



AMERICAN WHITEWATER

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BY BOATERS FOR BOATERS
May/June 2022

A FOND FAREWELL TO MARK SINGLETON

ACCESS REESTABLISHED FOR KEY NORTHERN CALIFORNIA RIVERS

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American Whitewater Journal
May/June 2022 – Volume 62 – Issue 3

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Cover Photo

Tales of beautiful bedrock waterfalls and a deep beautiful canyon dewatered for a lifetime just up the road trickled down over time to Executive Director Mark's Singleton's home in Cullowhee, NC. Local projects always seem extra special to AW staff, but over the course of an incredibly successful 18-year run, restoring flows to the West Fork Tuckasegee stands out as a major career highlight for Mark. As a direct result of negotiations led by American Whitewater, a classic run and one of the most awe-inspiring put-ins in the world now has a series of releases each year.

PHOTO BY EVAN STAFFORD

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PURPOSE

RIVER STEWARDSHIP: AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

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

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

CONSERVATION: AW's professional staff works closely with volunteers and partner organizations to protect the ecological and scenic values of all whitewater rivers. These goals are accomplished

through direct participation in public decision-making processes, grassroots advocacy, coalition building, empowerment of volunteers, public outreach and education, and, when necessary, legal action.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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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I'VE BEEN PRONE to wander. In my 20s, my wandering meant that I was in one place no more than five months at a time, which amounted to either a winter season skiing or a summer season paddling. The tendency to wander also represents my management style; it is largely how I've directed American Whitewater over the years. Our projects span the country, and I like to think of my office as on a river, rather than in a physical space with walls and a ceiling. I've been most valuable to the organization when I can interact with members and partners. That happens largely on rivers, sometimes in board rooms and government offices. It's now time for me to pass that wandering torch to the next executive director of American Whitewater. As I write this, the AW Board is in the process of searching for that next leader. I'll be departing American Whitewater at the end of June; this AW Journal introduction is the last one coming from me. Before I peel out of this eddy, there a couple of thoughts I want to share.

First, the amazing American Whitewater staff: they've been absolutely incredible to work with and are the driving force that makes American Whitewater successful. A big part of our secret sauce is having stewardship, communication, and engagement functions scattered in communities where we have active projects. It makes a huge difference in how the organization is perceived when community members see our staff shopping at the local grocery store or picking their kids up from school. Our regional program model, with staff working remotely on local projects, is a source of great organizational strength. It takes a special type of individual to thrive in an environment that provides autonomy and independence while working towards collective goals. Staff are self-directed, technically skilled, passionate, and opportunistic; in short, they know how to get things done. As our board works to hire the next leader, the first question to address is not "who can replace Mark?" but rather, "how do we keep this remarkable team of staff together?". From there, the replacement question comes into focus. The achievements of American Whitewater over the last two decades have been staff driven; keeping our current team in place is a priority.

Next, our remarkable members and volunteers: without the support of membership none of this great work could happen. Our members understand that you can't love what you don't know. The gateway to stewardship is access—if you aren't able to get on the water, you'll be limited in what you know about that place. It's through access that paddlers develop a direct and intensely personal interest in the stewardship of rivers. As paddlers, our close connection to whitewater rivers makes us uniquely aware of the challenges and threats rivers face. We are often the first to

notice when something is wrong, and we are highly motivated to protect these places and the experiences unique to whitewater rivers. Our members step up. The political power of this community cannot be underestimated. Last year alone, over 7,000 comments were sent to land management agencies regarding policy issues that impact whitewater paddling. The weight of our hammer is significant and we have the direct ability to impact how public lands and waters are managed into the future.

Likewise, our partners vary from outdoor industry support to foundations large and small. At the core of many conversations is the question, "if this is such a good partnership, who else is supporting the effort." What a question like this gets to is that no one wants to fund a program alone; strength comes from various groups and businesses coming together to solve a collective problem. Our active participation in numerous coalitions is a key strategy in meeting our stewardship goals. The depth of our membership also aids in the lift. You can see this clearly when you look at one of our annual reports; no one source of funds supports more than 37% of our overall revenue stream. Grants, membership dues, and additional contributions each make up roughly a third of incoming revenues supporting stewardship work.

Finally, I need to recognize my family who has given me the freedom to wander as it was needed to support my American Whitewater role. My wife, Debby, and our two kids, Skyler and MK, have overheard me on various conference calls, seen me buried in email correspondence, and generally fretting over the crisis of the moment. Plus, they have seen me sleep for 12 hours straight after returning from Gauley Fest. Through it all, my family has provided my best counsel, been tolerant when sideswiped in conversation, and allowed space and time for my various wanderings.

The right point for a leadership transition is when an organization is at its peak; American Whitewater is clearly there. The organization is stronger than it has ever been and the staff know how to punch way above their weight. I've accomplished more than I ever dreamed was possible in my role here; this is the right moment to usher in a new leader, and I'll be working closely with our board to make this a smooth transition.

Take care of our rivers and your paddling will take care of you,



ACCESS TO MIDDLE FORK FEATHER AND FOUR OTHER CALIFORNIA RIVERS REESTABLISHED

BY SCOTT HARDING

AS A RESULT of American Whitewater's advocacy and the outpouring of nearly 1,000 comments from our members and supporters, the Plumas National Forest ended their boating ban on the Middle Fork Feather River's Devils Canyon Run, effective March 31. This iconic Wild and Scenic river is once again open to boaters and anglers, and many paddlers were able to immediately enjoy a spring run on this classic reach.

Greg Lee, American Whitewater Volunteer and Board of Directors Member writes, "Devils Canyon on the Middle Feather, is one of the best, if not THE best river at its difficulty in the world. Thirty miles of quality Class V with minimal portaging and top notch scenery add up to one of the best river trips out there. I'm extremely grateful to American Whitewater for reopening this Wild and Scenic river, and I hope that the Forest Service will make a more concerted effort to keep places like the Middle Feather open in the future. The Forest Service has a duty to keep public lands open to the public, and I hope they will reconsider the policy of long term closures across the West."

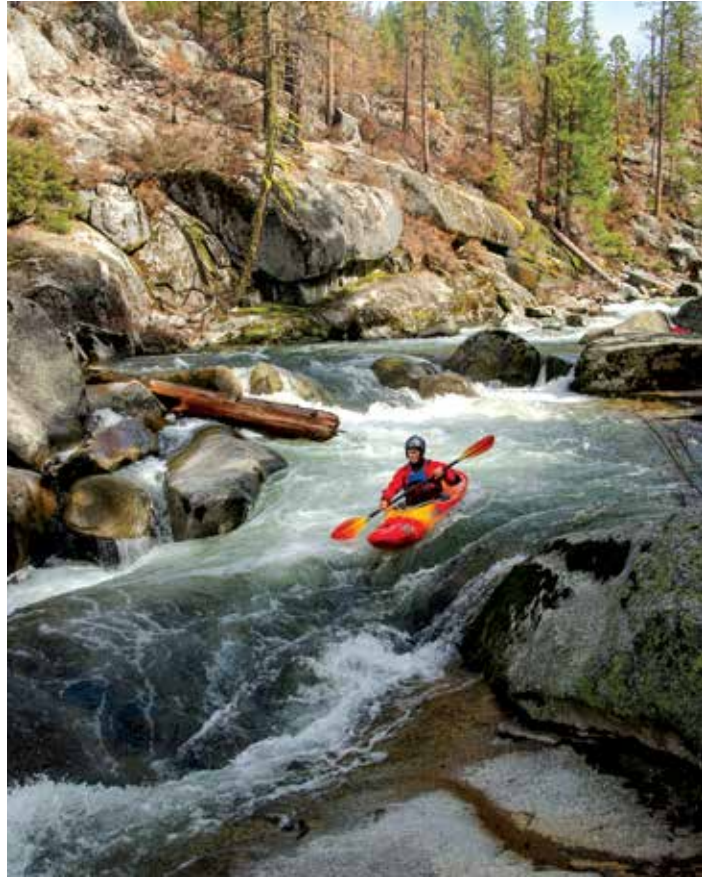
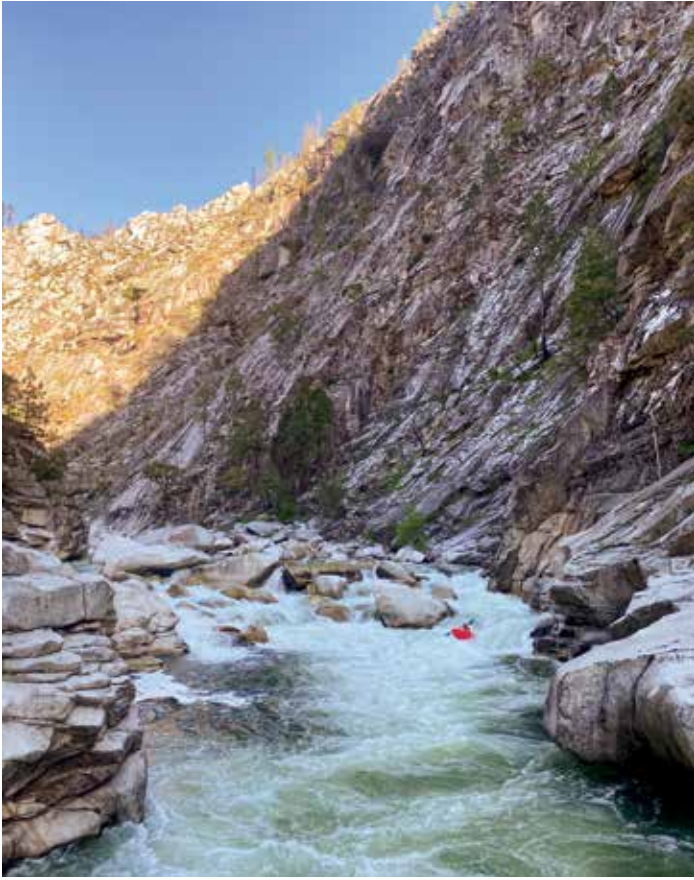
The Forest Service closed a large part of Plumas National Forest during the 2020 North Complex wildfires. It had since reopened all of the closed area but imposed a boating and fishing ban for the Middle Fork Feather River "to provide for public safety" even though it had not identified a single fire-related hazard that affected boating or fishing. We are happy that the river is open again; however, it never should have been closed without justification. We are working to ensure that this type of arbitrary closure does not take place again. Paddlers are reporting that there are currently no fire-related hazards in the river, but always keep in mind that rivers are dynamic systems, changes are frequent, and that fire-related hazards may be present on shore.

Also in the Northern Sierra Nevada, the Eldorado National Forest just reopened access to 65 miles of whitewater runs that had been closed since the Caldor Fire last summer. American Whitewater met with Forest Service District Ranger Scot Rogers in March to discuss options for reopening access to rivers, including the South Fork American, Silver Fork American, and Middle Fork Cosumnes. We appreciate Ranger Rogers' engagement on the issue and his

support for reopening as much access to rivers as possible. The Eldorado National Forest listened to the input and information we provided and reopened access to eight whitewater runs on four different rivers, effective April 1. These runs are:

- American, South Fork - IV-V Strawberry to Kyburz (Lover's Leap)
- American, South Fork - III-V Kyburz to US 50 Bridge @Riverton (Kyburz Run)
- American, Silver Fork - V Hwy 88 to Fitz Rantz Bridge (Tip-top)
- American, Silver Fork - V Fitz Rantz Bridge to Girard Creek (Dugald Bremner Run)
- American, Silver Fork - III-IV Girard Creek to China Flat (Middle)
- American, Silver Fork - V+ China Flat to SF American confluence (Lower)
- Camp Creek - IV+ Fleming Meadows trailhead to Happy Valley Road
- Cosumnes, Middle Fork - V FS Route 9N60 to Mt. Aukum Road (Upper Middle)

Top Left: Middle Fork Feather, Devils Canyon
PHOTO BY GREG LEE
Top Right: Silver Fork American
PHOTO BY MAREIKE DELLEY
Bottom: Middle Fork Feather, Devils Canyon
PHOTO BY GREG LEE







A happy crew finding access to Devils Canyon on the Middle Fork Feather open after a two-year closure.
PHOTO GREG LEE

All told, American Whitewater helped open access to 88 miles of whitewater in March, covering nine runs on five different rivers! Many boaters were also able to enjoy this reestablished access almost immediately after the closures were lifted.

