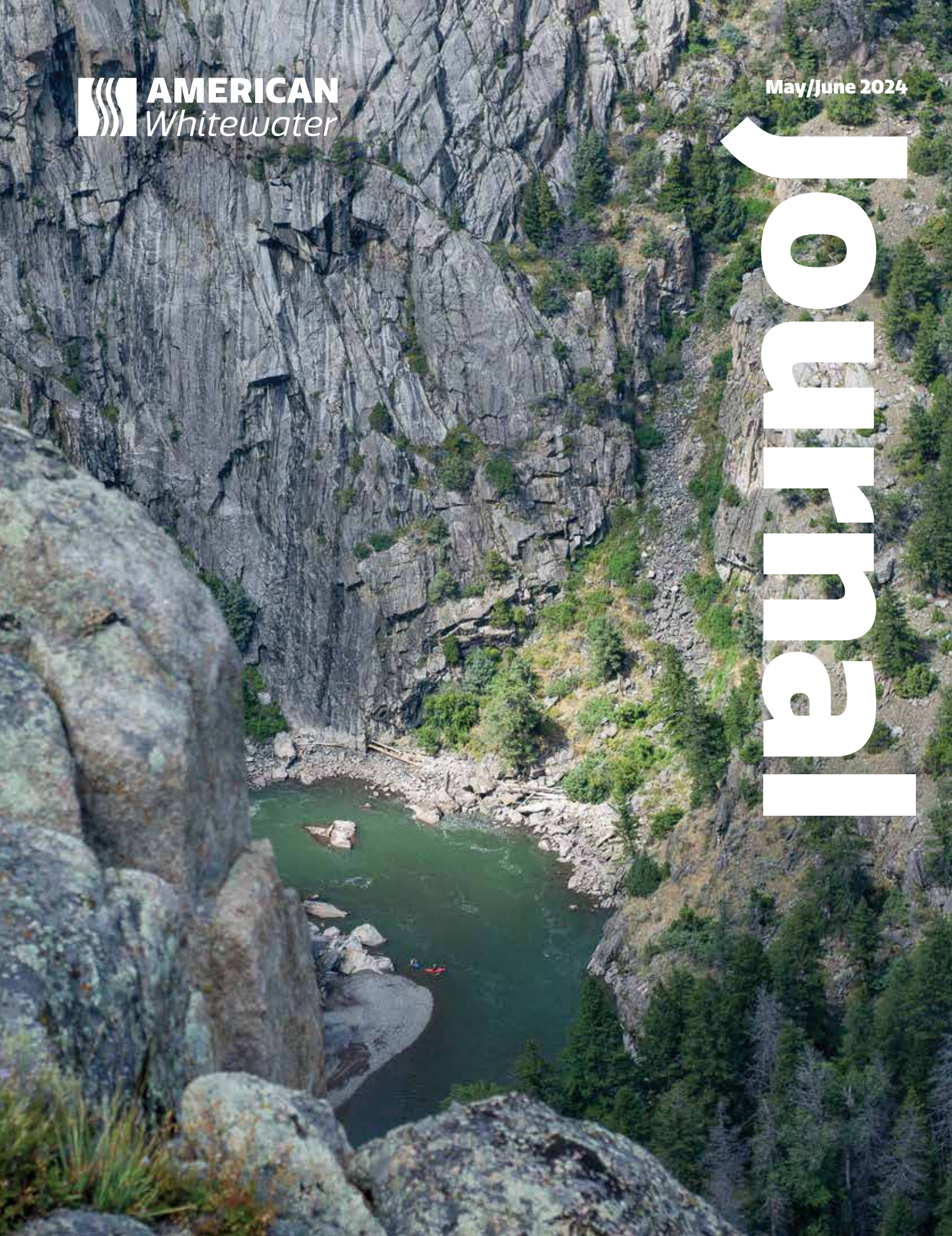


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**AMERICAN
WHITEWATER
JOURNAL**



A volunteer publication
promoting river conservation,
access, and safety

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Cover photo: Nathan Werner out of cell range, deep in the Clarks Fork Box (WY). Nathan discusses the need and options for satellite communication devices when traveling river corridors on page 40. Photo: Evan Stafford

PURPOSE

RIVER STEWARDSHIP: AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

Our mission: "To protect and restore America's whitewater rivers and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely," is actively pursued through our conservation, access, safety and education efforts under the umbrella of River Stewardship. The only national organization representing the interest of all whitewater paddlers, American Whitewater is the national voice for thousands of individual whitewater enthusiasts, as well as over 85 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 nonprofit organization (Non-profit # 23-7083760) with a mission "to conserve and restore America's whitewater resources and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely." American Whitewater is a membership organization representing a broad diversity of individual whitewater enthusiasts, river conservationists, and more than 100 local paddling club affiliates across America. The organization is the primary advocate for the preservation and protection of whitewater rivers throughout the United States, and connects the interests of human-powered recreational river users with ecological and science-based data to achieve the goals within its mission. All rights to information contained in this publication are reserved.

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

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Horizon Lines

Clinton Begley

WHILE VISITING THE AMERICAN WHITEWATER OFFICE IN NORTH CAROLINA

recently, I had the chance to browse through back issues of the Journal from our archives. To demonstrate my firm grasp of the obvious: 70 years is a long time.

Thumbing through seven decades of the whitewater community's history has a way of giving perspective about just how much has changed about our world, and this organization in response to it. It also reveals how the things that have continued to matter so deeply to our community have stayed remarkably consistent.

I was particularly struck by how the underlying values of river restoration, protection, whitewater safety, and enjoyment of rivers, have been front and center from the very first issue. Values are not issues, opinions, or positions. They are more enduring than that, and it shows.

The list of changes our organization has navigated throughout our history is long: attitudes, culture, laws and regulations, threats, technology, bylaws, logos, our name, office locations, board members, personnel, climate...and more.

Change is inevitable, but the values that underpin the choices we have made along the way, and in response to the dynamic world we inhabit, have remained evergreen.

In that spirit, you should know about some changes at American Whitewater that will help us to better uphold our enduring values and serve our mission and our membership in the years ahead.

After eighteen years in downtown Sylva, NC we have moved to a new home office location just over the ridge to the beautiful town of Brevard. Our Brevard office will be the base of operations for Membership & Engagement Director Bethany Overfield and National Stewardship Director Kevin Colburn. It will also be American Whitewater's only physical address. We are proud to retain our headquarters in the great state of North Carolina.

In February we welcomed our new Finance Director, Heidi Heisler. Heidi is based in Oregon and will be working closely with me to comprise our Executive and Financial Office. In the coming weeks and months, you'll see our Cullowhee mailing address replaced by a new mailing address. For membership forms, donations, and love letters to the rivers you care about, mail us at Post Office Box 63, Springfield, OR 97477.

Nestled between the Oregon Coast Range and the Cascade Mountains, with dozens of rivers and creeks in every direction, the Springfield / Eugene metro area has a long history as a hub of whitewater activity. Springfield is the birthplace of the Mckenzie drift boat and hosted the Redsidies Rodeo on the Mckenzie throughout the 1990s and early 2000s when many professional paddlers called the Eugene area home. Today it still has a great whitewater scene and plenty of river issues befitting an AW presence.

In a few decades, those who follow us might thumb through this Journal and remark how much has changed. We anticipate it will be change for the better and plan for the core values at the heart of our efforts to continue to outlive us.

Thanks for being part of American Whitewater's story and for helping us celebrate seventy years of consistently doing right by the rivers that sustain us.



Clinton Begley
Executive Director



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Member Spotlight



Dixie-Marree Prickett

Location: Asheville, NC

Years as an AW Member: 23 (I think...)

Why American Whitewater? Whitewater kayaking has had a profound impact on the course of my life and shaped the person I am today. I believe it is so important to protect the places you love and care about and American Whitewater has done just that for over 70 years. Supporting AW is the very least that I can do to give back and help protect the rivers and access to our whitewater rivers across the US. I encourage anyone who is a whitewater boater to support AW.

What is your "home river"? The Green River in Western North Carolina!

What piece of gear will you not get on the water without? My nose and earplugs.

What's your boating motto? We are all in between swims – just keep on paddling!

Max Blackburn

Location: BZ Corner, WA

Years as an AW member: 15

Why American Whitewater? When it comes to protecting free flowing rivers and river access, I can think of no better way to ensure my money is directly supporting these causes than donating to American Whitewater. The work they do is truly incredible and the impacts are felt in every region of this country where people enjoy paddling on rivers.

What is your "home river"? White Salmon

What piece of gear will you not get on the water without? Throw rope

What's your boating motto? No place I'd rather be.

ASK AW

New Friends in New Places

Hi American Whitewater,

I recently made the leap from Colorado to the scenic waters of Asheville, North Carolina. While the move brought me closer to family and a great new work opportunity, it also has me feeling adrift. In Colorado, it seemed like there was always a crew ready to paddle after work or make a road trip to a new river. I went to college in Colorado, so a lot of my whitewater community grew organically from that. Here in Asheville, I'm struggling to make friends, especially whitewater friends.

I miss the camaraderie of my old paddling buddies and the excitement of exploring new rivers together. How can I break into the whitewater scene here in Asheville and forge new friendships with fellow boaters? Any advice you can offer would be greatly appreciated.

*Signed,
Rapidly Getting Lonelier*

Dear Rapidly,

Moving across the country is tough and making friends as an adult is even tougher! Luckily, boating can be a great way to connect with other like-minded folks and Asheville has long been celebrated as a river-focused destination.

There are many different ways to build community. As such, it first may be helpful to get clear on what type of boating buddies you are seeking. Are you searching for fellow river-runners for a simple after-work paddle? Are you looking to push your skills to the next level? Are you most comfortable with boaters who share your same intersections of identity? Do you have extra time in your week to give back as a volunteer to river stewardship or river justice causes?

Clubs and meet-ups can be a great way to start to get a feel for a local boating community. American Whitewater Member and Engagement Director and fellow North Carolinian, Bethany Overfield, recommends the American Whitewater Affiliate Club, WACKO (West Asheville Canoe and Kayak Organization) as a great place to start. They have a very active club and the best way to keep up with them is on their Facebook page. Another great way to connect with folks is through the Western NC Creek Visuals Facebook page.

Your local outdoor stores or paddling shops may know about affinity groups based on gender, race, or sexual orientation. Staff also often have the pulse on ways to give back to your local rivers through one-time or ongoing volunteering, a great way to meet other river folks.

It may take longer to seek out whitewater experts who can push your skills to new heights, as similar to you, they may be wary of boating together until they understand your skillset. Offering to help support a swiftwater rescue course or demonstrating your competence on less difficult stretches may help. It's easier for others to trust the expertise should 'show' rather than 'tell'!

If you're still striking out on finding river partners, it might be time to make the first move. Host a river films night, start a boating-focused community group, or plan a river stewardship day. You never know, there might be someone in your same river sandals, looking for a new friend!

Sincerely,
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STEWARDSHIP

A River Again: How Restoring Flows Changed the North Fork Feather and My Life

Dave Steindorf

WE ALL ENCOUNTER MOMENTS THAT PIVOT THE course of our lives. Like the snap of a boat crossing the eddy-line into the current, a moment so crisp and transformative that it's impossible to imagine if it hadn't happened. For me, this turning point arrived in 1997, when American Whitewater asked me to attend a meeting about the future of California's North Fork Feather River and a utility's plan to renew a 50-year license for its hydropower project.

From a young age, I had always been connected to rivers through fishing and exploring, and I had recently been introduced to kayaking. I knew nothing of the complex world of hydropower relicensing, where bureaucratic processes meet environmental concerns. Little did I know attending this meeting would change

the course of my life from a casual river enthusiast to a professional whitewater river advocate and change the river to benefit generations of whitewater enthusiasts.

About twenty people gathered in the meeting room, seated under the flicker of fluorescent lights, while the quintessential California sunshine beamed outside. On one side were Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) managers, biologists, and lawyers advocating for their hydropower project. On the other were the state and federal agencies tasked with protecting the river, its water quality, and aquatic life. Alongside were groups with various interests in the river, including American Whitewater, which brought a devoted focus to the potential of the river's whitewater, something that, for the most part, did



Photo: Scott Harding

not exist for the previous fifty years due to the hydropower project's complete lockdown of flows.

Among the attendees were Kevin Lewis from the Shasta Paddlers and myself representing the Chico Paddleheads. John Gangemi, American Whitewater's Conservation Director, joined via phone. While Kevin and I were newcomers to this arena, John, with his background as a fish biologist, added substantial credibility to our trio. Mostly, the room was filled with experts from agencies and utilities. Despite this, we—a high school teacher, an auto mechanic, and a fish biologist—stood as an unlikely but determined voice for the rivers.

A Maroon Lincoln Continental Town Car

I met John in person for the first time a month later. He had driven from his Montana home to pick me and Kevin up and attend the next relicensing meeting in person. John arrived in his maroon Lincoln Continental Town Car which seemed an unlikely vehicle for the conservation director of a river advocacy group. As I got to know him better, however, it became clear that the car was a perfect reflection of his unique character.

The three of us took that gas-guzzling maroon monstrosity up the North Fork Feather Canyon toward the meeting, stopping frequently to look at the river, as boaters do. Nearly drained by hydropower diversions, the river resembled a chain of stair-stepped stagnant ponds adorned by golden granite boulders.

This was a stark contrast to the river's natural, pre-dam state, where flows would seldom drop below 1,000 cfs as the river tumbled from the High Sierra to the Central Valley floor. It took imagination to envision it as a whitewater river.

At the meeting, we argued passionately for reintroducing water into the river—not just for its ecological health but also for its potential to provide whitewater recreation. Despite learning from John about the U.S. Forest Service's authority to require increased water releases from PG&E, we were met with disinterest. Their focus was elsewhere, prioritizing aesthetic changes to powerline towers over substantial environmental restoration. At the end of our meeting, the Forest Service staff essentially told us that we should find a different river to save.

One Dollar and a Portage

Afterward, feeling a bit defeated, we nestled ourselves in the plush confines of the Town Car's cabin and floated effortlessly down the river canyon highway. The car, with its commanding presence and comforting embrace, was more than a vehicle; it was our sanctuary on wheels. Little did I know then that it was bearing us not just toward an eventual success of monumental significance but also along a transformative, riverine journey in my life.

