN THE RENEWABLE ENERGY FUTURE?

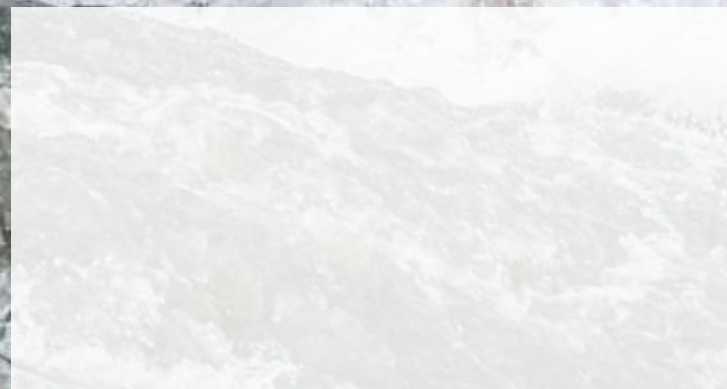


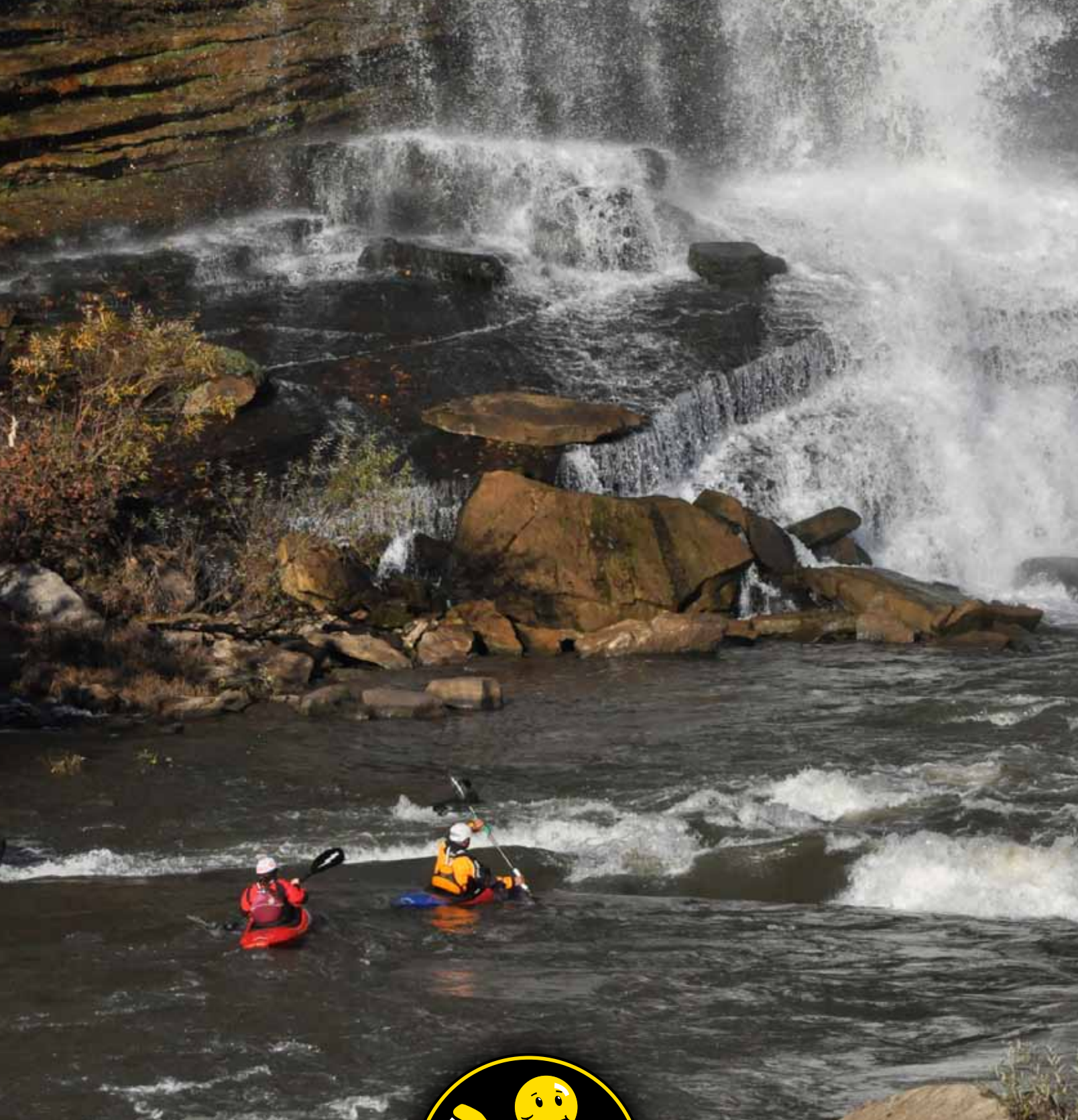
## WILD AND SCENIC WHITEWATER

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# AMERICAN WHITEWATER

A VOLUNTEER PUBLICATION PROMOTING RIVER CONSERVATION, ACCESS AND SAFETY

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*“See you at the bottom!” With a willingness to charge the most committing whitewater on the planet, like the Hole that Ate Chicago on the Stikine River in British Columbia, Sam Grafton was often in the company of the most elite kayakers in the world. Sam missioned to some of the most challenging rivers the globe has to offer, but he also took care of business at home, working as an Emergency Room Technician. He was part of the core group of Class V volunteers that American Whitewater relies on in Washington state, and he cared deeply for the rivers he grew up around. He inspired many with his passion, positivity and willingness to lead. We’ll miss you dearly Sam. Sam Grafton Apr 13th 1991 - Feb 10th 2018.*



Photo by **Daniel Patrinnellis**

Publication Title: American Whitewater  
Issue Date: Mar/Apr 2018 Statement of Frequency:  
Published Bimonthly  
Authorized Organization's Name and Address:  
American Whitewater  
PO. Box 1540  
Cullowhee, NC 28723

# 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](http://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.

### EDITORIAL DISCLAIMER

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

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# THE JOURNEY AHEAD

**T**HE FINAL COUPLE of weeks of December 2017 saw a huge outpouring of support for American Whitewater's river stewardship programs. We are deeply humbled to be selected as an organization worthy of your support; it demonstrates confidence in our mission and ability to achieve successful outcomes on projects that are near and dear to the hearts of boaters and friends of wild rivers. Your support places additional responsibility on AW staff to demonstrate leadership in the coming year on stewardship issues and to adequately report back key developments.

As an example of how unexpected contributions to our stewardship program can be, let me relay a story of one large, very significant, year-end donation. It came with a note that read, *"Mark gave me a ride to the put-in one day. I greatly appreciate the work you do to keep our rivers free flowing, clean, and accessible to boaters. Keep up the good work!"* Now, providing shuttles to hitchhikers is something most of us do around rivers, but it's not a development strategy widely acknowledged by professional fundraising types. Yet, within our community of paddlers, we all collectively appreciate access to high quality, pristine, wild rivers. Sometimes that appreciation is shown through significant donations, other times it is demonstrated in the number of volunteer hours our community gives (last year volunteers donated 5,316 hours of their time—the equivalent of three full-time employees—to American Whitewater). No matter how big or small, or what form your contribution takes, the collective impact of your support fuels what we do and is deeply treasured.

Looking back at our success in 2017, American Whitewater achieved these important stewardship milestones:

- Volunteer hours contributed in 2017: 5,316 hours (the equivalent of three additional full-time staff)
- Members at year end: 5,719
- Affiliate Clubs: 113
- Pro bono legal services: 543 hours working on Catawba River (SC), Bears Ears (UT), and NC river navigability
- Rivers on which new flows were restored: New River Dries (WV), North Yuba (CA)
- Dams removed: Sullivan Creek (WA)
- Wild and Scenic legislation introduced: East Rosebud Creek (MT), Oregon Wildlands (Rouge, Molalla and Chetco), Wild Olympics (WA), Lower Farmington and Salmon Brook (CT)
- Collaboratively managed access: 32 rivers, 728 river miles
- Unique website users: 937,331

We face an era of increasing threats to rivers and their surrounding public lands. Our focus moving forward is to make sure the paddling public has access to rivers that are well managed for their recreational and ecological values. On each project that we work on, we seek land and water conservation, public river access, stream flow information, and flow releases that benefit both the aquatic ecosystem and recreation. We have a proven track record of success with each of these goals. With your ongoing support, these enhancements create a triple bottom line: they provide local communities a sustainable economic base, they result in healthier rivers, and they provide opportunities for healthy nature-based recreation. Reconnecting people and communities with their rivers creates an

enthusiastic and lasting constituency for river stewardship.

As we look to the future, we continue to appreciate the importance of rivers and their role in supporting the health and well being of the paddling community. We remain committed to giving back to these special places and have a great story to tell. Our stewardship projects are making a real difference to rivers and local communities, while providing flows for recreation and habitat. If you are reading this publication and you are not a member, please consider supporting this work. If you are a member, thanks for your support; pass this issue on to friends and let them know what we are doing. There has never been a better time to support American Whitewater!

Take care of our wild rivers and they will take care of you.

See you on the river,



Executive Director, American Whitewater

p.s. Join me on the American Whitewater Rogue River trip on June 14-17, 2018. Thanks to support from Northwest Rafting Company, American Whitewater members have the opportunity to join AW staff on an exclusive four-day trip down Oregon's Rogue River. We invite you to come learn more about what we're up to while having a great time enjoying one of our nation's first Wild and Scenic Rivers. The trip, which will take place June 14-17, will be fully outfitted by Northwest Rafting Company with professional guides, exceptional food, transportation to and from the put-in, and all group equipment. Participants will have the option of bringing their own boats, renting boats, or joining as a passenger on one of the rafts.

# STEWARDSHIP

## MOKELUMNE RIVER CALIFORNIA STATE WILD AND SCENIC DESIGNATION UPDATE

BY THERESA SIMSIMAN



*Paddlers show their love for the Mokelumne River - L to R Marc Musgrove, Keith Kishiyama, Carson Watts, Theresa Simsiman, Rylan Thomas, Marilyn Freedberg, Keith Christensen.  
Photo by Theresa Simsiman*

**T**HE CALIFORNIA NATURAL Resources Agency recently released the draft Mokelumne River Wild and Scenic Study Report, recommending that 37 miles of the Mokelumne River be added to the California Wild and Scenic River System. The California Wild and Scenic Rivers Act preserves rivers that “possess extraordinary scenic, recreational, fishery, or wildlife values in their free flowing state, together with their immediate environments, for the benefit and enjoyment of the people of the State.” At a public hearing soliciting comments for the draft report in Mokelumne Hill, CA, American Whitewater and fellow paddlers Keith Kishiyama, Marc Musgrove, Marilyn Freedberg, Keith Christensen, Carson Watts and Rylan Thomas showed up in paddling gear to advocate for the river they love.

The study report, which was required by Assembly Bill 142 in 2015, finds that the current uses of the Mokelumne will

continue if the river is designated, including hydropower generation (there would be gaps in designated reaches around Pacific Gas & Electric facilities), grazing, and agriculture. The report also finds that designation will potentially have limited effects on timber management or logging on private lands. Additionally, local water agencies could develop “many types of water projects” upstream of the designated reaches “without adversely affecting the free flowing condition, natural character, and extraordinary scenic and recreational values of designated segments.”

During the public meeting, American Whitewater voiced specific support for the portions of the draft report that highlighted whitewater paddling as a unique recreational value on four of the five Mokelumne river segments evaluated in the study, including the Class III-V Devil’s Nose run, and the Class III-IV Tiger Creek run, to the Class III Ponderosa run, and

Class II Electra run. AW emphasized the important economic impact of the 500 to 600 paddlers, identified by Bureau of Land Management Whitewater Recreation Visitor Surveys, that visit Tiger Creek annually during the six to nine days of scheduled recreational releases. These paddlers buy gas, visit restaurants, and stay overnight in the nearby Amador and Calaveras Counties.

The California Natural Resources Agency hopes to process all public comment and issue the final draft of the report in March 2018. Then the real work will begin to find the state assemblyperson or Senator who can sponsor a bill to include 37 miles of the Mokelumne River in the California Wild and Scenic River System. If ultimately designated, the Mokelumne will be protected from new dams or large diversions in the designated reaches preserving the river for future generations of whitewater paddlers.

# DOES HYDROPOWER HAVE A PLACE IN THE RENEWABLE ENERGY FUTURE?

BY MEGAN HOOKER



*The Cullasaja River in North Carolina was a proposed site for a new dam until American Whitewater and stepped in to protect the river's beautiful upper gorge.  
Photo by Sarah Ruhlen*

**A**S WE CONTINUE to face a changing climate, states are considering how they will address renewable energy standards in the future. How do we keep the lights on while successfully reducing or eliminating our energy-related greenhouse gas emissions? This simple question has a complex answer that takes a lot of different factors into consideration. One of the main ones we examine at American Whitewater is, what role will hydropower play?

Some people place hydropower in the mix of energy sources that are “clean” and “green,” advocating that building new hydropower dams is a key part of the solution. However, as river lovers know well, there’s nothing clean or green about

a technology that degrades water quality and pushes aquatic species to the brink of extinction by fragmenting, altering, or destroying important habitat. And while hydro certainly emits much less than a coal plant, reservoirs behind dams release greenhouse gases. (As always, there are some caveats to this. If you’d like to learn more, see the study printed in BioScience on November 1, 2016 entitled Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Reservoir Water Surfaces: A New Global Synthesis). Then there are the impacts that go beyond the calculus of whether hydropower is green, that include the social and economic fallout that comes to local communities when river-based recreation opportunities dry up.

Others see the impacts of hydropower dams very clearly, but seek a carbon-free future no matter the impact, even if it means building new hydropower dams on our last freely flowing rivers.

American Whitewater believes that there’s a more balanced solution, and that we can preserve what’s left of our already overburdened rivers to reach a renewable future. Hydropower can and does play an important role, but if we need to expand generation, we have opportunity do so through upgrading existing dams to operate more efficiently and produce more power with the same amount of water. Additionally, we’re in the midst of a rapid evolution of the energy market that is fueled in large part by the influx of

# STEWARDSHIP



*American Whitewater and our partners successfully stopped a new dam project on the Bear River in Idaho.*

**Photo by Evan Stafford**

power into the grid generated by solar and wind. In the West in particular, on some days there's actually too much power being produced, meaning that there's no need for new projects, and even that some existing hydropower projects will not be cost effective in the near term. In fact, some aren't cost effective now. Millville Dam on the Shenandoah River in WV brings in approximately \$400,000 in revenues each year, but costs \$800,000 to operate.

In the pages of the *AW Journal* and on our website, you'll see stories about proposals for new dams that we're fighting. In Washington State alone, there are approximately 500 potential sites for new hydropower dams on rivers that are freely-flowing. About a dozen of these have been actively investigated by developers over the last few years. And across the country, we've recently had a hand in the defeat of new proposed dams on the Mascoma River in New Hampshire, the Cullasaja in North Carolina, and the Bear in Idaho.

In addition to keeping our finger on the pulse of new proposed hydropower projects on the ground, we also track policies that incentivize them. On the West Coast, American Whitewater and our partners in the Hydropower Reform Coalition are tracking state legislation, watching for proposals that incentivize new hydropower dams.

The energy challenges that we face are complex, and American Whitewater is navigating them within our mission "to conserve and restore America's whitewater resources and enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely." While we don't have all of the pieces to the puzzle of our energy future, we do know that sacrificing our remaining freely flowing rivers to new dams is not the answer.

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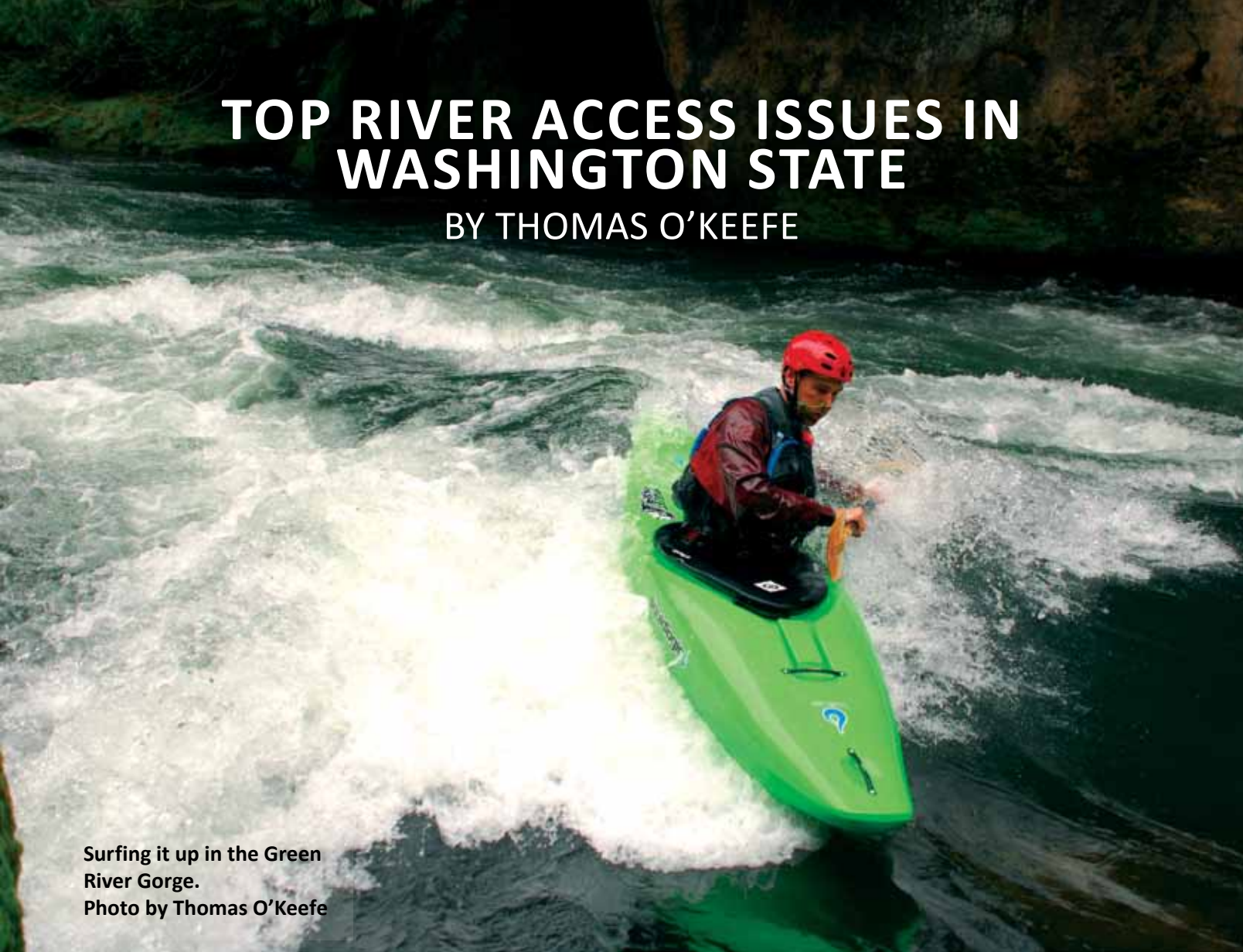


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# TOP RIVER ACCESS ISSUES IN WASHINGTON STATE

BY THOMAS O'KEEFE



Surfing it up in the Green River Gorge.  
Photo by Thomas O'Keefe

**A**MERICAN WHITEWATER'S MISSION is to conserve and restore America's whitewater resources and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely. Inherent in our goals of river conservation and restoration is the importance of connecting people to rivers to provide experiences that are safe and enjoyable. You can't protect what you don't know, and a big part of our river access work is connecting people to rivers so they can become better advocates for those resources.