According to San Francisco Bay Area kayaker Mareike Delley, “The South Fork American and its tributaries are the closest whitewater. As 2022 is another dry year, I was really happy that American Whitewater was able to reopen the road to the Silver Fork, so that we could get on it while it was running!”

In February, American Whitewater similarly succeeded in helping restore access to nearly 100 miles of whitewater runs in the Trinity River watershed in far Northern California that had been closed following the Monument Fire and River Complex. We’re truly happy to see these runs back open to the paddling and angling communities. We’re working to pursue administrative and legislative solutions to prevent these arbitrary closures from happening again, and to further encourage individual National Forests to follow their own rules that require them to provide public notice of proposed closures and to accept public input prior to making a closure decision.

This work is only possible with your support, and the nearly 1,000 comments from paddlers from across the country submitted to the Forest Service truly made the difference in getting the agency to re-open the Middle Fork Feather River!

THE GRAND SALMON: A SOURCE TO SEA JOURNEY

BY HAILEY THOMPSON

THE BEST IDEAS are born on the river, where the white noise of life falls away, and the flow and stoke propel you to wild and wonderful conclusions. The Grand Salmon Source to Sea journey came to life under precisely these conditions, one chilly spring day, somewhere between Grim Reaper Rapid and Lochsa Falls on a high-water Topo Duo lap of the Lochsa.

In the spring of 2020, Brooke Hess and Libby Tobey found themselves crash landed as roommates in Missoula after an abrupt return from New Zealand. The pandemic had aggressively altered both Brooke and Libby's plans of living and working overseas for the year, but their resulting situation could have been far worse. As newfound roommates, the two women spent most

of that spring season chasing rivers around Idaho and western Montana together in their COVID-bubble. In addition to their fondness for big waves, both women fostered strong science and conservation backgrounds. Libby was working towards a master's degree in International Conservation and Development with a focus on international climate policy, and Brooke holds a master's degree in journalism with a focus on science writing. Between raucous giggling and hollering in delight, that magical high-water Lochsa lap inspired the gals to ponder how they could marry whimsical whitewater endeavors with the more serious business of protecting rivers and the critical ecosystems that our lives are so intertwined with.



Middle Fork Salmon
PHOTO BY EVAN STAFFORD



The Grand Salmon Expedition Team, clockwise from top left: Alia Payne, Brooke Hess, Libby Tobey, and Hailey Thompson.

Two years later, the Grand Salmon Source to Sea journey is the result of that springtime high-water dream. The crew grew, rapidly, from Brooke and Libby in a Topo Duo, to a team of four women, including Alia Payne and myself (Hailey Thompson), with the monumental support of organizations like Idaho Rivers United and Rivers for Change. The idea of paddling the South Fork of the Salmon River in Idaho and making a short YouTube edit blossomed into a plan for a wild, 1,000+ mile journey tracing the Salmon River from its source to the sea, while creating a cinematic short film to tell the tale of an all-too-timely environmental battle.

The Salmon, Snake, and Columbia River Drainages are on the precipice of a massive shift. In the 1960s and 70s, the lower Snake River's flow was locked in heavy, repressive chains as Ice Harbor (1962), Lower Monumental (1969), Little Goose (1970), and Lower Granite (1975) Dams were completed. The completion of these four dams, collectively known as the four Lower Snake River Dams (LSRDs) coincided with an abrupt increase in fish mortality across the Pacific Northwest. Stagnant reservoirs behind each of the four LSRDs began to heat, deoxygenate, and collect agricultural runoff, all of which contributed to skyrocketing fish mortality during

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the anadromous species' journeys both to and from the sea. These factors, paired with the loss of invertebrate food sources for salmonid species, quickly combined to create a recipe for imminent salmonid extinction in the Snake River Basin (which includes all sections of the Salmon River).

In addition to the ominous environmental conditions created by the LSRDs, Perpetua Resources (a Canadian mining company formerly known as Midas Gold), proposed reopening the Stibnite Gold Mine at the headwaters of the East Fork South Fork (EFSF) Salmon River—a proposal that would result in open-pit mining operations directly upon the gravel beds that salmon migrate

to in order to spawn. As part of our journey throughout the headwaters, the Salmon Source to Sea team plans to ski tour into this region prior to paddling the EFSF, to further examine and share as part of our story just how damaging this mining operation could be to the salmon and steelhead populations of the Snake River Basin.

The Salmon Source to Sea team is joining generations of indigenous activists, grass-roots conservationists, and community organizers in a very timely fight. For the first time since the building of the dams, federal stakeholders are considering dam removal along the lower Snake River as a way to restore critical habitat and access to breeding grounds. A White House press release dated March 28, 2022 stated, "We heard calls to support breaching the four dams on the lower Snake River to restore a more natural flow, also about the need to replace the services provided by those dams, and recognition that such a step would require congressional action." This year's congressional decision may make or break the lifeline of salmon within this massive river system.

So we will paddle. An insane distance, really. Over 1,000 miles, stringing together each major tributary of the Salmon River, including Marsh Creek, the Middle Fork, Upper Main, Main, East Fork South Fork, South Fork, and lower Salmon before confluencing with the Snake River. Then we will proceed to paddle the Snake to the confluence with the Columbia River, where we will make our way to the mouth of the Columbia River at the Pacific Ocean in Astoria, Oregon. We have discussed it all; the imminent tendonitis, blistered hands, exposure, exhaustion, and logistics, but in a strange way, the unavoidable discomforts have made us all the more determined to trace the paths of juvenile migrating salmon, dam portages and all, to the Pacific.

We have a somewhat unique approach. Just like Libby and Brooke, Alia and I have science backgrounds. Alia was raised by a long line of conservation biologists, and studied geology as an undergraduate. Her studies have led her to glaciers in the Peruvian Andes, and across the Pacific Ocean conducting oceanographic research. In addition to her science background, she has also pursued a career as a cinematographer. I graduated from the US Coast



Pristine salmon spawning habitat and perfect eddy lines in the Middle Fork Salmon drainage.
PHOTO BY EVAN STAFFORD



Guard Academy with a degree in Fisheries Biology and Physical Oceanography, with an emphasis on salmonid species in the Pacific Northwest. I proceeded to spend years working as a ship driver and fisheries expert in Alaska. Most recently, I transitioned into a career as a graphic designer and artist. Our team's unique blend of science and storytelling, art and whitewater paddling has woven together organically to form this mission. We all hold a deep belief that to effect change, we have to make the science behind the issues a story that people feel intrinsically connected to. Through art, film, writing, and traveling to the communities that love these spaces so deeply, we believe we can help weave this story. We hope to understand the relationships people along the way have with this river. While we know our personal connections with these places as whitewater paddlers are rooted in the pure joy of roosting off glassy green waves, and peaceful nights spent sleeping by the river, we know others rely on these rivers for more than just recreation.

We're conscious of the fact that we paddle in the wake of communities that have been river protectors for generations. In 1855, the Nimiipuu, Umatilla, Warm Springs, and Yakama tribes negotiated treaties which clearly articulated their immemorial rights to maintain the natural resources on which their culture depended, including rights to water, land, fish, and gathered foods and medicines. Our journey downstream, advocating for the breaching of these dams and the prevention of a dangerous mine, is an effort that we hope will further adherence to these treaties,

SNAKE RIVER

BY THOMAS O'KEEFE

The idea for dams on the Snake River emerged as early as 1910 with the initial impetus being to modify the river to facilitate barge traffic. Railroads were used to transport agricultural products and goods along the river but local boosters sought a cheaper alternative subsidized by taxpayers.

Congress authorized the four Lower Snake River Dams in 1945 as multi-purpose projects primarily for barge traffic and to establish Lewiston, Idaho as a seaport. From the start, project economics were unfavorable and fisheries biologists were concerned with the cumulative impact these dams would have on the Columbia-Snake River system and the salmon nurseries of the Salmon and Clearwater Rivers.

Washington Senator Warren Magnuson pushed to secure funding for construction, which began in 1955. Ice Harbor Dam was completed in 1962, followed by Lower Monumental in 1969, Little Goose Dam in 1970, and Lower Granite Dam in 1976. These were among the last major dams constructed in the region.

The Lower Snake River dams have never fulfilled their intended purpose, and barge traffic has been minimal. The promise of Lewiston as a bustling seaport was left unrealized while salmon and steelhead felt the impacts declining to 4% of their historical abundance; this has occurred despite \$17 billion spent on fish recovery efforts. The dams continue to waste public funds due to their ineffectiveness and decreasing value.

In February 2021 Idaho's Representative Mike Simpson announced that after reviewing dozens of alternatives for the Snake River Dams he could find "no viable plan that will allow us to keep the dams in place," and if the region fails to act "we are condemning Idaho's salmon to extinction." In October 2021, Washington's Senator Patty Murray and Governor Inslee stepped forward to state their commitment to salmon recovery that takes all options into consideration, "including potential breaching of the Lower Snake River Dams." They launched a process that will result in a draft public report to be released this month for public comment and a final report to be issued in mid-July. We urge our community to engage in this process.

In addition to the benefits for salmon, our community is uniquely positioned to highlight the benefits a restored river corridor will offer in the form of additional opportunities for multi-day river trips. We encourage our community to thank leaders who have taken bold steps forward, request those who have not to consider doing so, and provide feedback on the benefits restored rivers provide for fish and communities.

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Seeing schools of spawning salmon return to winding their way up the Middle Fork Salmon is a big part of the vision for removing the Snake River Dams.
PHOTO EVAN STAFFORD

and return these rivers to the abundant, healthy ecosystems they once were. Unrepressed, these waterways are capable of supporting entire cultural ways of living, as well as providing beautiful spaces for people to experience through river-travel.

We're rapidly approaching the beginning of our wild excursion, which launches on April 29, 2022; by the time you read this, we will have taken our first strokes in the cold, steep waters of Marsh Creek. We hope that over the course of this long paddle, we cross paths with you. More than anything, this is a journey of people, rivers, and salmon; one that is made all the more powerful by the communities we can collectively work with to breach these (damned) dams, and effect a permanent moratorium on the Stibnite mine.

If you are interested in learning more about our team, our cause, or our journey, you can visit our website, www.salmonsourceatsea.com, or follow us on social media: @salmonsourceatsea on Instagram and Facebook. Join us for launch parties, community paddles, music, and river fun throughout our journey. You can find out more on our "Events" page. We encourage you to write or call your representatives, comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Stibnite Mine Proposal, and submit comments in favor of breaching the Lower Snake River Dams to Governor Inslee, Senator Murray, and the Biden Administration (all of which you can do from the, "Take Action" page on our website). If you want to engage with our team more closely on the Source to Sea Journey, we have opportunities for folks to volunteer, partner, donate, and sponsor on our website's "Get Involved" page, or you can simply text SALMON to 53-555 if you want a quick and simple way to make a tax-deductible donation to this project.

We hope to see you downstream!

Cheers,

Hailey and the Salmon Source to Sea Team



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THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AT HOME: A JOURNAL EXCLUSIVE EXPOSÉ BY THOSE ON THE INSIDE!

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DEBBY, SKYLER, AND MK SINGLETON
ILLUSTRATIONS BY MK SINGLETON



JUDGING SOLELY BY the past 18 years with American Whitewater, readers may not realize that Mark Singleton actually has a life outside of “AW World.” As Mark paddles his kayak into the eddy of retirement, we, his family (wife Debby, and his kids Skyler and MK), want to share our side of the AW journey. So, settle in for a behind-the-scenes, exclusive look.