We stopped to debrief in the old Belden Town Bar on the banks of the river, with its deeply embedded odor of old, spilled beer. Despite the disheartening meeting, John outlined our possible pathways ahead, outlining water quality certifications required under the Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act conditions, and FERC comments. He offered a glimmer of hope through a thicket of acronyms and regulations I barely understood.

As we lingered in the bar, we noticed that the ceiling was covered with pinned-up dollar bills. In an act of optimism, we took a fresh bill and wrote on it the number of days of boating releases and the minimum flows we hoped to secure in the new hydropower license. Then, two beers in, I stood on a rickety bar stool, reached as high as I could, and pinned it to the ceiling.

The first step in the next meeting required each party to articulate their objectives. The resource agencies emphasized the need for enhanced flow regimes to safeguard the fisheries of the North Fork Feather. PG&E sought to minimize financial impacts on its ratepayers. Our request for water releases to facilitate whitewater recreation, however, was met with skepticism, if not outright disbelief, by many in the room.

PG&E then boldly asserted that the North Fork Feather River would hold no appeal for boaters. Questioning how they arrived at such a conclusion, given their lack of boating expertise, we were met with a surprising response. Their relicensing manager produced a copy of *The Best Whitewater in California* by Lars Holbeck and Chuck Stanley, turned to the Rock Creek

Witnessing our collaborative effort to pull off a complex study and our adept handling of a dangerous situation, PG&E was impressed by our group's competence and professionalism.

Run, and cited the single portage listed as evidence of its supposed unattractiveness. "People aren't going to want to boat a run that has a portage," they said.

Having never paddled the Rock Creek Run myself—few had due to its lack of flows—but skeptical of PG&E's assertion, I dialed up Lars Holbeck to get more information. He candidly admitted that his write-up was based on a single day on the river with a wicked hangover in bone-chilling rain. Recognizing the potential impact of his off-the-cuff write-up, he agreed to provide a statement clarifying that his guidebook's portrayal should not be seen as definitive.

The Alternate Reality Where Fish Don't Need Water and Boating is Harmful

I came to relish the challenge of debunking PG&E's mischaracterizations, astounded by the extent of their commitment to an alternate reality. In yet another meeting, PG&E presented the results of its fish studies. Despite my limited knowledge of fish habitat modeling, a cursory glance at the graphs revealed glaring inaccuracies.

I asked PG&E's lead fish biologist about a particularly counterintuitive result: the graph suggested that more fish habitat existed at a dam-influenced flow of 100 cfs than at a natural flow of 600 cfs. He said, "That is correct." Then I followed up. "Before the construction of the dams, the river flowed at 600 cfs or more throughout the summer, supporting one of the West Coast's most vibrant trout fisheries," I said. "Today, reduced to a mere 100 cfs by your dams, the once-thriving trout population has been decimated." I leaned in to set the hook. "How do your results account for this fact?" His response was more than I could have asked for, "Well, I guess somebody forgot to tell the fish."

Over several meetings, John, Kevin, and I tirelessly advocated for a comprehensive boating study, given the lack of data on the river's whitewater resources. We needed more information if we were going to be able to win boating releases in the new license. The erratic releases from the dams—fluctuating from too low to dangerously high within a single day—precluded any possibility of boating without a special release to conduct a study. Despite the glaring need for further research into the



Photo: Scott Harding

river's recreational potential, PG&E dismissed our requests, suggesting we were late to the game and should just go sit in the corner.

Then, PG&E dealt what they thought would be the death blow to our dream of boating releases. In an official letter to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and every state and federal agency imaginable, PG&E argued that whitewater releases would inflict considerable harm on the environment, the economy, property, and the power grid. They elaborated, "Even beyond the public safety issue, there are other aspects of whitewater boating that bear close scrutiny by resource and regulatory agencies, such as adverse environmental and economic impacts. Such impacts can take the forms of degradation of wilderness values and overall costs of property damage, rescue efforts and lost electric generation that can far outweigh the benefits."

This claim from the utility, which had severely compromised one of the West Coast's premier whitewater rivers, was audacious. Fortunately, American Whitewater skillfully countered these claims, and then used them to rally public support for boating releases. A few months later, under pressure from resource agencies and the whitewater boating community, PG&E contacted American Whitewater to begin planning a whitewater boating study.

The Whitewater Study

PG&E agreed to facilitate the study by providing releases, leaving American Whitewater to design and execute it. Despite this being my first whitewater study, it has proven to be the most complex one I've ever worked on. We evaluated three river sections, each tested at three different flows that presented varying levels of whitewater difficulty. Over three days, we managed logistics for more than forty boaters, most embarking on their first descents of these runs. The stakes were heightened by the presence of PG&E staff, regulatory agencies, and an Outdoor Life Network film crew. Our primary concern was the safety of our team on the water but we knew that any mishap could jeopardize our ability to get boating releases in the future.

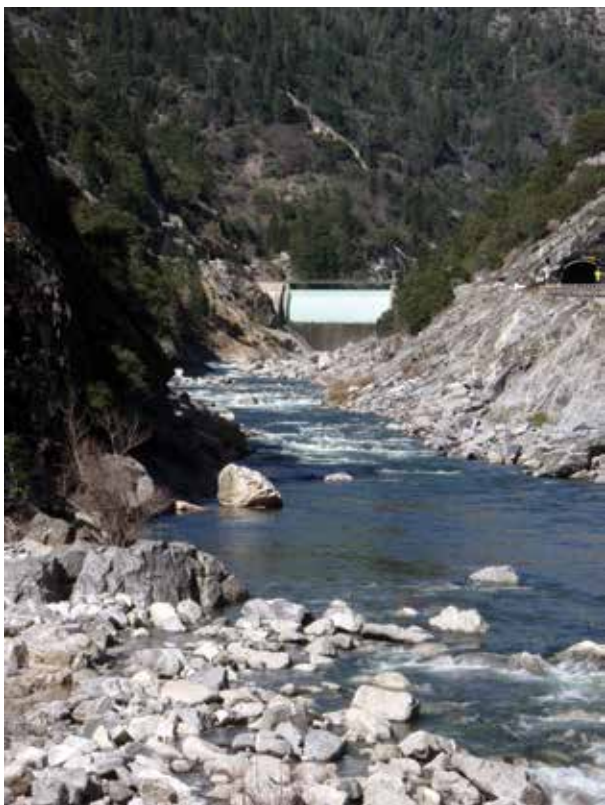
The first day of the study went flawlessly on the Cresta Reach. On the second day, however, as I led twenty kayakers and rafts down the easier Rogers Flat run at a test flow of 800 cfs—marginally too low for rafts—my cousin Karl's raft became ensnared on a rock in a rapid now ominously dubbed Karl's Kitchen. Then we learned there was a mishap with the group that was running the more difficult Tobin Section downstream.

Kayaker Risa Shimoda was widely regarded as one of the best paddlers in the sport, and she clearly had the skills to test paddle the Tobin Reach. As her crew approached the boulder-filled rapid just upstream of the Rock Crest Bridge, anticipa-





Photo: Scott Harding



The arc of a love affair. The dewatered North Fork Feather below the Cresta Dam (above) in contrast with the same reach with restored flows. Photos: Dave Steindorf.

tion grew. Several members of the team ran the drop successfully. When Risa's turn came, she launched into the rapid with style but got pushed farther right than the others. Paddling a Perception Phat—a big boat in those days—Risa's stature at five-foot-two had the kayak's cockpit rim grazing her armpits.

She was swept into a slot to the right of the main current. This initially appeared to be a minor mistake but, suddenly, her boat pitched down and abruptly stopped. The slot concealed a pothole, perfectly sized to vertically pin a kayak, trapping and immobilizing it. Risa's predicament quickly caught the attention of Norwood Scott, just upstream. Without hesitation, he dropped into the rapid with his C-1 and strategically wedged his boat across the slot, alleviating the water pressure and enabling Risa to exit her boat onto the solid safety of Sierra granite. Miraculously, Risa was unharmed. Her ordeal—and the remarkable rescue that followed—was captured by the Outdoor Life Network crew. The rapid, henceforth named "Pierce a Risa," carries her legacy.

The flow study marked a pivotal shift in our negotiations with PG&E. Witnessing our collaborative effort to pull off a complex study and our adept handling of a dangerous situation, PG&E was impressed by our group's competence and professionalism. Although numerous disputes over the flow schedule lay ahead, the success of our study infused our subsequent discussions with a newfound respect and altered the tone significantly.

Subsequent negotiations centered on the frequency of boating releases and their corresponding flow rates, amid concerns about potential impacts on fish and aquatic habitats. Committed to ecological stewardship, we pledged not to advocate for boating flows beyond the river's natural pre-dam flows, arguing that the dams' artificially diminished flows were the true disruptors of the riverine ecosystem. Despite our reasoned approach, skepticism and opposition persisted. To mitigate these concerns, we consented to extensive monitoring studies and agreed to cancel boating releases should significant environmental impacts emerge. With this, we finally secured an agreement for a boating release schedule, initially set at one weekend per month with the potential to increase to four, depending on usage.

Dance With Those That Brought You

Discussions on other critical issues, especially water temperature, remained contentious. Jim Canaday, representing the California State Water Resources Control Board, advocated for a numeric temperature standard—a proposal PG&E staunchly resisted, preferring a less stringent approach. This standoff threatened to unravel three years of diligent negotiations.

In a pivotal moment, a contentious meeting on water temperature standards was paused, and a small group, including John, Kevin, Jim Canaday, Maureen Rose from Friends of the River, and Jim Edmondson from CalTrout, gathered in the hallway. Edmondson, a seasoned negotiator, shared a maxim, "Rule number four of negotiations: You dance with those that brought you." Recognizing the gravity of the situation, the group decided to



re-enter the room and declare that without some movement on this point, negotiations would be over.

PG&E's refused to budge, leading Jim Canaday to declare that the group couldn't be part of an agreement that didn't address water temperature. We all stood up and walked out. The atmosphere in the hallway was tense, and the weight of nearly three years of effort, countless volunteer hours, and the risk of losing it all hung heavily in the stale air. Fortunately, over the next month, a path to bridge the divide emerged. With renewed purpose, the group returned to the negotiation table.

Though not flawless, the eventual agreement established a foundation for the restoration of the North Fork Feather River. The agreement increased base flows, implemented flow ramping rates, and established an Ecological Resources Committee to oversee the implementation of the new hydropower license conditions. The group's episode of walking out marked a turning point, underscoring the tenacity required in the pursuit of a shared vision of a restored river.

A Pink Tutu, Boating Releases, and a New Direction in Life

In October of 2000, the entire relicensing group met in the town of Quincy to sign the relicensing agreement. Representatives from key agencies were there, including the Forest Service, California Department of Fish and Game, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the State Water Board. Randy Livingston, a Vice President at PG&E, stood up to address everyone. "Six months ago, Dick Locke, PG&E's attorney, promised that he'd dance on a table in a tutu if we reached an agreement," he said. Randy then pulled a frilly pink tutu from his back pocket and said, "Dick, it's time to dance." Realizing that Randy was not asking and that he was his boss, Dick donned the tutu and climbed atop the table.

A few years later, the Belden Town Bar had just sold and Jeff Willson, the previous owner, was on a ladder taking all of the dollar bills off of the ceiling before the new owners came in. He knew about the dollar bill that Kevin, John, and I had pinned to the ceiling along with our hopes for restoring flows. When he found our dollar bill, he delivered it to me. Looking at it again, I was shocked at how close our scribbled hopes were to what we achieved in getting the new license.

Reflecting on this journey, what started for me as a daunting venture among experts unfolded into a profound chapter of personal and professional growth that changed my life. Thousands of people now enjoy the restored flows of the North Fork Feather River every year, and American Whitewater's Feather Fest has become the largest river festival on the West Coast.

After our success on the North Fork Feather, I was hired by American Whitewater, and, over the subsequent 27 years, I participated in over 20 hydropower project relicensings throughout California, crafting agreements to revitalize our rivers for generations to come. In 2017, I was honored to be called upon to testify before the U.S. House of Representatives about the impacts of hydropower on rivers. This former high school teacher had become a national expert on hydropower reform, all because I agreed to attend a meeting back in 1997. ■

Editor's note: In addition to John Gangemi and author Dave Steindorf, three others mentioned in this story have contributed significantly to the successes of American Whitewater over many years by serving on its board and/or working on its staff: Kevin Lewis, Risa Shimoda, and Norwood Scott. We thank them for their contributions. Scott Harding provided editorial support for this piece.



Photo: Thomas O'Keefe

American Whitewater Launches New Initiative to Remove Deadbeat Dams

Bob Nasdor

AMERICAN WHITEWATER LAUNCHED A NEW PROJECT in March aimed at removing deadbeat dams from our nation's rivers. With an increasing number of hydropower dams crumbling and being abandoned by their owners, the project seeks to require dam owners to remove these dams and restore our rivers for the fish and people who use and enjoy them. This initiative will focus on utilizing legal challenges to force the removal of these dams which no longer serve their purpose and present a significant hazard to the public.

As the nation's hydroelectric dams age and become non-functioning and no longer economically viable, dam owners in-

creasingly seek to surrender their federal hydropower licenses and abandon their dams in the river rather than removing them. The reasons vary, including prohibitive maintenance costs, declining economic benefits, or an inability to meet the expense of bringing old dams up to current environmental standards.

Unfortunately, surrendering a hydropower license doesn't often lead to dam removal. Instead, these "deadbeat" dams often remain, continuing their negative impact on public safety, river ecosystems, and communities. Often, taxpayers are ultimately burdened with the costs of future dam removal and river restoration.

What is a Deadbeat Dam?

Invariably, dam owners seek to surrender their federal licenses to generate hydropower when the cost of dam maintenance or environmental requirements such as installing fish passage exceed the project's value. Unfortunately, the surrender of a federal hydropower license rarely results in dam removal and river restoration. Instead, dam owners are often allowed to leave "deadbeat dams" in rivers, blocking fish passage, eliminating recreational opportunities, posing safety hazards, and causing other harmful environmental impacts. Absent requiring that the hydropower dam owner who profited from the project remove the dam, responsibility for restoring the river falls to taxpayers, if removal occurs at all.

American Whitewater proposes to address the problem of deadbeat hydroelectric dams through targeted litigation and advocacy. Our goal will be to compel the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to consider dam removal in place of relicensing, to revoke the licenses of non-operational projects whose inevitable removal is being indefinitely delayed, and to require dam removal as a condition of license surrender.

