



# AMERICAN WHITEWATER

Conservation • Access • Events • Adventure • Safety

BY BOATERS FOR BOATERS  
Sep/Oct 2015

## PROTECTING OREGON'S OWYHEE CANYONLANDS AND NATIONAL RIVER STEWARDSHIP ISSUES TAKING CENTER STAGE

PLUS...

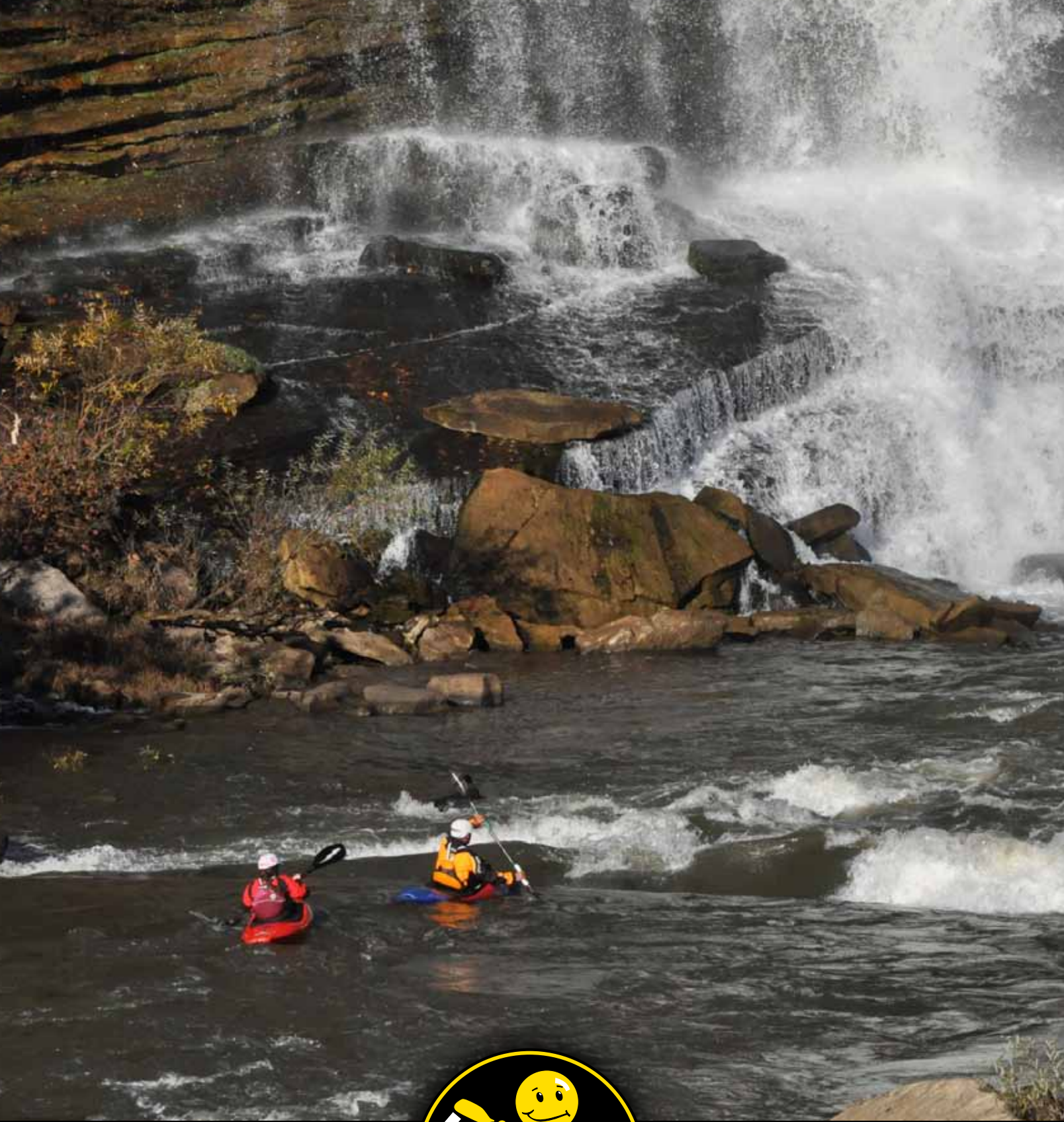
CHASING SNOWPACK (AND PADDLERS) IN THE AMERICAN WEST

LOOKING BACK AT *WE SWAM THE GRAND CANYON*

AND

MEET JIM MICHAUD, WHITEWATER LEGEND





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# AMERICAN WHITEWATER

A VOLUNTEER PUBLICATION PROMOTING RIVER CONSERVATION, ACCESS AND SAFETY

## American Whitewater Journal Sep/Oct 2015 – Volume 55 – Issue 5

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Paddlers enjoy Iron Point Canyon on the Owyhee River in Southeastern Oregon. Learn more about AW's efforts to protect the Owyhee Canyonlands on page 10.