When Mark first started with American Whitewater, his kids couldn’t pronounce his job title. Their age-appropriate vocabulary for a 4- and 5-year-old made Executive Director sound like “Excusive Director.” This title has stuck within the circle of trust that is the Singleton family. To us, Mark Singleton is the “Excusive Director” of American Whitewater, whatever that means. What

exactly does Mark do? Even his own family isn’t sure. We have some ideas.

Certainly, one of his main duties is making phone calls. A lot of phone calls. Phone calls all the time. To whom and about what, we’re not sure. We just know he’s on the phone a lot.

Thinking of Mark and American Whitewater, it’s important to mention just where he is doing his “work” (a.k.a. making phone calls). His “home office.” Also known as the brown leather recliner in the living room. It has an indentation of his body clearly outlined. After years of studying the habits, style, and tone of the “Excusive Director,” it is very easy to now have an incredibly

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realistic impression of him. It's quite simple. One only needs to sit in his chair (in recliner mode of course), pretend to talk on the phone while squinting in vague confusion into the middle distance, and say generic lines like, "Let's toss to Bethany," or, "Let's keep this call short." Maybe throw in a, "Sorry that I skipped over you there, Tom, let's backtrack to the Pacific Northwest." Keep your tone mildly gruff and low, like a smaller dog trying to match the bark of its much larger companions. It does help the impression to wear the same outfit as him, an American Whitewater shirt and hoodie, fleece pants or board shorts, and wool clogs or "House Birkenstocks" depending on the season.

It is hard to picture Mark Singleton, "Executive Director," without mentioning his workwear. The Patagonia fleece pants have been worn almost every day since the pandemic, much to the horror of everyone else who lives in the same house as him (seriously, when does he wash them?). These fleecy, warm pants have been his loyal companion since the mid-90s. His wool clogs have never been fashionable, but they are as much of a part of American Whitewater workwear as the fleece pants at this point.

For outside of the house (office) attire, Mark will slip into his more professional footwear, Dansko clogs. Mark admittedly took great pleasure picking his kids up from school wearing his clogs. Dansko clogs represent another side of Mark, someone who appreciates sensible shoes with good arch support. Let's paint a picture of the, "OMG, what is my dad wearing now" humiliation the kids experienced from the ages of seven to 17. There is Mark, standing by the school front office, hands shoved into orange-ish cargo

pants, balanced on an extra two inches of scuffed and worn-down leather clogs. Their school aged peers titter around Mark and point to his clogs. The Singleton kids walk briskly and try to push him towards the car before any other kids notice his attire. Of course, this is probably an exaggerated memory now.

Over the years, the clogs have become dear to us, but they could never be considered truly acceptable for most audiences. Unfortunately, they are the shoes he wears most often, even while lobbying in D.C. During Skyler's time in high school, she journeyed with Mark up to Washington D.C. to participate in a lobbying day organized by the Outdoor Industry Alliance. One of the important things about lobbying in D.C. is that you must dress the part. The night before the lobbying began, a representative from Outdoor Industry Alliance pulled Skyler aside. "Do you have the right clothes for tomorrow?" they asked her. "Yes," she assured her, "I don't dress like my Dad." There was a pause and a slight wince. "Is he going to wear what he always wears?" Mark has not changed the blazer that he wears to D.C. since before he joined American Whitewater. The Dansko clogs are always heavy hitters, but if he knows that he'll be walking more, he switches them out for his "nice" shoes, Keen leather low-hikers that he has never used for yard work.

With all the American Whitewater, t-shirts, hoodies, jackets, and vests, there's hardly any need for Mark to buy clothes. Now, the question that we must ask with Mark leaving American Whitewater is this: what is he going to wear? No, seriously. He doesn't really own any other t-shirts.

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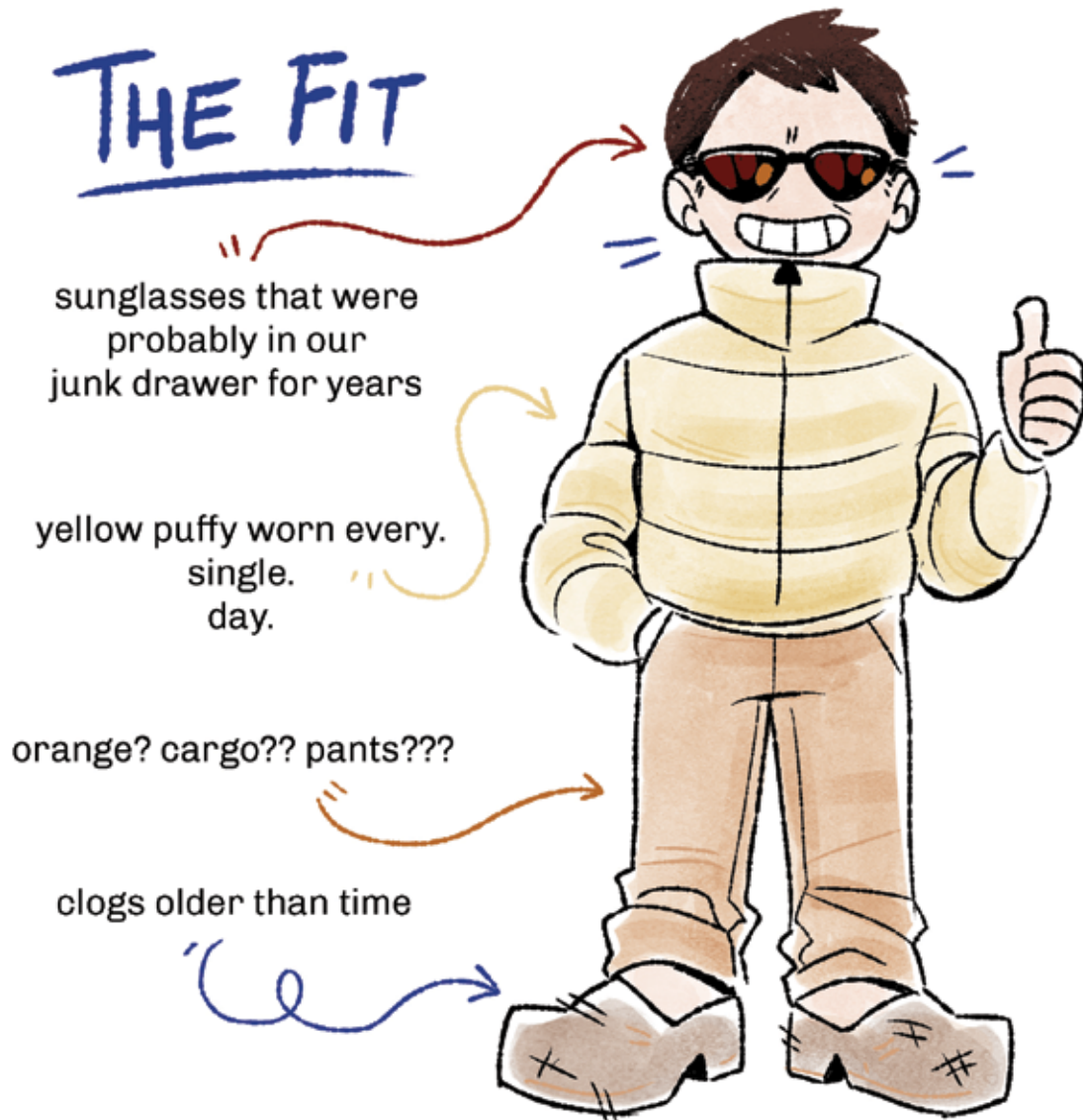
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Deerfield Fest supports American Whitewater's effort to protect, restore, and enjoy our treasured rivers here in the northeast. www.americanwhitewater.org/deerfieldfest



THE FIT



Unfortunately, one of the t-shirt designs has become the butt of many jokes. The first time any of us saw it, we all frowned and looked closer at the image of a bulldozer tearing down a dam. "Does that say American Shitewater?" While his modern fashion taste might be mostly curated to be about comfort, with the additional perk of embarrassing his family, before paddling gear was mass-produced and sold by companies, Mark would make his own. He sewed his own PFDs, paddle jackets, and spray skirts. Yet, we are so glad he doesn't try to make his own clothes; wearing AW swag is much better.

As you know by now, Mark mostly works from home; he only needs an internet connection and his laptop to get his daily work done. When the pandemic hit, there were suddenly four people working and going to school out of the Singleton house in Cullowhee, NC. Now, Mark's daily routine of being on conference calls, answering emails, and lying on the couch as he reviews grant

proposals was interrupted by three other people. These included two college students who would wander through the living room intermittently, bored and attempting to avoid schoolwork. The third was his wife, Debby, who was trying to teach college classes over Zoom. Lunch was no longer him happily munching on leftovers in silence as he scrolled through Instagram; it now involved two Gen Z-ers attempting to explain TikTok memes and a very overwhelmed college professor muttering about the black boxes not engaging on ZOOM.

Since we were all stuck here together, Mark named our situation, "WheeWorks," a play on the idea of the work collective WeWorks and the name Cullowhee. The collective WheeWorks of the Singleton house has inevitably led to random figures walking in and out of view while Mark is on ZOOM calls. These interruptions in the ZOOM flow are because he is steadfastly ignoring the rest of us by having his "office" set up in the middle of the living room.



How does he manage to keep all of his work commitments organized? Surrounding his “home office” and tucked into his computer bags are various composition notebooks full of Tasks Lists, which are very different from To-Do Lists. Everything in these notebooks is written in what is colloquially known as Mark Hieroglyphics. Only a few scholars can decipher the writing. Mark also keeps a very full AW Google calendar of important meetings. Often, Mark will say, “I have a meeting with a donor,” and then disappear for hours. Where did he go? Paddling? Skiing? Mountain Biking? They’re in his business calendar and they are, technically, “donor meetings.” Sometimes, they just happen to be a little outside the box.

The actual office of American Whitewater is in Downtown Sylva, though it mostly serves as a library for old American Whitewater journals. There has been very little change to the decor or contents of the office over the past 18 years. A corkboard with class photos

of the two younger Singletons in third and second grade (they’re both over the legal drinking age now) hangs above his workspace. Still in residence is the basket of kid entertainment, full of coloring books, puzzles, and Ranger Rick magazines (the most recent one from 2011).

Growing up, Skyler and MK would take the school bus to the AW office downtown. This was always a special treat. Every Tuesday and Thursday they’d get dropped off right in front of the office door and head up the steps. The three had a routine. First, they’d head down to the bakery and get lemon San Pellegrinos and baked goods. MK would get a chocolate cupcake and Skyler an éclair. On Tuesdays, they would get loaves of fresh baguette and on Thursdays, they’d get fresh challah bread. Then they’d head back up the street, drop the bread off, and go check out books from the library. Afterward, Mark would stay in the office for a

FAREWELL TO MARK

little while longer, while the kids either sat on the floor, or the conference room, playing, reading, or coloring.

For most of Mark's tenure at American Whitewater, his garage has served as the unofficial storage shed for AW. Product, boats, dry bags, Clif Bars, inflatable couches, you name it. If you received a prize from American Whitewater, it may have been stored next to the Singleton Christmas decorations and fleet of bicycles. Plenty of American Whitewater merchandise has passed through the Singleton house. American Whitewater has had many partners and industry donors who graciously extended products to AW. One of the most iconic of those was Clif Bar.

For many years, there were boxes upon boxes of Clif Bars stacked up in the garage. Every school lunch had a Clif Bar packed away in it. They fueled the Smoky Mountain High School Ski and Snowboard Team and many WCU Parks and Recreation Management events. If you wanted a Clif Bar, you found a Singleton. Now, none of them can stomach them, except for Mark. He keeps them stashed away in his car (check the expiration date before he offers you one).