The Deadbeat Dam Law Project is a joint effort between American Whitewater and Earthrise Law Center in partnership with other environmental and legal advocacy groups. American Whitewater, with support from Patagonia's Holdfast Collective, launched the Deadbeat Dam Project by challenging FERC's decision to allow the owner of a dam in Somersworth, NH to abandon a failed hydropower dam in the Salmon Falls River, with support from Patagonia's Holdfast Collective. Unless removed, the Somersworth dams will continue to obstruct fish passage, impact recreation, and pose a public safety hazard.

American Whitewater has a long history of working to remove obsolete and harmful hydropower dams through the individual dam relicensing process, and also by working to reform laws and policies that prevent their removal. This work will be a continuation of our historic success. We've been involved in more than 100 hydropower relicensing proceedings and have worked to restore flows, river access, and recreation opportunities throughout the country. Where possible, the organization has successfully advocated for the removal of dams and the restoration of rivers to their natural condition. American Whitewater is a founding member of the Hydropower Reform Coalition, a diverse consortium of more than 160 national, regional, and local conservation and recreation organizations that protects, enhances, and restores America's rivers, watersheds, and communities affected by hydropower operations.

American Whitewater is partnering with the Earthrise Law Center, the environmental legal clinic at Lewis & Clark Law School. Founded in 1996, Earthrise is the largest and one of the oldest environmental law clinics in the country. From the outset, Earthrise has worked to combat the adverse environmental effects of dams, particularly in the Pacific Northwest, and to protect endangered salmon species that have been devastated

by hydropower operations. More recently, Earthrise has been representing public interest clients participating in advocacy efforts involving dams on the Colorado, Connecticut, and Salmon Falls (border of Maine and Vermont) Rivers, in federal court and in Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) proceedings. Earthrise is uniquely positioned among legal clinics to work on nationwide campaigns because it has offices on both the West and East coasts. Earthrise also is able to involve the incredibly talented Lewis & Clark law students in our cases, which benefits our clients and the environment while at the same time providing our students—the next generation of environmental advocates—with invaluable hands-on education, mentoring and inspiration.

Case Study: Somersworth Hydroelectric Project Dam Removal Litigation

New England is home to a fleet of aging and failing hydropower dams under the jurisdiction of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. Nowhere is the decay of our country's hydropower infrastructure more apparent than in the Northeast, where scores of dams are either non-operational or no longer viable for power generation. One such dam is located in Somersworth, on the border of Maine and New Hampshire. The Somersworth Hydropower project on the Salmon Falls River has not been operational in over a decade due to equipment failure. Rather than repair the project and seek a new federal license, the dam owner sought to surrender its federal license and proposed to abandon the project dams in the river with no one held responsible for dam safety or addressing the environmental impacts. Once abandoned, the dams would block the restoration of anadromous fish on the Salmon Falls River, as well as prevent recreation at the former project site.

American Whitewater, as well as the states of Maine and New Hampshire, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, and several river advocacy groups called for dam removal and river restoration; however, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission allowed the dam owner to abandon the dams. In response, American Whitewater appealed to the federal court to require the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to find dam removal in the public interest and necessary to comply with the Clean Water Act. While American Whitewater is coordinating its challenge with several partners, it is the only organization with standing to bring this appeal, providing us with the ability to seek administrative and legal relief. Since filing our appeal in the D.C. Circuit, Maine Rivers and Conservation Law Foundation have intervened in the case in support of our appeal of the FERC decision. While our appeal will take time and resources, removing dams is a priority for American Whitewater and our partners. If successful, this case will serve as a precedent that will help us and our partners remove more dams where their owners seek to abandon them. ■



Rivers of the Galaxy, illustration by Cayla Sanderson

The Oblivion Leap

How a cross-continent paddling adventure helped a paddler give back to his home state of California

Dup Crosson

IT'S EASY TO FORGET HOW GOOD WE HAVE IT AS

paddlers these days — our gear is dialed, our maps are multifaceted, GPS beacons save our lives in emergencies, and helmet cams provide proxy test runs on the internet. As a result, one can realistically plan for and implement an entire trip based on cursory internet reading. It's an increasingly "old person" thing for me to say, but folks before the 2000s really had to work for their trips.

The old-school snobbery ends there, though. Being a millennial, I'm also grateful I don't have to do that much work. It took a few years for me to learn to enjoy the planning aspects of trips, but I settled into the rhythms of checking gauges, reconciling forecasts, asking people for their advice, reading guidebooks, poring over maps, and perhaps the greatest challenge — managing schedules with dubiously-committed Californians.

As I learned to become adaptable and resilient to changing conditions before a trip just as much as during one, I continuously returned to what I consider to be one of the most important resources available to the paddling community—the American Whitewater (AW) River database. A recent road trip confirmed how unique and important this database is, one that many countries don't have.

Pretty much as soon as my paddling turned into a lifestyle, I became an AW member, and then a volunteer with their Stream Team. I enjoyed how a backyard run like Alameda Creek could be easily given some life online by sharing one's experience — it felt like an updated kind of stewardship for the [over]information age. It also paralleled my conservation work and interest in ecology perfectly, providing an avenue for all of these things to coalesce.

As I began contributing info to AW, I also started logging notes in a small book with a silly name, with the intent of amassing a lifetime's worth of paddle memories. I knew that meant building a mosaic of resources, so I also bought all the books, new and old (shoutouts to Holbek, Stanley, Menten, and the others) and absorbed Bill Tuthill's wisdom on CACreeks.com. Meanwhile, AW's database fought ongoing technical issues for a few years, and over time, posting from my pen-and-paper entries became a large backlog — another thing on my own "honey-do" list.

Last year, I quit my job and left California for a sabbatical I named the Oblivion Leap, paddling through the Pacific Northwest, traversing eight Canadian provinces, and reluctantly returning to the States. I was looking for a jostling—a new homebase, and a respite from the Bay Area hustle that had slowly become my life over time.

On night one, reclined for the first time in the new sleeping platform in my Ford Escape, and overlooking a warm quiet evening on the edge of the Sacramento River valley, I felt wide open to the world. With very few obligations to meet in the next half year, my days were going to be very water-shaped.

Amidst all the free time, I imagined I might even get to entering that backlog of notes to AW.

Living minimally was something I was always comfortable with in my musical pursuits, and increasingly in other parts of my life as I identified more as a dirtbag. Now I was fully surrendering to living in an always-changing state, haunted by rivers throughout. Part of that flux meant relying on the local communities I would travel through, which I did daily by partaking in the lost art of talking to strangers—visiting dirtbag hubs like outdoor stores, breweries, libraries, coffee shops, campgrounds, and trailheads.

Digitally speaking, posting on regional Facebook groups and utilizing AW was just as important. One of the first things I noticed in both Oregon and Washington was that the river write-ups on AW were very well tended to — they were true living documents, used by many. There were lots of trip reports, photos, and alerts, not just from the last decade but the last month! This was a refreshing change from the California pages, many of which were neglected or non-existent (partially because many paddlers preferred the forecasts on an aging resource called Dreamflows). All this time I had thought these ghost pages were a national issue, but it seemed to come down to local dynamics and alternative resources.

Getting updates in something closer to real-time was a game-changer. On the McKenzie, an AW alert about a strainer changed my routing and made for a solo trip with fewer death traps. When taking in the vistas in the Columbia River Gorge, thinking I couldn't run anything solo with water this high, AW helped me connect to other nomads like Quinlan Pffifer. Quinlan is a terrific kayaker and a kind human, and with our powers combined, we navigated a very fun and continuous Class III section of the Hood River, a contender for one of the best days of the Leap.

In Leavenworth, WA, I also had one of my proudest days of paddling to date. I hadn't met anyone there yet, so thanks to descriptions and flow ranges in AW I knew that a popular steep creek named Peshastin was running at a perfect level. Its mother river, the mighty Wenatchee, was also at near-flood stage and looking extremely intimidating. I eventually found a local crew who knew the lines and we ended up doing a run on each — vastly different paddles that stretched my skills in all directions, ranging from narrow, technical chutes to terrifying fifteen foot wave trains in the most volume of water I've ever paddled.

Further north, I learned Canada has no national organization or database quite like AW (though Paddling Maps is working towards this). Its regionalized resources, like BC Whitewater, are better than what I found in Ecuador but are lacking compared to what New Zealand has to offer. I was now in a large, watery country with what looked like infinite options, but not enough consensus on their viability. I gathered multiple reports from

Assembling a river plan is almost always a patchwork of known and unknowns, risks, and guarantees.

the Coast Range to the Rockies that all warned of access issues and a tremendous amount of avalanche debris that barred all but the most expert paddlers from doing deep wilderness expeditions, which is what I was chasing. Trekking into the wilderness alone here was tempting but it could also end in disaster. It made for a state of sweet, unending river tease.

In Western Alberta, a shuttle run conversation started up. Where is the balance between sharing all your river stories online, and keeping a “secret” or “new” run to yourself? Safety, fun, pride, community, ego, and individualism all were discussed in our group.

A lack of online information often led me to new people and unexpected experiences, for which I’m eternally grateful. Those days and people are truly the difference between being a tourist, locked into expectations, and being a traveling human, blending into your surroundings. I will never forget that four-day Elvis impersonator festival, for one... but that’s a different story.

In pretty much all cases, however, any resources are good resources, and assembling a river plan is almost always a patchwork of known and unknowns, risks, and guarantees. For that, I think of days like meeting and trip scheming with Scott MacGregor from Rapid Media in a gear store in Revelstoke, BC.

Through Scott, I acquired a write-up in Kootenay Mountain Culture Magazine

by Ray Schmidt about packrafting in the Rockies. That chance encounter ultimately led to a three day hike/packraft on the Cline River on the edge of Banff National Park with Cameron Fenton and Tim Radcliffe, chasing a 40-inch-wide, turquoise-watered canyon that looked like something you’d do in Arizona. While that trip and its unforgettable views never would have happened without making conversation at Revy Outdoors, the limited online write-ups (mixed with our enthusiasm) almost led us into a high-water, high-risk situation. In hindsight, our bad luck turned into good fortune: a small misinterpretation of the trails forced us to walk the coveted canyon after losing valuable daylight to back-tracking and an unexpected, high-stakes ferry. Overall, though, none of us regretted taking the chance, and look forward to a return trip with more experience in our collective quiver.

Dozens of rivers later, I improbably landed in Maine for an overwinter with a woman I met just before finally descending the Kennebec Gorge in a solo boat. It felt like completing a circuit—the Leap was over, and I was returning to the river where years ago I did my first whitewater rafting trip. I had a season of frozen rivers ahead, so I made good on my pledge to update the California part of the AW database with my notes.

I set about creating or updating gages, gradients, photos, flow ranges, map coordinates, and trip reports for dozens of rivers, giving the most attention to lesser-known or under-reported sec-



tions like Grindstone Creek or the lower Bear River. As a former staff member at the statewide conservation nonprofit CalWild, I also added advocacy information on sections involving Wild and Scenic River designations, action alerts, and public comment opportunities, as well as interesting policy histories.

These entries meant a few things to me. First, they were a way to look back on this life-changing trip and take stock of my new path. Second, they tied me into a national paddling community, where for years I was seeing my craft of choice



Photo: Tim Radcliffe

—a packraft—establish itself in the whitewater scene. And of course, they were an offering to California, my home for eight years, and the place where I learned to build my own trips and began identifying as a boater. When I think of California, I think of its rivers.

This work is part of a bigger goal, too—helping to make AW’s database the ultimate U.S. paddling resource. Over the years I worked with AW’s Scott Harding, Kevin Colburn, and Thomas O’Keefe (and StreamTeamer Paul Martzen) to give feedback and suggestions on making the StreamTeam editing process easier — which admittedly took some time. But, it’s definitely a better, working interface now.

Our online resources should reflect the stewardship that rivers need “IRL” — and it’s an easy way to dig deeper into these ineffable places.

Vaya con rios!

Editor’s note: Do you have a treasure trove of paddling data, too? Please consider contributing to the American Whitewater river database using your membership login—you don’t even need to be a StreamTeamer to provide a trip report—then make a habit of it. ■

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Photo of paddler Alec Vorhees by Dane Jackson

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Pinto Gallo

Costa Rican Beans and Rice

Words and Photos by Thomas O'Keefe

MY KIDS HAVE NEVER BEEN FANS OF HOT CEREAL AND sometimes you want to mix it up with something other than eggs, bacon, or pancakes for breakfast. You can look to other cuisines around the world for inspiration for breakfast and Pinto Gallo has made its way into our standard rotation of breakfast options. The Salsa Lizano is key to the flavor. Another great attribute of this dish is the ingredients do not require a cooler.

Prep Time: Minimal

Total Time: Instant ingredients, 5-10 minutes; Non-instant ingredients, 90 minutes (and overnight soak).

Serves 4

Ingredients

1 tablespoon vegetable oil
 1/2 red bell pepper, chopped (15 grams dried pepper if you want to reduce weight)
 1/2 yellow onion, chopped (10 grams dried onion if you want to reduce weight)
 1 clove garlic, minced
 1 cup cooked black beans (or rehydrated dry beans)
 1/8 cup Salsa Lizano
 1 1/2 cups cooked rice
 1/8 cup chopped fresh cilantro or cilantro paste

Helpful Hints

On a raft trip canned beans are convenient but I like to bring dry beans and soak them overnight which makes this a good kayak self-support dish. Check with your crew before the trip to see what everyone's eating habits are for breakfast and adjust portions accordingly.

Directions

1. Sauté the garlic and onion and then add the peppers.
2. Add black beans and Salsa Lizano; simmer.
3. Stir in the cooked rice.
4. Serve in a bowl or on a warm tortilla. Top with cilantro.
 You can leave the bottle of Salsa Lizano out for those who want more.

Optional

This dish can be served alongside eggs, sour cream or crema, plantains, and/or avocado. If you make these additions, adjust portions of rice and beans accordingly. ■



A Timeline, Part I: 1954–1994



1954

American White Water Affiliation (AWWA) Forms

Formed as the result of a memo sent out on April 6, 1954 to multiple outing clubs and informal paddlers across the country, beginning a circle of communication and information exchange about ideas around conservation and advances in technique, equipment, and safety.

First secretary Eliot Dubois, of the Appalachian Mountain Club-Boston, often considered to be the founder, was in fact one of many influential original members and club affiliate leaders who founded and led the development of the AWWA, including Bruce Grant (CA), Laurence Grinnell (NY), Wolf Bauer (WA), Clyde Jones (CO), Steve Bradley (CO), Oscar “Oz” Hawksley (MO), Walter F. Bermeister (MA), W. S. “Stu” Gardiner (UT), Don Rupp (PA), Bob McNair (PA), Harold Kiehm (IL), Marvin McLarty, and Wolfgang Lert.