Photo by **Thomas O'Keefe**

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# PURPOSE

## RIVER STEWARDSHIP: AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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# THE JOURNEY AHEAD

**D**RIPPING MORE THAN 668 feet over 26 miles of rugged terrain, the Gauley River's energetic rapids and scenic quality combine to make the Gauley (WV) a classic eastern whitewater run. Largely protected by the National Park Service, the river flows through a beautiful forested canyon and among massive, house-sized boulders. The Gauley and its sister river, the New, have become the economic backbone of an otherwise rural region of West Virginia. Paddlers fought hard for protection and wise management of the river since the first descent in 1968.

American Whitewater remains active today in the management of the Gauley River; we lease the Legg family field, above Mason Branch, from a local landowner to provide parking for private boaters. In partnership with the Gauley River National Recreation Area (part of the National Park Service), a shuttle is provided on busy weekends from the river corridor to the Legg field parking area.

On the west coast, the North Fork Feather River is part of a Rube Goldberg-like hydroelectric scheme draining the Sierra Nevada Mountains of California. The project consists of multiple dams, power plants, and trans-basin diversion tunnels in the headwaters of the North Fork Feather River. The project was conceived in the early 1900s under the Great Western Power Company to provide hydroelectricity and water storage for irrigation in the Sacramento Valley.

In the decades following, construction flows from the North Fork Feather were diverted for hydropower and only 50 cfs flowed through the river's natural channel. Unscheduled spring and winter releases were erratic and impossible to catch. All this changed in June 2002 when a new hydropower license required recreational releases. The staff and volunteers of American Whitewater, Chico PaddleHeads, and Shasta Paddlers spent a decade, thousands of dollars, and thousands of hours negotiating the

hydropower relicensing process to make these recreational releases happen.

In the fall of each year we celebrate these project successes with two river festivals:

## **Gauley Festival (WV) - September 17-20**

Over the last 30 years Gauley Fest has grown to become the largest river festival in the world. The festival is a showcase for American Whitewater and top whitewater vendors in the boating community. All proceeds from the festival support American Whitewater's national stewardship work. Gauley Fest features live entertainment, a whitewater marketplace, onsite camping, and a raffle and silent auction where you can pick up some awesome outdoor gear. Gauley Fest is also the largest annual membership drive for American Whitewater and your support feeds our national river stewardship efforts. Come out with your friends and join American Whitewater staff and volunteers on September 17-20 (Gauley Fest is always the third weekend of September) for a weekend of great paddling, exciting camaraderie, live entertainment, onsite camping, killer boat raffles, and the American Whitewater membership drive.

## **Feather River Festival (CA) - September 25-27**

The annual Feather River Festival will be held during scheduled releases September 25-27. The fundraiser event for American Whitewater will be held at "Indian Jim School" campground located two miles upstream from the small town of Tobin and one mile upstream from Tobin Vista. Free camping and ample parking will be available. This year's Feather Fest will continue the tradition of a film festival on Friday night featuring the latest films from local paddling filmmakers.

Saturday's festivities will include a free Class II slalom course appropriate for all skill levels, ages and for a variety of craft; and a downriver race on the Tobin stretch. That evening there will be a benefit party

with live music, food, and beverages, complete with raffle prizes, race prizes and silent auction items. The Rock Creek/Tobin releases will occur between Saturday morning and noon on Sunday. The Rock Creek reach is a Class III run appropriate for rafts, IKs, and kayaks, and the Indian Jim Campground is the perfect take-out. Below the campground is the Class V Tobin reach followed by the Class IV "Lowbin" stretch. There are also flatwater and Class I/II sections available all weekend. Bring the whole family to enjoy, celebrate, and support the work American Whitewater has done to ensure regular, recreational whitewater releases on this amazing, classic California river!

Both of these rivers represent significant milestones in river conservation and stewardship for American Whitewater. Each fall, AW and our friends come together to celebrate these two rivers at Gauley River Fest and Feather Fest—we hope to see you there!

Wherever your boating adventures take you this fall, remember that American Whitewater's river stewardship program is made possible through your membership support. We continue to appreciate the importance of rivers and their role in supporting the health and well being of the paddling community. At American Whitewater, we remain committed to giving back to these special places through river stewardship.