Also included in the garage storage area at one time were the infamous American Whitewater pet rocks. Which of all the membership drive material, is probably one of the oddest. These pet rocks lived a long and happy life in the garage for eighteen years, but now have found their place as landscaping cover around our house. Of all of the products that we have stored in the garage over the years, the blow-up couches were some of the best. We had to test drive them. Outdoor parties at the Singleton house often had small human people getting stuck in them. How the merchandise and product ended up in the garage and the shed is mostly Mark's fault. He went to an event or on a trip and came back with new boats or SUPs on top of the car. Often, Debby looked into the shed or the garage and did a double-take. "Where did that come from?" she'd ask rhetorically, knowing exactly where it came from.

The Singleton garage isn't the only hosting space for American Whitewater stuff. Sometimes it's the entire house. Often, it serves as the Singleton AirBnB, with a bed and a beer available for any AW staff or board member who happens to be rolling through Western North Carolina. At one point, a staff member stayed in



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the house for a longer period than most, offering to house sit while the whole family went on a trip. The conditions were that he had to watch the family dog, a squatty version of a yellow lab named Gidget. Gidget had never been a big fan of men, especially tall men, and Jeff was a very tall man. Gidget was not enthused about Jeff, to begin with. When we all returned after a few weeks, Gidget and Jeff were best friends. Turns out, Jeff bribed her with an obscene amount of dog biscuits. She was a lot heftier once Jeff finally left the Singleton AirBnB and Gidget was truly sad to see him leave.

Mark's dedication to American Whitewater is a part of what has made him so invaluable. No matter where he is, he usually makes the weekly staff call or other virtual appointments he has scheduled. This dedication to work has found him pacing outside the campervan as we traveled in New Zealand, chiming in to a Board meeting from a chair at a campsite, taking calls on chairlifts, to taking a staff call as he drives a sleep-deprived daughter who has been traveling for over twenty-four hours back home from the airport. Generally, he'd always pick up the call, answer the email, or shoot off the text.

In the early days of his time at American Whitewater, Mark was cool. Because he had a Blackberry. Remember the days of Blackberrys? He was attached to that thing. Even his wife's glare, which would send weaker college students groveling at her feet and begging for mercy, wouldn't remove the Blackberry from his hand. As time passed and technology evolved, so did the phone in his hand. When iPhones came around, he was one of the first who had one. And then when iPads came around, he had to have one of those as well. When iPads came out, the only cellular network that supported them was AT&T, as opposed to the Verizon plan, which he had with his iPhone. This of course meant that no matter where he was in the country, he'd have a device with a cell connection.

To get the kids into rivers and paddling, Mark and Debby introduced them to water at a very early age. Usually seated in the cockpit of a touring kayak as they paddled the kids on various bodies of flatwater before they were able to walk. Mark got each of them a pink Jackson kayak when they were "old enough to wipe their own butts" (his biomarker of them being kids instead of toddlers). There was a lot of playing with smallish kayaks in the living room, at the lake, in the snow as a sled, and on the river. As a family, all four Singletons would pile into our two-person Shredder and take it down the rapids of the Tuckaseegee or Nantahala Rivers. This was a lot easier when the kids were small. Summers could find us navigating multi-day river trips with other families and traveling to a multitude of national parks. This introduction to rivers and the outdoors was successful on Mark and Debby's part, as both of their spawn have grown up to be river lovers and outdoor stewardship fans.





TESTING THE SURGE

Paddler - Ben Stookesberry
Location - Priest River, Idaho
Photo - Chris Korbolic

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**WERNER
PADDLES**

FAREWELL TO MARK



stopping in to talk with Staff, Board Members, or Donors.

There are several AW work trips turned family trips that live in infamy. One of them is the incident known now as “Puking in Paradise,” in which the whole family came down with the norovirus while traveling through the Pacific Northwest, and the staff at Paradise Lodge had to deal with, well, the puking. Another memorable experience was our multi-day trip on the Green River in Utah. Insider knowledge had warned us of the impending mosquito doomsday on the Green. During our drive across the county, enroute to the Green River in Utah, every time we passed a Bass Pro Shop or Cabelas along the interstate, someone in the car would perk up and ask, “Are you sure that we don’t need bug suits?” To which Mark would inevitably reply, “No. There’s no

In high school, Skyler secured an internship with AW to focus on conservation, stewardship, and leadership experience. When in actuality her duties were primarily to stuff membership envelopes and send them out (fastest envelope stuffer in the East) and work Gauley Fest. Her experiences at Gauley Fest were indeed character-building, but probably should not be recounted in a family publication. MK always had a sketchbook and pencil ready to document the Singleton multi-day river trips by drawing cartoons to depict the highlights of each day. We wouldn’t be surprised if some of those stories end up in one of MK’s animated films in the future.

way that we need bug suits. We will be in the desert.”

When we got to the put-in, everyone was wearing bug suits, including the Outward Bound group. It was the largest mosquito hatch in 10 years. The pains that followed, including kids getting knocked unconscious with double doses of Benadryl so that they

Many of Mark’s work duties took him to cool places with cool rivers. It made it so that any time that he could, he’d pack up the family in the van and head out on a duo work-family trip. During meetings in D.C., the other Singletons would wander around the National Mall and geek out at museum exhibits. In other parts of the country, the family would patiently wait for a meeting to be done so we could all head out on a little adventure. The cross-country road trips served the dual purpose of the Singletons having fun and Mark



FAREWELL TO MARK



Mark often has people coming up to talk to him about various river things, which goes against his true nature—a hermit who just wants to paddle a river and have a beer afterward. He also impresses folks with his ability to remember almost every rapid and line, on any river. His mind is like a steel trap when it comes to rapids he’s run maybe only once or twice. But that river memory does not transfer to the, “Where did I put the thing-a-ma-bob that was last in the garage?” question that happens at least once a week (it must be under all of the AW stuff!).

All kidding aside, as Mark’s family, we are immensely proud of what he has accomplished as the

would stop scratching the bites, the hurried scrambling to pack the rafts while dodging swarms of blood thirsty insects, the brief respites that could only be found in the middle of the river, and the multiple scars that now mark the survivors, are all labeled as, “character-building experiences” by Mark. This mosquito trauma probably haunts Mark, considering the event inspired a song that is still sung to this day: “Bug suits, bug suits, why didn’t Daddy buy them, buy them?” It has been taught to every child on every river trip we have participated in since then. It does become slightly more sensational with every retelling.

When people see the AW sticker on each of our vehicles, or the AW shirt which Mark is inevitably wearing, or the AW drybag that accompanies him on river excursions, often they’ll strike up a conversation, asking if Mark’s a paddler. The conversation will sometimes carry on for a few seconds or a few minutes, with the stranger talking about either paddling or the greatness of American Whitewater. At some point, Mark must awkwardly interject, with, “Yeah, I know American Whitewater pretty well. Allow me to introduce myself.”

“Executive Director” of American Whitewater. We love spending time and sharing adventures with the AW family (staff and board members). Our commitment to the mission of AW goes beyond Mark’s role as the director; it is part of who we are as a family. We are the unofficial ambassadors, on and off the river, for stewardship, conservation, and safety of the river places that are important to our well-being and the health of our communities. Thanks for allowing us to be a part of Mark’s journey. Now, let’s go paddling!





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Permanently removing dams and restoring rivers like the White Salmon (WA). "Anytime you get to go to work and there's like dynamite involved... it's gonna be a good day"



Restoring flows to the West Fork Truck in Mark's backyard was a highlight but American Whitewater secured instream flows for hundreds of streams under Mark's leadership



Thousands of miles of new Wild & Scenic designations passed through Congress and thousands more rivers protected under the Wild and Scenic Act through Forest Planning.



We've grown from a staff of 5 to 12. Mark started with one full-time Stewardship role, we now have 8 dedicated stewardship positions. Mark built the team that gets it done

MARK'S LEGACY AS the Executive Director is impossible to completely capture, but take it from the staff at American Whitewater, it's one that will endure.

The characteristics that make Mark such a wonderful leader are the same ones that you look for in a paddling partner. He comes from a place of complete trust and confidence in his staff. He has a way of providing support, direction and encouragement without overloading you with instructions. He'll point out the stomping hole at the bottom and then be there with a rope, without the 'I told you so' look on his face. I will sorely miss him and his strong leadership."
- Southern Rockies Stewardship Director Hattie Johnson

FAREWELL TO MARK

A TRIBUTE TO OUR FEARLESS LEADER

BY BETHANY OVERFIELD

PHOTOS BY THOMAS O'KEEFE



It was a beautiful, crisp Saturday morning this past February when I headed out on a hike with Mark, Debby, and Skyler (Mark's wife and daughter, respectively) in western North Carolina. I had been wanting to visit Panthertown, a stunning and relatively untamed portion of the Nantahala National Forest, for quite some time and Mark invited me on an adventure with his clan. We spent the morning chatting, laughing, and making our way through rhododendron thickets and over gorgeous granite balds, eventually finding a spot to stop for lunch to enjoy the view. While we were finishing up Mark said, "Bethany, I've got some pretty big news," then he told me he'd be leaving American Whitewater in June. I accused him of doing anything to get out of being in charge at Gauley Fest, and then had a great conversation with him about his plans—Debby would be retiring a few weeks before Mark.

The care with which Mark told me about his transition away from AW was textbook Mark Singleton. He spent three to four days calling each staff member to talk to them independently about his plans, which is so indicative of his leadership style, marked by an authentic and personal approach. Mark is hands-down the greatest leader I've had the pleasure of working for. Hattie Johnson, our Southern Rockies Stewardship Director summed it up beautifully when she said, "The characteristics that make Mark such a wonderful leader are the same ones that you look for in a paddling partner. He comes from a place of complete trust and confidence in his staff. He has a way of providing support, direction, and encouragement without overloading you with instructions. He'll point out the stomping hole at the bottom and then be there with a rope, without the 'I told you so' look on his face. I will sorely miss him and his strong leadership."

When Mark took the helm at AW in 2004, the organization looked very different than it does today. We've grown from a staff of five to a staff of 12 since then (and now work with +/- 10 contractors at any given time). He started with one full-time Stewardship role and we now have eight folks dedicated to stewardship project work. Much of our growth has been in the past five years, with new positions created for Communications and Outreach, Membership and Engagement, and two key associate stewardship roles.

The tenure of staff at AW over the past 18 years is impressive as well and that's, in large part, due to Mark's leadership style. "He's given staff incredible latitude to dream up compelling projects that we then deliver on because we are personally invested in them. We are encouraged to be curious and creative, and tackle projects on behalf of our members that we find inspiring and ideally suited to our skillsets," said Kevin Colburn, our National Stewardship Director. When anyone comments on the success of AW during Mark's reign, he always places that success on his team. And although it's true that the staff does much of the gritty work, it's Mark who assembled our team. He's the one who brought us all together to share his vision and he's the one who is dedicated to making sure we have what we need to propel our mission forward.

Mark, as Hattie mentioned, trusts the team he put together. You'll notice that most of the Staff at AW has, "Director" in their title. Working for and with a person that has trust in you to do the job that you know how to do enables freedom and confidence. He doesn't micromanage; he directs. This is rare and it's invaluable.

The American Whitewater budget has tripled over the past 18 years, an impressive accomplishment of growth. The organization has received four out of four stars on the Charity Navigator star rating for nonprofits for 12 years in a row. There's just a handful of nonprofits in the nation with that track record at Charity Navigator! Membership has grown significantly as well and continues to do so. Mark consistently gives the staff what they need for sustained growth. We believe in building relationships at American Whitewater. We want our members to be invested in our project work—that's always been Mark's focus.