1955

Journal first published, first editor Joe Lacy, an early Colorado whitewater pioneer. Articles ranging from technique and safety, to conservation and boat building instructions were all featured in the Journal and it continues to be an important source of inspiration and information for river runners to this day.



Echo Park Dam Fight

An article questioning the need for another massive dam in the Green River watershed that would have flooded both the Yampa Canyon and the Gates of Lodore ran in the very first issue of the Journal. The controversy over the proposed Echo Park dam in the mid-1950s was a crucial episode for the fledgling environmental movement, encouraging river activists to fight the large-scale dam proposals across the West and captivating the country. Following years of debate, the US Congress decided not to authorize the dam, signifying the growing public interest in national parks and monuments and in the protection of wild rivers.

1956

Constitution and bylaws adopted, executive board created, internal service committees of Safety, Membership, Conservation and Editorial committees were formed under the General Committee made up of representatives of affiliated clubs. Four other committees, Safety, Membership, Guidebook and Conservation were established and made up of volunteer members.

1957

First publishing of the international scale of river difficulty

1958

Secretary Oz Hawksley

American Whitewater co-founder, Oscar “Oz” Hawksley, was at the forefront of early exploration of the Clearwater, Main Salmon, and Middle Fork Salmon Rivers (ID), Flathead (MT), and Yampa and Green Rivers (CO, UT, WY), along with many rivers in the Ozarks. Oz was a part of a new generation of wilderness explorers, many of whom had served in World War II, who took to the water with army surplus rafts. These explorations and conservation efforts, such as Oz’s first modern descent of the Selway River (ID), were critical to the design of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Due to this advocacy, many of the rivers they explored including the Selway, the Salmon, and the Flathead, were among the first rivers designated when the Act became law on October 2, 1968.



1957: First Publication of Purpose, The American White Water Affiliation

We are many individuals who wish to promote river touring, and to keep informed about wilderness waterways and the ways of white water. We are an affiliation of outdoor groups, outing associations, canoe clubs, ski clubs, hiking groups, all interested in river touring for our members. Our groups range from the Appalachian Mountain Club in Boston, to the Washington Foldboat Club in Seattle. These groups have pioneered in developing river know-how. They are the local sources from which flow the currents tributary to our growing sport. Through group representatives, the knowledge of all is made available to all. We are a non-profit organization. Our organizational simplicity permits all dues to go directly to the building of our magazine and services.

OUR PURPOSE

To encourage exploration and enjoyment of wilderness waterways; to foster research, development, and teaching of improved techniques and equipment designs for safely negotiating white water; to protect the wilderness character of our waterways for the growing number who are discovering the rewards awaiting the river tourist.

OUR PUBLICATION

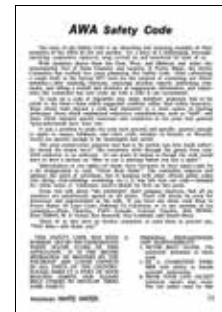
All members receive our quarterly magazine "American WHITE WATER," which is a voice for all American boatmen. You are urged to contribute articles, pictures, cartoons, information and ideas (ideas to increase the fun of our sport and ideas for improving our services to you).

MEMBERSHIP

Membership is on an annual basis with the new year starting in March. Tell your friends who might enjoy canoeing or canyoneering about the AWWA. Their \$2.50 will help foster enjoyment of wilderness water and bring each into the boating fraternity through the pages of American WHITE WATER magazine.

1959

Publishing of the Safety Code, the first comprehensive guide to river safety knowledge including many basic principles we now take for granted but which were not common practice at the time. The original code covered personal preparedness (wear a life jacket, never boat alone, be a competent swimmer, beware of cold water, have a frank knowledge of your boating ability, etc.), boat preparedness and group equipment (have a spare paddle, carry a repair and first-aid kit, install floatation devices, carry a throw line, etc.), and group dynamics on the river (understanding hazards, using signals, responsibility to assist your partners, etc).



1960

Executive Secretary Clyde Jones assigns a more full staff in Editorial (Martin Vanderveen), Safety (Leonard E. Fancher), Conservation Chairman (Daniel K. Bradley), and Advisory Committee Chairman (Oz Hawksley).

1961

Article of Incorporation filed in Missouri.

1962

Origins of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act

American Whitewater sent a report in 1960 to the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission calling upon them to extend new protections to special free flowing rivers. In 1962, A Report to the President and to the Congress issued by the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission recommended that, "10. Certain rivers of unusual scientific, esthetic, and recreation value should be allowed to remain in their free-flowing state and natural setting without man-made alterations."

Wolf Bauer wrote a concept paper with a handwritten note from Secretary of the Interior Stu Udall indicating they were in contact. The Craigheads are credited with the original idea but Wolf Bauer and paddlers in the Wisconsin Hoofers, who had a relationship with Senator Gaylord Nelson, also clearly had an important leadership role that is not often recognized.



1963

First Revision of the Safety Code leading to a perpetual updating of safety information as advances in data, understanding of river hazards and rescue techniques have evolved.



1964

American Whitewater co-founder Wolf Bauer wrote an essay on the “Concept of River Wilderness,” featuring the Sauk River (WA), a major influence in the movement and the legislation that eventually became the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. In 1978, the river was designated as Wild and Scenic.

1968

On October 2, the Wild and Scenic Act was signed into law by Lyndon Johnson. Through the American Whitewater Journal, Oz Hawksley encouraged letter writing and kept paddlers across the country informed on the progress of Wild Rivers legislation and the ultimate signing of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Affiliate clubs became involved in education and outreach efforts, including a trip by Kayak and Canoe Club of New York to take Senator Kennedy (in the photo) and Interior Secretary Udall down the Hudson River to promote the Wild Rivers Bill, and efforts by the Wisconsin Hoofers to highlight the need to protect the Wolf River in Wisconsin while Gaylord Nelson was still Governor and before he joined the Senate. Over the decades and through today, boaters continue to take an active role in securing new designations and advocating for protection for hundreds of rivers that agencies have determined to be “eligible” Wild and Scenic Rivers, but have not been formally designated.



1971

The release of the film Deliverance sparked a fevered interest in whitewater river running across the country, which also served to strengthen the voices of river advocates calling for the protection of rivers. Claude Terry and Doug Woodward were at the forefront of calls for a Wild and Scenic Chattooga River designation (GA) and also served as stunt doubles for actors Jon Voight and Ned Beatty. Photo by Payson Kennedy



1972

American Whitewater establishes 501(c)(3) status.

1973

Gerald Meral for the Journal pens the original essay on the need for a national coalition for American rivers, the impetus for the formation of our partner organization American Rivers.

1974

In 1968 the Chattooga River (along with 19 other rivers) was designated as a “study river” by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. In 1971 the movie Deliverance featured the Chattooga’s whitewater, and interest from river runners grew. Efforts over the next several years to share the river with influential members of the community, including then-Governor of Georgia Jimmy Carter, culminated in the river’s designation in 1974. Claude Terry and Jimmy Carter running the Chattooga. Photo by Doug Woodward



ENTRAPMENT CLAIMS TWO VICTIMS

Entrapment, fast becoming recognized as the most lethal situation for the experienced whitewater boater, recently claimed two lives in separate accidents, and endangered a third (see “Trapped at Gate 23,” p. 191 this issue).

In July, Jack Tucker of the Washington Kayak Club succumbed after being pinned against a submerged log, in spite of desperate attempts by his companions to free him. This tragedy will be analyzed in detail in the next issue.

On September 18, a 34-year-old Lehigh University professor, Rolf Adenstedt, drowned in the Lehigh River (Penna.) after his ankle was caught between two rocks following a capsized canoe. Entrapment occurred in five feet of water and there was speculation that he may have been trying to walk on the bottom.

We cannot overemphasize the importance of KEEPING YOUR FEET ON THE SURFACE when you are out of your boat in swift water. Opinions are divided on whether to keep your feet in front or behind—this probably depends on the individual and situation. But in any case, DO NOT ATTEMPT TO STAND unless you are in an eddy or very shallow water. —ILS

1975

Origins of the American Whitewater Accident Database

Charlie Walbridge was on the water when a drowning occurred at a Class II slalom race. The paddler was well equipped and experienced and no one could explain exactly how it happened. Charlie was upset, and curious enough to start asking questions. He knew many of the paddlers who had tried to make the rescue and talked with them the next day. Later someone told him about a similar accident that happened a few months earlier in Tennessee. His report, published in the 1976 AW Journal, described the risks of foot entrapment for the first time. The well-known caution not to stand up in fast-moving water, not standard back then, quickly became a standard safety practice. This illustrated how paddlers learn from accident reports and led to Charlie receiving more reports. At first he only heard about a handful of accidents each year. The sport was very small then; he knew many of the people involved personally and they trusted him to explain what happened. Later he started studying accidents outside the whitewater paddling community to support American Whitewater work with State and Federal boating regulators. Any incident occurring on fast moving water was of interest since whitewater dynamics were in play. He encouraged paddlers to submit accounts of near misses, serious injuries, and successful rescues. The Database now covers almost 50 years of whitewater incidents and has proved invaluable in the development of river safety knowledge.

1983

The first Gauley Fest. After almost two decade's worth of advocacy work by volunteers and members, plans for a second dam that would have that would have dewatered the Upper Gauley above Pillow Rock dropped dropped. On Sept. 24 nearly 1000 paddlers gathered to celebrate and the biggest whitewater festival in the world was born. Today, it remains American Whitewater's largest fundraising event and brings thousands of boaters to Summersville, WV to commemorate the river's protection and restoration, to learn about river stewardship across the country and to experience the river's legendary whitewater.

1986

Federal Power Act Amended

A 1986 amendment to the Federal Power Act, the Electric Consumers Protection Act (ECPA), required the Commission to take a more balanced approach to dam licensing. ECPA requires the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, when deciding whether to issue a new license, to consider not only the power generation potential of a river, but to give equal consideration to energy conservation, protection of fish and wildlife, protection of recreational opportunities, and preservation of general environmental quality.

This "equal consideration" mandate requires FERC to consult with federal, state and local resource agencies, including fish and wildlife, recreation, and land management agencies, in order to more accurately assess the impact of a hydro project on the surrounding environment. Beginning with Pope Barrow, Pete Skinner and others utilization of this amendment to influence the restoration of the Black River watershed in New York, American Whitewater now has been a party to hundreds of dam relicensing processes across the country using an updated version of this original FERC process.

1991

The Clarks Fork Box is one of the most dramatic river canyons in the United States and was saved from efforts to dam it by some incredibly dedicated river warriors around the same time of its first descent by paddlers in the early 1980s. Armed with incredible photos of paddling inside the Box, Lamar Empey spent years convincing what seemed like the entire state of Wyoming, including chambers of commerce, county commissioners, the Governor and multiple newspapers, to endorse the river's nomination, culminating in victory, when the plans to dam it were finally put to rest with the river's designation as a Wild and Scenic River in 1991.

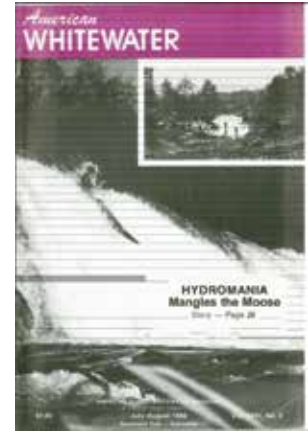
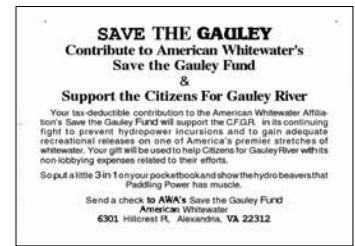
1992

American Whitewater partnered with American Rivers to create the Hydropower Reform Coalition. The Hydropower Reform Coalition consists of 160 national, regional, and local conservation and recreation organizations dedicated to protecting and restoring rivers affected by hydropower dams, ensuring public access to these lands and waters, and reforming the federal licensing process to ensure public participation and to improve the quality of the resulting decisions. American Whitewater staff continue to co-chair the coalition and play a strong leadership role in restoring rivers affected by hydropower.

1994

In 1994, the "Deerfield Settlement Agreement" was signed and became the first hydropowers settlement agreement ever developed in New England and only the second agreement ever signed in the U.S. This agreement incorporated significant land protective measures, fishery and recreational benefits, and financial enhancements never before available in Federal Energy Regulatory Commission relicensing, including 32 releases on the Class IV Monroe Bridge, and 105 releases on the Class II-III Fife Brook making paddling available almost every day throughout the summer.

**This timeline draws heavily from The River Chasers, Sue Taft 2001, the historic record of many involved individuals, and past issues of the American Whitewater Journal.*



Flowing Through Time:

The Evolution of American Whitewater

Sue Taft

TODAY WE TAKE FOR GRANTED MUCH OF WHAT WE know about whitewater—how to paddle, where to paddle—let alone how to do it safely. But 70 years ago none of that information existed, or if it did, it was knowledge held by just a few. There were no manufacturers of canoes or kayaks specifically for whitewater, no guidebooks, and any gear we used we borrowed from other sports including hockey helmets and diver's wetsuits. We didn't even have a common terminology for river features or how to describe a river's difficulty. Pretty much everything we know and use today had to be invented or leveraged from another sport. American Whitewater was instrumental in establishing the sport as we know it today. It was also and continues to be instrumental in preserving the rivers and access on which we rely for whitewater recreation.

Before World War II, many ski clubs also had small groups of canoeists who ran whitewater rivers in wood canvas canoes after the skiing season was over. The Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) of Boston of the early 1900s comes to mind as the earliest club in America with a whitewater contingent. After World War II, in the late 1940s into the 1950s, big changes in construction materials were now available for canoe and kayak construction with aluminum (Grumman canoes) and early fiberglass materials.

These new materials and the availability of folding kayaks (skin-on-frame), both US and European-made, resulted in an increasing number of paddlers who gravitated to whitewater. New clubs were organized specifically for running whitewater. Post World War II car production also allowed paddlers to explore whitewater rivers beyond their home rivers and with that, clubs became aware of others in geographic regions beyond their own. While some inter-club communication developed as a result of this, it was very limited and sporadic at best.