See you on the river,



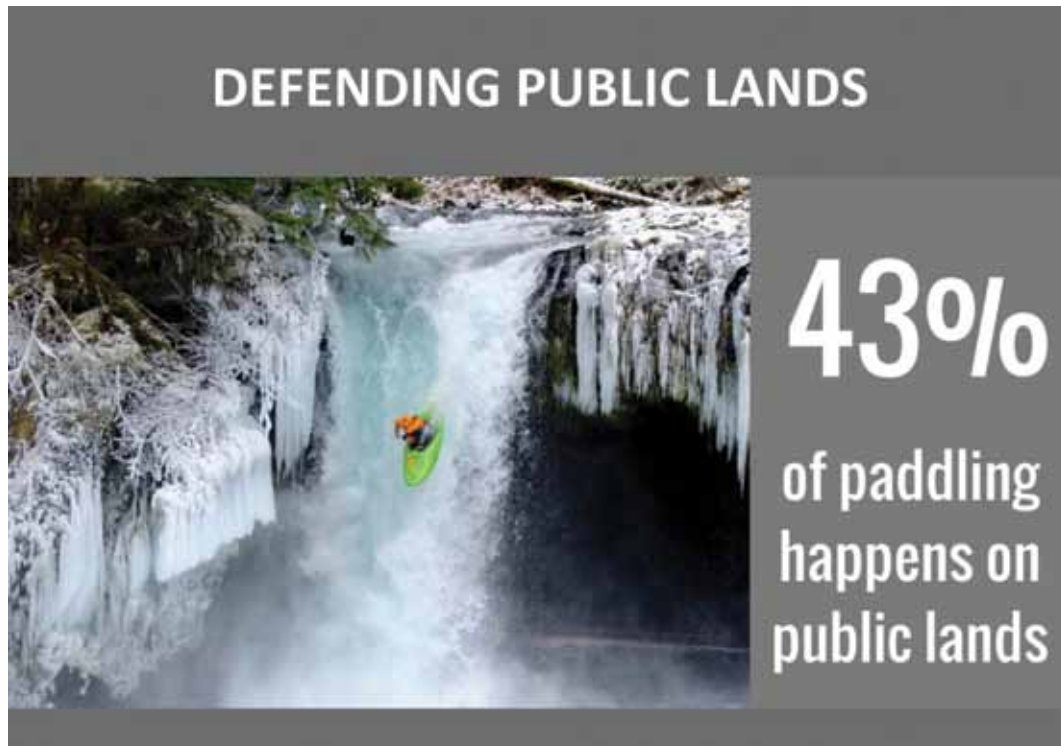
Mark Singleton  
Executive Director

P.S. On your way to the Gauley please know that the local Summersville police department takes their speed limit seriously. Drive at or below the limit through Summersville and be safe out there.

# STEWARDSHIP

## NATIONAL ISSUES AFFECTING PADDLERS HEAT UP

BY KEVIN COLBURN



IF YOU FOLLOW our website and Facebook feed you've likely noticed that American Whitewater is tackling quite a few big national policy issues lately, including issues relating to public lands, clean water, and hydropower. The reason for this is simple: these issues threaten paddling as we know it. They disproportionately have an impact on our community, and therefore we are in a unique position to tell personal, compelling stories to our political representatives about how these ideas will affect their constituents. In short, we can make a difference. Here is a snapshot of a few of these high-level issues, and some ways you can help.

### Defending Public Lands

According to the AW river database roughly 43% of whitewater runs flow through public lands. There is a movement afoot to transfer Forest Service and BLM lands to the states, after which most would inevitably be sold off to private buyers. This terrible idea has worked its way into state and national legislation. If it were to pass, paddlers could experience impacts on things that are key parts of our paddling experience, including road access, scenery, water quality, camping, shore access, and federal infrastructure like permits and bathrooms. We hope all paddlers will sign a petition at <http://www.protectourpublicland.org>, a site that Outdoor Alliance developed in partnership with American Whitewater. We need to push back on the public lands heist in a big way, and you can help.

### Protecting Clean Water

A new rule released by the EPA and Army Corps of Engineers this spring should ensure that pollution can't legally be dumped where it will end up in rivers and streams. The rule is based on the basic principle that wetlands and small creeks flow downstream into large rivers, and therefore should be protected from pollution under the Clean Water Act. American Whitewater supports this rule. The rule faces opposition from some in Congress. If their efforts to block the rule are unsuccessful, and the rule is allowed to move forward, paddlers won't see much change in their rivers, and will remain largely safe from unhealthy pollution. If the rule is blocked by Congress under current or future legislative attempts and subsequently weakened, our health and enjoyment of rivers will be at risk. The best thing you can do is let your Senators and Congressmen know that you support the Clean Water Rule, and why. Search for "American Whitewater Clean Water Act" online to learn more on our website.

## KEEPING HYDROPOWER FAIR



Whitewater (Blue) and Hydropower Projects (Green)

### Keeping Hydropower Fair

After a quiet decade of cooperation between the hydropower industry and river advocates, the industry recently went to Congress seeking the upper hand in how dams are managed. Most importantly, they aim to limit the power of state water agencies and federal agencies like the Forest Service to prescribe flows for recreation and fish. Without this agency power it would be very difficult for American Whitewater to negotiate dam releases like we have on the Cheoah, Feather, Deerfield, and countless other rivers. If you paddle on recreational dam releases, please take the time to let your Senators know that you value those opportunities and that the Hydropower Improvement Act of 2015 (S. 1236) and the hydropower provisions in the EPMA of 2015 would be a bad deal for outdoor recreation.

## PROTECTING CLEAN WATER



We've teamed up with our partners in Outdoor Alliance and the Hydropower Reform Coalition to tackle these issues. This gives us a bigger voice, and access to some tools like online petitions and congressional letter writing sites that makes it easier for paddlers to take action. In the end, though, what will protect rivers when threats like these emerge are paddlers like you taking the time to contact your political representatives. Our members have a strong connection to the land and water, and great stories to share about why healthy rivers matter. Sometimes it just takes one email to a legislator to change a vote, and that one email might just come from you.