We've increased our community's engagement in our work through platforms like Every Action, which allows for our members and supporters to be heard. We recently switched our membership platform, a huge undertaking, to better serve our members, donors, and staff. This sort of project work doesn't



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Colorado River, Grand Canyon. | Photo: Evan Stafford

FAREWELL TO MARK



make headlines, but it's the foundation of our success. Mark knows all about the value of laying a good foundation; it's one of his greatest strengths. He motivates us to always further engage the public in our work. "Mark always has not only pushed our staff to connect with the community we serve in an authentic way, he's never once balked at the idea that building these relationships on and off the water isn't one of the most important things we do," said Evan Stafford, our Communications and Outreach Director.

Another of Mark's strengths is his ability to make tough decisions, oftentimes under pressure. On staff calls, he'll let us debate a topic for a while, listening to all angles of a particular issue. Before we get too mired in the weeds, Mark will interject and proclaim our stance and let us know how to move forward. This is what it is to truly lead an organization. On his leadership style, Stafford commented that, "Mark's guidance can probably best be described as that quintessential last stroke at the lip of a drop: perfectly placed, just the right amount of force, completely engaged and committed to the line. It's been the pleasure of my career to work for Mark and I deeply appreciate the opportunity he's given me to serve the community and the rivers I love so much."

"Mark has the rare quality of directing without ego and allowing a talented staff to make good trouble to protect our rivers," said Bob Nasdor, our Northeast Stewardship Director. Mark's management style includes an intrinsic lack of ego, making him approachable and responsive, but unwavering when it comes to his beliefs. Mark doesn't back down when he has to go to bat for rivers or his staff. Colburn summed it up as, "There is a lot of humanity in his leadership style, along with no small amount of honey badger," which the entire staff would agree is undeniably true.

When I came on board three and a half years ago, Mark and I already had a strong working relationship. I worked with him for many years as the Director of the National Paddling Film Festival, a volunteer gig for me. When the Membership Director position opened, Mark reached out to let me know. I'd been a research geologist for 17 years and was looking for a career change. Living in Kentucky at the time, I drove to Sylva, NC (where our Executive Office is located) to meet with Mark for the interview, which was casual since we both knew each other so well. We had a very candid conversation about how different this path would be for me career-wise. At one point Mark looked at me and said, "Bethany, I don't want to be the guy that &*\$%s up your life."

We joke about that all the time now, especially when work gets intense and I'm down in the trenches. Contrary to Mark's fear, working for AW has been thoroughly fulfilling and challenging in the best ways. Not only because I believe so wholeheartedly in

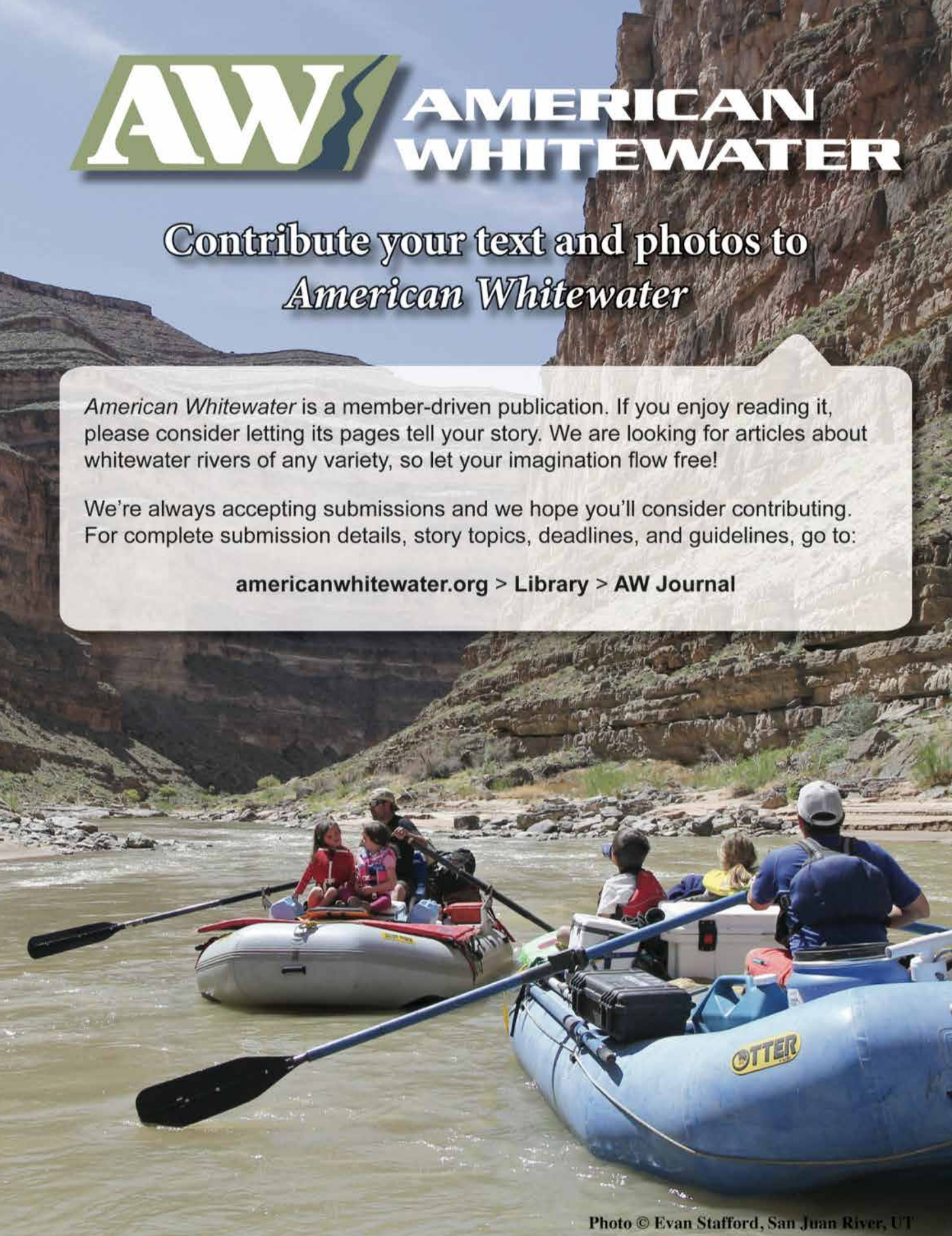
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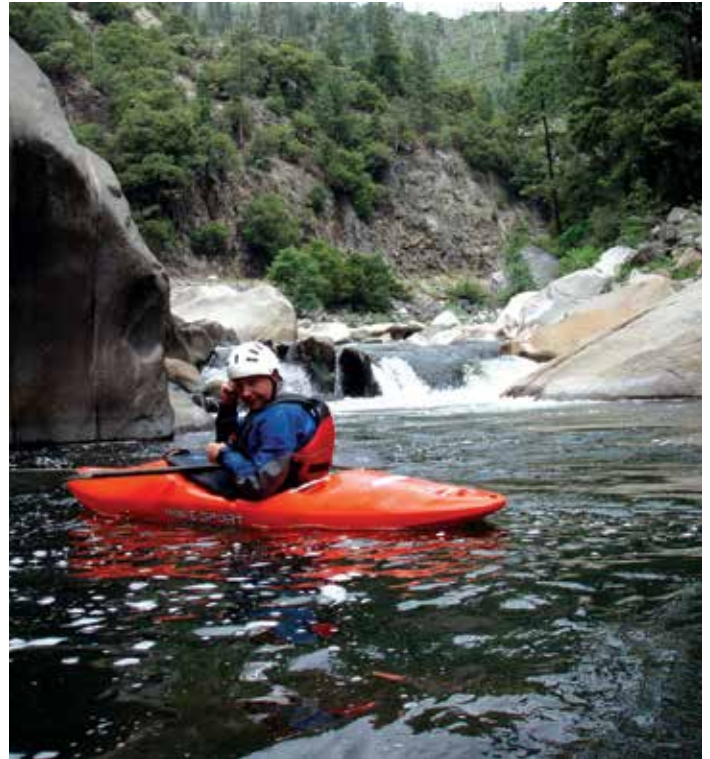
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FAREWELL TO MARK



our mission, but because getting to work directly with Mark has been a tremendous learning experience in how to lead. Mark leads with compassion, listens intently, fiercely advocates for his staff, and unabashedly makes hard decisions that he stands by. Working closely with Mark has been one of the greatest joys of my professional life and I will miss him immensely.

Mark, from your staff, who are your greatest admirers and also your friends, we wish you nothing but the best; we will carry your commitment with us always, we will continue to honor you in our work to protect, restore, and enjoy rivers. Thank you, from the bottom of our hearts, for your leadership, your compassion, and your commitment to American Whitewater and to us.

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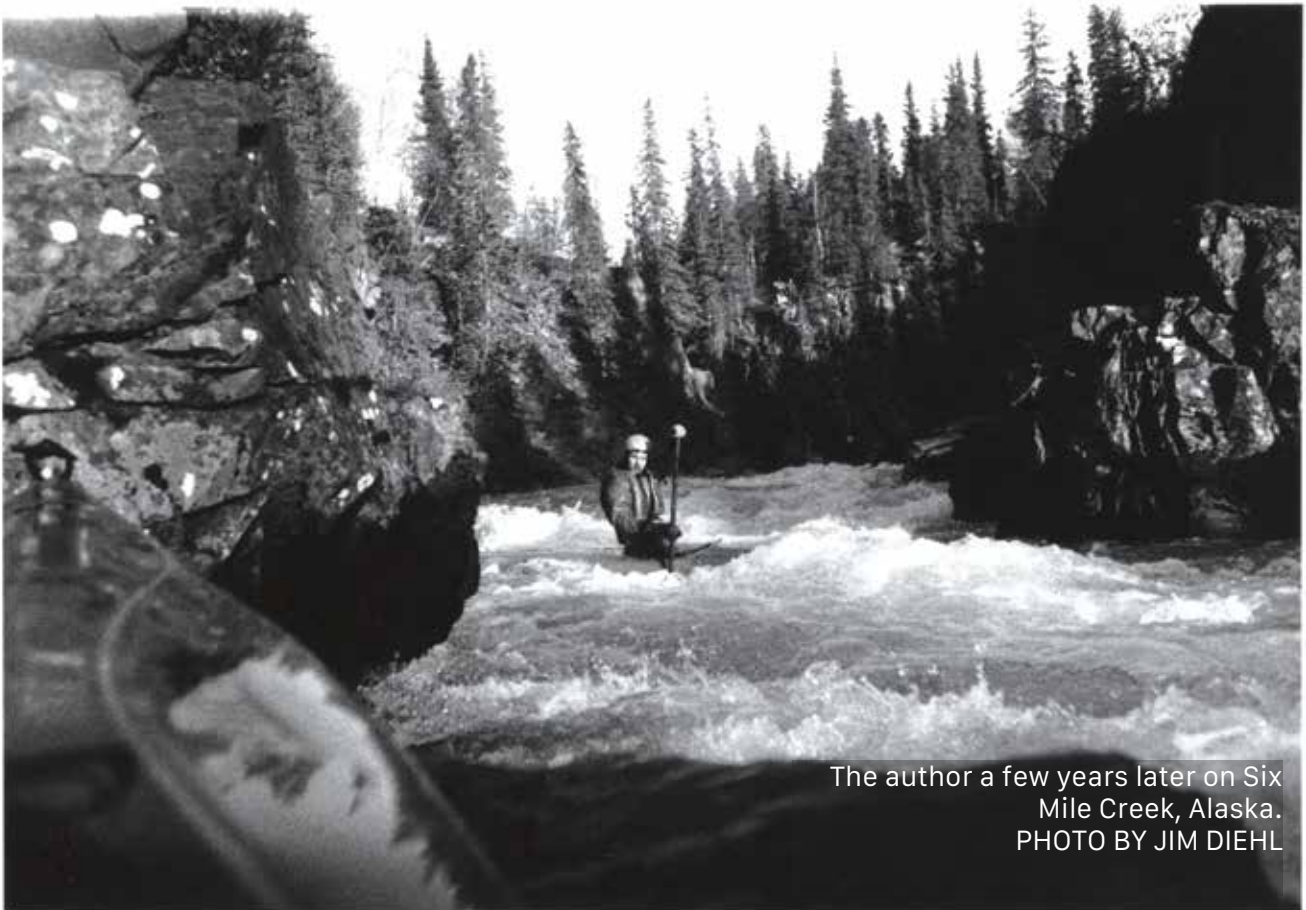
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SHAPING
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UPPER LITTLE NORTH SANTIAM FIRST DESCENT AND DRYSUIT FIELD TEST