Although the American Canoe Association (ACA) has been in existence since 1880, its whitewater focus was on representing the competition-oriented segment of whitewater paddlers, particularly after the International Canoe Federation (ICF)

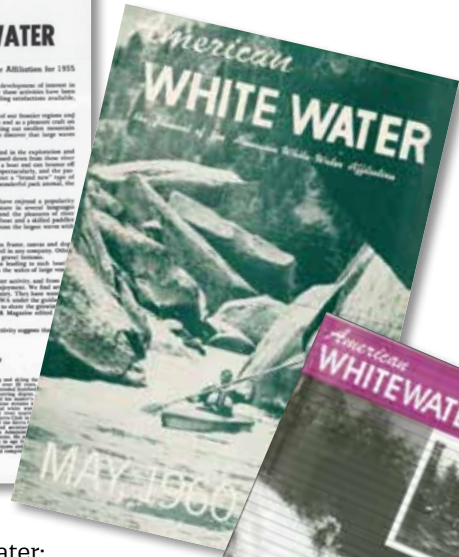
recognized ACA as the governing body for competition. As a result, no single organization represented or was aware of the activities of all whitewater paddlers across the country. Nor was there an industry that could work together to support whitewater. No one had knowledge of all of the pieces. A grassroots effort was begun to organize an inter-club exchange of information. This effort became the basis for the formation of the American White Water Affiliation (AWWA). The affiliation itself was the result of a memo sent out on April 6, 1954, to 16 formal clubs and informal groups of paddlers scattered across the country. Its intended purpose was to exchange information among whitewater clubs and individuals nationwide.

At first, the affiliation was just a link between clubs. In short order, an executive committee was elected from members of the affiliate clubs. The clubs were asked to provide copies of all trip schedules, instruction outlines, and any other information that they provided to their members. The purpose of this was to provide an opportunity to try out new ideas before presenting them to the entire affiliation's membership.

The clubs learned whitewater river skills mostly by trial and error and developed their own safety and instructional programs, which became part of the exchange of information. The early exchange also included how-to instructions for designing and building canoes and kayaks out of the newly available fiberglass materials. Information about slalom and wildwater competitions and events that were sprouting up around the country was also exchanged including club whitewater trip reports.

So much valuable information came to light in the early exchange of information that the Journal of the American White Water Affiliation was created within the first year. The Journal was also available to individuals who did not have access to a club and soon became the medium for the exchange of information.

Within the first year, the affiliation's purpose was further defined as, "To encourage exploration and enjoyment of wilderness waterways; to foster research, study and teaching of



improved techniques and equipment designs for safely negotiating white water; to protect the wilderness character of our waterways...and for bringing together ideas, procedures and experiences.” Noticeably absent was any mention of whitewater competition, although the membership supported and sponsored a growing interest in wildwater and the newly introduced slalom competitions from Europe.

Competition implied regulation, and it seemed that the more free-spirited souls involved in the establishment of AWWA did not seek to be regulated. Their purpose was to foster a sharing of information perhaps more befitting of the whitewater psyche. As such, the affiliation maintained a fairly loose organizational structure and in doing so, was not interested in competing with the ACA for authority over slalom and wildwater competition

The Guide Committee was established in the spring of 1955, “To encourage exploration and enjoyment of wilderness waterways.” Its purpose was multifold and included reaching an agreement on the use of a standard method for river rating, seeking uniformity in methods used to describe portages, scenery, river flow rates, distance tables, mapping symbols and riverside signs, and compiling an accurate listing of that information. One of the challenges for this was the lack of a single rating system there were eight different rating systems in use, including three in Europe. The committee’s final recommendation supported the use of the six-point system from the International Canoe Federation’s International Scale. AWWA took to establishing a common terminology for describing flow rates, river difficulty, and other river features, which was critical for the development of whitewater guidebooks for rivers across the country.

The Safety Committee was established the following year, “To foster research, study and teaching of improved techniques and equipment designs for safely negotiating white water.” In 1957, the committee began publishing accident reports. The number of deaths for that year was ten, including the tragic deaths of three Boy Scouts and their scoutmaster due to hypothermia and drowning on a high water run of French Creek in Pennsylvania.

The committee also began soliciting input for a Safety Code, much of which elicited strong opinions. The suggestion of being a good swimmer as a requirement was met with considerable criticism, many pointing out that swimming after an upset (as flipping and ending up out of your river craft was termed) was absurd. The suggestion that life jackets be worn at all times also solicited strong opinions. There was considerable discussion regarding loose ropes or painters, and

AW continues to support the people who paddle in the ways that support whitewater as a whole. I encourage members to look back at the early Journals to see how far the sport of whitewater has evolved and AW's role in that evolution.

the safety issues with snagging either paddler or river objects. The use of riverside throw lines was also seriously questioned for their practicality due to the concern of loose ropes in the water. One of the few suggestions that elicited little criticism was the hazard associated with cold water. The use of spray skirts was also encouraged, but so too was the issue of making sure the skirt could be released.

By 1959, final changes made to the Safety Code were accepted. The Code included provisions for wearing life jackets, dressing for the air and water temperature, and carrying essential equipment in waterproof bags. It specifically addressed required equipment such as a spare paddle, bow and stern safety lines, repair kit, sponge or bailing container, a spray deck, and in Class IV and V rivers, a pith-type crash helmet should be a "consideration." The Code further addressed the use of lead and rear-guard boats and the responsibilities of other boaters in the middle of the group.

The Conservation Committee was formed in August 1956 to, "Protect the wilderness character of our waterways..." The committee was composed of members who held conservation positions in other organizations including the Sierra Club. The affiliation intended to coordinate conservation efforts with other like-minded organizations. One of the earliest concerns was the potential loss of whitewater rivers in the West to dams for water storage, flood control, and hydroelectric generation, with much concern over the Colorado River watershed as a result of the post-World War II Colorado River Storage Project.

However, in the early years, the committee became disillusioned when the Wilderness Protection Act, which they thought would be the solution to preserving whitewater rivers, failed to pass Congress. The committee was further disillusioned by encroachments of proposed dams on the Clearwater in Idaho and the change of Dinosaur National Monument to National Park status, which did not guarantee the prevention of building a dam on the Green within the park's boundaries.

In supporting the initial purpose of the affiliation to disseminate information, the first issue of the Journal of the American White Water Affiliation was published in May 1955. The first

issue included trip reports, announcements of upcoming competitions, and river trips for clubs from the East (AMC and Buck Ridge Club) to the Rockies (Colorado White Water Association) and the West Coast (Sacramento White Water Club and the Sierra Club). It also included information about the possible damming of the Green River by the Echo Park Dam. In establishing the Journal, the organization furthered the "bringing together ideas, procedures and experiences" that was so critical to the development of the sport of whitewater.

Now, 70 years later, the affiliation's (now shortened to American Whitewater or AW) ongoing mission continues to maintain its historical purpose to "protect and restore America's whitewater rivers and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely." This mission, supported by four tenets—Conservation, River Access, Safety, and Education—mirrors the essence of the affiliation's original purpose with appropriate changes for its evolution. From the early days of supporting conservation efforts in disseminating information to its members, AW's role is now firmly established as an active participant in ongoing conservation and access efforts. Safety remains a mainstay via the now internationally recognized American Whitewater Safety Code. Maintaining an accident database and a uniform ranking and description system for whitewater rivers furthers its mission.

While the Guide Committee is no longer represented in AW, its early purpose was fulfilled by establishing common terminology and information about specific rivers. AW continues to serve as the medium for information and education solely focused on whitewater. Education through the bi-monthly Journal, monthly e-news, and AW's website serve to disseminate information about river recreation, conservation, access, and safety, in addition to paddling and educational events.

While 70 years have passed, AW continues to support the people who paddle whitewater in the ways that support whitewater as a whole. I encourage its members to look back at the early Journals to see how far the sport of whitewater has evolved and AW's role in that evolution. ■

A Mexico Adventure

COMMUNITY VOICES

Hannah Musgrove

Photo: Emma Musgrove

MY NAME IS HANNAH MUSGROVE AND I AM 16 YEARS old. This Thanksgiving, my family and I flew to Tlapacoyan, Mexico to paddle the Filobobos and the Alseseca Rivers. The trip to Tlapacoyan not only exposed me to thrilling whitewater but also to Mexico beyond the usual Cabo or Cancün.

We flew into Mexico City and stayed at Hacienda Santa Cruz for our first night in Mexico, where we were immersed in traditional foods like Pulque. In the morning, we took the scenic drive from the Hacienda to Aventurec (the kayak hostel in Tlapacoyan), which showed a transition from mountainous terrain to the jungle. At Aventurec, we were impressed by the wonderful accommodations and nice locals. We paddled the rafting section of the Filobobos, which boasted fun, safe rapids and spectacular views. The next day, we took on the Roadside section as a family. This is a step up for Class IV paddlers who want to work on boofing and try new drops. However, this section is also fun for many different types of paddlers because while it is pool-drop, the rapids are spaced close together.

The following day, I decided to paddle the Seven Sisters section of the Alseseca with my dad. We started the day with a drive through a huge banana plantation and then a massive rappel into the river canyon. The rappel was arguably one of the scariest parts of the day, but it was equally as beautiful. As I rappelled into the water from the 180-foot cliff, I saw Tomata 2 on my right and the first "sister" on my left. It was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. The Seven Sisters run was one of the best sections that I've ever paddled. The drops were so fun and the scenery was unmatched.

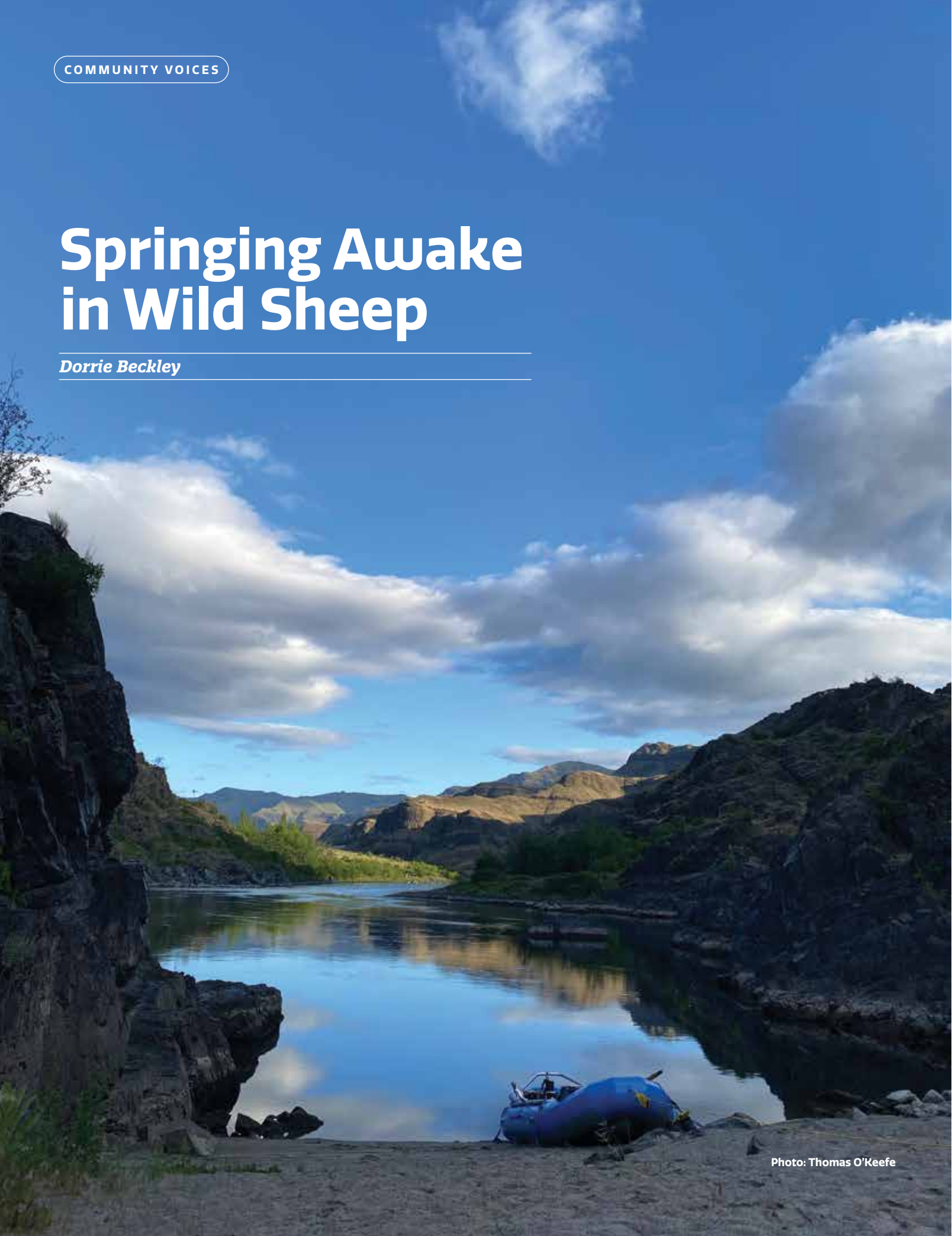
That evening, we went into Tlapacoyan to explore the town. It was very crowded but we got to experience a more traditional Mexican city. We found some pretty spots in town with the backdrop of the mountains. For the last half of the week, my dad paddled the harder sections like Big Banana and the Alto-Alto-Filobobos, while my sister, mom, and I found some scenic sections. We paddled the Alto-Filo one day, where we traveled down another canyon to the river. We experienced caves and rapids, but most interestingly, we visited ancient Mayan pyramids. The riverside pyramids were astonishingly intact and we used them as our takeout. Our guide (through Aventurec) showed us all of these spots and made the section super exciting. Aventurec provided our shuttles, food, and lodging for the whole trip; the hostel is a must for your trip to Tlapacoyan.

At the end of our trip, we paddled Roadside again and then went to a bus station from the take-out. While we waited for our bus, we began the arduous task of breaking down our breakdown paddles and repacking our bags. The locals in the bus station were extremely confused about what we were doing because the paddles took a lot of force to disconnect! We took a bus to Puebla, where we explored the city. From there, we took another bus back to Mexico City. The buses in Mexico were super convenient and we used them multiple times on our trip.