# STEWARDSHIP

## PADDLERS' HELP NEEDED TO KEEP FUNDING FLOWING FOR RIVER ACCESS AND MORE

THE LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND SET TO EXPIRE SOON!

BY MEGAN HOOKER AND THOMAS O'KEEFE



IF YOU'VE FINISHED your Green Truss run or launched from the BZ access on the White Salmon (WA), enjoyed a river trip down the New or Gauley River (WV), or experienced the undeveloped wilderness of the Middle Fork of the Salmon (ID), you have the Land and Water Conservation Fund to thank for protecting these places when private landowners along the river were ready to sell.

For 50 years, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) has been a critical source of funding for important river access projects and other recreational enhancements across the country. In addition to ensuring access to paddling, the Fund supports creating and maintaining the places we connect with nature and with our families and friends—from local soccer fields and playgrounds all the way up to State and National Parks. The Fund also supports projects that protect water

quality, preserve open space for wildlife habitat, and protect communities from natural hazards.

The LWCF was established in 1965 to meet the nation's growing desire to preserve natural areas, culturally and historically

significant landmarks, and outdoor recreational opportunities. It is unique because it is not funded by taxpayer dollars, but rather by a small fee oil and gas companies pay for being able to drill in public offshore waters. In return, the Fund improves access, recreation, and



*Boaters put in at Kanaskat Palmer State Park on the Green River in Washington. The project was funded through the Land and Water Conservation Fund.*

Photo by Thomas O'Keefe





*The take out for the Green River Gorge in Washington at Flaming Geyser State Park was funded via the Land and Water Conservation Fund.*

**Photo by Thomas O'Keefe**

conservation efforts on public lands and rivers.

Unfortunately, the LWCF program faces an uncertain future. **Unless Congress reauthorizes the Fund by September 30th, 2015, it will be a thing of the past.** As we go to press with this issue of the *AW Journal*, Congress has made few strides towards reauthorizing the program.

Reauthorizing the LWCF will preserve our shared legacy, support our economy, and provide the opportunity for more people to experience our nation's great outdoors. Further, *fully* funding the LWCF will help to expand the footprint of the economic and community benefits it provides. While the LWCF was slated to receive \$900 million each year, it has received its full allotment of funding just twice in its 50-year history.

We're calling on all paddlers to reach out to their Congressional representatives and make their voices heard about this important program before it's too late. Check out [americanwhitewater.org](http://americanwhitewater.org) for an

update on the status of reauthorizing the Fund and for ways that you can help.

### American Whitewater and LWCF

At American Whitewater, our current top Land and Water Conservation project for the Western U.S. is on Oregon's Crooked River, where a critical opportunity exists to secure public access on the only Wild and Scenic River in the region with no public access. Land and Water Conservation funding will bring a parcel in the Crooked River Canyon,

*Paddlers have the Land and Water Conservation Fund to thank for preserving public access at BZ Corners on Washington's Wild and Scenic White Salmon River when the landowner was ready to sell.*

**Photo by Thomas O'Keefe**



specifically the Hollywood Road access, into public ownership. The Bureau of Land Management has sought LWCF funding to acquire this property for years, and although it was acquired several years ago by the Trust for Public Land, their goal is to transfer the parcel to public ownership.

Ensuring that the Land and Water Conservation Fund continues into the future and is fully funded will give the Crooked River project a fighting chance of becoming a reality. It will allow the BLM to acquire the parcel to formally open the river to whitewater boaters, fishermen, and those in the public who seek to enjoy the area's stunning scenery.

The pending project on the Crooked River, and those that have been completed on the White Salmon, Gauley, New, and Middle Fork Salmon, highlight the importance of the Land and Water Conservation Fund for whitewater paddlers throughout the country. It is a key source of funding for river access and so much more. Please join American Whitewater in our ongoing efforts to keep it healthy and strong for current and future generations of outdoor lovers.

# STEWARDSHIP

## PROTECTING THE OWYHEE CANYONLANDS

BY THOMAS O'KEEFE



*Squeeze Rapid in Iron Point Canyon on the Owyhee River in Oregon. Photo by Thomas O'Keefe*

**W**E HAVE FEW places left in the world where one can simply disappear into the landscape and experience a transformative wilderness adventure. Here in the US, we find these places in the labyrinth of canyons of southern Utah, beyond the end of the road in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area, in the high country of the Cascades and Sierras, and within the ribbons of undeveloped river corridors along the spine of the Appalachians. Most are less familiar with the Owyhee Canyonlands region, a vast open landscape of 9 million acres, largely managed by the Bureau of Land Management, where the borders of Idaho, Nevada, and Oregon meet.

The region offers a unique whitewater experience through a landscape reminiscent of the Old West, containing rolling sagebrush hills, red rock formations, and deep canyons that soar up to 1,000 feet above the river. The main stem of

the Owyhee offers a multi-day river trip popular with rafters, self-support kayakers, and canoeists during the spring snow melt. The tributaries offer more opportunities for exploration and wilderness adventure and are being discovered by pack rafters and those experienced in cross-country multi-sport travel.