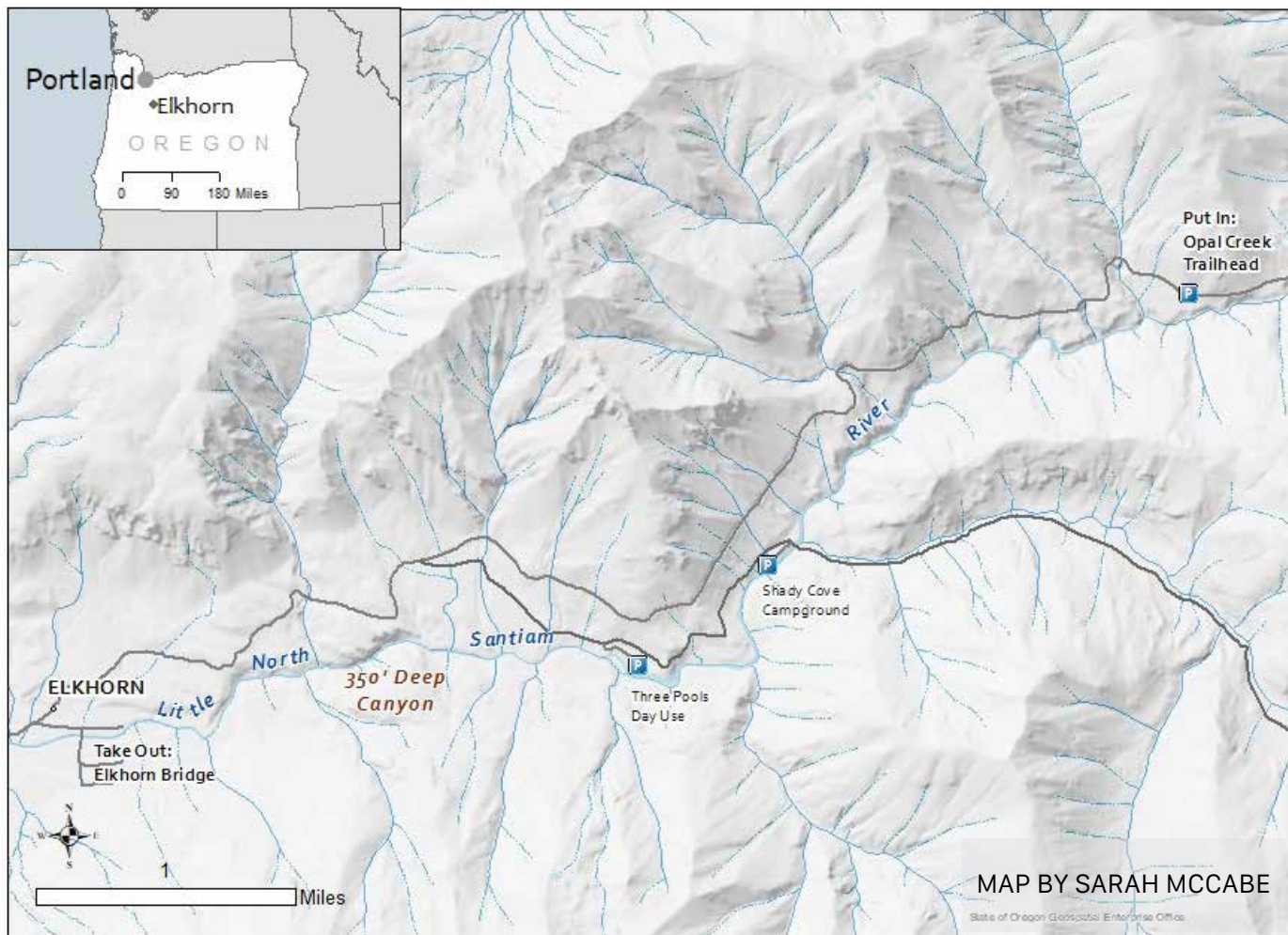
BY BILL OSTRAND



The author a few years later on Six Mile Creek, Alaska.
PHOTO BY JIM DIEHL

WHEN I ARRIVED in Oregon in 1977 as a young man in my 20s, paddlers were beginning to explore rivers during the rainy season. Many first descents were recorded and most of these river sections are now described in *Soggy Sneakers: A Guide To Oregon Rivers*. It was also the era before drysuits. We wore a farmer john wetsuit, wool or synthetic long johns, and a nylon paddling jacket. The protection from the cold was less than perfect, and I was often chilled at the end of a run. In 1983 a friend received a deal on the first drysuits that I had ever heard of. I was unsure that the expense would be justified, but in the end, I joined the group purchase. The trip described here was the second use of that drysuit.

In the fall of 1983, friends Harvey Shapiro, Andreas Muller, and Kenneth Hochfeld, were planning to do a first descent of the upper Little North Santiam River (OR). As trip planners, they were as thorough as one could be in those days. They studied USGS paper topographic maps, calculated river gradients, and determined access points. The trio made an early-season attempt, but shortly after the put-in they encountered a complex waterfall which they considered un-runnable. They climbed out of the steep forested canyon and returned to the access road. Within weeks they decided to give it another try, and they invited me to join them.



On the November day of the trip it was cool with a light rain. We had hoped for low water to explore the river, but it was obviously high due to several preceding days of rain. After some discussion about the risks associated with the water level, we decided to go for it. To reach the river required a rugged boat carry through forest which would have to be repeated in reverse if we could not find a way around the waterfall.

Harvey and I were paddling decked canoes, C-1s, which I had built. Andreas and Kenneth were in kayaks. After putting in, we soon came to the falls, which we all safely eddied out above. This time we persisted in searching for a portage route, and with some effort were able to climb part way up the canyon and then back down below the falls. Beyond this point we did not know what lay ahead. Based on the flow and gradient there certainly would be some big rapids in an intense canyon section.

What we found was delightful. The rapids were Class III and IV, which we negotiated without incident. After the canyon came calmer water and a chance to unwind. Soon we were at the Three Pools Recreation Area which signaled we were near the end of the run. At the time of the first attempt this was to be the take-out, but further map study showed a bridge a short way downstream that would offer more convenient access. We pressed on. I began feeling fatigue and pain from extended kneeling in my C-1 so I paddled in the lead, attempting to hurry the group along in what we expected to be easy water.

Soon we came around a bend and saw more rapids ahead. I remember saying to Harvey, “This is turning into an ordeal!” At the time, I had no idea how prophetic that statement would prove. I could see there was a horizon line on the river, but I also saw a safe eddy above it on river right.

This is when I made the mistake that nearly cost my life. I did not take in the big picture – the abrupt change from a steep forested river gorge to a sheer rock canyon. I paddled ahead and into the eddy above the big drop. But I could not see what was below the big drop. There was a tremendous roar of the water, so I needed to get out of my boat to see below. There was barely enough flat rock to land and get out of my boat. Standing only a few feet from the lip, I still could not see the bottom. The rock surface I was on was too smooth, wet, and slippery for me to advance. But I could see the water downstream slammed into the opposite wall and then caromed right, dropped again and formed a river-wide hole. In the center of the hole was a large basalt boulder rising above the foam of upstream crashing water. I had never seen such a feature on a river before or since. It was obvious we needed to find another option to continuing downriver.

Fortunately, my boating companions saw the rock canyon and did not follow me. They eddied out well above the entrance to the canyon. They quickly recognized that I was in serious trouble and that we needed a plan. Andreas offered to continue down to

the eddy I had landed in. He was a confident and skilled boater, but Harvey and Ken convinced him the plan was flawed. Two people boxed into a canyon would be worse than one. Instead, they stashed their boats, grabbed their throw ropes and began working their way in my direction along the steep bank.

Surveying my situation in the canyon, I looked for an alternative way out. On the left side of the river, just opposite me, was the end of a long eddy. The top of the eddy was opposite a tiny eddy on river right near the forested riverbank. If I could make the ferry to the long eddy, paddle upstream, then ferry across to the tiny eddy, I might be able to scramble onto the rocks and free myself.

I did not hesitate to make the attempt. The initial ferry went well, and the long eddy pulled me under a large, cave like overhang. To avoid being pinned I reached up and pushed myself forward out from the overhang. Next was the ferry from left to right. As a right-handed C-1 paddler, this was the weaker move, with no paddle or brace on the downstream side of my canoe. However, with adrenaline surging in my blood I made the move and got into the micro eddy. My friends also recognized this series of moves as my best option for escaping the canyon as I could see them scrambling to get to the top of the micro eddy where they

could reach my bow grab loop. Unfortunately, I arrived at the eddy before them. I could not hold my position in the eddy and slid backward, downstream. I was quickly pushed against the right wall and knocked over. With the current pinning me and my boat against the wall, attempting to roll was futile. I could wait to drift free of the wall then roll up just before going over the big drop backward, or I could wet exit and attempt to swim to the eddy just above the big drop. In such situations there is no time for contemplation, yet I did have a clear understanding of my options and the consequence of each. I chose the exit and came to the surface beside the last eddy. The boat and paddle were in my way, so I pushed them over the edge, never to be seen again. With just a few freestyle strokes I was in the eddy, crawled out of the water, and clung to the rock wall.

Now I faced a new situation. I was trapped and could not remain there because the rock surrounding me was polished smooth, forcing me to hang on with both arms and legs. It was raining and if the river rose, I would be swept downstream. Moving upward was my only option.

About 10 years earlier, I had taken a rock-climbing class and learned the basics, but the sport was not for me. In whitewater boating

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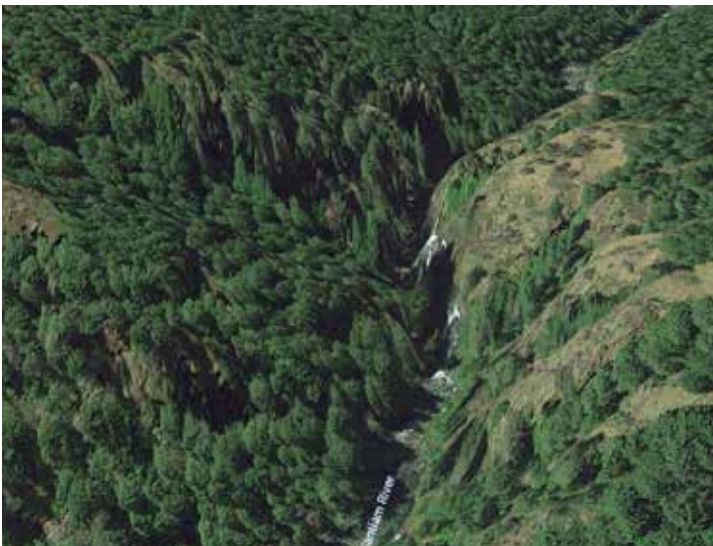


one must react instantaneously to the demands of situations changing at the rate of the river's flow. That was a source of exhilaration. In climbing, there is more time to contemplate one's next move and to consider the fear of falling. I found climbing's emotion and adrenalin not to be pleasant, but rather inhibiting, resulting in poor performance, much like stage-fright. To put it more succinctly, I hated it. But now, I had to free climb to save myself.