Overall, the trip was super fun and there was not one dull moment. I am extremely thankful for this experience and I hope to go back to paddle Big Banana and Tomata one day! ■

Springing Awake in Wild Sheep

Dorrie Beckley



NED, KYLE, AND I PULLED INTO THE SWIFT CURRENT

as a united tripod. After breaking the eddyline, I kept pulling as hard as I could towards river right. Perhaps I was taking my nervousness out on the oars, and attempting to match the strength of the swelling Snake River. This proved to be a mistake only moments later.

I paused and looked downstream. *Ahh, just where I want to be*, I thought. But I would soon learn that where I believed and imagined I was in my mind was very different from where I was on the water.

As a 20-something wild river guide testing her mettle against the current and the broader world, I had an idea of where I should be, or sometimes who I should be. I often took cues from rigid perfectionism and fear, rather than a conscious awareness of where I actually was.

It was my first trip lead of the season in Hells Canyon, and it was spring. The hills are emerald green during this glorious time of year. It's as if one might be floating through Scottish highlands with sounds of bagpipes lofting in the air, rather than Idaho and Oregon desert with rattlesnakes lurking under blooming arrow-leaf balsamroot. We had just floated by an adult black bear, fishing with his massive paws, from river-right.

Any seasoned river-runner will tell you that Hells Canyon is absolute magic this time of year.

I had dabbled in commercial trip leading before this day, however, I usually tried to avoid it. It scared me. Looking back now, I can see that I struggled with self esteem and identity, topped off with a healthy dose of anxiety. This resulted in a whole lot of compensatory protectiveness, perfectionism, and rigidity.

I adjusted my angle back to river left as we entered swift water and looked back at the crew behind me. They followed suit.

For a few brief moments, I still thought all was well. The waves were bigger than they appeared from the scout, and the current moved more powerfully to the right than I had anticipated, but all good persisted in my mind.

About 20 yards down into the rapid, I must have woken up. I realized I was being ushered forcefully to river right, despite my hopeful boat angle pointing to the left. I was off line. Way off line. There was no point in trying to push back to the left against 20,000 cfs of the Snake River. I was on the wrong piece

of water to begin with, and not even Hercules could transport us back to where I needed to be.

Therein lies the classic moment as a river guide. Oh shit.

I was accompanied by fellow guide-friend, Ned Perry. A kind and incredibly skilled boatman, Ned is equal parts vivacious and skilled. Ned spent most of his time on the Middle Fork of the Salmon those days. I was puttering around on the Snake and the Lower Salmon, trying to dodge our rafting manager as best I could when I sensed he was about to ask me to lead a trip.

Our third boatman was a kind-hearted Lewiston high school student who worked in the boat shop. His name was Kyle, and he was eager for time on the water rowing the 18-foot gear boat. There was a humility and a sweetness to the feel of the crew for this small three-boat trip in the glorious Idaho bloom. We all had that fresh spring spirit that seasoned river guides know well.

We had walked back from the Wild Sheep scout to the boats with our nine-passenger crew. Our guests were two families from the Seattle area. I was carrying the two dads and their 12-year-old sons. Ned rowed the remaining five in his oar rig.

At low flows, the scout of Wild Sheep rapid is a slow flat pool; today it was fast-moving current. We finished off our last-minute rigging and fussing with straps and pulled back out into the river all together. Then there I was, 20 yards into the rapid, off my line. Oh shit.

Coming off the right wall were enormous laterals. I hadn't taken much notice of them at the scout as I anticipated being nowhere near them. Not only was I headed straight for them, I was headed toward them with the worst possible angle. I was set up to barrel roll right into them. I focused on trying to spin myself back towards river-right and square up to the massive giants.

We almost made it.

Working the oars as fast as I could muster, I nearly straightened. But I needed one more stroke, 10 more yards to work with, six more seconds before we hit. All guides know this feeling too.

As the boat rose with the green portion of the lateral I remember my vantage point changed from horizontal across the

water, to looking straight up at the bright blue sky. As the raft went vertical, for a brief moment we seemed to balance on the left side of the stern. We may have even bobbed for a second. I vividly remember thinking, *Maybe...*

And then, the boat rolled over.

As I surfaced, I saw all of the passengers close by. They all grabbed the line on the upside-down boat as instructed three hours earlier at the safety talk. I had just met these fine folks this morning, and now I had dumped them into the Snake River.

After a quick attendance check with all passengers present, I assured them we were all good and we climbed on top of the upside-down raft. Even as my mind and body were focused on the immediate tasks at hand, like climbing on top of the boat and getting it to shore to assess the damage, I could feel shame and anxiety rising in my bones.

I felt like a failure, and maybe today we would use the term, imposter syndrome. All of my efforts to avoid trip leading were probably subconsciously so that I could avoid a moment like this. One mistake, one failure, and I was terrified I would slip into the depths of tearfulness and self loathing.

The silver lining of being so far off line and so far right is we caught the eddyline slackwater and drifted into an eddy right below the laterals at the bottom of the rapid.

Ned and Kyle pulled in right behind us and we made quick work of righting the boat. Ned was highly skilled in swiftwater rescue techniques and had a line ready to flip the boat in minutes.

Upon righting the boat, the passengers came aboard again as I inspected the rigging. The energy among the passengers was surprisingly positive and upbeat. I know now that a clean flip and recovery, or a mistake in the walk of life followed by repair, can bring people together like no other experience. However, at the time, all I could feel was tension in my legs, shakiness in my hands, and tears welling in my eyes.

We floated down to the next big rapid, Granite. I had initially planned for another scout with the passengers. At the high flows, we had time to burn and this added a nice little side adventure. I needed, however, to collect myself.

We pulled into the Granite scout, admiring the towering blue walls, and I announced in the shakiest trip leader voice I could muster, that this would just be a quick boatman scout to save time. A small white lie, but hopefully forgivable.

As I walked up the primitive trail of sparkling granite pebbles, I began to feel my legs tremble with each step. Tears that had been welling in my eyes finally poured over. I felt so embarrassed, ashamed, and if I'm being honest, scared. We arrived at the viewpoint and Ned came up behind me. I tried to hide

my tears and I shook my arms a couple times to release the electric buzzing I felt all throughout my body.

What he said to me at that moment is something I still remember so clearly, more than 12 years later. Ned looked me straight in the eyes. Everything felt so intense, from the bright mid-day Idaho sun to the roar of the rapid below. To adjust for this, I remember Ned used an assertive and loud voice.

"Dorrie, I was just on a high water Middle Fork trip, and our trip leader, a guide of 25 years, flipped a dory. It was an epic recovery from there. This guide is highly skilled and revered in our community. And he flipped. It happens to all of us."

He smiled. Then he said, "Dorrie, you are a solid boatman and trip leader, and I'd follow you down any river." He added, "And I'm about to follow you down this next Class IV."

I don't share this with you to recover my position as a grandiose river goddess. His words landed like a soft blanket of kindness, and I immediately noticed the intensity in my body start to relax. I saw the kindness and honesty in his face. I did not feel invited into arrogance by this; I felt seen and held in a really tough moment.

Ned's words demonstrate the sisterhood and brotherhood of the guiding community that is unlike anything else I have experienced in my lifetime. His encouragement neutralized the stress of the experience for me and helped me to see that all was okay.

Brene Brown reminds us to surround ourselves with people who don't blow out your candle. A mentor of mine in the mental health counseling profession calls them "light cuppers" — someone who cups their hands around your inner flame to remind you that it's there, even when you may have forgotten.

Ned gave me a big hug, the kind of powerful embrace river guides know well. We headed back down towards the boats to run our next Class IV of the day. I was still nervous for sure. But I felt lighter and grounded, at the same time.

The dads, sons, and I pulled out into the current to run Granite Rapid. At the top of the entry to the rapid, one of the intrepid sons sitting in the front of the boat turned to me and asked, "Hey Dorrie, are we going to flip in this one too?" He didn't seem afraid, but rather intrigued and adventurous, eagerly holding on to the line.

I chuckled to myself. I leaned in and responded with an Indiana Jones-type smile. "Not if I can help it."

We had a smooth run through Granite, with plenty of hooting and hollering at the bottom. The joy of a clean and fun run never felt so good.



Photo: Thomas O'Keefe

Later, around the campfire, Ned told his version of our Wild Sheep flip. It was hilarious, of course, helping cement the idea of the moment as a grand adventure rather than a shameful and irreconcilable mistake. He noted that from the sweep position he watched my boat bob in the lateral and slowly land upside down. He saw Kyle loyally following my line downriver. *Oh no*, he thought, as he had a moment of coming back to his own present situation. He thought to himself, *Well shit, we can't all flip here!* as he refocused on running a clean line himself. Kyle's heavy 18-foot raft fared better in the laterals than mine, and Ned course-corrected in time to run a smooth line. We all had a good laugh around the campfire.

I have made so many mistakes over the years. Some really spectacular ones. We all have. And perhaps there is a way to hold ourselves and be held by others in authenticity and compassion as we muddle our way through life. I seek a way that is neither arrogant nor dismissive, but actually takes accountability with kindness.

As a river guide for over ten years, I was lucky enough to have many smooth multi-day trips. Looking back now, of all the seasons and river miles, I remember this trip most clearly.

That day at Wild Sheep Rapid taught me something. I experienced a moment where I showed up short, made a mistake, and was met with compassion and support. I learned that making mistakes and being compassionate with self and others is the pathway to self awareness, growth, and good leadership.

This core Wild Sheep lesson remains present for me today in my leadership roles now as a mother of two beautiful high-energy kids and as a supervising mental health therapist. Some days the thought of running as fast as I can in the opposite direction of leadership arises. Anxiety and I still have standing tea dates as well as many spontaneous meetups. But I bring the lessons in being aware, focusing on the task at hand, and providing kindness when mistakes are made. The resulting growth I see in myself, my children, and supervisees is palpable.

Maybe we are all learning that we grow when supported with kindness. Providing kindness is less about me. It's more about the power of compassion and co-regulation we provide for each other. I see far more growth in myself and others with this approach, than rigid perfectionism and shaming self or others.

Sometimes it's not too late and we can make some adjustments and get back on course. Other days we might be so far off-line that we have to let the laterals crash where they will and try again the next day. But the power and growth is in the trying again. More often than not, we have a chance to do it differently the next time.

The week following my Wild Sheep flip, I found myself rowing the same section once again, at the same high water level. This time I was one of six boats, and not trip leading. Redemption time.

The trip leader was Heather Solee, a dear friend. She knew I was nervous about running Wild Sheep again.

At lunch upstream of Wild Sheep Rapid, Heather revealed a large gummy bear lollipop she had stowed for me. It really was one of the most ridiculous things I'd ever seen. It made me laugh instantly. She said, "I know you are nervous about Wild Sheep. Follow me, we've got this."

Anyone who has ever boated with Heather knows how skilled and graceful she is on the water. She led the trip down the rapid with ease, and I was able to experience a successful run, just a week after flipping in the laterals below.

The dry land rapids I run these days in mothering and counseling provide endless opportunities to practice dedication, focus, and compassion when I make a mistake. I love my kiddos so deeply. And I make mistakes all the time. When I'm present and grounded, I can notice, adjust, and repair. And I can see that we actually get it right far more than we get it wrong.

Less and less, I feel as if I am rolling through life unconscious, anxious, and guided by a protective fantasy of being perfect. More and more, I sense and observe myself moving through life with my eyes open. My heart is open. I believe that day in Hells Canyon was a turning point for my personal growth. Now, my oars are in the water and I'm more alive and paying more attention. I see more and more who I am and where I am in real time with focus and kindness.

And I have learned that people who stay with you in the struggle and hold you up in tough moments are one of life's greatest gifts. ■





Photo: Thomas O'Keefe

A photograph of a kayaker in a narrow canyon. The kayaker is wearing a red jacket and a green helmet, and is paddling a yellow and orange kayak. The canyon walls are dark and rocky, with some green vegetation on the left side. The water is dark and reflects the surrounding rocks.

Satellite Communication Devices

Nathan Werner

WHITewater ENTHUSIASTS ARE USUALLY AN EDUCATED group when it comes to safety. They are knowledgeable about swiftwater rescue and sometimes even overanalyze the safety considerations of throw bags, pin kits, first aid kits, and apparel. Like any tool, good decision making takes knowledge of best practices. Satellite communication devices are no different and are an important part of a safety kit.

Satellite communication devices have become more accessible for outdoor uses with lower costs of devices, plans, and ease of use. These devices can make a big difference when things go wrong, but there are lessons to learn about how to carry them and how to use them. The most important consideration is that the device should be accessible when it is needed. This means it should ideally be connected to your person and not in a drybag in your boat. I carry an inReach Mini in the front pocket of my PFD.