While we have had many successes over the past decade, we have identified our top priorities for the next five years to improve river access in Washington State. Our efforts are not simply focused on bringing more people to rivers. Instead, our focus is on

ensuring that those who do retreat to rivers are doing so responsibly, in a manner that reduces impacts to these resources. Many such projects require much more than just building a new access point; the majority of these projects have a goal of building successful and durable partnerships that support sustainable outdoor recreation on Washington's rivers. Many of these projects have volunteers involved and we also welcome additional assistance. If you are interested in helping out with any of these projects, please get in touch.

## Our Top Projects

### North Fork Skykomish River

When the Index-Galena Road washed out in 2006, access to the North Fork Skykomish was severely affected. While an alternative

access is available up the Beckler River Valley and over Jack's Pass, this route is snowed in for the entire winter paddling season as well as the early spring snowmelt when this run is most popular. Additionally, it turned a short and convenient shuttle route into a major undertaking. American Whitewater has worked with Snohomish County and the Forest Service to reopen this road that accesses one of the best Class IV whitewater runs in western Washington. As part of the overall project, American Whitewater has worked with project planners to ensure that critical river access sites are managed and integrated into the overall site design.

### Green River—Paradise

The standard access point representing the dividing point between the Upper

# STEWARDSHIP



*Access to rivers like the Kalama that flow through private timber company lands has become more restrictive.*

**Photo by Thomas O'Keefe**

Gorge and Lower Gorge on the Green River has been a popular take-out for experienced kayakers and a put-in for beginners. Although a good trail to the river is available on State Park land, the parking area is on private land. While our local affiliate Washington Kayak Club and local volunteers have worked to keep the property cleaned up and accessible to paddlers, recent development and associated population growth in the area have increased use to a point that could exceed the capacity of the landowner and volunteers to manage the site. Finding a long-term solution to access management that is durable and sustainable remains a priority for American Whitewater.

## **Elwha River—Highway 101**

While we join river advocates in celebrating a free-flowing Elwha River, the removal of two dams and the restored flow of sediment has created challenges for river access. The historic access at Altair was washed away in a flood and the river has migrated away from the historic access downstream of the Highway 101 bridge at the old Elwha

River Resort property. In 2016, American Whitewater led an effort to establish a new state law requiring the Department of Transportation to evaluate the feasibility of providing public waterway access any time a bridge is reconstructed. With the Highway 101 bridge scheduled for replacement in 2018, we have an opportunity to explore options for providing access to the river at this location.

## **Methow River**

While the Methow Valley is best known for its network of Nordic and mountain biking trails, the Methow River forms a natural water trail through the valley with some great paddling opportunities. Currently one of the greatest access needs is in the town of Twisp. While good access to the river can be found upstream in Winthrop and downstream in Carlton, access in Twisp is challenging. Taking out at the park in town requires a skilled ferry across the confluence where the Twisp River joins the Methow and a steep scramble up an eroded bank. Improved access in town is desirable, along with way-finding and

safety information for both paddlers and summer floaters to better understand the character of the river and where safe access points exist.

## **Skykomish River—Sunset Falls**

Back in the summer of 2000, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife formally closed Sunset Falls to public access. While the site had been used informally for years, and despite the fact that the land on river right below the falls is owned by the State of Washington, the operators of the fish trap and haul facility determined that public use of the site was interfering with their operations. American Whitewater has explored various options to provide managed access at the site for whitewater boaters. Several years ago we identified this as one of our top ten access issues nationally, and it continues to remain a top priority as we pursue various options to restore access to this site.

Sunset Falls is not the only site on the Skykomish River where we see a need to improve access: the Town of Skykomish has an interest in providing better access in town, Money Creek Campground is managed for overnight use but provides suboptimal day-use access to the river, Eagle Falls requires a safe take-out upstream of the falls and a site plan for the unmanaged day-use occurring on the rock ledges downstream of the falls, and Split Rock is privately owned and not guaranteed for the long term. We have partnered with Snohomish County with support from the National Park Service to encourage a community dialogue on how to best ensure river recreation is sustainably managed on this river.

## **Wind River—Fish Ladder**

In recent years, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife has demonstrated an increased interest in broadening the appeal of their agency by creating a more welcoming environment for citizens of the state who do not normally identify as hunters or fishermen. American Whitewater has identified the need for

a legal portage option at the fish ladder on the Wind River as a top priority for the Department to address. At higher flows, the series of waterfalls near the Columbia River confluence and a dangerous artificial weir to direct fish into the fish ladder requires a portage. The only logical portage route is along the fish ladder on river left that is signed for no trespassing. Paddlers generally ignore the sign, but Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife staff have been known to threaten paddlers with criminal trespass, and the uncertainty over the legality of the portage route creates a barrier to use of the river by commercial outfitters. Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife should recognize the right to portage and embrace whitewater recreation as an appropriate activity on the Wind River. American Whitewater has had several discussions with Department staff on this issue and we are committed to continued dialogue to resolve the issues.

### Chehalis River

The Chehalis River is currently being considered for a massive flood control dam that would destroy a spectacular whitewater run located on private forestland owned and managed by Weyerhaeuser. Unfortunately, access on private timberland has become increasingly challenging in recent years with individual forests, including this one, requiring expensive user permits issued to an individual. The State of Washington has attempted to argue that the impacts to recreation of building a dam would be minimal because the forest owner is currently limiting access. American Whitewater has a long-term interest in improving access to private forestlands and the rivers that flow through them. We will also continue to oppose this dam that will destroy the river for any future

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*The Index-Galena Road washed out in 2006, severely affecting access to one of the best Class IV runs in WA on the North Fork Skykomish.*  
Photo by Thomas O'Keefe

opportunity to enhance the whitewater paddling experience.

### Wynoochee River

Access on the Wynoochee has gradually deteriorated over the years with Forest Service road decommissioning and new gates that routinely block access on private timber company lands. In an effort to reduce this trend, American Whitewater is supporting the efforts of Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to provide public access at Bob's Bridge, located downstream of the gorge. Ultimately, we are working toward the goal of improved access at Save Creek, but access on private timber company land continues to be a challenge.

### White Salmon River—Northwestern Park

With the removal of Condit Dam on the White Salmon River and PacifiCorp's restoration work nearing completion, the fate of PacifiCorp-owned lands along the lower river remains in question. Of particular interest to paddlers, Northwestern Park is owned by PacifiCorp and represents one of the busiest river access points in the state with thousands of paddlers and several commercial raft companies using the site every year. Given that the White

Salmon Wild and Scenic Rivers is managed by the Forest Service, the agency managing the put-in at BZ, they would be the logical choice for an agency that could take ownership and manage this access point. Beyond the access at Northwestern Park, American Whitewater has an interest in ensuring that all PacifiCorp lands along the river ultimately are managed in a manner that protects the riparian corridor and the \$35 million investment in dam removal for the benefit of the fishery resource. We are currently engaged in stakeholder conversations to develop a long-term vision for this river that enhances fishery resources while providing opportunities for sustainable river-based recreation.

### Cispus River

The Cispus River has been a great whitewater resource for decades, but unfortunately, the commitment to build a public access point prior to construction of the hydropower project that was completed in 1994 at Cowlitz Falls was not upheld. While the access finally was constructed and opened to the public in 2007, frequent gate closures and irregularly updated web pages continue to represent a barrier to actually getting to the site. In recent years, new leadership at the public utility district and continued pressure to



# STEWARDSHIP

fix the situation from the local paddling community has resulted in steps being taken toward improving the situation. We will continue to support efforts leading to a permanent solution for an access point that is open and easily accessible to the public.

## Kalama River

The Kalama is one of many rivers in Washington that flows through private timber company lands. Unfortunately, access to these rivers has become more and more challenging as timber companies have shifted from policies of providing open access to more restrictive and costly limited-entry permit systems. This is a regional issue, and while we have no easy solutions, we have had several discussions with lawmakers, other user groups in the outdoor recreation community who are similarly affected, and timber companies.

## North Fork Snoqualmie River

The North Fork Snoqualmie is famous for Ernie's Gorge, a Class V proving-ground for elite paddlers from across the entire region. No public access to the river is available, however, for either the Class V run through Ernie's Gorge or the Class III run just upstream. While King County purchased the development rights for private timberland within the North Fork

Snoqualmie for \$22 million, the land remains private and access continues to be restricted to those who purchase a permit. Given the significant public investment King County made in this 90,000-acre forest, our long-term goal is improved access and a parking area near the Spur 10 Bridge.

## Nisqually River

Despite decades of planning and the opening of Nisqually River State Park as one of our state's newest public parks along a river, access to the Nisqually River upstream of McKenna remains a challenge. This stretch of river provides Class II boating opportunities through a river corridor that is largely undeveloped.

Currently, however, it is a mile-long hike in to access points at the Mashel or Ohop River confluence, despite the fact that both sites are public land and recognized as opportunities for river access in the Master Plan for the park. Improving access to the river and realizing the full potential of this new state park to provide recreational boating opportunities is a priority of American Whitewater.

## North Fork Nooksack River—MP 27

While the Forest Service provides a great put-in for the Nooksack River on Forest Service land, boaters are on their own once they float downstream of the forest boundary. The traditional access point is at milepost 27 on the Mt. Baker Highway where the river approaches the road. But since the road has a very narrow shoulder, paddlers often end up standing on the highway to load boats. The need for a safe access point has been identified as a priority for years. The Department of Natural Resources owns a parcel just downstream of milepost 27 that we have identified as a potential access point.

## Suiattle River

While we have had great success in implementing projects to enhance all the priority projects on the Sauk Wild and Scenic River, access to its major tributary, the Suiattle Wild and Scenic River, remains a challenge. The Boundary Bridge is one important access point that is used by commercial outfitters and the general public. The need for this access was identified in the river management plan, and for many years a trail on river left provided adequate access. In the 2003 floods, however, the river blew through the approach road to the bridge and with it went the access.

A more durable access point appears possible on river right on the upstream side of the bridge where a bedrock shelf provides a staging area and adequate space is available in the bridge right-of-way for an access path to the water. Reestablishing formal access at Boundary Bridge is a priority for American Whitewater. In addition, we will explore opportunities with the Washington Department of Natural Resources to establish access at Tenas Creek, an access point identified in the river management plan that could provide an

*Dangerous boat loading at the North Fork Nooksack take-out.*

**Photo by Thomas O'Keefe**



alternative put-in that avoids the braided section upstream of this point and extends the floating season through the summer.

### **Teanaway River**

With beautiful user-friendly surf waves, the Teanaway is a spring favorite for those looking for a Class II paddling experience that includes some wonderful river features. We recently cheered the acquisition of 50,000 acres within the Teanaway River corridor by the State of Washington that will protect this river from private development. Efforts are currently underway to plan a community forest that is managed for sustainable forestry and other community values that include outdoor recreation. We support efforts to formalize and manage the informal river access sites that are used by paddlers in the spring and passersby who are simply looking for a place to retreat from the heat during the summer.



*Winter road closures have made accessing the Sol Duc an issue during the river's main paddling season.*

**Photo by Thomas O'Keefe**

### **Sol Duc River**

The Sol Duc River in Olympic National Park is one of the best winter whitewater runs on the Olympic Peninsula. Unfortunately, however, the National Park Service has chosen, in recent years, to extend the period of time the road is gated. What was once a dependable winter whitewater run has become increasingly difficult to access. While closures during times of major storm events or after extensive road damage are understandable, the road has been more frequently closed when it would be safe to drive for access to the river. American Whitewater identified the need for this access in our comments on the updated General Management Plan for Olympic National Park. We will continue to raise this issue and seek improved access to this river through the winter paddling season.

### **Canyon Creek (South Fork Stillaguamish)**

While many paddlers have known about the short run on Canyon Creek that flows into the South Fork Stillaguamish, local paddlers have explored the upper reaches of this creek in recent years and discovered

a great run with some beautiful gorges. Unfortunately, however, a damaged bridge on Forest Road 41 limits access to all but those willing to hike in several miles. American Whitewater is actively engaged with Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest staff in discussions over road maintenance and we have prioritized this as an important access for our community. Additionally, we annually provide input to Congressional appropriators on the importance of investing in infrastructure on our public lands that supports outdoor recreation.

### **State Level Legislation that Affects Access**

We keep our eye on state legislation that may affect the public's access to rivers, and almost every year there seems to be a bill with far-reaching implications that would impede the public's right to access some of our favorite whitewater reaches. Currently, there is a bill moving through both the Washington State Senate and House that would add new language to state law allowing a county to vacate a public right-of-way abutting a waterway "for the protection of public safety."

Public road right-of-ways that dead-end on waterways provide important access to rivers and marine shorelines across Washington State, and allowing counties to vacate these has the potential to remove key public access points for paddlers. Click here to comment and learn more about this legislation.

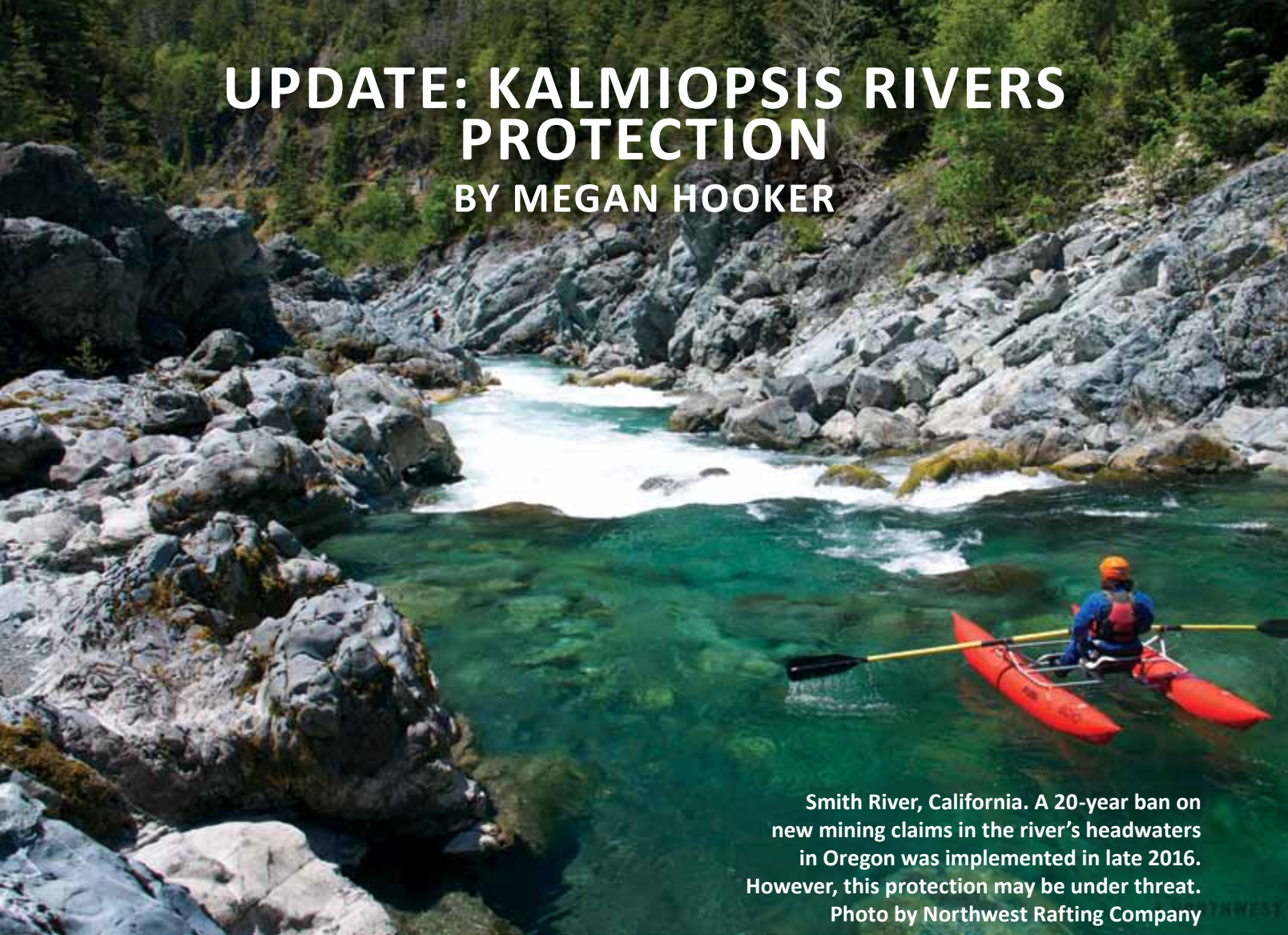
### **Connecting People and Rivers**

Working to connect people with rivers serves to help American Whitewater accomplish our stewardship goals in a number of ways. The more the public experiences rivers, the greater their desire to protect them. Accessing rivers safely and improving public access to waterways is a part of our founding principles. While the projects above represent important priorities and opportunities we are focused on, we are also proud of several recent successes.

If you'd like to be a part of solutions to any of these projects, please contact American Whitewater Pacific Northwest Stewardship Director Thomas O'Keefe at: [okeefe@americanwhitewater.org](mailto:okeefe@americanwhitewater.org).

# UPDATE: KALMIOPSIS RIVERS PROTECTION

BY MEGAN HOOKER



Smith River, California. A 20-year ban on new mining claims in the river's headwaters in Oregon was implemented in late 2016. However, this protection may be under threat. Photo by Northwest Rafting Company

**I**N EARLY 2017, American Whitewater and our partners celebrated the implementation of a 20-year ban on new mining claims for over 101,000 acres of public lands in the Kalmiopsis region of southwestern Oregon. The area is home to rivers cherished by the whitewater community, including the headwaters of the Wild and Scenic North Fork Smith and its tributary Baldface Creek, and the Illinois and its tributary Rough and Ready Creek. Nearby Hunter Creek and Pistol River on Oregon's Wild Rivers Coast are just as important to the fishing community, and are included in the protected area.

Unfortunately, these protections may now be under threat. Last fall, Representative Rob Bishop (Utah) called on the Secretaries

of Agriculture and Interior (Sonny Purdue and Ryan Zinke) to "review" all mining bans (also known as "mineral withdrawals") implemented between 2009 and the first three weeks of 2017. In his letter, Bishop called out the Southwestern Oregon withdrawal in particular as "Federal lands [that] were inappropriately withdrawn from mineral access due to false premises of environmental protectionism...."

Bishop's letter was full of inaccuracies, but the idea that the withdrawal was based on false premises was the most outlandish. The outstanding natural resource values of the rivers of the region provide the backbone for the local recreation economy. In addition to being home to some outstanding whitewater, these

rivers provide a vital stronghold for some of the few remaining wild salmon and steelhead runs. Their watersheds are home to impressive wildlife and rare plants not found anywhere else on the planet. Visitors travel from across the globe to experience natural beauty and pristine rivers of the area, whether through fishing, rafting, or camping. Baldface Creek and the North Fork Smith, in particular, provide drinking water for downstream residents of Oregon and California. There is nothing false about the need to protect these things.

The public process for the withdrawal was a lengthy one, and throughout the entire time, local communities (including the paddling community) and businesses rallied to ensure that the mineral withdrawal

# STEWARDSHIP

became a reality. Hundreds of people spoke up loudly in order to make sure that key decision makers understood that the pristine rivers of the region were the backbone of the region's economy and identity, and that mining would put them at risk for pollution and irrevocable damage. The effort to ban new mining claims brought broad bipartisan support from local residents, community and tribal leaders, county commissions, business leaders, and community organizations. There was broad support regionally and throughout the state as well. During the multi-year public process, 99% of the comments submitted were in favor of the mining ban.