The landscape is home to 200 species of wildlife, including California Bighorn Sheep and Pronghorn Antelope. The Owyhee was also home to the Paiute tribes, and contains over 500 archaeological sites. Careful observers will discover writings, rock drawings, pottery, tools, weapons, and other artifacts from ancient people.

### Conservation of the Owyhee Canyonlands

The conservation value of the Owyhee River was first recognized more than four decades ago when the river was designated as an Oregon State Scenic Waterway in

1970. In 1984 the Owyhee and South Fork Owyhee were designated as federal Wild and Scenic Rivers and the North Fork and West Little Owyhee were added in 1988. In 2009, half a million acres of public lands in Idaho were protected as the Owyhee River Wilderness and 325 additional river miles were designated Wild and Scenic, including the Jarbidge, Bruneau, and several other tributaries of the Owyhee.

Despite the long history of conservation achievements, much of the landscape in Oregon remains unprotected. Here, there are over two million acres of wilderness quality federal lands that remain unprotected. It represents the largest conservation opportunity in the coterminous United States.

The Owyhee Canyonlands region is wild country and our goal is to keep it that way. American Whitewater is working with our partners in the conservation community

on the Owyhee Canyonland Campaign to develop a conservation vision that will permanently protect the area's unique ecology, healthy wildlife habitat, rich ancient history, and fascinating geology.

Resource extraction has quickly taken hold throughout other areas of the West, with devastating impacts. Not surprisingly, pressure is mounting on the Owyhee too. The landscape in Oregon currently has no safeguards against resource extraction, which if developed, would severely affect the unique recreational experiences and important wildlife habitat of the region.

Through Wilderness and Wild and Scenic protection, or alternatively, a National Monument designation, we can safeguard the Owyhee's deep red-rock canyons, rolling plains, wild rivers, and ample recreational opportunities for future generations. Under the conservation alternatives we are considering, extractive uses like mining and oil and gas development would not be

allowed. At the same time, recreational activities like fishing, boating, hunting, and hiking would continue, as would working farms and ranches.

By taking action now, we can protect the unique and ecologically significant areas of the Owyhee. Paddlers' voices are important in protecting the Owyhee Canyonlands! You can help show your support by signing a petition online at [http://wildowyhee.org/act/sign-the-petition\\_american\\_whitewater](http://wildowyhee.org/act/sign-the-petition_american_whitewater). Stay tuned to American Whitewater for more ways that you can help!

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*Paddlers enjoying the whitewater and scenery of Iron Point Canyon on the Owyhee River.*

**Photo by Thomas O'Keefe**



The Owyhee is rich with ancient history. Boaters float past Potters Cave—a historic rock shelter—on river right. Photo by Thomas O'Keefe



# WHITEWATER PIONEERS

## A CONVERSATIONAL INTERVIEW WITH JIM MICHAUD, WHITEWATER LEGEND

BY KERRY HEIDENIS



Jim Michaud in the Grand Canyon near Pumpkin Springs.  
Photo by Bob Kerry

**W**HAT CAUSES A man or woman to seek out a hobby which, at a certain level, can literally be death defying, and then do it for a lifetime? This is the question I posed to my guest, Jim Michaud. Jim has been paddling Class IV and V rivers for over 50 years, and he does it with confidence and enthusiasm.

Jim was born in Canada. World War II broke out when he was only three. His mother was raising Jim and his two siblings alone and could not support her children, so he and his sister and older brother were sent to live in a convent in Massachusetts at that point. What was that like? "I rarely saw my sister, and the overall treatment in this convent was worth forgetting," he said. "I went to live with my mother and grandmother when I was 11."

At that point, he became a Boy Scout, eventually achieving Eagle Scout status. While in Scouts he went on a canoe trip that got him interested in canoeing. When he got to high school, he joined the swim team, which made him comfortable in water.

After high school, he went into the Air Force for four years. Upon leaving the service, he got a job with IBM, and married. He retired from IBM in 1993 and is still married, with children and grandchildren, and a very understanding wife.

After getting married and buying a house, he sought out a sport that had something to do with water. It was a toss-up between sailing and whitewater boating. After thinking back to his Boy Scout canoe trip, boating won, and he bought an aluminum canoe. He banged around with this for a bit, until he pinned it in Tariffville Gorge. This was when he met an avid AMC boater by the name of Kent Heidenis. Kent talked Jim into getting an Old Town Tripper, and the rest is history. Jim learned that AMC offered weekly trips on whitewater rivers, gave lessons, and taught whitewater safety. He was in heaven!

When I ask how his wife feels about his years of whitewater boating he replies, "She does not boat herself, but she has always been very supportive of me in this endeavor."

I have been with Jim on several rivers in his early years of boating and I've noticed that he rarely ever gets mad, and that I have never heard him swear. In fact, I once overheard one paddler say to another that Jim must be really upset because he said "Gee Willikers!" Says Jim, "That is about as profane as I ever get."

Back in Jim's early paddling days, if someone wanted to have a closed C-1 or kayak, he or she had to build his or her own. Jim got into the boat building field, constructing several C-1s. He even built his own mold and helped several others build their own, as well, including the author. But now he says, "I no longer build any boats; there are so many available these days."