Above me was a lone conifer tree. Perhaps beneath the tree was soil and a flat spot where I could rest and contemplate my next move. I began climbing. Upon reaching the tree, I was greatly disappointed. There was no soil or flat spot. The tree grew out of a crack in the rock wall, a testament to the tenacity and survival of this tree, but it offered me no rest or comfort. My only option was to continue climbing. Above the polished rock, climbing was less tenuous with more secure hand and foot holds, but it was increasingly vertical. At about 100 feet above the river I came to a ledge, about as wide as my feet. There were a couple of hand holds that allowed me to stand and hang on semi-comfortably. Above me was a deep crack in the rock that ran at about a 45-degree angle upward. It was a possible route up and out of the canyon, but it was much more challenging and dangerous than anything I had ever done. The consequence of a slip would be death. Furthermore, it was getting dark, so I decided to wait the night where I stood. If I am still here at dawn, I will see where the crack leads.



Although my friends could not see me, they were aware of the gravity of my situation and that it was up to them to seek outside help. They knew of the Air Force Reserve 304th Rescue Squadron, out of Portland, and made the correct assumption that the unit's unique skills and equipment would be necessary to save me. This being before cell phones, so they decided to send one person to contact the squadron while the remaining two would search the

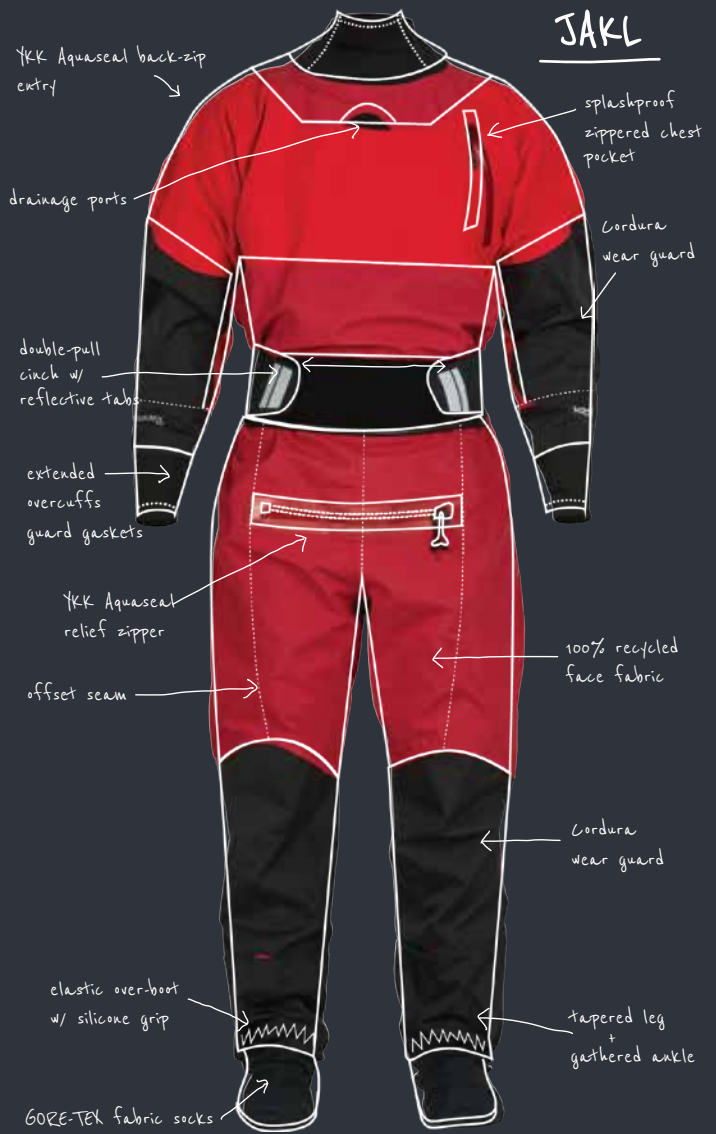


Top: The author in red and in the foreground. Harvey Shapiro, in blue in the background, is the person who went for help and alerted the Air Force Reserve 304th Rescue Squadron. This photo was taken on the Clackamas River, OR after events of this article. PHOTO BY SARAH BEVILACQUA

Middle: Harvey completing a roll on the Clackamas. PHOTO BY SARAH BEVILACQUA

Bottom: Google Earth 3D view of Santiam Canyon. A drone-like view, somewhat distorted, yet it gives a realistic illustration of the size and depth of the canyon.

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RIVER VOICES

slope for a way to reach me. Harvey would go for help. Harvey had to hike out of the canyon, find someone's home, and ask to use their phone. Harvey was the perfect choice. Having grown up in New York City, he could be pugnacious when the situation called for it, and he wouldn't fail to get through to the 304th. Harvey did it, and his call was routed to the local volunteer rescue unit. The local unit responded, and at Harvey's persistent insistence the 304th was contacted and put on alert by the local rescuers. But they would not be dispatched until called in by the local unit. It was not the action my friends had planned, but alerting the 304th made the difference in the end.

While clinging to the cliff all night I understood that should I succumb to hypothermia or give way to panic, I would likely fall 100 feet or more to certain death. My thoughts needed to be focused and controlled. To the extent possible, I had to stay warm. I attempted to sit on my ledge to ease the strain on my legs and arms. But sitting on the cold rock wicked away precious body heat. Therefore, I resolved to stand for the duration of the night.

To control my thoughts, I recounted events of my past and mentally re-read my favorite book, Lennard Bickel's *Mawson's Will, The Greatest Polar Survival Story Ever Written*. After playing back

Mawson's struggle to cross 320 miles of Antarctica after losing companions, dogs, supplies, and food, I thought, "This situation, compared to what Dawson survived, ain't nothing." I also drew upon the most important lesson I gained from my time on the high school wrestling team: that if I could press past the initial pain and was persistent, I was capable of more. I would need more this night. However, my greatest inspiration and determination to survive came from thinking of my child that would be born in a few more months. I was resolved to be there for her.

Well into the evening I heard noise above me, followed by rocks flying by. I realized that a rescue attempt was being made, but nothing more happened. I yelled but heard no reply. Later I learned that the local rescue unit had attempted to send a rappeler to me, but their rope was too short. Probably it was sometime after this failed attempt that the local unit chose to call in the Army 304th Rescue Squadron.

Harvey returned after making his call, and my friends remained above the canyon all night. Andreas and Ken had climbed up and down the canyon margins, both upstream and downstream of my location attempting to find a way to get to me. The terrain was extremely steep, and the footing was very loose and slippery from



The author on the Clackamas River.
PHOTO BY SARAH BEVILACQUA

RIVER VOICES



Harvey on the Clackamas
PHOTO BY SARAH BEVILACQUA

the continual rain. When the local rescue unit arrived, they largely ignored my companions. They failed to recognize Harvey, Andreas, and Ken as the experts in river running that they were. They apparently thought us to be foolish, poorly prepared adventurers.

Much later in the night I thought I heard a helicopter above me, but with the roar of the rapids below me, I could not be sure. The sound soon went away. After other signs that rescue might be coming, I forced myself to return to my disciplined thoughts and not to relax physically. Later I learned that what I heard was indeed the 304th helicopter. But the freezing level was now just above me, which caused the ship to ice up as it hovered above the canyon. They were forced to land in a nearby field and trucked their gear to the rim of the canyon.

As dawn broke, I first heard, then saw, an airman rappelling to my side! I shouted to him. He saw me and moved over to my ledge. He helped me into a climbing harness and attached me to his rope. He then placed anchors into the cracks in the rock wall and transferred himself to this secure anchor. At last I was in a stable position and could slightly relax which made me aware of the pain of muscle fatigue and cramping which I had mentally pushed aside all night. The airman radioed to his team above to begin hoisting me up. A chainsaw powered winch was used to pull me the 200 feet or so to the top. The winch pulled me about 40 feet, after which the rope was secured, the winch reset, and the

lifting cycle repeated. Each pull and reset took several minutes. For one reset, I was below a large overhang dangling about 50 feet from the rock wall. The rope was free to relieve itself of the twist and I spun in one direction and then the other. Under normal circumstances, this spinning could be upsetting, thrilling, or even terrifying, but in my mental state I simply hung onto the rope waiting for the lifting to continue.

Above the overhang of the vertical canyon was a steep slope where I could see the group. Saved! But not yet. The canyon made one more attempt to claim me. The carabiner that linked my climbing harness to the rope jammed in a rock while the winch continued to pull, putting dangerous tension on the line. I frantically pounded the carabiner with my fist, but with no result. The rope began to stretch.

Suddenly the carabiner popped free, I was shot upward and landed safely above the canyon wall—now with the rescue team and boating friends who had waited the long, cold night for me. Although I was cramped, stiff, and sore, I was otherwise in good shape. I had not become hypothermic and there were no effects that were not cured by a few hours rest and some sleep. The local newspaper reported that I had spent 15 hours on the canyon wall.

EPILOGUE

Following my rescue, I experienced several related events, some immediately and others in the coming weeks. Below are two of the positive results from my rescue.

The following March, my daughter was born. On that day, I was largely caught up in the events of her birth, but I did take time to be deeply thankful for being alive to experience her arrival and to be around as her father in the future.

The newspaper reporter who wrote about the event described a conversation that took place among rescue team members shortly before my extraction. "He must be in bad shape down there. I heard he is wearing a special suit that might be keeping him alive." Yes, that special suit did make a difference. I credit my drysuit for preventing hypothermia. The story of my experience quickly spread through the Northwest boating community. In a few months, nearly all the boaters I met on river trips were wearing drysuits. My experience proved to be a very early and successful field test.

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WOOD WARNING

BY THERESA GRYDER



A familiar sight to experienced paddlers, any wood in the river, like the tree here, is to be avoided.
PHOTO BY THERESA GRYDER

GREW UP paddling in the southeast and while there is sometimes wood in the creeks, it is usually smallish and transient. I didn't really understand how dangerous wood in the water can be until Pablo Perez died in 1998. He was a kind, beautiful young man and a super strong paddling athlete. I knew him because he was a guide on the Chattooga, too. When he died there was deep sadness throughout our community, and a heightened awareness of how dangerous even a small tree in the river can be. Even with fast and expert rescue attempts he could not be saved.

People who haven't seen this happen may underestimate just how dangerous wood can be.

Here's the accident report about Pablo's demise: <https://www.americanwhitewater.org/content/Accident/detail/accidentid/475>

There are lots of terms for it but these days most folks just talk about "wood." "Strainer" is a tree that has enough branches that it "strains" things out of the current. "Sweeper" is more like a tree or shrub that hangs down from overhead. In some areas logs and

root balls are added to streams to provide shelter and habitat for fish, especially salmon.

The trouble with wood is that water flows right around it without slowing down. New paddlers learn that rocks (excepting undercut) are not that hard to avoid because the water piles up on them making a soft "pillow" and then diverts around them. A rock really slows the river down upstream from it. Wood is not like that. There is no pillow, and the water doesn't turn and go around them. Water goes through strainers.

Another problem with wood is that it can be branchy, spiky, and all kinds of shapes. I heard a story about a rafter in Chile who fell out of a raft and swam into a pine tree in the fast current. Maybe he tried to reach an arm over the log to climb up on it. The spike of a broken branch stuck him through the armpit and into his heart. Another boater died when they attempted a rail slide on a log and slid into a crook that held them.

Wood floats, but when stuck on rocks it can be under water, where it's hard to see. The "safe swim position" involves keeping our feet up on the surface and pointed downstream to avoid foot

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SAFETY

entrapment. You can get your feet caught in the rocks, but you can also get caught by a branch.

Any part of your gear can get caught on a branch, including a tow tether (sometimes called a cowtail) on a rescue jacket, a lifejacket shoulder strap, a sprayskirt or a helmet strap. This is why you should keep all straps snug, and for cowtails on a rescue vest, you should have quick release systems on both ends of the tether. The bottom line is that you don't want to get snagged on anything.