As this issue of the *AW Journal* goes to press, Secretary Perdue has written a letter to the Oregon Congressional delegation clarifying that the Department of Agriculture will evaluate mineral withdrawals that were proposed between 2009 and early 2017, but that the Southwestern Oregon withdrawal will not be included in this effort because it was finalized. We see this as good news for the Kalmiopsis region, but it remains unclear whether Secretary Zinke will follow suit. American Whitewater and our partners are tracking the process...stay tuned for updates.

In the meantime, Oregon Senators Wyden and Merkley, and Representative DeFazio,

and California Representative Huffman re-introduced legislation to permanently protect the Kalmiopsis from new mining claims. We encourage you to reach out to them to thank them for their leadership in protecting the region and urge them to continue to advance the Southwestern Oregon Watershed and Salmon Protection Act. Ultimately, permanent protection is what the region needs to stop the threat of industrial-scale strip mines and protect these special rivers for generations to come.

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# HOW WE MADE IT HAPPEN

BY SUSAN ELLIOTT

PHOTOS BY ADAM ELLIOT



Staging and pumping beneath Wyoming's Gros Ventre Mountains for a triple Wild & Scenic river day: Granite Creek to Hoback River to Snake River.

**L**INKING TOGETHER RIVER trips for a nationwide dream paddling tour requires equal amounts of pre-planning and serendipitous encounters. By the end of our Wild River Life tour, we will have paddled at least 50 Wild and Scenic rivers (including a few soon-to-be designated rivers) on both East and West Coasts and everywhere in between, all before the end of 2018.

Seem like a lot? Well, it is. Timing flows, releases, festivals, and our own work schedule around these adventures was not easy. So how do we piece all these river trips together?

First, we began scheming about tour routes, paddling seasons, river event timing, and more as early as 2014. We began to see the map of Wild and Scenic rivers in our dreams as we connected the dots. With so many flows dependent on spring snowmelt, winter rains, or even upstream dam releases, we had not only to connect rivers by proximity, but also by seasonal timing.

We started checking off rivers close to home as soon as we set the goal in 2016. Living in Oregon, with its 59 designated rivers, made this easy. As I finished grad school, we snuck away on weekends to the Deschutes, North Umpqua, Clackamas, Illinois, White Salmon, and a few more.

We noted which rivers could be paddled over the winter. This inspired us to head to Northern California's Smith River watershed and nearby Trinity River over New Year's to kick off the official road tour in early 2017. By this point, we had 15 rivers crossed off and a general itinerary for the next 20.

We retained a healthy dose of flexibility even as we traveled. A good year for Idaho's Jarbidge to Bruneau classic multi-day? Add it to the itinerary! John Day River hidden under massive sheets of ice? Nix it. Surprise flows in Zion's Virgin River? Load the boats! Richter flows on the Tuolumne? Prego—Susan sits out while Adam charges on.

And of course, none of us can paddle without friends. Since we didn't know paddlers on every river, we reached out to our network of river family in nearby areas. We learned of festivals on designated rivers and found ourselves at the annual Packrafter Round-Up near the Snake River Headwaters. Borrowing packrafts, we paddled with a handful of inspiring individuals on Granite Creek and the Hoback River outside of Jackson, WY. We reached out to paddling characters from our social media channels and joined Arizona's river heroine, Dannie Keil, for a float on the Verde.

But what about the hard-to-get permitted runs? We had help here. Having worked as raft guides and kayak instructors for so many years connected us to multiple outfitters. Turns out, many outfitters want to do more for protecting rivers and are excited to get behind a mission when they can. These outfitters get it. When we float on a free-flowing river, we are more likely to want to protect it. Susan joined Canyons rafting company for a float down the Main



# WILD RIVER LIFE



**Above:** Susan navigates Twenty-Five-Mile Rapid on the Wild & Scenic Middle Feather (CA) during their three-day packrafting trip through this spectacular watershed.

**Below:** Flows of 10,000 cfs on the Tuolumne River (CA) in May 2017 made for sporty lines in the usual spots for raft guides.

Salmon River and Adam swamped for NWRC on the Middle Fork Salmon. ARTA also helped Adam tag along for a trip on the Tuolumne.

Finally, to learn more about proposed Wild and Scenic Rivers, we coordinated our travel with the schedules of American Whitewater Stewardship Directors Tom

O'Keefe and Kevin Colburn. No better tour guide than these guys. Tom took us around the Olympic Peninsula in search of rivers for the filming of our Wild Olympics video and we followed Kevin down several proposed Wild and Scenic rivers in Montana.

Now, we sit at 40 rivers. Only 10 to go. Even though it has taken years to fit together these rivers trips, it has been worth every moment spent reading AW's river descriptions, mapping driving routes, and connecting with paddlers. Structuring a road trip around a single goal provides a really cool way to see new rivers, especially when that trip can contribute to the protection of those places.

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# RIVER VOICES

## LET 'EM LIVE

BY ALDEN BIRD



*This “friendly” scene belies the friction that can occur between locals and paddlers in small towns near rivers. If we all do our part to behave respectfully, we can promote harmony in these towns, benefitting everyone.*  
Photo by Nyttend, CC-BY-SA-3.0

LIKE TO PLAY the music loud when I drive. Really loud. People who know my carefully cultivated professional image like to imagine that I’m enriching myself during my hour-long commute with urbane, sophisticated material: books on tape, informative podcasts, NPR. But I’m not. Mostly I just crank up the tunes.

My commute takes me through some of Vermont’s quaintest small towns. Every time I drive through one of them, I have a special ritual I perform. It’s a tribute, an act of homage to the small towns of the world. I wish I’d started it a lot earlier in my life, because it represents something important, something that I never understood until I hit my mid-30s, long after I’d stopped kayaking seriously.

But somehow it was kayaking and the perspective it afforded me—especially the clashes with cops and landowners that kayakers naturally get into sometimes—that caused an important light to flip on in my head.

And that’s what led to my daily ritual.

\*\*\*

Let’s get one thing straight: Most kayakers aren’t criminals. Sure, Davey Hearn got arrested for paddling the flooded Potomac, Rob Lesser was chased through the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone by a park helicopter, and Don Weeden was hauled away from the Niagara Gorge in handcuffs. But those were righteous men breaking silly rules! That was civil disobedience, not criminal activity. It’s pretty rare that boaters actually run afoul of the law.

More often it’s the landowners we butt heads with. Stories of boaters being shot at near the Upper Yough put-in back in the early days of the river are legendary. I’ve never been shot at, but I owe probably the most tense five minutes of my life to a landowner run-in. This man, who was truly terrifying—clearly on drugs or in need of them—ended up in the back of a police car himself that day!

Most regions have their share of sketchy landowners: riverbanks you don’t want to portage on, sensitive access points, stealth

put-ins, even whole rivers that landowners would rather keep off-limits (as the Ausable Chasm in New York was for many years). In some cases it’s simple NIMBY politics. In other cases, it’s whole areas where kayakers are seen negatively—the result of a real culture clash that exists between younger, liberal kayakers and older, conservative residents. While some towns welcome kayakers as a source of revenue, many other places view us more warily: as drug-carrying troublemakers, disrespectful tourists, or rowdy interlopers. Anyone who has boated long enough has a story of running afoul of either the police or some peeved landowner. At the time, it doesn’t seem fair. We’re just trying to kayak, right? Kayaking is NOT a crime!

\*\*\*

But here’s the thing. Now that I am a landowner, I get it. Especially because I own land in a vacation town in the White Mountains. While not quite as touristy as Lincoln, New Hampshire, or North Conway, New Hampshire, Littleton, New Hampshire still catches thousands of tourists every

summer weekend. And while most are respectful, some aren't. They think they own the White Mountains. They tailgate, they park wherever they want, they clog up the hiking trails, they order local merchants around like serfs, and—worst of all—they like to stop on the side of busy highways just to take pictures of brightly colored leaves! It's weird to be on the other side of it now.

It makes me think back to some of the behavior I exhibited as a kayaker years ago. Simple, basic stuff. For example, I was always surprised by what felt like the frosty reception boaters got in Friendsville, Maryland. It felt like a constant undercurrent of complaint from the town, a complicated balancing act that river advocates had to play with pissed off residents and town officials, an implicit threat to yank our take-out and perhaps our river access, too. I didn't get it. Weren't hundreds of boaters flooding town every weekend, infusing much-needed cash into the gas stations, restaurants, and campgrounds? Weren't we about the best thing going for Friendsville? Why were they so uptight? I was once screamed at by a local in the street after I parked my car in the wrong place. There was no talking him down. He was incensed. What was the big deal?

But now I get it. It was exactly that kind of arrogance—"We're the best thing going for Friendsville"—and all its attendant behaviors that pissed off the residents so much. Looking back at it, I was acting just like the kind of tourist that I hate. Where I'd parked left me blocking part of the street. But even more than that, it was the way I did it that enraged the guy: like it was my street. Same goes for the drinking on the main street near our cars. Sure, we tried to do it discreetly, but what other main street in any town do you know that has 100 people drinking beer along it in broad daylight? If the bikers who roll through Lincoln, New Hampshire ever did that, I'd probably have an aneurysm. If they were changing clothes outside on the main

road next to their bikes, I'd probably lose my mind. If they started parking on my street like they owned it, I'd be out there screaming at them too. I get it. Finally.

Years ago the police ran a sting operation at the Upper Yough where they pulled everyone over who was speeding on the road to the put-in. There, right in front of a small Christian church, were pulled over about 15 boater cars with D.C. and Maryland plates. In retrospect, it could not have been a more perfect divide between Red and Blue America. At the time, I thought it was unfair: the cops were officious, the speed limit—25—was silly, the townspeople self-important. But now I understand how they felt. As much as we boaters identify ourselves with Friendsville and all the other small river towns like it, we are only visitors. We don't live there. And we aren't always the most respectful guests.

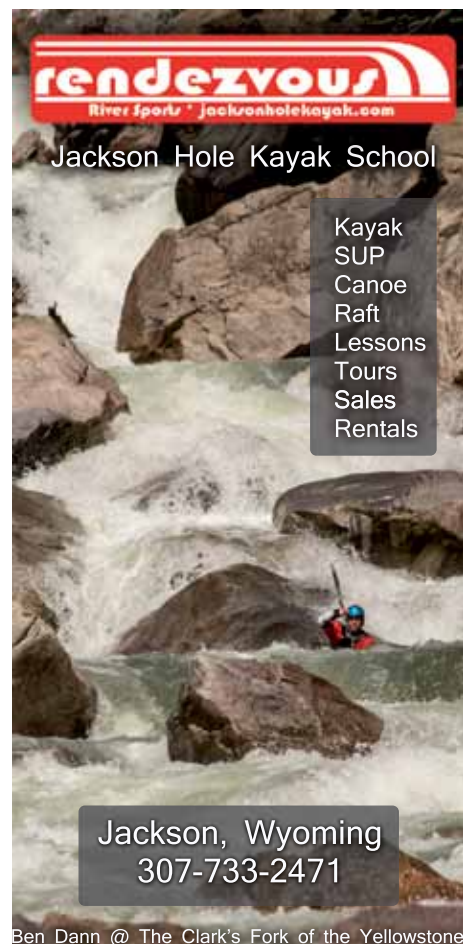
That's why I've developed my ritual. It's simple: every time I drive through a small town, I turn the music down. Why? Respect. Ever hear a car drive by at night with the volume up loud? Even with the windows up, it'll rattle your walls. I don't want to be that guy anymore. I used to show up at the river with loud music blaring. I still do that, but once I get near houses, I back it off. You know those old public safety messages about driving slowly around road workers: "Let 'em live"? That's how I feel now: let 'em live in peace.

Ultimately, I believe that turning down the music, having your beer in the pub, not in public; using the facilities, not the bushes; and driving it like you own it, not like you stole it—all go a long way toward keeping kayakers respectable in river towns. We don't want to go getting a bad rap. While we've enjoyed considerable success over the last decade in ensuring reliable river access and river releases, all of that can vanish if we start getting bad public relations. We want to be seen as the responsible ones, not the out-of-state jerks who play their music loud and think they

own everything. Many of the river access victories won by groups like American Whitewater have come through forging alliances with locals. We boaters often pride ourselves on being environmentalists and good stewards of the land. But that's not enough. We need to be good visitors of the towns around the land as well.

So that's why I've started turning down the music when I drive through towns. It's a small thing to do that probably doesn't really make a difference to anyone, but to me it's a matter of simple respect. Just look for me somewhere in eastern Vermont. I'll be the guy cruising through town with a line of impatient cars behind him, the one with the music turned down nice and low. You won't even hear me.

Let 'em live.



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# RIVER VOICES

## HARD LABOR ON THE UPPER ANIMAS

BY DOUG GOODWIN



The author on the Upper Animas.  
Photo by Dave Wilson

**G**EMS. There are certain rivers spread across the United States and the world that really embody this word. With a starting elevation of over 9,200 feet, the Upper Animas in southern Colorado's San Juan Mountains is certainly one of them. An average gradient of 80 feet per mile demands heads-up boating. Flows range from 500 cfs to 4,000 cfs for a select group of core kayakers looking to push into the zone of beyond. In the springtime, the Upper Animas is inundated with many side creeks as well as small falls that make their way into the canyon in the form of wonderful cascades flying off the walls of the towering mountains that envelop the river.

Early accounts of kayakers running the Upper Animas date back as far as the mid-1960s. As for rafts, catarafts began plying the icy waters of the Upper Animas sometime in the 1970s. It has always been regarded as a tough river. Remote, cold,

challenging, the Upper has taken its share of lives over the years. The keystone rapid of the run, No Name, is a solid Class V with little room for recovery downstream of the intimidating drop. Jim Cassady, Bill Cross, and Fryar Calhoun say this of the rapid in *Western Whitewater*, "The river squeezes between large granite boulders and drops abruptly through churning, irregular holes and side curlers. The run-out is poor, with a Class IV drop just 50 feet downstream. Scout and, if in doubt, portage on the right. Below the rapid No Name Creek enters on the left. Downstream, Class IV rapids continue for three miles as the Animas cuts between the 13,000' to 14,000' spires of the East and West Needle Mountains."

This is one of my favorite descriptions of the Upper Animas. The river is beautiful and has given me many lessons. As an aspiring guide in the early '90s I got on as many training trips on the Upper Animas as I could, watching the veteran guides dance with the river using 16-foot Jacks Plastic catarafts—stern rigged oar frames

with four paddlers up front. With a good crew, these rigs were just what the doctor ordered for the continuous whitewater on this run. Self-bailing rafts were also used, but due to the continuous nature of the whitewater, oftentimes they became swamped and nearly as useless as a bucket boat when entering the crux of rapids on par with No Name, of which there are several.

My 16 years working as a commercial boatman were dynamic. I worked on many different rivers and continuously aspired to push my skills. In 1998 after boating for some 30 straight days on the Class IV and V sections of the Kern River (CA), I headed back to Durango and the Upper Animas to guide and continue to learn the valuable lessons the river was more than willing to teach me.

Fast forward another 19 years to last summer; my love of boating has not wavered. The winter of 2016-2017 was a good one for the San Juans of Southern

Colorado. Many days were spent skiing deep, backcountry powder. We knew our runoff would be healthy, but hopefully not too healthy....

The Upper Animas generally peaks in mid-June. As the runoff began to shake out, my cat boating friends and I formulated a plan. We'd do a backpacker style overnigher on the river in early June, before the peak. We expected the flows would be medium-high, but manageable.

I met my friends early on the morning of June 3rd in the parking lot of the Rockwood Narrow Gauge Railroad Depot. One of the interesting things about the Upper Animas is that there is a railroad paralleling the river. The train used to haul gold and silver ore from Silverton to Durango and south

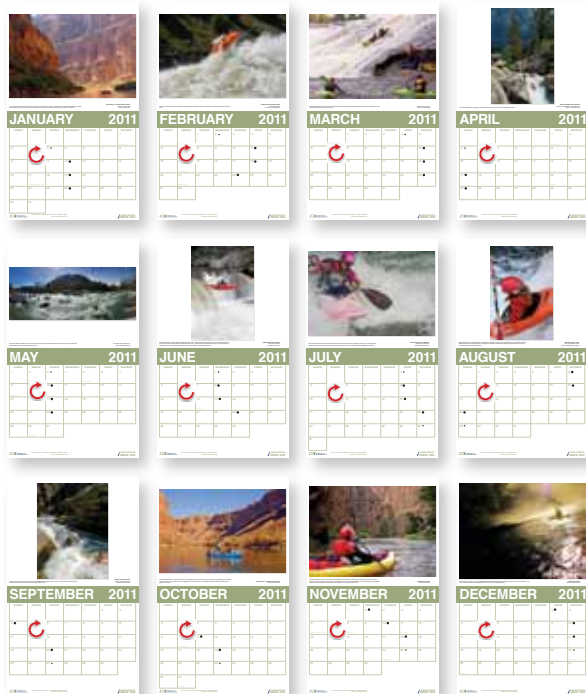
to New Mexico. The train is still used, but today it doesn't haul ore; it carries cash-wielding tourists on their way from Durango to Silverton. The train is also used by boaters to get out of the Upper Animas gorge. There are a few spots to exit the gorge and if you're rowing a boat, the train is the commonly used method. A place called Needleton is the approximate half-way point in the 26-mile run; farther downstream is the Tacoma power station. There, a massive enclosed flume carries water from the rim of the gorge all the way down to river level where it screams as it hits the electricity producing turbines secured within the old brick building. Beyond that lies the domain of expert kayakers who delve into the Rockwood Gorge, always careful to catch the mandatory take-out,

just before the Animas plunges into and under an un-runnable large-scale sieve.

From Rockwood we made our way north to Silverton where we unloaded our gear next to an unusually brown river that was bank-full. We'd done our homework. The gauge read just over 1,500 cfs. For catarafts, this was a high level, but within reason. Between the six of us, we had thousands of river miles and upwards of 100 trips on the Upper. Still, though, a strong sense of concentration and attention to detail was buzzing around as we carefully rigged our high performance cats.

Once on the river, it didn't take long to reach our first obstacle. A low-level railroad bridge crosses the Animas shortly after the put-in. We split into two pods of

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# RIVER VOICES



Day two—Lunch stop at Cascade Creek.  
Photo by Doug Goodwin

three boats each and approached carefully. Not only is the Upper Animas full of tricky rapids, there is also a fair amount of rusty metal train debris that can easily slice open an inflatable like a fillet knife in the belly of a trout.

We worked together to portage the cats. We were rigged fairly lightly and many hands made for easy work, as they say.

From there down we began to adjust to our environment—namely, pushy water and breaking waves in the six- to eight-foot range—fun, but also telling. If it was this big up high, we were in for a high water trip on the Upper Animas. The beauty of large side waterfalls and creeks pumping into the Animas was offset by our anxiety about what was lurking downstream.

Snow Shed Rapid is the first thing of any significance and it was coming up fast. On all high water runs, boat spacing becomes especially important. Our crew was solid and as we approached the steep Class IV+

drop we were in good form. Dropping down over the horizon line on the left side of the river, we were greeted not by the usual semi-technical moves separated by some stout holes and rocks. Instead, we found no rocks, but deep, powerful, boat eating holes. Brace off the foot bar, make the moves, be confident, look several moves ahead, see the run-out. Slow is smooth and smooth is fast.

The rapid is fairly short, and before we knew it, we were working our way down to the next formidable rapid called Garfield Slide, or Ten Mile. We gathered up in the scout eddy, tied up the boats, and headed down the banks to take a look. Ten Mile is a long rapid and steep. It's a quarter-mile long, requires many moves, and has seen its share of carnage. At medium to low flows it rates somewhere between a Class IV and V-. On that day, based on the size of the water, the length of the drop, and the continuous nature of the river downstream, we felt the commitment of the rapid and its Class V nature.