Another thing that's changed? Flotation was pretty much nonexistent for Grumman canoes. At best someone might stuff an inner tube under a thwart. You had to

---

*Opposite: Jim Michaud running Agers Falls on the Moose River, NY.*  
Photo by Mark Shappert

have good paddling skills to avoid sinking in those days.

I asked Jim why even really proficient paddlers come and go in this sport. He said that, in his experience, it could be an unpleasant boating experience or two that leads to this kind of decision. He cited one experience in which he was on a difficult river at flood stage with three other paddlers in closed boats. After a life threatening situation that day, one of his partners quit boating altogether and two never again paddled a Class IV river. He feels that these types of harrowing situations eliminate some boaters from maintaining a lifetime of whitewater boating. Others simply get burned out. He almost got burned out once but simply switched from paddling a C-1 to paddling open canoes, after which the challenge and excitement returned.

Jim has had several close calls over the 50-plus years he has been boating. One was on the Russell Fork in Virginia. As he was approaching FIST rapid and was a little too far left, he and his canoe were swept under the huge undercut rock. He barely made it out alive and had trouble sleeping for several days after. He also had a close call on the Bottom Moose.

Jim's injuries over the years have included a dislocated finger, shoulder separation, and severely bruised hip that led to a pulmonary embolism.

One thing Jim has really enjoyed has been wilderness canoe trips. He recalled a trip with several friends on the Petawawa River in Ontario, Canada. "Early into the trip," he said, "I went over a wooden dam and landed on a spike. This pierced the bottom of my ABS canoe, and by the time we got the boat free, the hole had gotten quite large. We were not going any farther with that boat unless it was repaired. I got my camp stove out and heated the Royalex to make it pliable so that I could close up the hole. Then I used my Swiss Army knife and punched little holes around the hole. I then used parachute cord to lace the hole closed. I got some nylon bow line and lit it, holding it over this repair. I let the melting nylon drip into the tear to seal the hole. This not only got us through the trip, but lasted for several more years after that."

Over the years Jim seems to have used every kind of vessel available. "I love open canoes the best, but I have used kayaks, C-1s, rafts, a Shredder and, of course, an inner tube."



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# WHITEWATER PIONEERS



*Jim Michaud on Roaring Brook, CT.*  
**Photo by John Wallace**

This sounded a little strange to me, so I asked him if he could tell me about inner tube, or “T-1” as he called it, with a twinkle in his eye. “In big water like in the Grand Canyon, I use a smaller inner tube,” he said. “This keeps my butt lower in the water and makes more room for me to move my arms, both of which give me more control and stability. I always run sideways to the waves so I don’t get flipped. I can just lean downstream as I go up a wave. I have a 15-foot rope with quick releases on both ends. If I get separated from the tube and my tube is stuck in the hole, I just get to the end of the rope and the tube gets pulled out, and I can haul it in and hop on.”

But, he added, “In low water I use a large inner tube to keep my butt off the rocks.”

His mention of the Colorado made me wonder how many times he has done the Grand Canyon. Glowing, he said, “I have run the Grand Canyon 32 times. I have trips set for this June [2015] and June 2016. On my 35th trip, I will have paddled or rowed 5,000 miles in the Grand Canyon. It will also include two full years of my life in the Canyon. I had previously hoped to be paddling it into my 80s; but now that that is in sight, I am going to change it to at least

age 85. I love that river too much to stop at age 80!”

Planning a Grand Canyon trip involves lots of work. I asked him how he does it. “Well, I have never gone on a commercial trip and I’ve never had to enter the lottery,” he said. “I’m one very lucky guy and always end up getting an invitation on someone else’s trip year after year. Planning a Grand Canyon trip is no longer a big deal so I usually offer to do the logistics. I hire the company; they supply the food, rafts, and shuttles. I also get the oarsman if needed, and I act as guide and/or oarsman at times. I will paddle my canoe or whatever I feel like using on that particular trip if they don’t need me as an oarsman.”

At this point in the conversation I do a rapid-fire series of questions that Jim is kind enough to answer:

How does he prepare himself mentally to run a big drop? “As I approach the start of the rapid I keep repeating to myself that it’s only Class III. When I get to the point of no return I screw my head down and go for it!” It sounds like he takes the complicated and makes it simple. Not everybody can do that!

How did he feel when he ran his first Class V river? “I recall back in the 70s when I first ran the Upper Yough. We had to either sneak in or run both the Top and Upper Yough, which included the three miles of flatwater between the two sections. We ran both sections that day and when I finished that run, I was so excited that I felt like I was jumping up and down on a pogo stick!”

What is the difference between running a Class V drop now versus back then? “Back then when I would finish, I would give out a big yahoo. Nowadays when I finish, I just give a big sigh of relief. Going on a first descent or a new river has always been a real thrill. I love the challenge of that unknown quantity. At my age, I don’t often run Class V rivers, but I will still occasionally run a Class V drop.”