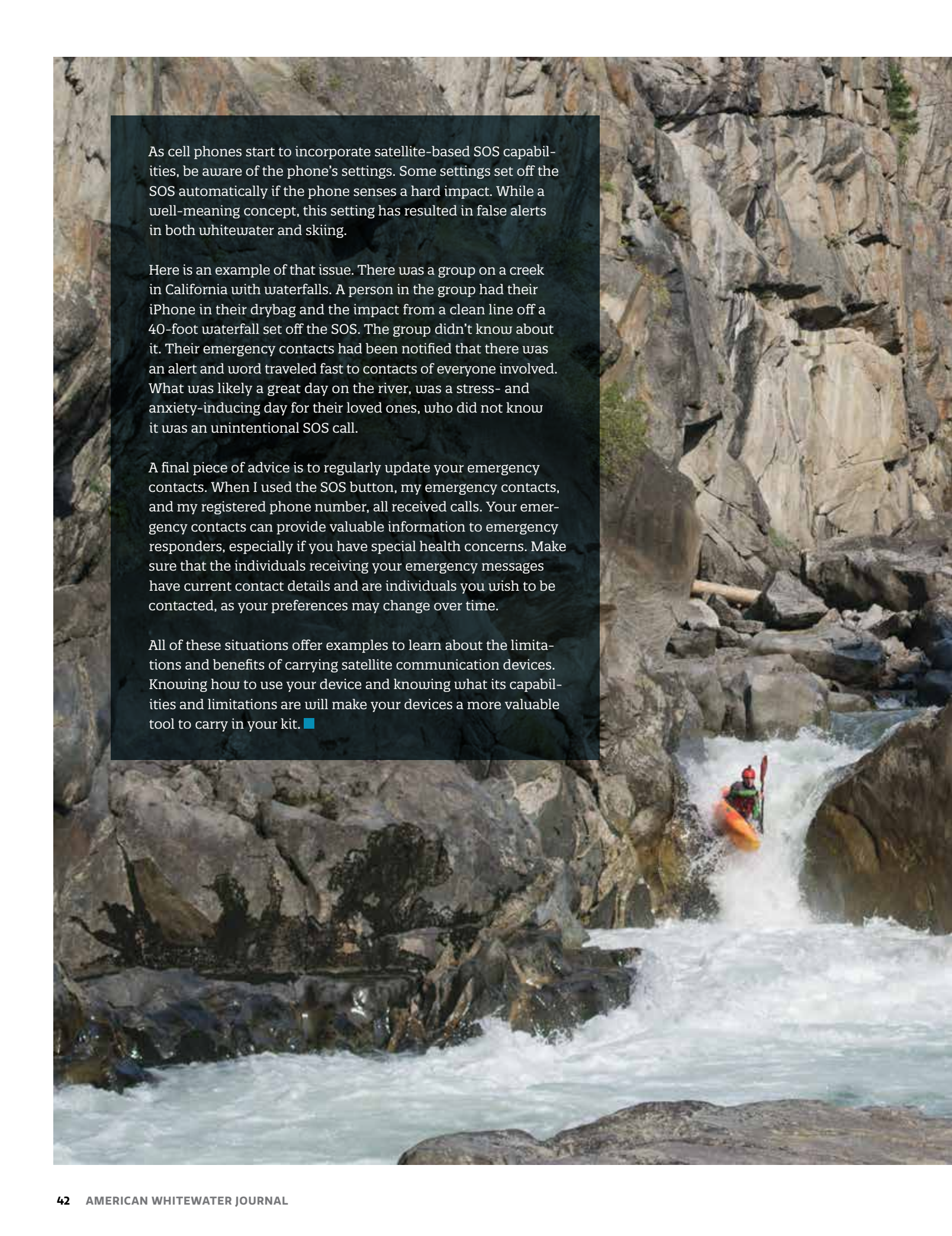
An example that illustrates why this is important: 15 minutes into a run in Mexico my group didn't recognize the portage eddy and flushed into an unrunnable waterfall. I have no memory from the lip of the drop until more than 10 minutes later and my boat was gone. My back was broken and I was immobilized. Through shock and adrenaline, I was able to get out of the water, but after, I lay on the side of the river for eight hours until someone found me. I didn't have a device, but if I had, it would have been in my lap bag and gone with my boat anyway. After this incident, I started carrying an inReach and have made a point of telling everyone I know who carries one to put it on their person.

An additional example comes from the "Tales from the Cripps" podcast. A group running the Jarbidge Bruneau had two swims with lost boats. The Jarbidge Bruneau is a remote multi-day trip and the group had two devices in the group. The devices belonged to the two people who swam and were in their drybags in the boats that had disappeared. They luckily did not have injuries, eventually found the boats, and did not need to use the SOS function, but it was another incident where if they needed it they wouldn't have had it. The podcast is a good listen for the perspective of the incident and lessons learned.

The second consideration when using satellite devices is ensuring you understand the messaging capabilities of the device. Some devices, generally older, are only capable of sending an, "all good" or, "there's an emergency" message. Most devices now have two-way messaging. Some can only send messages when connected to a phone while others can message directly from the device. The inReach Mini, for example, requires a phone to send non-preset messages. There are several presets that can convey the overall situation, but in a rescue it is better to be able to send detailed messages.

Here is an example that illustrates this case. Our group of six was running the Black Canyon of the Gunnison. This run is known as one of the most remote sections of river in Colorado. We had four devices in the group. Based on my earlier experience in Mexico, I told everyone who had a device to carry it on their person before we launched. The Black Canyon has a reputation for hard portages over house-sized boulders through poison ivy. Halfway through the longest portage, a person in the group slipped and fell head-first into a rock and was knocked unconscious. Having my inReach in my pocket, I had hit the SOS button before he regained consciousness. His injuries were severe enough that he had to be evacuated and was rescued by a helicopter less than three hours from the time of the fall. Debriefing with the first responders, they said the ability to send two-way messages saved over 24 hours on the rescue. In a situation with a head injury of unknown severity the difference between three and more than 24 hours can be life or death.

A third consideration is that satellite devices only work when they can reach a satellite. This seems self explanatory, but many remote river trips are in deep canyons that limit the frequency that messages can be sent and received. It is important to have patience and know the messages will go through. In the Black Canyon it took an average of five to 10 minutes for messages to send and 15 to 20 minutes before messages would return.

A photograph of a kayaker in an orange kayak navigating a turbulent white-water rapid in a rocky river canyon. The kayaker is wearing a red helmet and is positioned in the lower right quadrant of the frame. The water is churning and white with foam, splashing around the kayaker. The surrounding rocks are dark and jagged, forming a narrow channel. The background shows a steep, rocky cliff face with some sparse vegetation.

As cell phones start to incorporate satellite-based SOS capabilities, be aware of the phone's settings. Some settings set off the SOS automatically if the phone senses a hard impact. While a well-meaning concept, this setting has resulted in false alerts in both whitewater and skiing.

Here is an example of that issue. There was a group on a creek in California with waterfalls. A person in the group had their iPhone in their drybag and the impact from a clean line off a 40-foot waterfall set off the SOS. The group didn't know about it. Their emergency contacts had been notified that there was an alert and word traveled fast to contacts of everyone involved. What was likely a great day on the river, was a stress- and anxiety-inducing day for their loved ones, who did not know it was an unintentional SOS call.

A final piece of advice is to regularly update your emergency contacts. When I used the SOS button, my emergency contacts, and my registered phone number, all received calls. Your emergency contacts can provide valuable information to emergency responders, especially if you have special health concerns. Make sure that the individuals receiving your emergency messages have current contact details and are individuals you wish to be contacted, as your preferences may change over time.

All of these situations offer examples to learn about the limitations and benefits of carrying satellite communication devices. Knowing how to use your device and knowing what its capabilities and limitations are will make your devices a more valuable tool to carry in your kit. ■

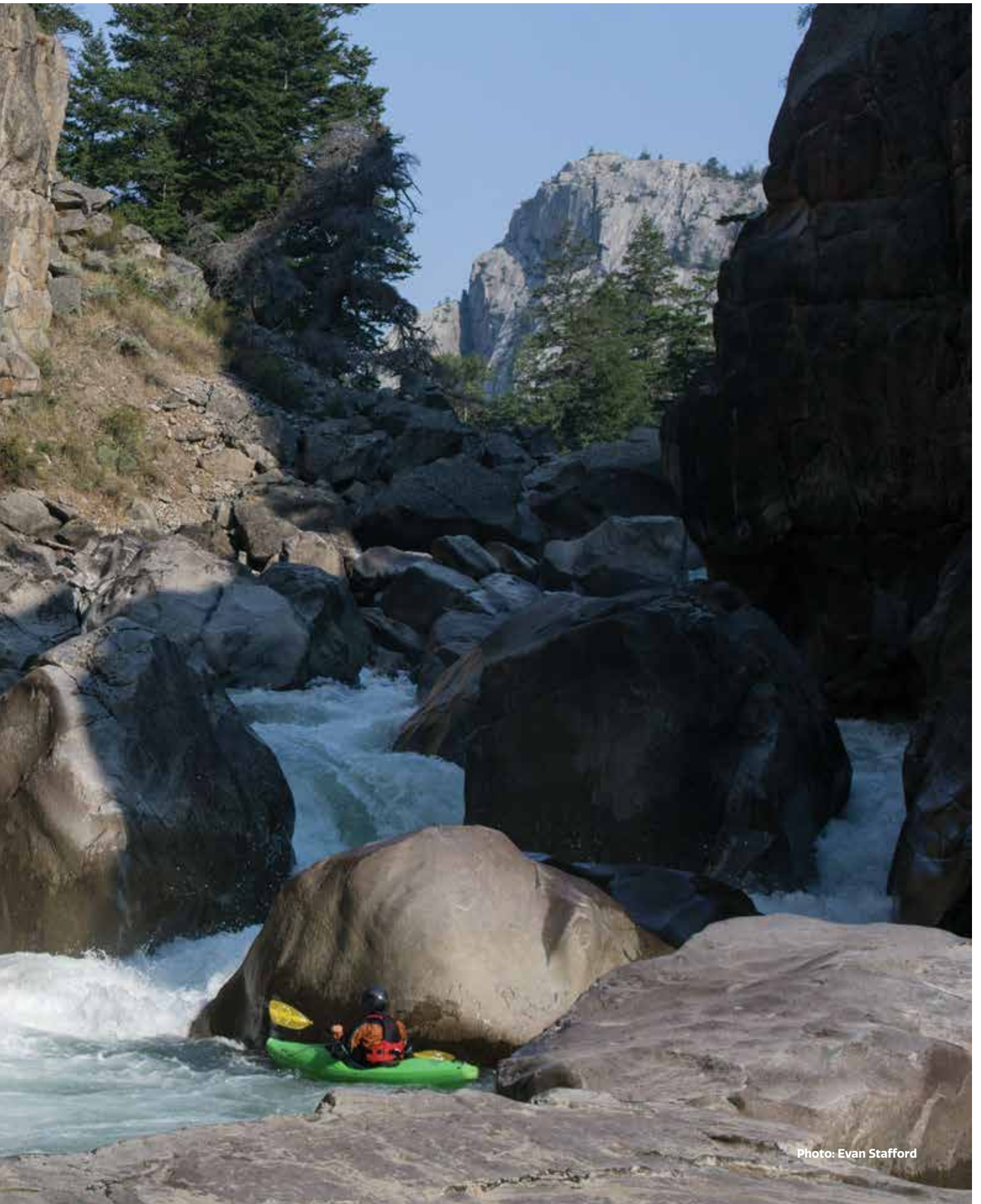


Photo: Evan Stafford

COMMUNITY VOICES

12
STEPS

*to Running New York's Independence
River for the First Time*

Richard Mauser

Photos courtesy of Richard Mauser



1. Put your foot down and clearly establish the boundaries. You can't let your friends push you around. You are an independent, strong-willed individual. Tell them: "Look, I am not going to paddle the Independence. What word don't you understand?"
2. Put in at Bradish Road. The water is moving swiftly. Don't stare too long at it. Distract yourself. Talk to whoever will talk back, but not to the paddler who got trashed on the first rapid and decided to carry back out. That would be discouraging.
3. Do a nice run down the Class II/III rock gardens. Be very pleased with yourself.
4. After scouting the first big drop, choose the beefier left route and follow a nice line, punching through the foam and backwash. How's your confidence now?
5. Take out at the top of the Class V Big Slide to scout. It starts with a big hole, then the water makes a big foamy pile onto a low granite boulder that can push you left or right, to your demise. Going left you'll find a river-wide wave that looks like it would be way too intimate for way too long if you don't punch it straight on. Watch a guy flip in that hole and roll up to surf it for what seems like a five-minute eternity. Do you really want to be there? If you survive that, you'll run the next slide into the spray off the rock at the bottom, and then eddy out.
6. Spend your scouting time chatting up a young hottie spectator. When asked, "Are you running this one?" reply with an emphatic, "NOOOO!!!!" and mean it.
7. Portage down, put in, and eddy out above the next drop, a waterfall. Don't intimidate yourself by scouting. Have someone else point out the line from shore, and then, go!
8. Make a nice boof, good landing, and give yourself an atta boy! Now figure out how to explain this one to your wife. You promised never to run waterfalls. Remember? Um, yeah...
9. Scout the last rapid. Portage around that nasty tree-strainer and put in and run the first ledge drops in a shaky, tentative way. After all, if you flip, you're in for a good spanking at the bottom. Let that weigh on the back of your mind. Steady yourself – steady now – and at the last moment, make the boof of your life off the last ledge. Land flat and perfect on the foam. Yeah baby, you made it!
10. Now, watch yourself sink into the churning water and disappear like a submarine. Welcome to your new home for the next 20 seconds. Foam. Bubbles. More bubbles than Lawrence Welk can muster in a season of reruns. Ones tinier than Don Ho could ever have imagined. Forget trying to paddle through it because you can't paddle air, and you are only wasting your oxygen. When she's through with you, you'll know. Funny how time expands when you're underwater. Did you remember to install the drain plug? Wonder how long you can hold your breath? Was that a fish? Is she singing yet? Can you hear her sing?
11. Your time is up. Rise from the foam like a waterlogged phoenix, now facing the ledge. Raise your paddle over your head and shout, "Who's your daddy! Who's your daddy! Yeaahhhh!" When your head clears from the euphoria of the finale, listen to the other paddlers yelling, "BACK-PADDLE! BACKPADDLE!" and do it. They know more than you, and you don't need an encore.
12. Remember step one and eat crow all the way back to camp.

Editor's Note: This essay was first published in the FLOW Paddlers Club "FLOWlines" November 2003 newsletter.



Remembering Mary Elliott

Words and Photos by Scott Sady

WE RECENTLY LOST A DEAR FRIEND AND LOCAL

kayaking legend. Mary would probably laugh and punch me in the shoulder if she heard me call her a legend, but she really was, at least to me. I met Mary when I first started kayaking after Reno built their whitewater park in 2005. I never saw her without a huge smile on her face. She was always happy to be on the water, even in the worst weather. We spent many afternoons at the whitewater park together where I taught her how to loop. She was so excited when she finally got it. She competed several times in the Reno River Festival. At 60 years of age, she was a favorite of all the younger kayakers for her infectious personality. I don't think I ever did a Pit River release that Mary wasn't part of.

The day I knew she was a legend was on her 60th birthday. A big group of us paddled down to the waterfall section (of the Pit River). There are many ways down this and Mary usually did a fun slide to the river right of the 30-foot waterfall. On her 60th birthday, however, she paddled up to the waterfall with me and said she thought she wanted to run it. We talked about the line for a bit and I went off and then paddled to shore and took out my camera. One of the pictures featured here is Mary hucking a 30-foot waterfall on her 60th birthday. Legend!

Mary was probably one of the most fit 60-plus people I have ever met. In the 20 years I knew her, she never drank, smoked, or did drugs. In addition to the river, I would see her on the slopes of Mt. Rose skiing, or at my gym. The last time I talked to her was at my gym. I had just had shoulder surgery and was there in a sling trying to adjust the sit up bench and failing. A voice from behind said, "You need some help with that." I turned around and there was Mary, all smiles. I forgot about the situps and we caught up. She was tan and glowing and had just come back from a trip to Mexico. She told me about her upcoming trip to Costa Rica after the holidays. She was super excited, as always.