We chose to run it as a group of six boats since the rapid is so long that any kind of shore-based safety would have been pointless. I led, and as I entered the drop I caught some much-needed green water at the top to slow down a bit before accelerating into the frothy abyss. Three moves later I caught the backwash of a large hole near the top of the drop to slow my ferry into the first significant tongue leading into the complex chasm of huge breaking waves and boat-eating holes. With a quick glance behind me, I could see the second boat entering cleanly and teeing up to the meat. The speed of the river was incredible, and as I careened downstream, the slick rocker of my cat blasted through a series of countless steep holes. No eddies. Back-surfing on giant waves was the best way to ensure our safety system stayed intact. The other boats came into view and all looked good. Things were becoming more comfortable. Intimidation was being replaced with confidence, but how would this play out in the next rapid? No Name waited for us downstream.

We eddied out above a recently formed rapid called Train Stopper, a pretty straightforward drop with a large magnetic hole in it. Immediately downstream from this drop is the bushy pull-in for the scout of No Name. Because the water was cranking so fast, we thought it most prudent to walk down beyond Train Stopper to take a look at No Name.

Approaching the drop, it was apparent that the daily trend of not seeing many rocks was going to continue in this rapid too. Most alarming, the main rocky feature at the top right of the drop that is normally well above the surface of the water was barely visible under the cold, brown murk. Above this rock was a frightening vortex-like hole formed by another rock from above. The word "terminal" came to mind. Below the upper section, the river thundered down

Opposite: Hard labor sledging catarafts.  
Photo by Doug Goodwin

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Large waves leading into No Name Rapid.  
Photo by Doug Goodwin

Class IV+ continued downstream before the first possible take-out at Needleton.

The scout was time-consuming. There was a lot of chin scratching, pointing, discussing, more pointing. I saw a thin line to the left that was pretty exposed to the terminal hole at the crux entrance of the drop. I thought it could be done, but a mistake would be catastrophic. We all knew the history of this rapid and had heard accounts of some high-water deaths that had occurred here. Flush drownings, combined with hypothermia, were the most common form of death on the Upper due to the continuous whitewater and the extremely cold temperature of the water.

through a series of nearly river wide 10 to 12-foot tall breaking wave/hole features. They were the most noticeable and concerning features. Four miles of stout

My friend Dave and I were planning on running. As we headed back to our boats and the rest of the group near the top of the rapid, we stopped to inform them of our plan. When we regrouped at the head of the rapid, another member of our team



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# RIVER VOICES

announced he was going to portage. The idea of portaging a boat to the base of the drop changed our situation. It would mean that we'd have a safety boat near the bottom of the drop in case Dave or I had any issues. However, if the safety boat had to give chase, our group would be split up. There was plenty of stout whitewater downstream that could easily flip the safety boat, creating more problems. What about two safety boats? Yes, it was less likely that both would flip if they had to give chase, but still, we didn't like the idea of splitting the group. We decided that if one wanted to portage, we'd all portage. It was the

safest choice, especially considering the high water we were on.

From Train Stopper down we split into two pods of cats. Once all the boats were on shore or tied up, we considered our work ahead. The railroad tracks were on our side of the river, offering a handy trail to carry boats on, or maybe drag them....

Looking around, we found two hefty aspen logs long enough to span the width of the tracks and to put a cat on. With a little trial and error, we figured out how to strap a cataraft to the aspen logs and then begin

the 200-yard drag/push to the base of No Name. At first, we were elated. "This isn't so bad," we thought. The first boat was almost fun to bring down to the steep river access area below the crux of the drop. Boat number two felt a bit heavier. Helmets were dropped, dry suits were zippered open, we drank down our water, and we took turns between dragging the boats with the tag lines off the tips of the cats and pushing from the back.

Three hours and six catarafts later we were pretty spent. We'd put in some hard labor and I kept thinking of how much easier it could have been just running the thing.

We rolled into camp with little daylight left. After peeling drysuits and polypro, getting on some dry clothes and pounding some more water to stave off the residual dehydration, we lit a fire. It felt really good just to sit, crack a beer, and look around. The expressions on the faces around the fire told the story. We were safe. We'd run some incredible whitewater that day and we also decided to leave some for another day. We also knew we'd made the right call: to stick together and work as a team. No Name rapid will always be there.

The next day we ran the remainder of the run—miles of more world-class whitewater. The river was a ghost town; we had the whole place to ourselves. At the take-out we bundled up our boats and relaxed as we waited for the narrow-gauge train to meet us and load up our gear. It had been a great trip and we all knew there would be many more to come.



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*Looking downstream as the Upper Animas cuts its way between the tall peaks of the San Juans.*

**Photo by Doug Goodwin**





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# WILD AND SCENIC WHITEWATER

## STORY AND PHOTOS BY TIM PALMER



Owyhee River, Oregon. Dramatically carving its canyon between walls of vertical basalt, the Owyhee is perfect for a four-day whitewater trip in springtime when the snowpack in the mountains of southern Idaho is adequate.

**W**ITH A HEALTHY sweep-stroke I pulled my vintage canoe into a quiet eddy at the base of ragged basalt cliffs that soared up to shaggy firs and hemlocks gripping ledges far above. Mule Creek Canyon, Blossom Bar, and other abrupt rapids of the Rogue River were now a day's paddle behind me. Along with my wife, Ann Vileisis, who rowed our raft, I had cruised past the usual take-out at Foster Bar to continue downstream past the mouth of the Illinois River and into the narrows of Copper Canyon, where I caught the eddy.

I bobbed there in the shelter of the rocky shoreline outcrop for a moment of silence. And more than that: I paused for a moment of reverence.

There, at Copper Canyon, the Rogue River may have been lost to a dam if it had not been for the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

Much like other proposals for dams that would have buried sensational whitewater on the White Salmon, Tuolumne, Middle Fork Feather, Snake, Cache la Poudre, Obed, and more, a hydroelectric proposal on the lower Rogue could have transformed that river's most magnificent stretch of rapids upstream of the dam-site into another flatwater reservoir. Instead, the Rogue and all of those other streams were designated as National Wild and Scenic Rivers to keep their wildness intact, their flows fast and free, their habitat healthy, and their allure to paddlers alive for the next trip and the next generation.

In a bygone age of bipartisanship, this path-breaking protection measure was enacted in 1968 by a unanimous vote in the Senate and a 265-7 margin in the House. It has been expanded many times from an original twelve main-stems and tributaries to nearly 300 major rivers and branches.

The Act's 50th anniversary, this year, invites us to consider what has been gained and what could still be lost.

River runners were key catalysts for the Wild and Scenic program. Inveterate rafters and pioneering wildlife biologists John and Frank Craighead conceived the idea of a nationally recognized group of safeguarded rivers as they fought to spare Montana's Middle Fork Flathead from damming in the 1950s. Then paddlers on the Allagash in Maine and the Current in Missouri were instrumental during the 1960s in building momentum toward nothing less than a new way of regarding rivers at the federal level.

Once passed by Congress, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act was largely ignored until whitewater canoeist and biologist Jerry Meral wrote a letter to the *American Whitewater Journal* proposing that a nationwide organization be formed to

# STEWARDSHIP

advance the program. A discussion ensued, and as a result, 33 conservationists met in Denver and formed the American Rivers Conservation Council (now American Rivers), with a focused foundational goal of expanding the Wild and Scenic program.

As an early addition to the system, the Snake River in Hells Canyon was included after an Idaho boater had persuaded a young Sierra Club lawyer, Brock Evans, to appeal federal permits for a 600-foot-tall dam. This delayed the hydropower developers long enough for a Wild and Scenic campaign to culminate with Governor Cecil Andrus declaring that the dam would only be built “over my dead body.” Designation of the Snake spared the biggest whitewater in the West next to the Grand Canyon itself.

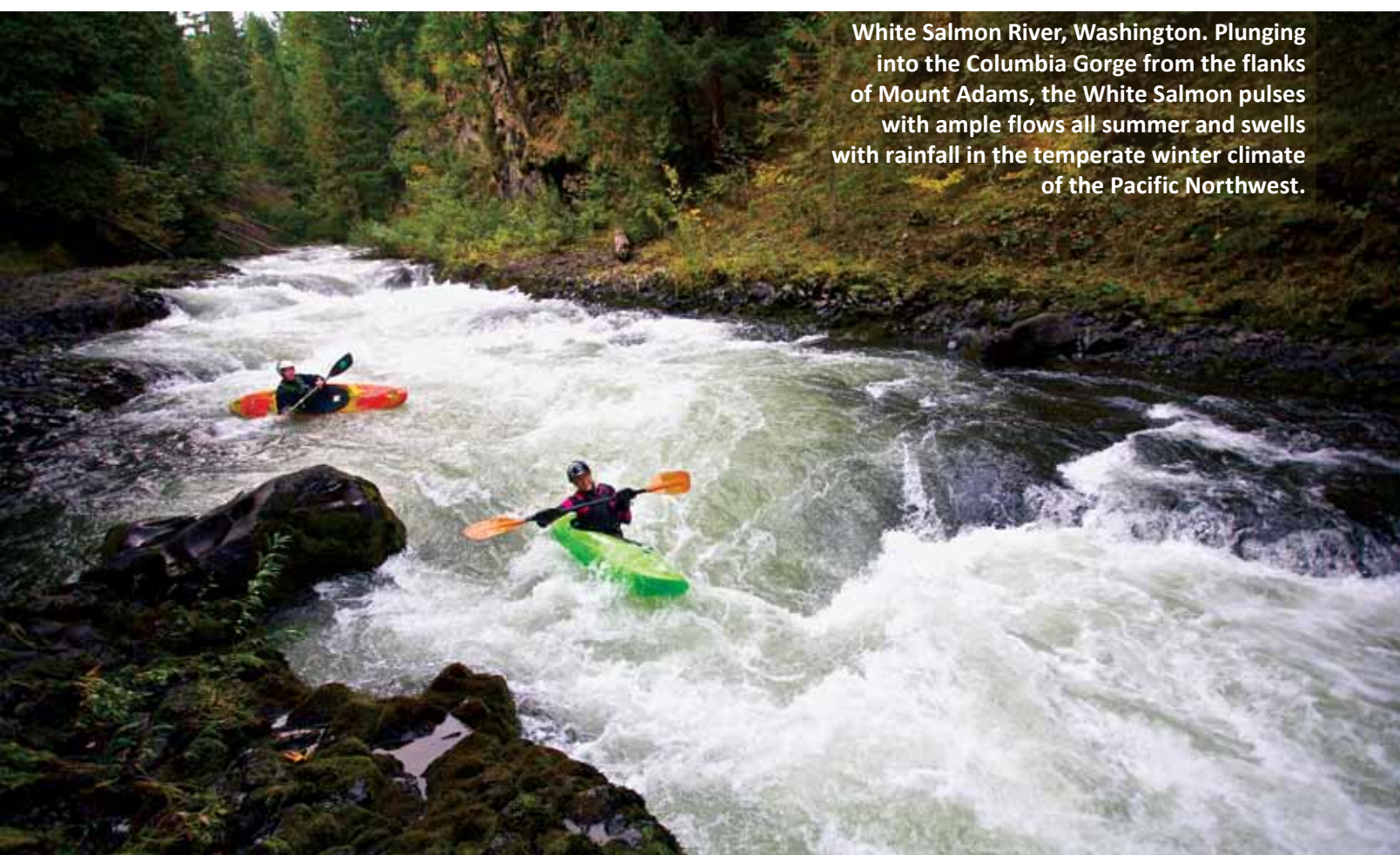
The stellar rapids of California’s Tuolumne were slated for damming and diverting in 1981 in what promised to be a repeat of Tuolumne losses stretching back to John Muir’s failed battle to protect Hetch Hetchy

Valley—a place Muir compared favorably with Yosemite Valley. Just to its north, enchanting whitewater of the Stanislaus River—the most popular in the West at the time—had been dammed only the year before and, fighting despair, paddlers from Friends of the River and the Tuolumne Trust turned their attention to the neighboring Tuolumne with a masterful campaign. Their persuasiveness hinged on river guides who generated thousands of post cards written by passengers during lunch stops and mailed to Senator Pete Wilson, whose support was wavering but essential. Wild and Scenic designation saved the “T” in 1984.

Congress enacts Wild and Scenic designations for specified reaches of rivers, but streams can also be enrolled by the Secretary of the Interior if requested by a governor. Jerry Brown of California championed this approach for 1,300 miles of rivers in Northern California, including the region’s finest whitewater gems: the

Cal Salmon, Klamath, Trinity and its forks, Middle Fork Eel, and the Smith, together with its North and South Fork canyons.

To be designated Wild and Scenic, a river must be free-flowing, which means no dams, and it must have one or more “outstandingly remarkable” qualities, specified as geology, wildlife, fish, history, recreation, scenery, or “other.” Congress cast a large net for the selection of rivers worthy of protection, and the natural qualities of these places benefit all. As American Whitewater Executive Director Mark Singleton reflected, “Some of the most cherished memories in our family come from time spent together on Wild and Scenic Rivers. They connect us to something much bigger than ourselves and have provided my children with experiences they could never get from a screen. Permanent protection makes the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act a one-of-a-kind legislative tool for conservation.”



**White Salmon River, Washington. Plunging into the Columbia Gorge from the flanks of Mount Adams, the White Salmon pulses with ample flows all summer and swells with rainfall in the temperate winter climate of the Pacific Northwest.**

# STEWARDSHIP

Enrollment in the program bans construction of dams and requires management plans aimed at setting the stage for local governments to regulate development on flood plains, for avoiding pollution, for possible acquisition of river frontage as open space, for improvement of access facilities, for addressing conflicts between user groups such as jet boaters and paddlers, and for better management of recreational use.

By fits and starts, the system has grown to nearly 500 named rivers and tributaries in all. The Northwest, Alaska, and California have 70 percent of all the designated rivers. Oregon has the most streams, with 59. California has 45.

Alaska has the most mileage: 3,427. Idaho's legendary whitewater reaches of the Salmon, Middle Fork Salmon, Selway, and Snake are all Wild and Scenic. Some eastern rivers are also designated including the Allagash, Farmington, Delaware, Obed,

Chattooga, and Horsepasture Creek with its majestic waterfalls. Private land ownership in the East has tended to block many designations, however, criterion whitewater of the Appalachians such as the Youghiogheny, New, Gauley, and West Branch Penobscot Rivers are protected under other programs including state parks, national recreation areas, and a similar classification called "national rivers."

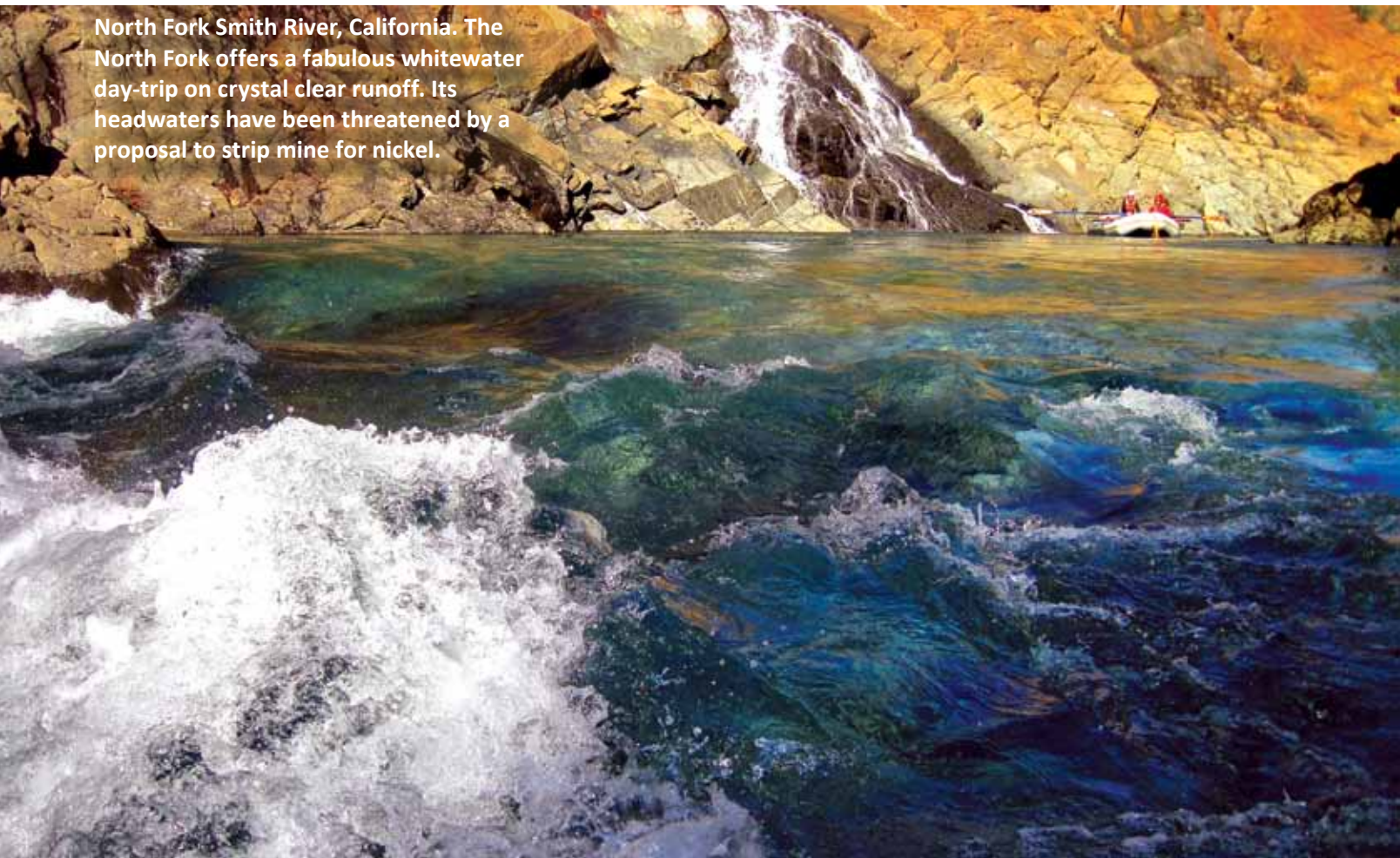
Wild and Scenic status was essential to stopping dam proposals in the 1970s and 80s, and though that protection feels less pressing now that the age of big-dam building in America is on hold, it doesn't mean that the dam threats won't come back, or that other protection needs haven't arisen in their place.

For example, as timber management reforms of the 1990s in the Pacific Northwest come under fire by industrial loggers perpetually wanting to increase cutting on federal land, status under

the "wild" classification of the Act can safeguard public river corridors from clearcutting and also from new mining claims that otherwise endanger National Forests under the archaic Mining Law of 1872. Meanwhile, population growth—slated to double in the U.S. in the next 60 years or so—will trigger a new wave of dam proposals. And on top of it all, the climate crisis will deliver worsening floods and intensifying droughts, all likely to spur pressure for dams and diversions even where diligent protection efforts have succeeded. On California's Merced River, for example, irrigators now want to rescind Wild and Scenic status for the lower end of the protected reach in order to raise an existing dam.

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act is America's foremost program for protecting rivers, but has it met expectations and ongoing needs for river conservation? Consider the numbers: The United States has 2.9 million miles of rivers and streams, but

**North Fork Smith River, California. The North Fork offers a fabulous whitewater day-trip on crystal clear runoff. Its headwaters have been threatened by a proposal to strip mine for nickel.**





*Sheenjek River, Alaska. As the third-longest designation in the Wild and Scenic system, the Sheenjek flows more than 200 miles from north of the Arctic Circle southward to the Porcupine River upstream from Fort Yukon.*

only 13,000—or less than 0.4 percent of them—are Wild and Scenic. Of 76 rivers identified as top priorities for protection in the original Department of the Interior study for the program, only 24 have been designated, the rest falling victim to political opposition in rural America.