There were revisions to the rating classification system back in the 1990s by AW; what is his opinion of them? “The Class I through VI designations have been used for decades. Nobody ever calls anything Class VI so as people start running harder rivers they become new Class Vs and the old Class Vs got downgraded to Class IV, etc. The only thing new was the 5.1, 5.2, etc. designations that never really took off. The ratings are useless unless you know who you’re talking to. Hot-shot paddlers tend to call a river Class III, while newbies will call the same river a Class V. It causes too many arguments on the Internet message boards.”

Jim wanted to address a misconception around whitewater boating. “Folks think that it is more dangerous [than it really is]. I think downhill skiing is more dangerous, and a lot of senior citizens still downhill ski. They may no longer do double-black diamond, but they can choose the path they are most comfortable with.” When

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*Jim Michaud nailing the landing at Big Splat on the Big Sandy River, WV.*  
**Photo by Ian Scott**

I point out that this does not explain why there are so few seniors doing above Class IV whitewater, he replies, "Well, when you fall in skiing, you just get up. When you miss a roll, you go for a swim. I guess a lot of people don't like to swim."

When I asked how many boats he owns currently he replied, "I own 17 boats, all C-1s, C-2s, or open boats. I have one I keep in Flagstaff, and one in Boise, Idaho. The rest are here in Connecticut."

What are his favorite rivers these days? "Locally, I enjoy the West Branch of the Westfield in Massachusetts or Sandy Brook in Connecticut. Nationally, I like the Big Sandy in West Virginia, the Upper Yough in Maryland and, of course, the Colorado in the Grand Canyon, which is my favorite of all."

In his early years, were there paddlers he wanted to emulate? "I looked to Dean Tomko and Wick Walker," he replied. "They were both C-1 Paddlers. They had great skills and knew how to run rivers."

"When I overhear people pointing me out and calling me 'the legend' I feel self-conscious," he explains. "I realize it is

flattery, but it still makes me feel kind of funny! I don't think I am any different than any other boaters, and there are certainly a lot of better boaters around than me."

His roots go back deep. "I joined AW in 1975. I know I was at the first Gauley Fest. I am a stream keeper today for AW and report on about 6 to 12 local rivers."

How many different rivers has he run? "I counted them once and came up with around 237 different rivers." He continues, "Over the years I have kept GPS Coordinates of put-in and take-out locations of the rivers I have run. I added the nearest street addresses to most of them, and I have this available for the East coast. I make this available to others."

Jim even has a few spots on rivers named after him. "Half way down the Hubbard River (CT) there's a rather nasty drop. Back in the days of the long 13-foot boats I was the only guy running it. It took around 10 years before someone else ran it, so when Bruce Lessels wrote his guide book *Classic Northeastern Whitewater Guide*, he called it Michaud Falls. When Alden Bird wrote his guide book *Let It Rain* (in 2007) he also named it Michaud Falls. On the Diana's Pool

section of the Natchaug River (CT) there is a hole just above the take-out and below the last ledge that can get pretty sticky at certain water levels. I once got stuck in it and while trying to dig my way out the blade snapped off my paddle. I had no choice but to swim. I had a pretty good roll back in those days, so all my friends started razzing me about swimming. Shortly afterwards John Porterfield co-authored the guide book *Appalachian Whitewater, Volume III* and in the book he named it Michaud's Hole."

Jim concludes, "I no longer seek out big rivers for the adrenaline rush. I just want a whitewater run where I have the skills to just enjoy it." This is what he advises new paddlers to do: "Just have fun!"

And so, the legend continues....