Another tragic drowning on wood happened February 2022 on the Oconaluftee River in North Carolina. A 34-year-old woman named Megan Thompson died after flipping over upstream from a root ball and getting stuck on it. Root balls are the grabbiest kind of wood, with roots sticking out in every direction. While her paddling partner asserts that she had the skills for the run, we all know that everybody flips, and everybody swims, no matter how good they are.

The accident report about that drowning is here: <https://www.americanwhitewater.org/content/Accident/detail/accidentid/115767>.

Once a person is stuck on a wood obstacle, it is difficult to extricate them. In many cases it is impossible. You have a better chance of

pulling off a rescue if you have rescue skills and a large crew, but those are no guarantee. The only guarantee of not having issues with wood is to avoid it entirely.

Avoiding wood may mean not doing certain runs. It may mean launching at a different place so that your chance of flipping above a bad strainer is zero instead of 1%. Other ways to avoid wood include paddling a big fat boat instead of a half slice or full slice, and portaging or sneaking a rapid that you normally would run without any trouble.

In medicine we have a "high index of suspicion" for any condition that is extremely dangerous, like melanoma. On the river we are wise to have a high index of suspicion for wood. Where there is a twig, look for a log. Pablo might be alive today if he'd waited for a signal from the man who ran the rapid before him. Megan might be alive today if she hadn't carried her boat upstream from the Smokemont Campground to launch a little higher on the run.

You make the choices that put you at risk, or save your life. Don't wait until someone near to you dies on wood. Give it a wide berth starting now. Wood in the water is far more dangerous than most other hazards, and deserves our utmost respect and our best efforts at avoidance.

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PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHT: IMMERSION RESEARCH

By GRANT BRAUN

IT'S THE MIDDLE of October 1981. Kara Weld is about to go for her very first "loop run" on the Lower Youghiogheny River. She is sporting some corduroy bottoms paired with a shrunken old wool sweater. Quite a common mash-up of an outfit for whitewater at the time, given the lack of available and dedicated equipment for the sport. Hard to believe that just a few years after this, Kara would become a three-time slalom National Champion, trading in old camping gear for some improved equipment designed by a fellow teammate.

Enter the early 90s, and a new era is starting to shape within the industry. A younger generation was eager to paddle, but frustrated with the lack of gear available. Paddlers were stuck with basically two options: sporting some blue paddle jacket and 5-inch inseam shorts or simply whatever camping clothes one had at the time.

This all changes when an eager and creative John Weld gets his hands on a sewing machine. John, driven by the need to create, begins sewing up surf trunks for himself, Kara, and their friends. And just like that, Immersion Research, IR, began to flood the budding scene of whitewater kayaking in 1997.

Immersion Research began to grow from sewing up boardshorts to tackling technical gear that could withstand the harsh environment of whitewater. John and Kara's passion for paddling has continued to fuel IR into the industry leader it is today. After decades of product testing and development, IR is now at the forefront of dry wear quality and is the most trusted spray skirt manufacturer in the world.

Behind the dry wear and spray skirts, IR at its roots is an expression of paddling culture. Experiences shared on and off the water influence a lot of decision-making for how IR creates and shares products. For IR, paddling is a way of life and it continues to drive them forward in all that they do.

Given the ability to create high-end garments, IR is beginning to expand into developing products that extend to life beyond the river. The recently launched Immersion Research brand experience store, in Hood River, Oregon, is providing the opportunity to develop new product lines, including improved layering pieces for users who enjoy a multitude of outdoor pursuits and even lifestyle wear that simply makes daily life more comfortable. An in-store production sewing room will allow shoppers a chance to see the team continue product development and the design of best-in-class gear for generations to come.



AFFILIATE CLUBS

AW'S ORIGINAL PURPOSE

BY BETHANY OVERFIELD

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

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

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

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

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Fairbanks Paddlers, Fairbanks

Arkansas

Arkansas Canoe Club, Little Rock

Colorado

Dolores River Boating Advocate, Dolores
Colorado Whitewater Association, Denver

Georgia

Georgia Canoeing Association Inc, Winston

Kentucky

Bluegrass Wildwater Association, Lexington
Viking Canoe Club, Louisville

New York

KCCNY, Brooklyn

North Carolina

West Asheville Canoe and Kayak Organization (WACKO), Asheville

Ohio

Keelhaulers, Cleveland

Oregon

Oregon Kayak and Canoe Club, Portland
Oregon Whitewater Association, Tigard

South Carolina

Foothills Paddling Club, Greenville
Palmetto Paddlers, Columbia

Washington

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

AFFILIATE CLUBS BY STATE

Alaska

Nova River Runners Inc., Chickaloon

Alabama

Coosa River Paddling Club, Wetumpka
Huntsville Canoe Club, Huntsville

Arizona

Outdoors Unlimited, Flagstaff

California

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

Colorado

Diversity Whitewater, Fort Collins
Friends of the Yampa, Steamboat Springs
Rocky Mountain Outdoor Center, Buena Vista
Royal Gorge River Initiative Org, Canon City
San Miguel Whitewater Asso, Telluride
Team Colorado Whitewater Racing Club, Longmont
Upper Colorado Private Boaters Asso, Glenwood Springs

Connecticut

Housatonic Area Canoe & Kayak Sq, Lakeville

Delaware

AMC Delaware Valley Chapter, Oaks (PA)

Idaho

Idaho Whitewater Association, Boise

Indiana

Hoosier Canoe Club, Brownsburg
Ohio Valley Paddlers, Evansville

Iowa

Iowa Whitewater Coalition, W. Des Moines

Kentucky

Elkhorn Paddlers, Lexington

Maine

Penobscot Paddle & Chowder Society, Freeport

Maryland

Blue Ridge Voyagers, Rockville

Minnesota

Northland Paddlers Alliance, Duluth
Rapids Riders, Eagan

Missouri

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

Montana

Beartooth Paddlers Society, Billings

Nevada

Sierra Nevada Whitewater Club, Reno

New Mexico

Adobe Whitewater Club of New Mexico, Albuquerque

New Hampshire

Ledyard Canoe Club, Hanover
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AMC Delaware Valley Chapter, Oaks (PA)

New York

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

North Carolina

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

Ohio

Friends of the Crooked River, Akron

Oregon

Lower Columbia Canoe Club, Portland
Northwest Rafters Association, Roseburg
Oregon Kayak and Canoe Club, Portland
Willamette Kayak and Canoe Club, Corvallis

Pennsylvania

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

Rhode Island

Rhode Island Canoe and Kayak Association,
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Tennessee

Appalachian Paddling Enthusiasts,
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 Clean Water Expected in East Tennessee,
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 East Tennessee Whitewater Club, Oak Ridge
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Texas

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Utah

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 Utah Whitewater Club, Salt Lake City

Vermont

Vermont Paddlers Club, Montpelier

Virginia

Blue Ridge River Runners, Lynchburg
 Canoe Cruisers Association, Middlebury
 Coastal Canoeists, Richmond
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Washington

Spokane Canoe & Kayak Club, Spokane
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Washington, DC

Canoe Cruisers Association

West Virginia

Dbl Z! Whitewater Club, Fayetteville
 Friends of the Cheat, Kingwood
 Mason Dixon Canoe Cruisers, Bolivar
 WV Wildwater Assn, S. Charleston

Wisconsin

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

Wyoming

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

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

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

JOIN AMERICAN WHITEWATER AS A CLUB AFFILIATE!

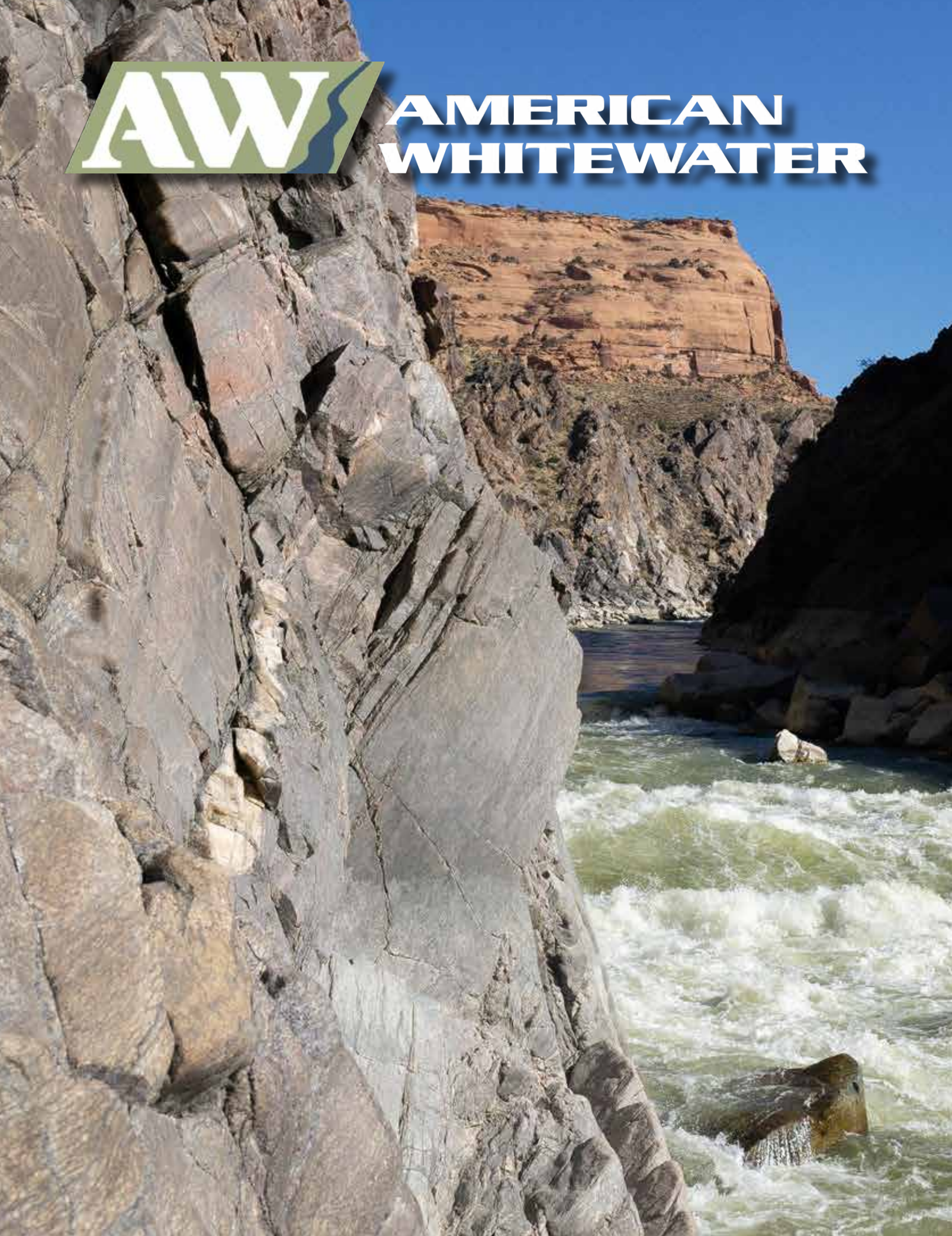
10 REASONS TO JOIN AW AS AN AFFILIATE CLUB

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

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



AMERICAN WHITEWATER



The Strength of Our Voice is Your Membership

Standard w/AW Journal	\$35
Family w/AW Journal	\$50
Ender Club w/T-Shirt	\$125
Platinum Paddler w/Hoodie	\$250
Explorer w/Watershed Bag	\$500
Lifetime	\$1,000
Steward w/\$400 Kokatat Gift	\$2,500



*Incentive gifts change from time to time, please check the website for the latest rewards.

Join @ americanwhitewater.org/join

Donate @ americanwhitewater.org/donate



Membership Driven River Stewardship
americanwhitewater.org/join

Whitewater River Defenders

Since 1954

Salmon River, ID – By Evan Stafford