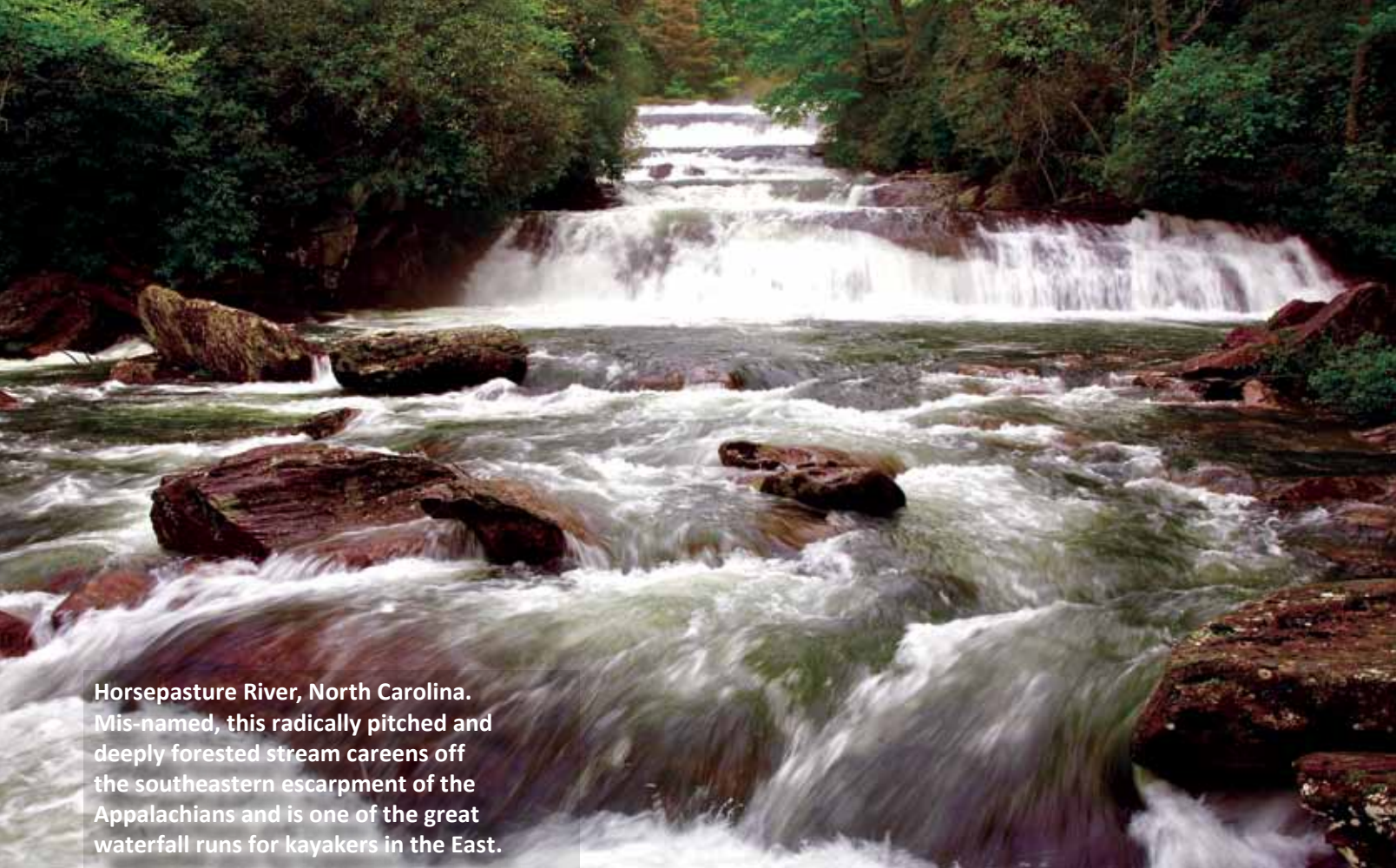
The Wild and Scenic program has not become the “complement” to dammed and developed mileage that was prescribed with the original legislation. Nationwide, over 80,000 sizable dams have been built, 75 percent of our stream mileage is polluted, and 235,000 miles have been channelized, not to speak of a vast majority of the mileage that’s diminished by development, farming without buffers, clearcut logging, and mining resulting in toxic spills and mountaintop removal. By any measure, the protected share of the nation’s waterways is small. Some

regions are scarcely represented at all—the politically red expanses of the South, Midwest and Great Plains, and also steeper terrain spawning fabulous whitewater in New York, Maine, West Virginia, Utah, and Colorado.

The protection needs of our finest rivers can also be addressed through other means, such as the Clean Water Act, state-designated “wild trout waters” that limit damaging hatchery operations, and open space campaigns by land trusts, but none have the teeth or the broad reach of Wild and Scenic status. Look-alike programs



*Rogue River, Oregon. This was one of the original Wild and Scenic Rivers designated in 1968 and offers one of the classic multi-day river trips of the West.*



**Horsepasture River, North Carolina.** Mis-named, this radically pitched and deeply forested stream careens off the southeastern escarpment of the Appalachians and is one of the great waterfall runs for kayakers in the East.

enacted by state legislatures were once seen as suitable alternatives to national Wild and Scenic status, but unfortunately most of those efforts have faded through attrition of enlightened bureaucrats, financial neglect, or outright hostility after right-wing takeovers of state resource agencies. Clearly, national Wild and Scenic River designation remains the best means of safeguarding natural rivers.

While the political atmosphere of 2018 in our nation's capital presents formidable obstacles, and while widespread progress will likely have to wait until an electoral makeover puts more people in office who care about the health of rivers, active campaigns are underway to build long-term support for adding worthy streams to the Wild and Scenic program.

In Washington state, American Whitewater leads a campaign to set aside a stunning radial complex of waterways plunging toward sea level from skyscraping peaks of the Olympic Mountains. In Montana, American Rivers and a coalition including American Whitewater seek designation of

600 miles of streams with exquisite rapids and windings of the Blackfoot, Smith, Dearborn, Gallatin, and Madison.

\*\*\*

Just a few years after the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act was passed, and when the era of big-dam construction was still in full swing, I launched a nationwide tour to paddle on and photograph streams that were doomed to the flatwater of dams still being built or planned, and I tempered that heartbreaking tour of American rivers by also seeking out the gems that were protected or proposed for Wild and Scenic status. I visited the Jackson River in Virginia, which was soon lost to Gathright Dam, and also the Chattooga, which was saved. I sought out the Applegate in Oregon, which was dammed, and also ran the neighboring whitewater of the Illinois, which was made Wild and Scenic in 1984. The Stanislaus of California was tragically and unnecessarily entombed under 700 feet of flatwater in 1980, but the nearby Tuolumne, Merced, Kings, and Kern were all saved with spirited campaigns by paddlers, outfitters, and river

aficionados of all kinds, setting these rivers aside as lifelines of the natural world.

Protection for many of these rivers could not have been accomplished without the leadership and engagement of river runners, and the future of dozens of streams still at stake will need help from people who know their waters firsthand. As Mark Singleton has said, "People only love what they know, and getting out on the water is one of the best ways to get to know a river."

Joining efforts to add some of our finest whitewater to the nation's premier program for river protection is a great way to ensure that the best streams will be available for everybody in the challenging years ahead.

Tim Palmer is the author of *Wild and Scenic Rivers: An American Legacy*, and also *Field Guide to California Rivers*, *Field Guide to Oregon Rivers*, and 22 other books. He has been involved with the Wild and Scenic Rivers program almost since its founding. See Tim's work at [www.timpalmer.org](http://www.timpalmer.org).

# Deerfield Festival Weekend

Come home to the Deerfield River to celebrate 20+ years of whitewater boating with friends. Show your support for American Whitewater's efforts to protect, restore, and enjoy our treasured rivers for the next 40 years.



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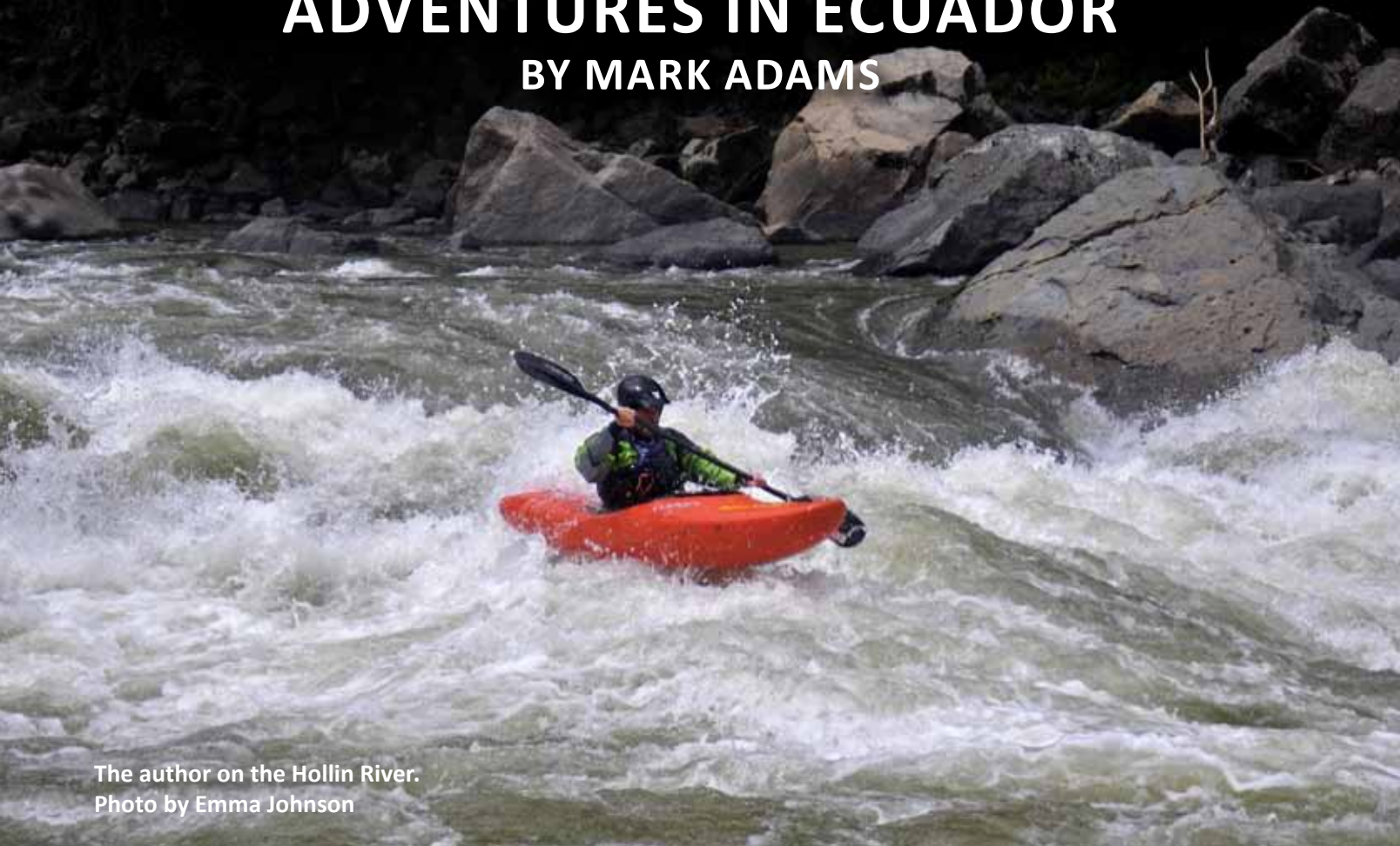
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# ADVENTURES IN ECUADOR

## BY MARK ADAMS



The author on the Hollin River.  
Photo by Emma Johnson

**A**FTER ENDURING A long, snowy winter in Portland, Oregon, several of us headed to Ecuador for a whitewater adventure. We met up with friends from Seattle, Ashville, and other places to join a guided kayaking trip near the towns of Borja and Tena. The kayakers included Michael and Shannon—who spearheaded the trip—along with Laura, Aaron, Rick, Alex, Liane, and David (from Portland), Emma (from Seattle), Rebecca (from Ashville), and a few folks that we hadn't met before.

The new airport in Quito is actually in the town of Tababela, so we checked into a hotel there and re-grouped over breakfast on Sunday morning. If you're tight on time, these trips are designed so that you fly in on Saturday, leave Quito on Sunday morning for Borja, set up your kayak, and hit the river that afternoon as well as the next six days. Most guided trips get you back to the airport the next Saturday evening, since

the majority of U.S.-bound flights leave around midnight.

Although we brought our own clothing, gear, and paddles, our guides own a good selection of kayaks for us to use during the week. With about 15 kayakers in all, we divided into a Class IV- group and a Class IV+ group, after which we got on the river for an afternoon warm-up run. The private lodge is next to the river, it serves excellent food, and even has a riverside hot tub so we did not suffer from a lack of luxuries. My group kayaked the lower half of the Chaco Canyon run on the Quijos river that afternoon. Styles of river vary in Ecuador, but I consider the Quijos a medium sized river with a big water feel.

Some of us were rusty, given the cold winter, which made the mild weather in Ecuador and the high guide-to-guest ratio helpful. More often than not, we had six kayakers in our group with three guides,

so we were sure to be given good lines and quick rescues, when needed. On day two, we put on at the confluence of the Quijos and the Oyacachi. This section is a fun Class III-IV big water section, the highlight of which was Gringos Revueltos (scrambled gringos). It's a powerful two-part rapid ending in a big wave hole (or just a hole, if you're in the wrong spot), but we weren't actually scrambled.

Unfortunately, one member of our Class IV+ group flipped over and hit his shoulder on the first day, dislocating it. I've done this myself on the South Fork of the American in California and it is painful. Our guides were able to get his shoulder back in place right away, but he spent the rest of the week in a sling rather than on the river. Still, he made the best of it, staying with us at the lodge and socializing while spending some of his days with Celeste, who was there with her husband Aaron and staying busy with activities other than kayaking. This



# INTERNATIONAL PADDLING

is a great option for spouses, partners, or friends who enjoy adventure travel but would rather hike, bird watch, etc. rather than kayak.

On day three, we headed toward the town of Tena and paddled the Upper Misahualli—another Ecuadorian classic—on the way. This run is more like kayaking in the Northwest—fairly continuous boulder drops, only pushy at certain levels. *The Kayaker's Guide to Ecuador* rates it a four on the fiesta factor scale (represented by beer mugs) and only one on degree of suffering (indicated by skull and crossbones). After staying at the well known and air-conditioned Hotel Yutzos in Tena, we kayaked the Piatua the following day which was at a fairly pushy medium level. The Class IV+ group paddled ahead while the Class III-IV group took a bit more time catching eddies and discussing rapids, although we didn't scout. What comes to mind is a particular double-drop with a high boof followed by a higher boof, the second of which saw a few flips but no swims. We had several "creative" lines on the last long drop, including some bad routes and unexpected flips or surfing sessions.

Tena, at the edge of the Amazon, is a great town to visit, making it fairly popular with tourists and fairly hot and humid (in the mid-80s during our trip). It's safe to see the sights there and do some tourist shopping. Two of our favorite dining spots were the Marquis Restaurant—with gourmet food and a live sloth in residence—and the Spider Bar, overlooking the river. I got a surprise blue margarita, birthday cake, and extended birthday song during our trip.

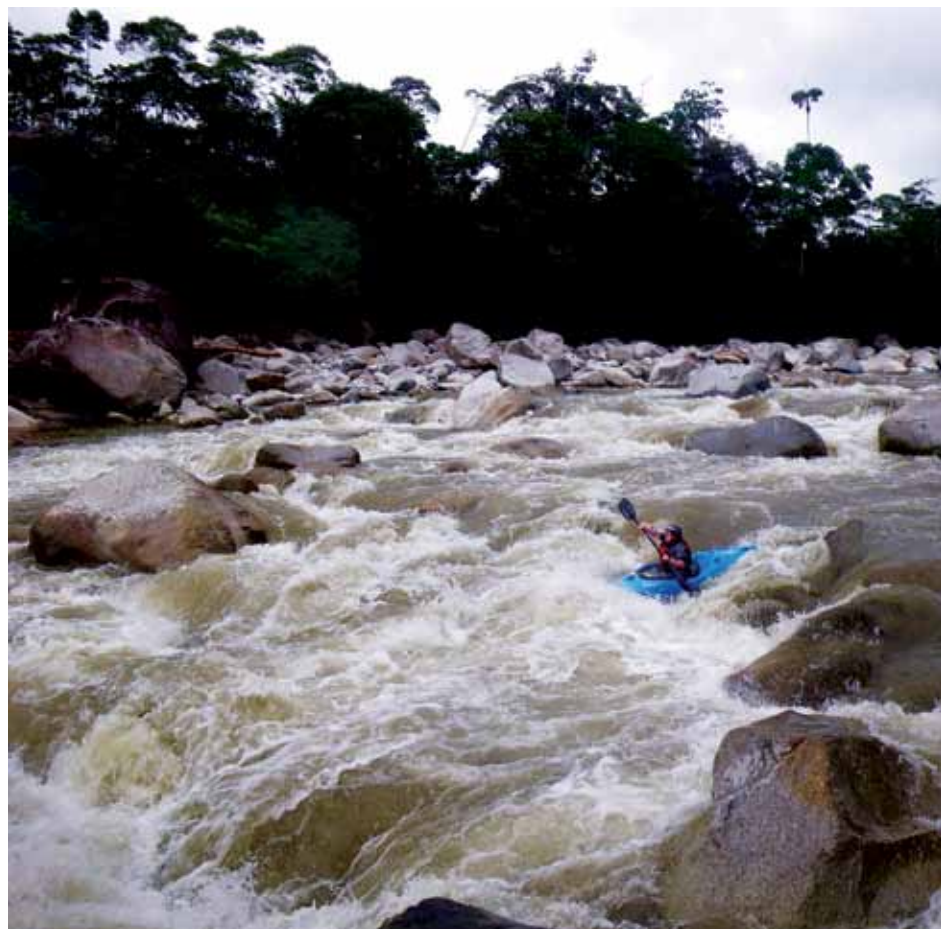
The Lower Jondachi into the Hollín was another big day for us. This is a great 14-mile run which combines about eight miles of jungle creeking with six miles of big water. The walk in is a steep half-hour, so we hired porters who carried our creek boats easily (for a small fee), despite the

muddy terrain. The creeking starts off with a bang and then mellows out, but at the last significant drop—a surprisingly sticky boof—half of us flipped and swam, but at least it was the last major drop for a little while and we had plenty of rescuers.

After lunch at the confluence, we entered the Hollín which luckily wasn't especially high. We heard stories of rafters who hiked out there and kayakers who unexpectedly camped waiting for the water to drop. The Hollín was big yet straightforward at first, but then we talked about the biggest rapid "Waffelera" before we entered it. Essentially you take a turbulent tongue aiming left between two giant holes, after which you hopefully get in the center and paddle hard through the final steep drop. Half of our group swam out of the lower drop, but thanks to a pool below and good rescuers, everyone was back in their boats

before long. There was one more fairly big rapid and then we were quickly enjoying cold pilsners in the ride back to Borja—a long but great day!