The group of women she went with on this two-week kayaking trip to Costa Rica posted photos of her last day. The photos show her kayaking down a beautiful river, all smiles, then sitting in a hot spring surrounded by friends. The group had a nice dinner and then went to bed. Mary never woke up. As last days go, it was a pretty good one. She lived her last day the way she lived her life, having as much fun as possible. It's just that her last day felt to us, too soon. Her passing was a wake-up call not to waste time, not put things off, hug those you love, laugh, travel, and adventure because you just never know. We'll miss you, little fishie! ■



Photo: Dup Crosson

I Love Kayaking

Chris Harjes

I love kayaking.

I love tuning my mind and body to its highest capability of immediate presence.

I love coordinating the graceful, perfectly controlled dance with the chaos and beauty of one of nature's most powerful forces.

And I love it when a slight misread of the complexity of churning forces, a slightly misplaced stroke or edge drive, turns the once-graceful dance into a rowdy, rough-and-tumble wrestling match with a giant watery bear, firmly demolishing any delusions of mastery on my part.

I love what playing in whitewater does for my mind, body, and spirit.

I love even more the awesome people it brings me closer to, the shared trials and tribulations, supporting each other through fear and limitations, solving the intricate puzzles of a steep gorge or a continuous unknown river.

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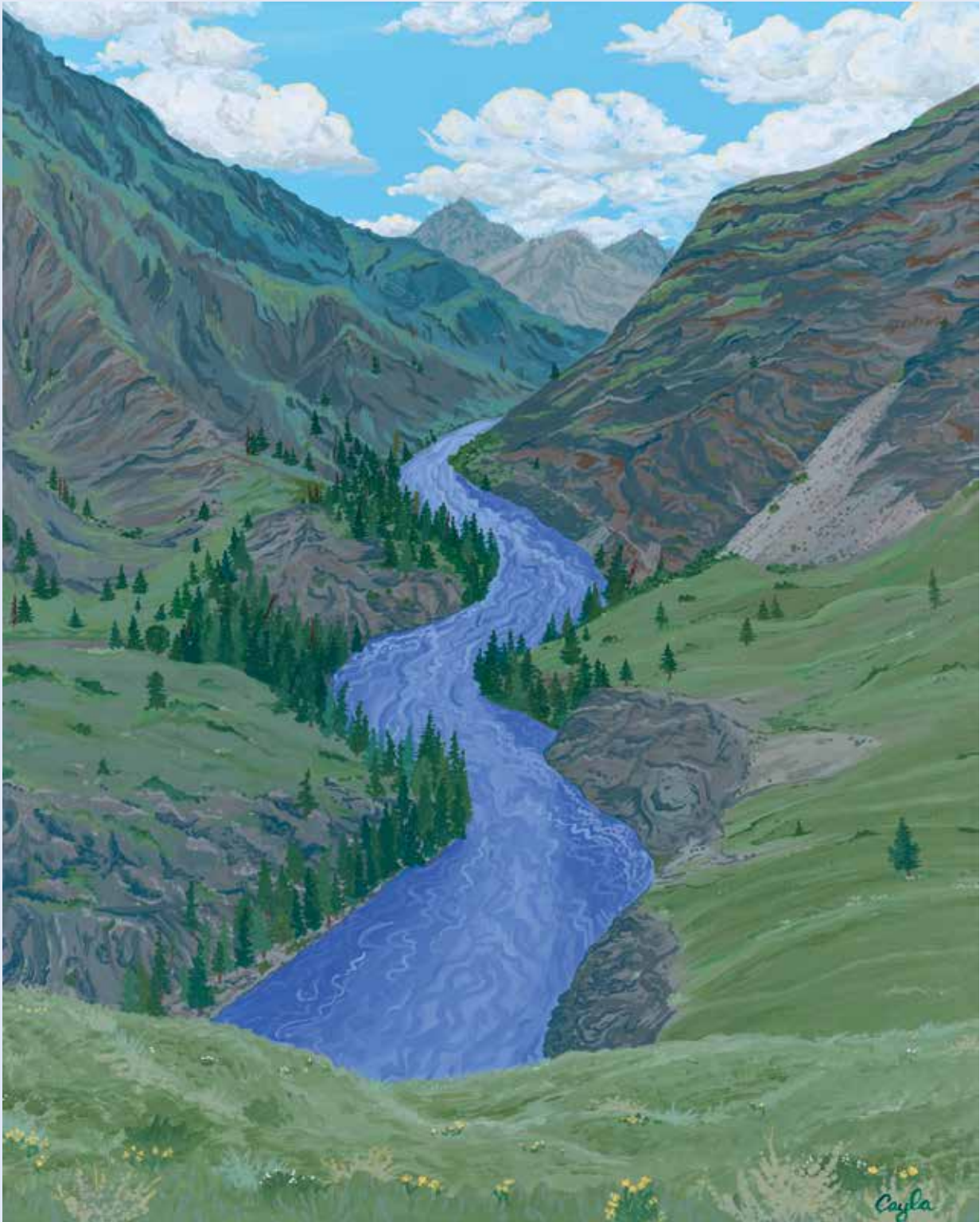


IT'S NOT JUST A PADDLE BOARD

IT'S A HALA

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Rattlesnake Ridge

This popular hike on the Middle Fork of the Salmon from Rattlesnake Cave to Woolard camp is a favorite of many river runners.

Cayla Sanderson is a self-taught artist and a river guide based in Salmon, Idaho. Her art is inspired by the rivers and wilderness of the American West. She aims to bring color and light to landscape paintings and large scale mural projects. She has also created one of a kind prompted river logs to help keep track of your personal river adventures. They can be found at www.CaylaSanderson.com along with her originals, prints, cards, stickers, and murals.



Pursuing **Joy**
Through **Kayaking**:
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JacksonKayak.com | Paddler: **Kirra Paulus**
Location: Celestial Falls, **Oregon**, United States
Photographer: **Sage Donnelly Imagery**

Jackson
kayak

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 80 current AW Affiliate Clubs 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!

AMERICAN WHITEWATER AFFILIATE CLUBS

SUPPORTING AFFILIATE CLUBS

Alaska

Fairbanks Paddlers, Fairbanks

Arkansas

Arkansas Canoe Club, Little Rock

Colorado

Dolores River Boating Advocate, Dolores
Colorado Whitewater Association, Denver

Georgia

Georgia Canoeing Association Inc, Winston

Kentucky

Bluegrass Wildwater Association, Lexington
Vikings Canoe Club, Louisville

Massachusetts

Appalachian Mountain Club, Boston

Nevada

Sierra Nevada Whitewater Club, Reno

New York

KCCNY, Brooklyn

North Carolina

West Asheville Canoe and Kayak Organization (WACKO), Asheville

Ohio

Keelhaulers, Cleveland

Oregon

Oregon Kayak and Canoe Club, Portland

South Carolina

Foothills Paddling Club, Greenville
Palmetto Paddlers, Columbia

Tennessee

Chota Canoe Club, Knoxville
Tennessee Valley Canoe Club, Knoxville

Washington

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

AFFILIATE CLUBS

Alaska

Nova River Runners Inc., Chickaloon

Alabama

Coosa River Paddling Club, Wetumpka
Huntsville Canoe Club, Huntsville

Arizona

Southern Arizona Paddlers Club, Tucson

California

Chico Paddleheads, Chico
River City Whitewater Club, Sacramento
Smith River Alliance, Crescent City

Colorado

Diversify Whitewater, Fort Collins
Friends of the Yampa, Steamboat Springs
High Country River Rafter, Wheat Ridge
Rocky Mountain Outdoor Center, Buena Vista
Royal Gorge River Initiative Org, Cañon City
San Miguel Whitewater Assoc., Telluride
Team Colorado Whitewater Racing Club, Longmont
Upper Colorado Private Boaters Assoc., Glenwood Springs

Connecticut

New England Canoe and Kayak Racing Association, Meriden

Delaware

AMC Delaware Valley Chapter, Oaks (PA)

Idaho

Cutthroat Whitewater
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

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

Minnesota

Rapids Riders, Eagan

Missouri

Missouri Whitewater Association, St. Louis

Montana

Beartooth Paddlers Society, Billings

New Mexico

Adobe Whitewater Club of New Mexico, Albuquerque

New Hampshire

Merrimack Valley Paddlers, Merrimack
New England Canoe and Kayak Racing Association, Contoocook

New Jersey

AMC Delaware Valley Chapter, Oaks (PA)

New York

Zoar Valley Paddling Club, East Aurora

North Carolina

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



Ohio

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

Oregon

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

Pennsylvania

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

Tennessee

Appalachian Paddling Enthusiasts, Jonesborough
Clean Water Expected in East Tennessee, Sevierville
East Tennessee Whitewater Club, Oak Ridge
Tennessee Eastman Hiking & Canoeing Club,
Kingsport
Tennessee Scenic Rivers Association, Nashville

Texas

Houston Canoe Club, Inc., Houston

Utah

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

Vermont

Vermont Paddlers Club, Montpelier

Virginia

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

Washington

Northwest Whitewater Association, Spokane

Washington, DC

Canoe Cruisers Association

West Virginia

Mason Dixon Canoe Cruisers, Bolivar
WV Wildwater Assn, S. Charleston

Wisconsin

North East Wisconsin Paddlers, Inc., Neenah

Wyoming

American Packrafting Association, Wilson
Jackson Hole Kayak Club, Jackson

National

Team River Runner

CANADA

Ontario

Kawartha Whitewater Paddlers

DISCOUNTED AW MEMBERSHIP FOR AFFILIATE CLUB MEMBERS

AW offers a discounted Affiliate Club membership of \$25, a \$10 savings. If you are renewing your AW Membership or joining as a new member, select the \$25/year Affiliate Club Member option online at www.americanwhitewater.org/join.

A list of Affiliate Clubs can be found on our website under the Community/Clubs tab. If you notice your club missing from our list, please encourage club leaders to renew their club membership or join American Whitewater as a new Affiliate Club.

Your club's membership and your personal membership enable American Whitewater Staff to be active and engaged in the process of river stewardship across the country. Your membership support helps to meet the many challenges whitewater rivers face. If you have questions about the Affiliate Club membership, please reach out to Bethany Overfield at membership@americanwhitewater.org.

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 longest continually published whitewater magazine.
6. Your club is recognized in the list of Affiliate Clubs posted to the AW website.
7. Recognize your club in the list of Affiliate Clubs noted in each bimonthly *American Whitewater Journal*.
8. Post club information on the AW website to help paddlers find you.
9. Gain club satisfaction from lending support to AW's stewardship efforts.
10. Improve your club members river karma.

For more information, contact Bethany Overfield:
membership@americanwhitewater.org

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

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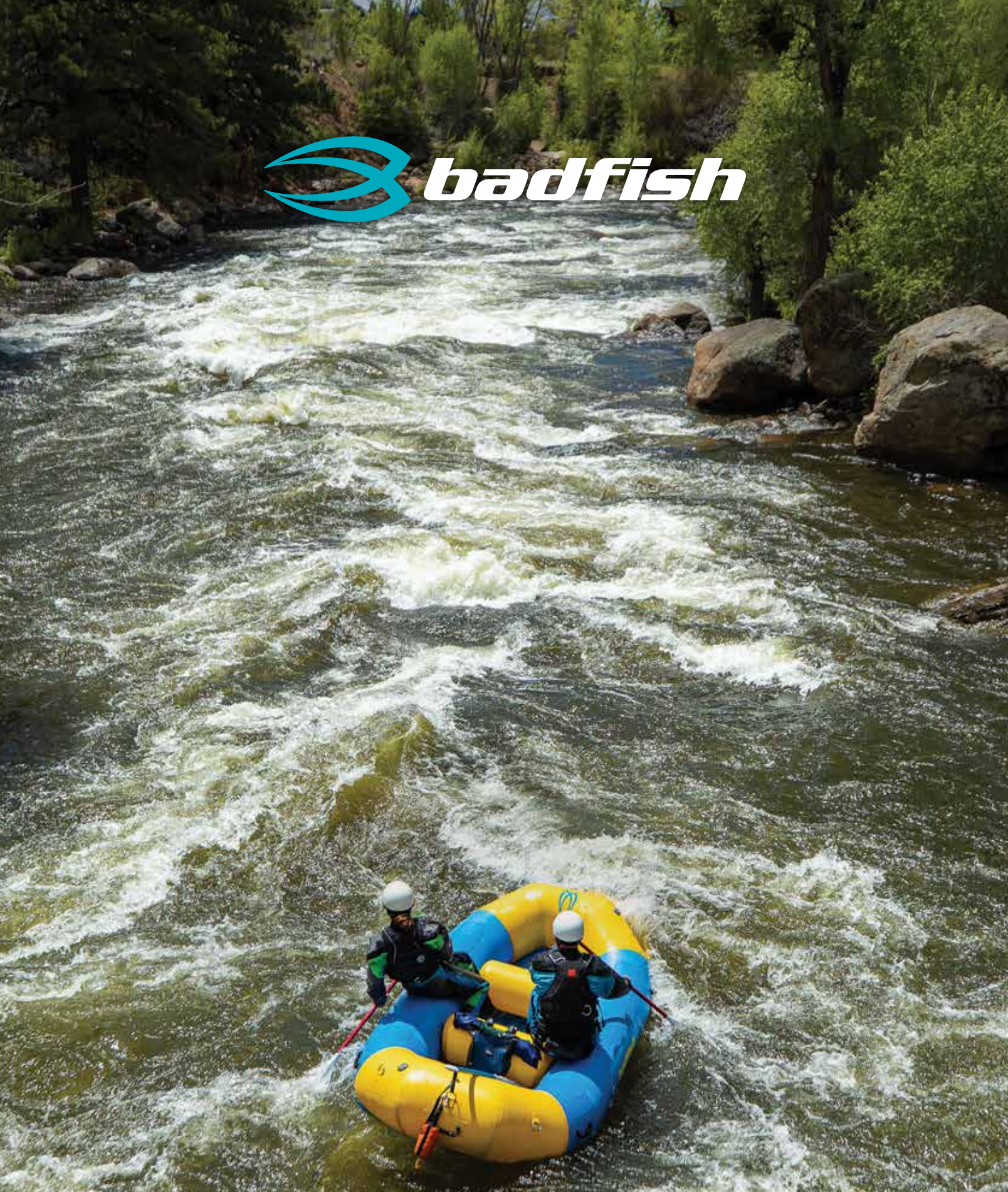
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