After one week of kayaking, three of the Portland crew members opted to stay for another week, while everyone else either traveled home or to other destinations. Laura and I met a driver who drove us about three hours from Quito to the Black Sheep Inn, a well-known eco lodge which was built by a couple of globe-trotting Americans. It's located in an incredibly scenic area South of Quito, near twin volcanoes, and about a half hour from Lake Quilotoa. The trip takes about three hours by car since most of the roads were recently paved; taking the bus is also feasible, although it will take longer with transfers.



*Laura Sol Kayaks the Piatua River.*

**Photo by Emma Johnson**

# INTERNATIONAL PADDLING



The Black Sheep serves excellent vegetarian meals, and the bunkhouse (dorm) is a super charming and well-built A-frame. You can also reserve a private room with a shared bath or private bath. All of the toilets are composting, and they are especially well known there, since they are environmentally friendly and constructed so that you have a spectacular view from the seat. On day two, we rode horses through the cloud forest with our native guide Umberto and our horses Hercules and Bella. Since our guide grew up nearby, he sprinkled the ride with stories of the local flora and fauna. Umberto also let us know that this area used to be heavily forested, but since farming took over river volume through the valley also diminished greatly. The ride was a mix of dirt roads and steep trails, combined with the occasional quick trot.

If you're looking for whitewater adventure combined with a fairly local tourist experience, check out Ecuador—where trips run each year from about November until March—the most reliable boating season. We loved the lodge, our guides, the support staff including cooks and drivers, the rivers, and of course, hanging out with friends and drinking Pilsners together.

I've also organized great trips to Costa Rica (lots of Class III-IV with an authentic jungle lodge on the Pecuaire), Panama (continuous creeking near Boquette), Chile (big water playboating on the Futelafu), and steep creeking in the Italian Alps. Even though you are typically hanging out with Americans or other foreigners, kayaking abroad gives you the opportunity to travel the country, meet locals since you'll often be in small towns, and practice your favorite sport.

To learn more about river conservation in Ecuador, visit the Ecuadorian Rivers Institute. <http://ecuadorianrivers.org/>

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*Above: Kayks on the Quijos River*  
*Below: Andres Charpentier Runs Ejector Seat on the Oyacachi River*  
**Photos by Mark Adams**



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## CLOSE CALLS

ADAM HERZOG

**"N**O PERSON. NO paddle. NO boat. We couldn't see anything."

"He was alive. He was f---ed up though. Compound femur fracture. The bow was bent at 90 degrees."

"He was just dead weight. His helmet was broken in half."

These are quotes from some of the best kayakers I know about real rescues they experienced.

American Whitewater's longtime Safety Editor Charlie Walbridge maintains a comprehensive database of whitewater accidents. Most of the incidents he records resulted in death. It is an excellent resource. But for every accident that ends in death, there are many more near misses

We can learn from close calls. I interviewed a few of my friends at river campgrounds and parking lot take-outs about some of the scarier incidents they witnessed. These are their stories. Some names have been changed to protect their privacy.

### Cullasaja 2006

Caleb Paquette was running the Lower Cullasaja in Western North Carolina with Brian, Nick and Lucas. The river is powerful, steep, narrow and undercut. First timers are always shocked on the shuttle drive when they see how quickly the river drops from the road. It descends the gorge like a boulder tumbling down a cliff.

An east coast version of a scree field drops from the road hundreds of vertical feet to the river's edge. The put-in is at the base of a multi-tiered, 100-foot cascade. The introductory strokes are in Class V+, and the mile and a half section is relentless. I always feel like I am getting in the ring

of an ultimate fighting match when I drop into the 'Saja.

The first two rapids are in-your-face brawlers, but the third and fourth rapids, Eclipse and Next Time, drop off the Earth. This incident took place at Next Time after the group had successfully run Eclipse, arguably a more difficult rapid.

Caleb, Brian and Nick had run Next Time. Lucas was the last to go. The falls is a narrow 10- to 15-foot vertical ledge drop, wider at the lip than the landing. An undercut rock dangles dangerously above the surface at the bottom right. The left side is only a few feet deep. It is a must-make boof move with no rock to lift off and zero margin for error.

Lucas missed his boof, penciled in, and disappeared. The team could not see a thing. He was just gone. Within ten seconds they were mobilizing, making their way to the base of the drop. Caleb was in his boat. Nick and Brian were running upstream on opposite shores. Less than a minute after submersion Lucas popped up in the backwash of Next Time. He was unaware of his surroundings. He was not swimming. He eyes were open, but he was not responsive.

Caleb said, "Brian just f---ing reacted." Brian jumped in the river, grabbed Lucas, and swam toward the shore. Nick hit Brian with a rope and pulled them both in as Caleb followed in his boat. There is a short pool below Next Time, but immediately below it the river picks up pace with continuous Class IV and V.

Lucas was alive but in grim condition. The jagged end of his broken femur was sticking out of his thigh. Two of the boater's girlfriends had hiked in and watched the whole thing go down. They thought they had watched him die. They ran to the road

and called for help. He was evacuated and eventually made a full recovery.

The key to the rescue was spontaneous action. Brian heroically and selflessly jumped in the river, and may have saved Lucas' life. Two of the three rescuers got out of their boats on opposite sides of the river, with ropes in hand. Caleb remained in the water to pick up any pieces.

Whenever possible, rescuers should exit the river on both shores while at least one person stays in the water. I was involved in an unsuccessful rescue attempt when a boater was recirculated in a hole. We all got out of our boats thinking we would rope him out. But after minutes of getting trashed, when he finally did wash out, we were all on shore, unable to give chase.

### Big Brush Creek 2011

Big Brush Creek is on Tennessee's Cumberland Plateau in a watershed known for sieves, undercuts and sinks. Caleb was boating with a medium sized group of five. No one had been down Big Brush before.

They stopped to scout a looming horizon line. Caleb and John got out on river left and the remaining paddlers were on river right. The left side of the river was a shallow boulder garden leading into a big sieve in the middle of the current. Caleb said "All the water was just dropping into this hole in a rock pile."

The crew on river right found a safe line and signaled with a thumbs up. Caleb walked upstream to ferry across a flat pool. Without discussing the plan, John put in where they had scouted, directly above the sieve. Caleb was already in his boat and had started his ferry.

Caleb said “I thought ‘What the f--k is he doing? He was trying to ferry across. It was not a possible ferry. I was in my boat, not in rescue mode.’ John immediately washed downstream and caught a boulder above the sieve. “He had a death grip on the rock.”

Caleb ran downstream and threw John a rope but missed. He needed to get the rope over John's shoulder and he was within a foot of his target, but it was not close enough. It is debatable whether the rope would have helped John because he was glued to the rock. The moment he let go of the boulder to grab the rope, he would probably have flushed into the sieve anyway. He lost his grip, washed through the sieve and out the downstream side. He was still in his boat. His survival was

pure luck. One log could have changed the outcome.

A long time ago Caleb taught me an important habit. Every time he goes kayaking he throws his rope twice when he gets home before he hangs it to dry. It is a great idea as we don't get too many opportunities to throw our ropes. Even so, every throw is not perfect.

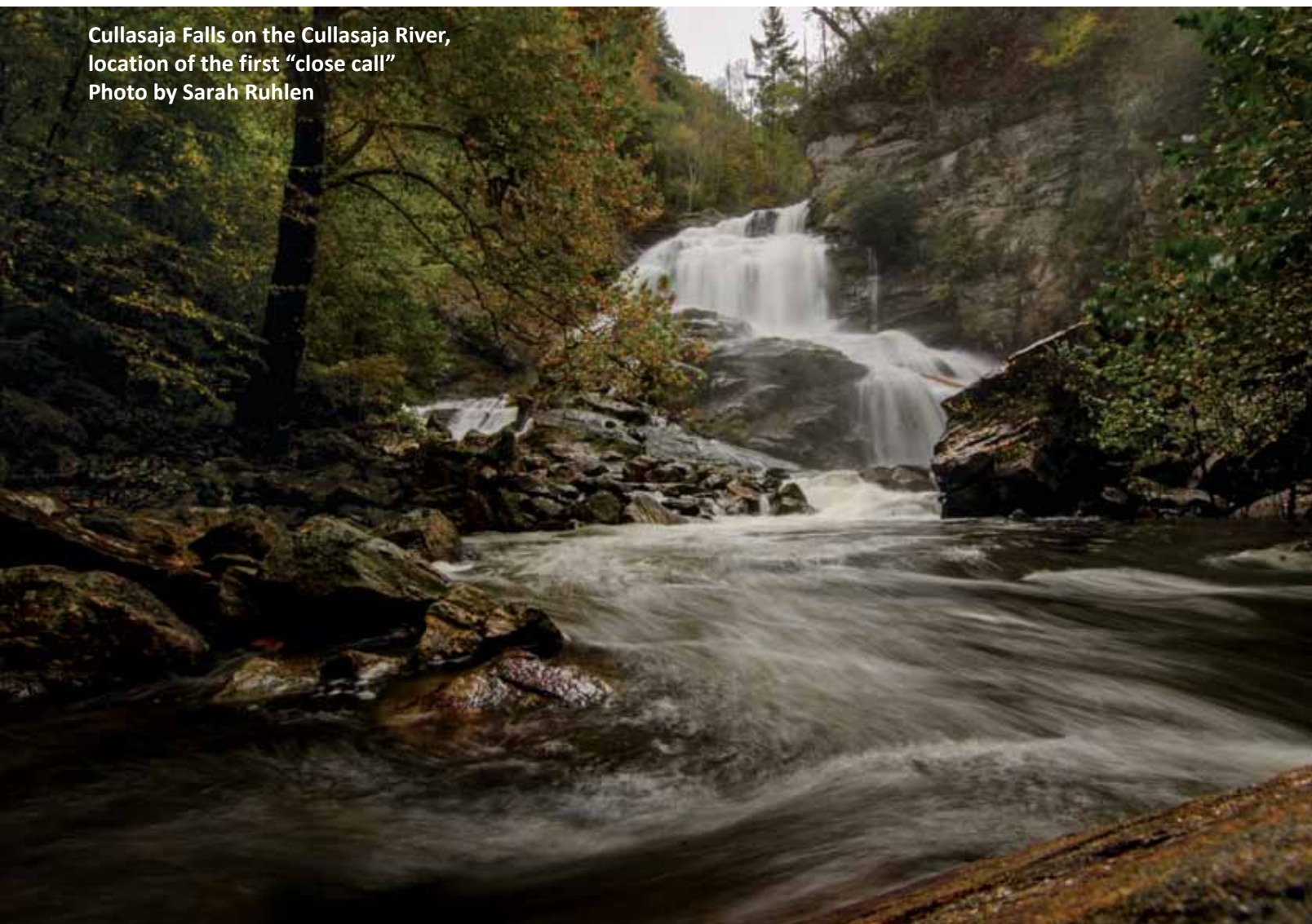
More importantly, lack of communication led to a breakdown between team members that resulted in an accident. As Caleb said, “I was not in rescue mode.”

The other lesson I took home from this situation is that sometimes two competent boaters see completely different lines. Maybe John thought he saw a feasible

ferry move and if they had talked through it he would have changed his mind. I was paddling with Caleb last winter on the headwaters of the Chattooga River in North Carolina. After a cursory scout at Bull Pen Rapid I was getting back in my boat to run the main line, when my buddies ran up to me and told me there was potentially disastrous wood in the drop. In my haste and nervousness I had completely missed it.

In 15 years of working in emergency medical settings I have seen poor patient outcomes that were a result of mismanagement by the healthcare team. In my experience one of the key factors in iatrogenic outcomes is a lack of communication. The same is true in paddling whitewater. Communication is key.

**Cullasaja Falls on the Cullasaja River,  
location of the first “close call”  
Photo by Sarah Ruhlen**



# SAFETY

## Green 2013

I interviewed Steve Mcgrady at the put-in of the Green River (NC) and he told me about two incidents, one of which I will share here. We had done a race run that evening, more out of necessity than desire. We had an hour and a half of daylight left and it takes an hour and fifteen minutes of hard paddling to run the eight-mile section. It was a late summer evening, the kind of day I remember growing up when it seemed like summer never ended. Crickets chirped in the thick southern air. Our run had been perfect. We ran the gorge smoothly with no problems. It felt like nothing could go wrong. Steve's stories were a stark reminder that rivers are dynamic and the difference between a perfect day and a trip to the hospital can be a few inches or a missed roll.

Steve's story took place at Gorilla, probably the biggest regularly run rapid in the southeast. It sees many descents. The sheer number of times Gorilla is run can lead to a complacency not normally seen with rapids of its magnitude.

Steve was paddling with Shawn, an out-of-towner who had been to the Green twice before. The first time was a couple of years earlier and the second time was the day before the incident occurred. I had paddled with Shawn that day and he was burning hot with excitement and enthusiasm to run "the Big Three." When I paddled with him I tried to impart the importance of scouting the lines and going with his gut. "The water is not low, it's not a great level for a first time run of Gorilla, and you should not feel pressure to run anything. Just take it as it comes," I said on the drive to the river.

Shawn did successfully run Gorilla, Go Left and Die and Sunshine that day. He returned the next day with Steve and another friend. Steve said, "They kept talking about how they just wanted to run the Big Three."

That next day, after scouting Gorilla, Steve and Shawn decided to run it. Steve was paddling his Dagger RPM, a smaller

playboat/river runner that was a top seller in the mid-nineties and has recently come into the limelight as a cool and fun retro boat.

Steve went first and had a clean line. He eddied out and waited for Shawn. He did not see Shawn run the complex entry moves above the crux, but he did see him come over the Gorilla upside down. The landing is shallow bedrock. A clean line can still result in a hit, but upside down descents rarely float through unscathed.

Shawn floated through the outflow still in his boat, upside down. Steve said there was no visible effort by Shawn to roll or self-rescue. As he floated over Scream Machine, the first slide, he was torn from his boat and drifted face down through the second part of the slide.

There is a strong seam where two currents converge between Scream Machine and Powerslide, the next big slide. Shawn was unconscious, boiling around on the eddyline. A college football player, he weighed over 275 pounds. Steve had given chase and was next to Shawn in his boat. But, "He was just dead weight. I could see his helmet but not his face. Because I was in the little RPM I could not get him. Every time I pulled on him I just pulled myself into him and he did not move."

While Steve struggled to get him to shore Shawn slowly floated into Powerslide, a chunky 20-foot tall slide that drops into a deep and powerful hole. He remained unconscious and facedown.

Below Powerslide Shawn came to and lifted his face out of the water but he was exhausted, dazed and unable to self-rescue. Steve pushed his bow into Shawn's lifejacket with everything he had and beached him on a rock island in the middle of the river.

Initially Shawn was awake but not responding; then, he snapped out of his daze and immediately sat up and then

jumped into the river against Steve's pleas to stay put. He swam to shore and sat down. His Sweet helmet was broken in half.

The rest of the group had made it to him by then and they worked together to extricate him from the gorge. Shawn was asking repetitive questions the whole time and when they got him to the hospital he had blood pooling in his ear, a common sign of basilar skull fracture. But somehow he survived the ordeal with no other injuries.

I gathered two lessons from this harrowing incident. One is that using good judgement is critical. Every day on the river is a little different. Listen to your gut.

The other lesson was specific to this scenario. Steve told me, "I do not paddle little boats when I am taking first timers down the Green. They do not have the buoyancy of creek boats and I did not have the leverage I needed to get him to shore."

These near misses exemplify the inherent risk of paddling difficult whitewater. Kayaking is dangerous. Good judgement and communication are cornerstones of navigating rivers safely. Rescue clinics and classes are a good idea, even for veteran paddlers. Throwing ropes and checking them for signs of wear after a day on the river is critical. Perhaps the most important thing that we can all do is listen to our gut.

## Interviews

Ditty, Jack. Personal interview. 2 September 2016.

Mcgrady, Stephen. Personal interview. 24 August 2016.

Paquette, Caleb. Personal interview. 19 August 2016.

Trembley, John. Personal interview. 24 August 2016.

# ACCIDENT TRENDS ANALYSIS

CHARLIE DUFFY AND AMBROSE TUSCANO

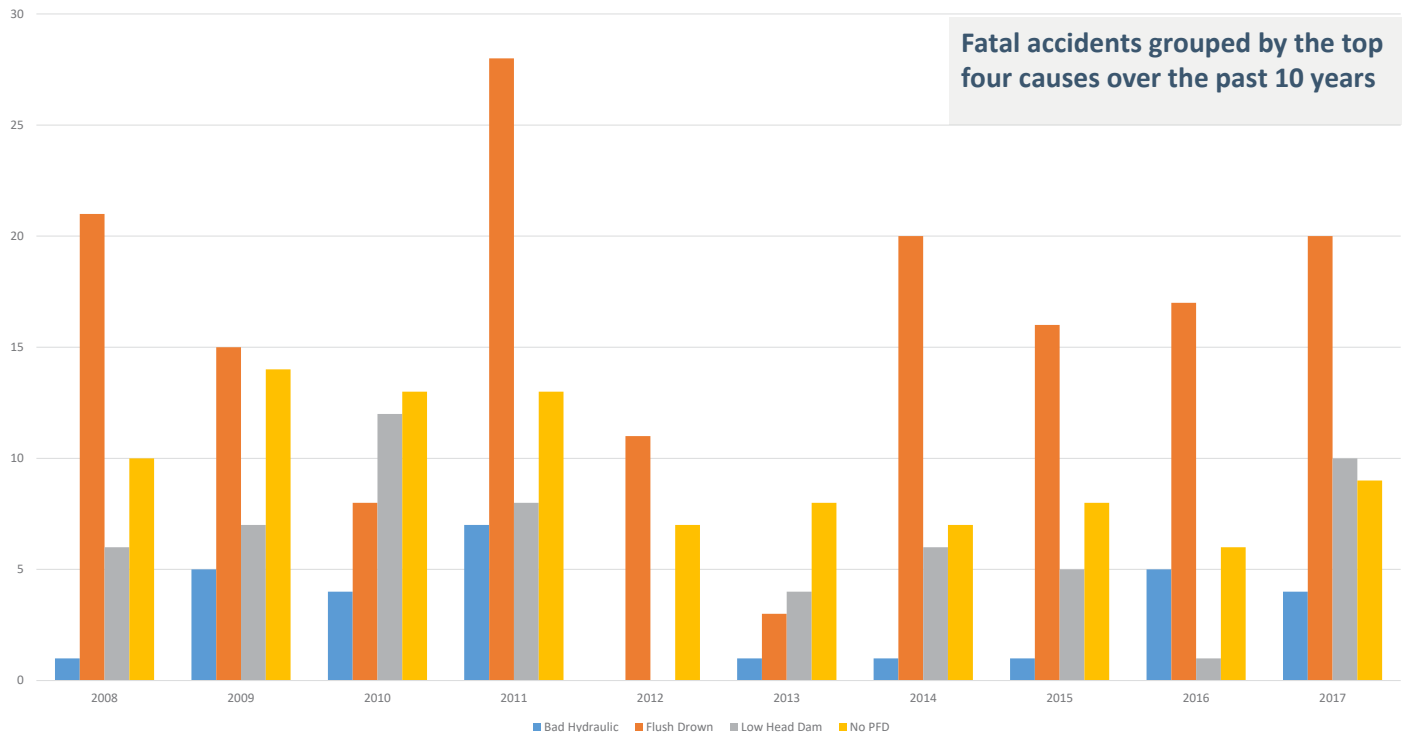
**B**ACK IN EARLY January, our Safety Editor, Charlie Walbridge, passed along some charts compiled by Charlie Duffy. Charlie Duffy has been teaching kayaking and rescue skills for decades and is an ACA Certified River Kayak and Safety & Rescue Instructor who has sat on the ACA SEIC Standards Committee and Safety & Rescue Committee. More recently, he's been a lead instructor for the Canoe Cruisers Association (CCA) and Team River Runner (Fort Belvoir). Charlie's daytime occupation is in IT, where he's learned the value of using graphics to illustrate data. Sine Charlie Walbridge introduced him to American Whitewater's Safety Database, he's been coming up with some really fascinating charts, which we want to share.

One of the most striking trends that Charlie's charts point out is the leading cause of whitewater accidents for the eight of the past 10 years: flush drowning. As Charlie writes, "Swimming in rapids is exhausting, especially in cold water. Eventually, the victim becomes very passive and is prone to getting caught in reversals. Many paddlers pride themselves on so-called bomb-proof rolls and don't practice basic swift water rescue swimming skills. As they say, we are all in between swims.... Besides training & prevention, paddlers need to rescue swimmers quickly before cold water and exhaustion take their toll. Paddlers also need to practice swimming skills (under controlled conditions) and learn how to get to a stable location ASAP.... In my Instructor Class (and refresher class)

I do a controlled simulation with what we affectionately call "The Big Swim." This exercise is a huge eye opener for all that participate and really drives home the need to practice and why fast rescues in big water are so darn important."

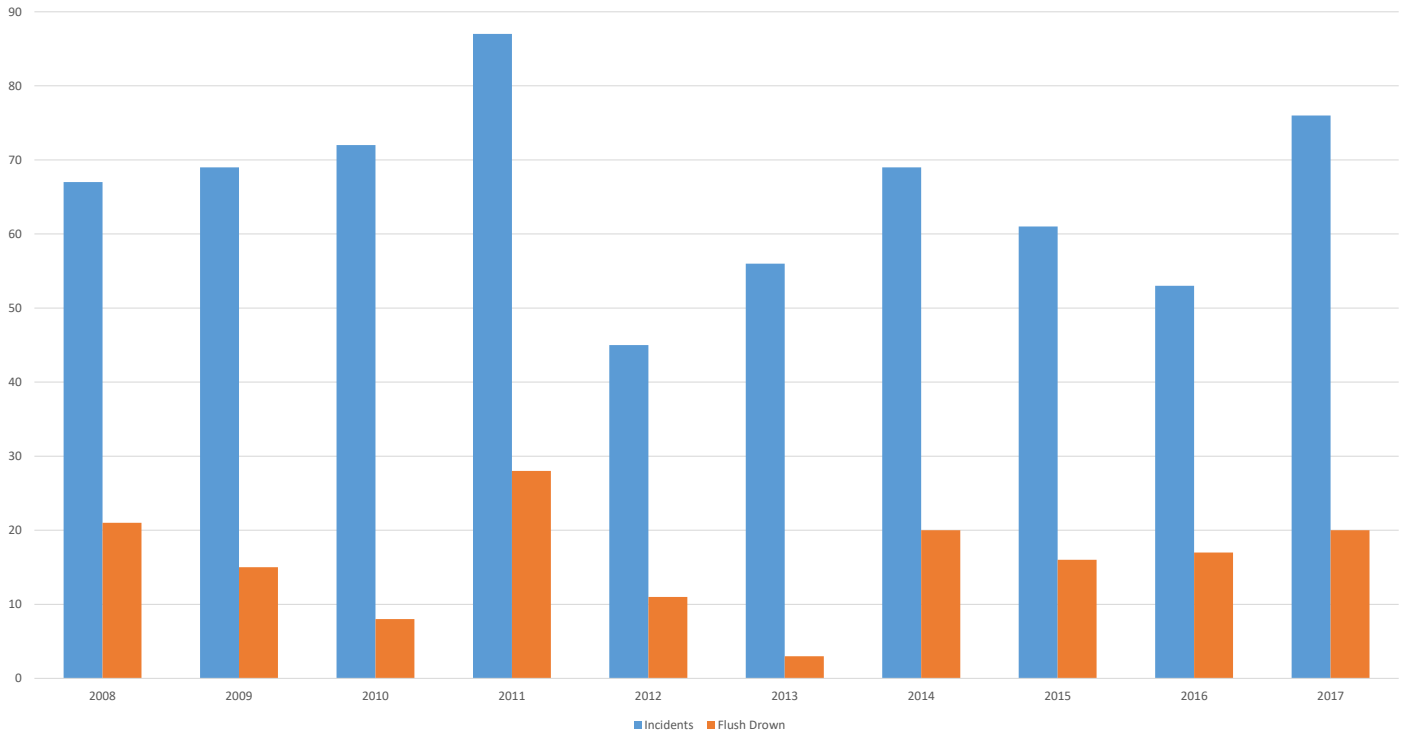
One of the interesting observations Charlie's charts point out is that, especially when there's a big spring runoff in the West, flush drowning tends to increase overall accident numbers. He writes, "As you can see, 2017 marks a significant increase over prior years. This chart is somewhat of a score card for rescue instruction in the aggregate. All things being equal, the trend should be flat, or better yet, declining. High water years tend to increase accidents whereas low water years just the opposite.

Top Accident Trends

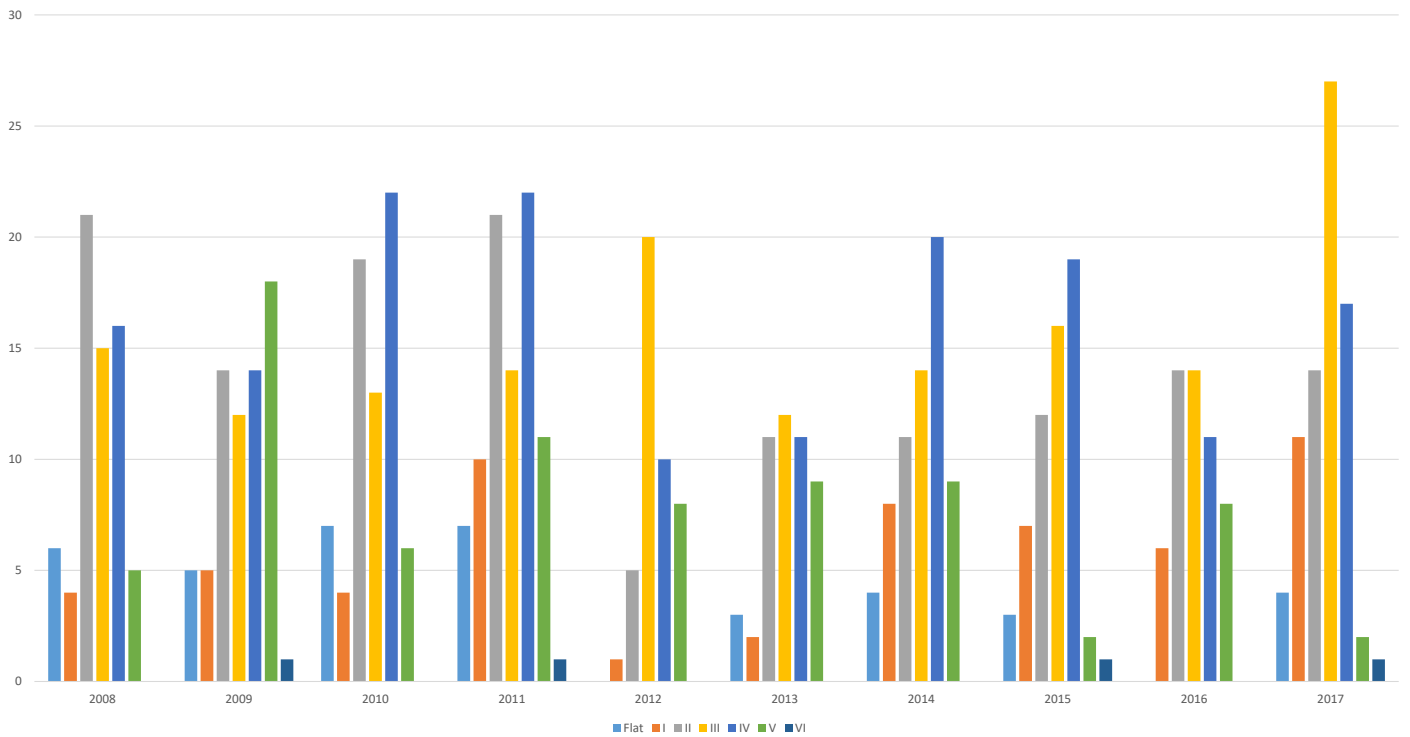


# SAFETY

### Annual Incidents/Flush Drowning



### River Difficulty Trends





Interesting enough, high accident years usually lead to very high demand for SWR classes." It's no secret that high water rivers increase the danger of flush drowning, but this trend should be taken into account by everyone from SWR instructors, to first responders, to anyone who paddles in high water. Being educated and prepared can save lives.

As indicated above, the United States is really two nations when it comes to leading cause of whitewater accidents. You only have to glance at the "Annual Incidents/Flush Drowning" chart to see the correlation. Charlie notes, "It's obvious that flush drowning is a huge issue in the western states. Eastern states generally

experience a wider variety of primary accidents causes. Also notice that not wearing a PFD is a significant issue all over the country. I would teach a very different course out West than back East, heavily emphasizing big water considerations." See Charlie Walbridge's Accident Summary on page 44 for more on PFDs.

The difficulty of whitewater is a significant factor in accidents. The trade-off between accessibility/number of participants (on Class II-III whitewater) and danger (on Class IV-V whitewater) seems to be a leveling factor in which class of whitewater causes the most accidents. Charlie writes, "I'm somewhat concerned about the spikes in Class III/IV incidents, especially in 2017. This

should be monitored for a few more years to see if this trend continues."

Last but not least, it's informative to look at the number of accidents linked to solo boating. While most boaters know that solo boating presents unique risks, many also feel that those dangers won't affect them (and much of the time they're right, but when they're not...). Along with wearing PFDs, avoiding solo paddling is one of the most important principles whitewater enthusiasts can develop. Remember, no one can force you to paddle solo! Charlie notes, "When paddling by oneself, one lacks extra sets of eyes and someone to provide some cautionary advice. Even if you are in a raft with several others, if the

Above: The leading cause of accidents, flush drowning, alongside total accidents for the past 10 years  
Below: Past 10 years fatalities grouped by difficulty of whitewater in which the accidents occurred



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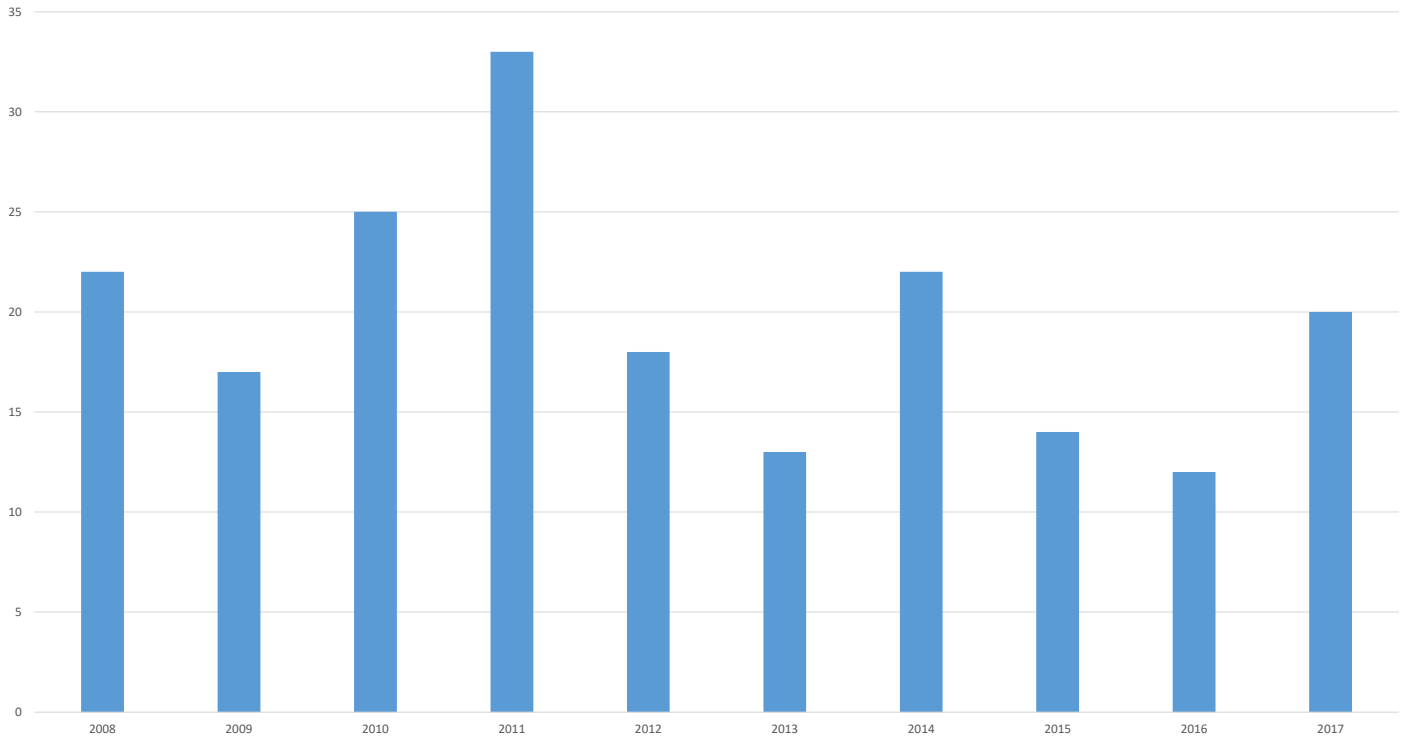
**GIFT MEMBERSHIP**

Member Name: A.M. Whitewater  
Member #: 007  
Renewal Date: 01/01/2099

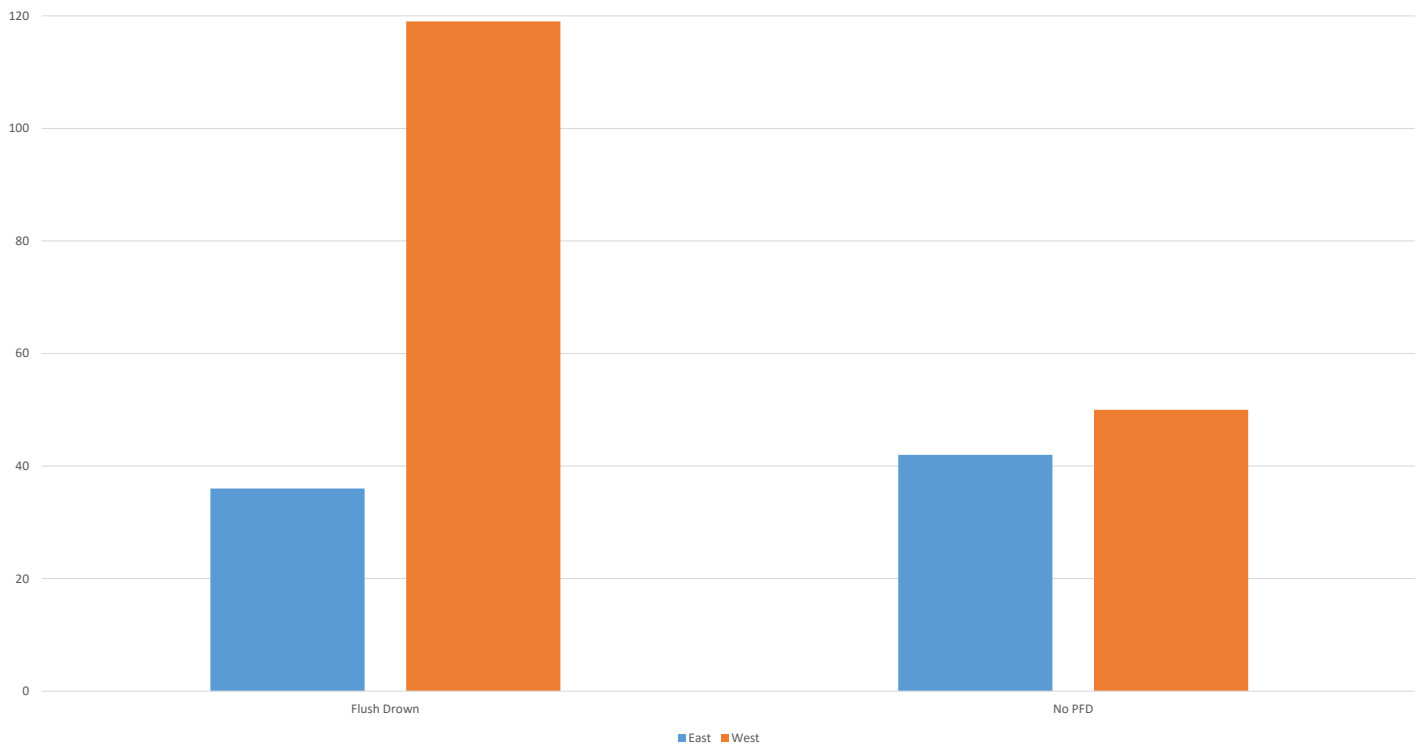
Colorado River, Grand Canyon. | Photo: Evan Stafford

# SAFETY

### Solo Incidents by Year



### East/West - Top 2 Accident Types



raft flips and someone gets swept away—who is in position to chase, or in many cases, even keep them in sight? I suspect many fatalities could have been avoided if only they were paddling with others for mutual support.”

Here are Charlie Duffy’s closing thoughts:

“I highly recommend taking advantage of the AW Safety Database tool and using your findings in classes you teach. A great deal more emphasis needs to be given to flush drowning prevention and fast rescue techniques.

---

*Opposite, Above: Fatal solo incidents for the past 10 years*

*Below: Contrasting the top two causes of fatal accidents in the east vs. the west*

We are very fortunate these days because there are so many excellent organizations that provide comprehensive paddling instruction. I strongly recommend joining a paddling club first. AW provides a great list to find a club close to you: <https://www.americanwhitewater.org/content/Affiliate/view/>.

Once you join a club, see if they have certified instruction and who certified them. They can probably recommend specific instructors as well. Other than that, the ACA, NOC, Zoar, and Sierra Rescue are great organizations that are strong in different parts of the country. Other great organizations are Team River Runner (TRR) and Heroes on the Water (HOW).

The Safety & Rescue curriculum covers a great deal of topics and I highly recommend taking the standard weekend course

periodically to keep up with new techniques and to refresh your skills. Winter is a great time to perform routine equipment maintenance, take First Aid & CPR training, restock your First Aid Kit. I also teach a land-based Safety & Rescue course every January at Great Falls Visitor Center where we get all our local instructors together to share ideas. This teaser class does a great job in filling the Spring and Summer classes. In February, I lead a Trip Leader Presentation course because prevention via planning always beats having to perform a rescue.”

Thanks to Charlie for his hard work on whitewater safety and for sharing his findings! To see his complete report, with many more charts and greater focus on 2017 and regional trends, check the Safety page of our website.

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## REPORTED WHITEWATER ACCIDENTS: JUNE-DECEMBER 2017

BY CHARLIE WALBRIDGE

**L**AST YEAR WE saw an increase in the number of fatal accidents reported to American Whitewater. From July through December there were eight kayak, one canoe, and nine rafting deaths. When added to the numbers recorded in the first six months the yearly total came to 45, 10 more than the average of the last five years. Most of the recent deaths were quite preventable: in 10 cases no life vests were worn (one more “fell off”) and five cases were of solo or one-boat trips. There was an additional report of an accident involving a “paddleboat,” most likely a home-made raft, in which three people who weren’t using life vests perished. Only one death occurred in Class V whitewater, two in Class IV, and the rest were in Class III or less. Five of the victims were over 60 and only one was under 30, continuing a trend from the first half of the year. I guess kids today are either more careful or less adventurous than we were!

### When Life Vests Were Not Worn

Life vests are indeed the single most important piece of safety gear in fast moving water, but despite decades of outreach and education, many people are not using them. In one tragic example, Kevin Moak, 23, Ryan Moak, 18, and Terry Mosher, 42 all drowned on July 3rd when their home-made “paddle boat” capsized in vigorous Class III+ rapids below Little Falls on New York’s Mohawk River. None were wearing life vests. Witnesses heard screaming and called for help, but it came too late. Their bodies were found several days later.

In a similar incident on July 11th Charles Stewart drowned after his sit-on-top kayak capsized on Talapaloosa River below Thurlow Dam. The Class III rapids found

here are the hardest in South Alabama and some side channels are even tougher. A man and his three-year-old son died here earlier in 2017. Mr. Stewart’s companion said that the 31-year-old man was wearing a life vest, but none was found with his body when it was recovered.

On July 17th Jose F. Loja drowned after his canoe flipped on the Delaware River, five miles above the Water Gap. Mr Loja, 35, was not wearing a PFD. Park Superintendent John J. Donahue summed it up: “The river current is strong and swift, despite calm appearances in some areas, and the depth can change suddenly, often going from knee-deep to over your head in a single step. Wearing a life jacket at all times is one simple thing that a person can do to ensure a fun and safe day on, and in, the river.”

### No PFDs on One-Boat Trips

One-boat trips pose additional risks because there is no backup if your boat capsizes. Without an immediate rescue those who also fail to use a PFD are even more likely to die. Two such deaths occurred on Wyoming’s Snake River. Oliver Woodward, 21, drowned on July 4th after he and a friend were thrown from a rented raft in Alpine Canyon. Neither were wearing life vests. Mr. Woodward was last seen floating downstream holding his beer high so as not get water in it. The stretch downstream has powerful eddy lines and whirlpools. It would be hard to swim here without a PFD. His body was recovered eight days later in Palisades Reservoir, 27 miles downstream. His friends finished the run, ran their shuttle, and then stopped by a gas station to ask what to do when a member of your rafting party is missing. The other missing swimmer turned up at a local Dairy Queen, where he was arrested for being drunk and disorderly.

Then, on July 31st James Hobson died on the Snake River after falling from a raft while fishing in a braided channel below Wildson Bridge. The 64 year-old man had suffered a disabling ski injury and was unable to use his left arm. He was not wearing a life vest. Mr. Hobson was sitting in the back of a 16-foot oar-rigged raft when they hit a levee and stopped suddenly, throwing him into the river. His boatman looked back, saw him in the water, and tried to help. But Mr. Hobson was unresponsive when they got him ashore, and CPR was unsuccessful.

Montana’s North Fork of the Flathead River was the scene of a similar incident. Lee Alan Gebro, 44, drowned after his raft flipped at “the Shelf” on July 14th. Again, failing to use a life vest was a fatal mistake. Then, on August 29th Michael Lawrence drowned after his kayak flipped on a Class I section of the Washington’s Wenatchee River above Tumwater Campground. No life vest was used and rescuers later spotted him floating under five feet of clear water.

In a rather odd case William Navarro drowned after removing his life vest during an August 11th run on Idaho’s Lower Payette River. Mr. Navarro, 48, was tossed from his cataraft at Mike’s Hole and couldn’t climb back aboard. Thinking that his life vest was getting in the way, he took it off, but was still couldn’t get back in. Meanwhile, his raft was drifting into the next rapid. He pushed himself away from the raft, washed downstream, and disappeared. His companion managed to get the boat ashore, climb to the roadway, and call for help, but then it was too late. The moral of the story: don’t ever take your life vest off while you’re on the water!

## Strainers

Two very different accidents resulted from encounters with downed trees. On August 28th Greg Senior, an expert catarafter, drowned in a big drop just above Jacob's Ladder on Idaho's North Fork of the Payette. According to the *Idaho Statesman* Mr. Senior, 50, lost an oar in the upper section of Class V Pectoralis Rapid. While attempting to put his spare oar into service he flushed sideways over a large pour-over and was thrown from his boat. He washed to the left side of the river and was shoved under logs. A recovery was made the next morning after flows were cut back to 200 cfs. A week later, on September 3rd, Luther Key was paddling a tandem kayak on North Carolina's Yadkin River. The boat capsized when fast water pushed it under overhanging tree branches. Mr. Key, 70, was not wearing a life vest and did not resurface.

## Head Injuries

Although fatal head injuries are pretty rare in whitewater, two occurred in the last six months. On July 4th Lynn Bartholomew, 55, was part of an advanced kayak clinic on Canada's Ottawa River. According to a report by Eric Jackson she flipped and swam in Lorne Rapid. Two safety kayakers chased her downstream and she may have hit her head on a rescue boat or her own loose kayak. She was unconscious when pulled ashore. CPR was attempted, without success. Then, on July 12th, Thomas Bajo flipped and hit his head while kayaking on Montana's Rock Creek. A friend was unable to get the 68-year-old man ashore, and he floated downstream for some distance until he was spotted by first responders.

## Health Problems

There were two instances where cardiac problems caused an on-river fatality. On July 7th Jeff Bitler, 54, stood up, then collapsed into the water after a short swim on Georgia's Class II Talking Rock Creek. He'd been paddling well that day, but

complained of being tired. His companion and a bystander got him ashore and, finding no pulse, began CPR. Paramedics pronounced him dead 45 minutes later and the autopsy revealed a massive heart attack.

A few days later, on July 15th, 66-year-old Michael Brinks died after his inflatable kayak flipped in Colorado's Yampa River. This happened in Class II Teepee Rapid. Although Mr. Brinks had decades of experience and was wearing a PFD, he did

"Most of the recent deaths were quite preventable: in 10 cases no life vests were worn (one more "fell off") and five cases were of solo or one-boat trips. There was an additional report of an accident involving a "paddleboat," most likely a home-made raft, in which three people who weren't using life vests perished."

not immediately resurface. His companions notified authorities who later spotted his body from a helicopter. A known underlying heart condition probably caused his death.

## Low-Head Dams

Low head dams are usually quite dangerous. The deadly currents at the base of these drops account for about 10% of all river fatalities nationwide. There were two such incidents in the last six months. The first occurred on July 7th, when Pennsylvania's Swatara Creek was very high following heavy rain. Perry Ratcliffe Jr., 31, was not wearing a life vest when he ran a low-head dam and was caught in the backwash. His companions got him ashore and attempted CPR, without success.

The next day a similar tragedy struck on Ohio's Hocking River, Steve Lippson, 40, and his family were running the river in kayaks when they all washed over Whites Mill Dam. Police responded quickly and saw several people caught in the backwash. Mr. Lippson managed to push his son to

first responders before he was pulled underwater for the last time.

## Flush Drownings

Flush Drowning occurs when someone who is wearing a life vest drowns in turbulent rapids. On July 8th Christopher Chapman was rafting Alpine Canyon of Wyoming's Snake River. His raft got caught in Three Oar-Deal, a very powerful hydraulic, and he was thrown from his boat. Since there was no second boat along on this trip, Mr. Chapman, 48, washed some distance downstream. He was picked up miles later by a commercial outfitter who tried CPR and a defibrillator in an unsuccessful attempt to revive him. In a similar incident Martin Rinke, 63, flipped a pack raft in Alaska's Matanuska River on July 15th. Cold water and long, rocky Class IV rapids made swimming difficult and his three companions were unable to help him in time.

## Rope Entanglement

The death of Luca Chiarabini, one of California's best-known canyoneers, is worthy of note. On August 2nd, he and two others hiked down to the Kings River to explore a steep side creek on the opposite shore. They brought ropes and wetsuits for the canyon and flippers for the river crossing, but no boats or lifejackets. The river is about 100 feet wide where they chose to cross, and was flowing at 2600 cfs. They crossed the river, scrambled up the side of the canyon, and worked their way back down Deer Creek. They arrived at the Kings and camped there for the night.

The next day they planned to send one person swimming across the river, pulling a rope behind him that would help the others get across. Mr. Chiarabini was wearing a wetsuit, flippers, and a climbing harness with the rope tied to it. The others anchored and belayed him from upstream. He swam about two thirds of the way across the river before signaling the team to pull him back. Unfortunately, they had let out a great deal

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## \$10,000 - Class III



## \$7,500 - Class II



## \$5,000 - Boof



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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.

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

Membership support is what will determine our ability to continue our river stewardship work in the years to come. Individual Annual Memberships are only \$35. If you are a member of your local paddling club and your club is an Affiliate Club member of AW, join as a Club Affiliate Individual for \$25. This is 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: \_\_\_\_\_

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# SAFETY

of line and they couldn't haul it in quickly. Mr. Chiarabini washed downstream into a Class IV rapid when the rope went tight and he was trapped. His partners cut the rope and he floated free, but the trailing rope caught on some rocks. Mr. Chiarabini was held underwater until his body was freed by rescue personnel later in the day.

Tying into a rope in fast water without a reliable quick release system is extremely dangerous! Canyoneers often rig rope systems to cross small streams but are seldom confronted with a river this wide and powerful. Also, Mr. Chiarabini tied the rope to the front tie in point on his climbing harness, so when the rope tightened the water was pushing straight into his face. Rescue life jackets used by whitewater paddlers, by contrast, have rope attachments in back so the swimmer faces downstream. An air pocket, formed by the swimmers head, allows them to breathe. In retrospect, it would have been better for the group to bring life vests so they could swim across the river without ropes, or to use a rescue vest to set the rope.

## Near Misses and Rescues

Experienced kayakers made several great rescues during the last six months, but this one really stands out. According to the *Anchorage Daily News*, the rescue happened on August 12th, on Sixmile Creek during the Whitewater and Bluegrass Festival. During pre-race practice Daniel Hartung, 64, attempted to run First Canyon. He was paddling a recreational kayak and was wearing a PFD, a bike helmet, and hip waders. He flipped, swam, and washed through a cliffside chute where he pinned on a hidden log that was broached in the channel. The log caught him hard across his belly and the current was pushing him underwater. A man lowered a line to him from above. This helped for a few minutes, but after a struggle he slipped beneath the surface. A short distance upstream Obediah Jenkins, a local paddler, saw him go under.

He jumped into the river, washed down into Mr. Hartung, and pulled him free. This was a dangerous, but effective move! He then swam Mr. Hartung into an eddy where others pulled him ashore and successfully revived him. There's an excellent video of the entire incident; find it by searching "Six Mile Creek kayak rescue" on Youtube.

On September 3rd a routine, low-water run down Little Falls on the Lower Potomac suddenly turned scary. Here's Ursey

"He flipped, swam, and washed through a cliffside chute where he pinned on a hidden log that was broached in the channel. The log caught him hard across his belly and the current was pushing him underwater. A man lowered a line to him from above. This helped for a few minutes, but after a struggle he slipped beneath the surface. A short distance upstream Obediah Jenkins, a local paddler, saw him go under. He jumped into the river, washed down into Mr. Hartung, and pulled him free. This was a dangerous, but effective move!"

Potter's description of what happened to her: "I tried to roll twice but was getting pummeled by the shallow rocks. I eventually had to get out of my boat and my sprayskirt got caught on a rock so I was facing upriver with my head being forced underwater. Luckily I was wearing my nose plugs because the forceful water was rushing directly on my exposed face. Larry Lemper immediately got out of his open canoe and brought my head to the treasured high oxygen environment but could not reach my caught sprayskirt. Bill Branson quickly got out of his kayak and released the sprayskirt. He emailed me later that he was delighted and relieved to see my quick smile and know that I was okay." The moral of the story: always keep an eye on your buddies, and be ready to help out quickly!

On September 16th, a man who volunteered to help out with a youth event ended up rescuing four young girls when a poorly designed homemade raft slammed against a strainer on Tennessee's Hiwassee River. Why the event organizers would use such questionable boats when a nearby livery rents top-of-the-line river rafts is beyond my understanding! William Whitaker jumped out of his kayak and let it float downstream as he extricated the teens from a variety of precarious positions and got them safely ashore. His kayak was later recovered, but to show that no good deed goes unpunished it was stolen in the post-event confusion. A word of warning: if you're asked to help with an event, don't be afraid to speak up if sensible safety procedures aren't being followed!

A terrifying situation in West Virginia's Cheat Canyon showed that you have to pay attention even at a low (one-foot) water levels! Nancy Kell was pushed into a badly undercut rock on the far left side of Three Amigos

(just above Cue Ball Rapid) on December 3rd. She was shoved under the rock with her head barely above water. Her group responded quickly, and Bill Durr waded out and pulled her free with great difficulty. You can see the full rescue on YouTube by searching for "Cheat - Nancy Pin Rescue." (Warning: It's hard to watch!)

The left side of Initiation Rapid on West Virginia's Upper Gauley is very dangerous! An innocuous looking chute flows over a crack between two giant rocks. Paddlers have been flushed down into the crack and pinned in their boats against a chock rock. There have been two fatalities and many narrow escapes here over the last three decades. On October 14th another pin resulted; the kayaker was rescued with a slick rope system that's

worth seeing! Here's the link: <https://www.facebook.com/african.river.rat/videos/1256292557850175/>. Check it out, and stay away from this hidden trap when you run the Gauley!

Finally, on December 17th a group of paddlers running California's Class III South Fork of the American encountered an underdressed, severely hypothermic kayaker. "Dave" was paddling with three better-equipped kayakers who were clearly flummoxed when it came to managing this life threatening emergency. Fortunately the second group was up to the task. Despite their support, Dave swam the next rapid. The sun was setting, and Dave's hypothermia was getting deeper and more dangerous. They pulled out. Everyone contributed clothing to help rewarm him, and one of the group dialed 911. Two people stayed with Dave and started a fire while the others sprinted for the take-out. Search and rescue hiked in after dark and launched a raft from upstream. Then everyone floated out safely in the dark. A full report of this and other incidents can be found in the Accident Database on the AW website.

American Whitewater needs *your* help collecting accident reports to share with paddlers. Serious incidents involving skilled whitewater paddlers are quite rare, but they often teach the rest of us how to avoid trouble and manage emergencies. Accurate accounts also keep malicious rumors from getting started. First person accounts from experienced paddlers, newspaper articles, and on-line posts are welcome. 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 the information. Or you can email me at [ccwalbridge@cs.com](mailto:ccwalbridge@cs.com) or message "Charlie Walbridge" on Facebook. You can also share newspaper articles, chat room posts, or even rumors! I'm not an "investigator," but I'll often run down leads to find out what happened. I will also help prepare a report if needed.

### 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](http://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

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

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

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

An Affiliate Club that is already being recognized as an AW Lifetime member is recognized in the annual Honor Roll as a Lifetime member. They do need to contribute either at the \$100 or the \$400 level annually to be recognized as an Affiliate Club in the AW Journal and under the Affiliate Club heading of the published Honor Roll.

## Supporting Affiliate Clubs

### Alaska

Fairbanks Paddlers, Fairbanks

### California

Gold Country Paddlers, Lotus

### Colorado

Dolores River Boating Advocates, Dolores

### Kentucky

Bluegrass Wildwater Asso, Lexington

### New Jersey

KCCNY, Flanders

### North Carolina

Girls at Play, Asheville

### Ohio

Keelhaulers, Cleveland

### South Carolina

Foothills Paddling Club, Greenville

Palmetto Paddlers, Columbia

### Tennessee

Tennessee Valley Canoe Club, Chattanooga

### Washington

Paddle Trails Canoe Club, Seattle

Washington Kayak Club, Seattle

## Affiliate Club by State

### Alaska

Nova River Runners Inc., Chickaloon

### Alabama

Coosa River Paddling Club, Wetumpka

Huntsville Canoe Club, Huntsville

### Arizona

Outdoors Unlimited, Flagstaff

Southern Arizona Paddlers Club, Tucson

Thunderbird Outdoor Restoration

Organization, Glendale

### Arkansas

Arkansas Canoe Club, Little Rock

### California

Auburn River Festival Club, Auburn

Chico Paddleheads, Chico

River City Whitewater Club, Sacramento

Shasta Paddlers, Redding

### Colorado

Colorado Whitewater Assn, Denver

Friends of the Yampa, Steamboat Springs

High Country River Rafters, Wheatridge

Rocky Mountain Outdoor Center, Buena Vista

San Miguel Whitewater Asso, Telluride

Team Colorado Whitewater Racing Club,

Longmont

Upper Colorado Private Boaters Asso,

Glenwood Springs

### Connecticut

Housatonic Area Canoe & Kayak Sq, Lakeville

### Delaware

Wilmington Trail Club, Newark

### Georgia

Georgia Canoeing Asso, Atlanta

### Idaho

Idaho Whitewater Association, Boise

### Indiana

Hoosier Canoe Club, Brownsburg

Ohio Valley Paddlers, Evansville

### Iowa

Iowa Whitewater Coalition, W. Des Moines

### Kentucky

Elkhorn Paddlers, Lexington

Viking Canoe Club, Louisville

### Maine

Penobscot Paddle & Chowder Society, Freeport

### Maryland

Baltimore Canoe & Kayak Club, Baltimore

Mason Dixon Canoe Cruisers, Hagerstown

Monocacy Canoe Club, Frederick

### Massachusetts

AMC Boston Chapter, Boston

Zoar Outdoor, Charlemont

### Minnesota

Rapids Riders, Eagan

### Missouri

Missouri Whitewater Assn, St. Louis

Ozark Mountain Paddlers, Springfield

Ozark Wilderness Waterways, Kansas City

### Montana

Beartooth Paddlers Society, Billings

### Nevada

Sierra Nevada Whitewater Club, Reno

### New Hampshire

AMC New Hampshire Paddlers, Raymond

### New Jersey

AMC Delaware Valley Chapter, Oaks

### New York

ADK Schenectady, Schenectady

KCCNY, Flanders

### North Carolina

Carolina Canoe Club, Raleigh

Providence Day School Paddling Club,

Charlotte

Landmark Learning, Cullowhee

Tuckasegee Paddlers, Cullowhee

### Ohio

Columbus Outdoor Pursuits, Columbus

Friends of the Crooked River, Akron

### Oregon

Lower Columbia Canoe Club, Portland

Northwest Rafters Association, Roseburg

Oregon Kayak and Canoe Club, Portland

## **Pennsylvania**

AMC Delaware Valley Chapter, Oak  
Bradford County Canoe and Kayak Club, Sayre  
Canoe Club of Centre County, Lemont  
Canoe Club of Greater Harrisburg, Harrisburg  
Conewago Canoe Club, York  
Lehigh Valley Canoe Club, Lehigh Valley  
Mach One Slalom Team, State College  
Philadelphia Canoe Club, Philadelphia  
Wilderness Voyageurs Outfitters, Ohiopyle

## **Tennessee**

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

## **Texas**

Houston Canoe Club, Houston  
Team River Runner, San Antonio

## **Vermont**

Vermont Paddlers Club, Montpelier

## **Virginia**

Float Fishermen of Virginia, Sandy Hook

## **Washington**

BEWET- Boeing Employees Whitewater &  
Touring Club, Bellevue  
Spokane Canoe & Kayak Club, Spokane  
The Mountaineers, Seattle  
University Kayak Club, Seattle  
Washington Recreational River Runners, Renton

## **West Virginia**

WV Wildwater Assn, S. Charleston

## **Wisconsin**

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

## **Wyoming**

American Packrafting Association, Wilson

## **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](mailto: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](mailto:membership@americanwhitewater.org) or sign-up on line at [www.americanwhitewater.org/membership](http://www.americanwhitewater.org/membership).

# **AW** 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](http://americanwhitewater.org) > Library > AW Journal





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Photo: Alexander Clark's Emu Bay © Evan Stafford

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