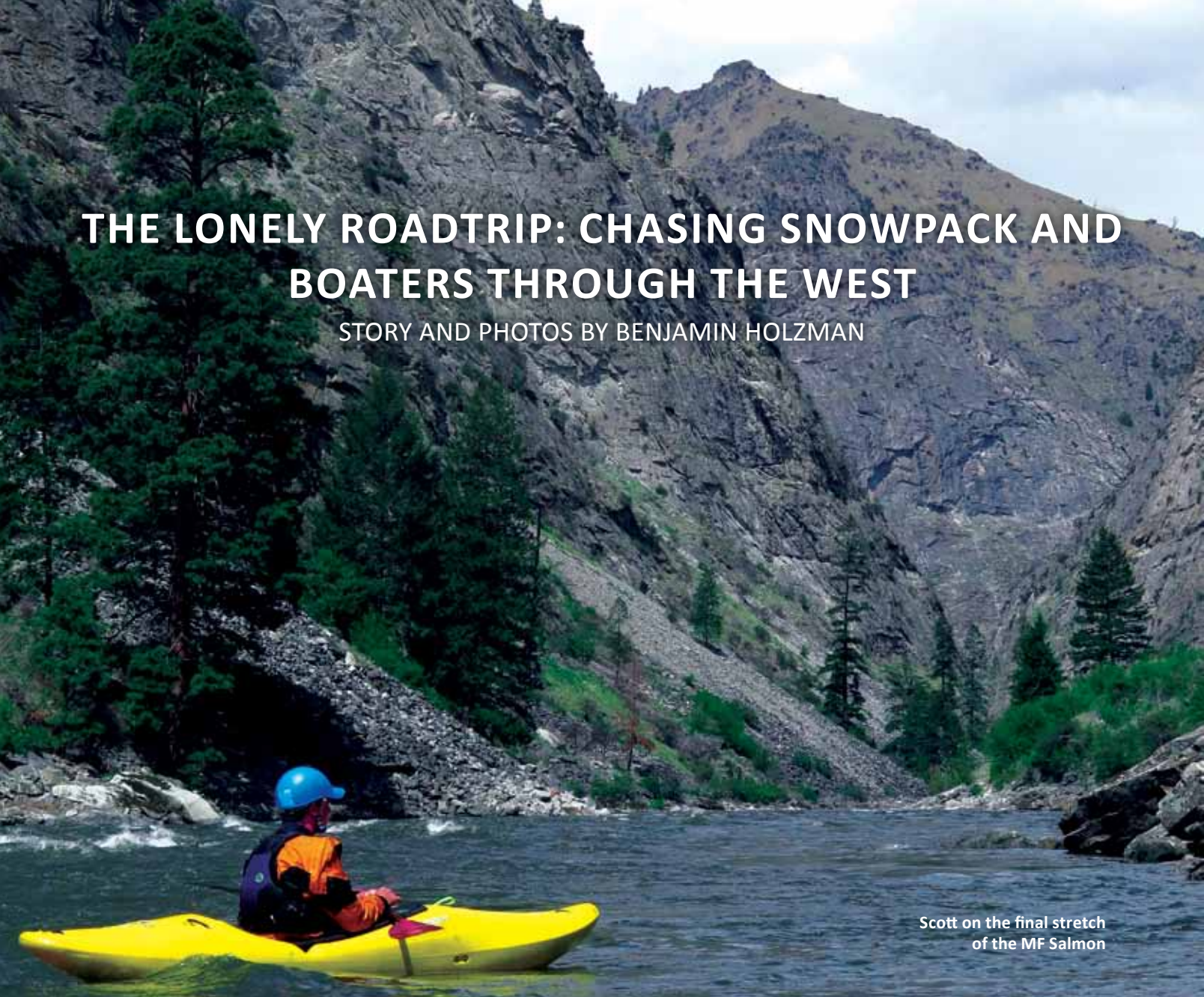
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# THE LONELY ROADTRIP: CHASING SNOWPACK AND BOATERS THROUGH THE WEST

STORY AND PHOTOS BY BENJAMIN HOLZMAN



Scott on the final stretch of the MF Salmon

**W**HITewater IS CHAOS. The experienced paddler rolls through holes, whirlpools, and surging waves on a loose plan and a lot of instinct. The chaos spills over into logistics as well, and seems to define the entire sport. Often my friends and family ask me where I am going, and I tell them. Then I drive to some meeting point, discuss water levels, switch cars, and take off in a totally different direction—most often out of cell service. I try to tell people where I am going, I really do, but....

I just returned from a three-week trip to the Rockies, a trip in which we paddled classic whitewater stretches in five states and

saw almost no one else on the water. We paddled the entire 110-mile Middle Fork of the Salmon from the Marsh Creek put-in during perfect weather, at an optimal water level, *over a weekend*, without seeing a single person. The solitude left us plenty of time to think. Why, when climbing, biking, and skiing participation has exploded over the last few years, do rivers remain wide open? I suspect it is because the vast majority of people like order. They like to *plan* things, and the very core of our sport lends itself to the unplannable, whether it be clawing our way over a newly formed boil or driving an hour out of the way to catch a favorite creek before it drops out.

For instance, our Plan A was to drive from Vancouver to California in the spring. But the Sierras were drier than a...(choose your own metaphor)...California would have to wait. In fact, the entire West Coast snowpack was dismal. Where to go then? I had an old friend in Taos I had been meaning to visit. He was guiding on the Rio Grande and invited us to run the Taos Box. A quick query for the Southern Rockies showed a merely “below average” snowpack, so I pitched it to my friend Scott. The Taos road trip was a go.

During the following weeks, our pre-planning reached academic levels. We studied snowpack surveys, road maps,



# ROAD TRIP

guidebooks, the American Whitewater River Database, weather forecasts, and we put out feelers on Mountain Buzz and Facebook. Finally, Scott sent me a picture from Tyler Williams's *Whitewater Classics* guidebook. The map called out a dozen river sections spanning the entire Mountain Time Zone. "Simplified Plan" was the email header. We would figure it out; the important thing was to pile into the truck and go. Our first stop was a relicensing release on the Sultan River in Washington.

We left Vancouver and arrived at the Sultan by 10am. We met Alison at the take-out and put on an hour late. *When do kayakers ever leave on time?* we thought. Apparently they do when paddling an unknown canyon with a timed release. The release had drawn 60 or so boaters and we were the last ones to put on. At the dam the Public Utilities Department (PUD) employees assured us we would be fine. Just watch for wood. *It is a wild card*, they warned.

We did the long hike down to the put-in and launched into the chocolate brown waters of the too-oft dry riverbed. A few hundred yards downstream the canyon pinched in and we encountered our first log jam of the day. Logs dangled from other logs,



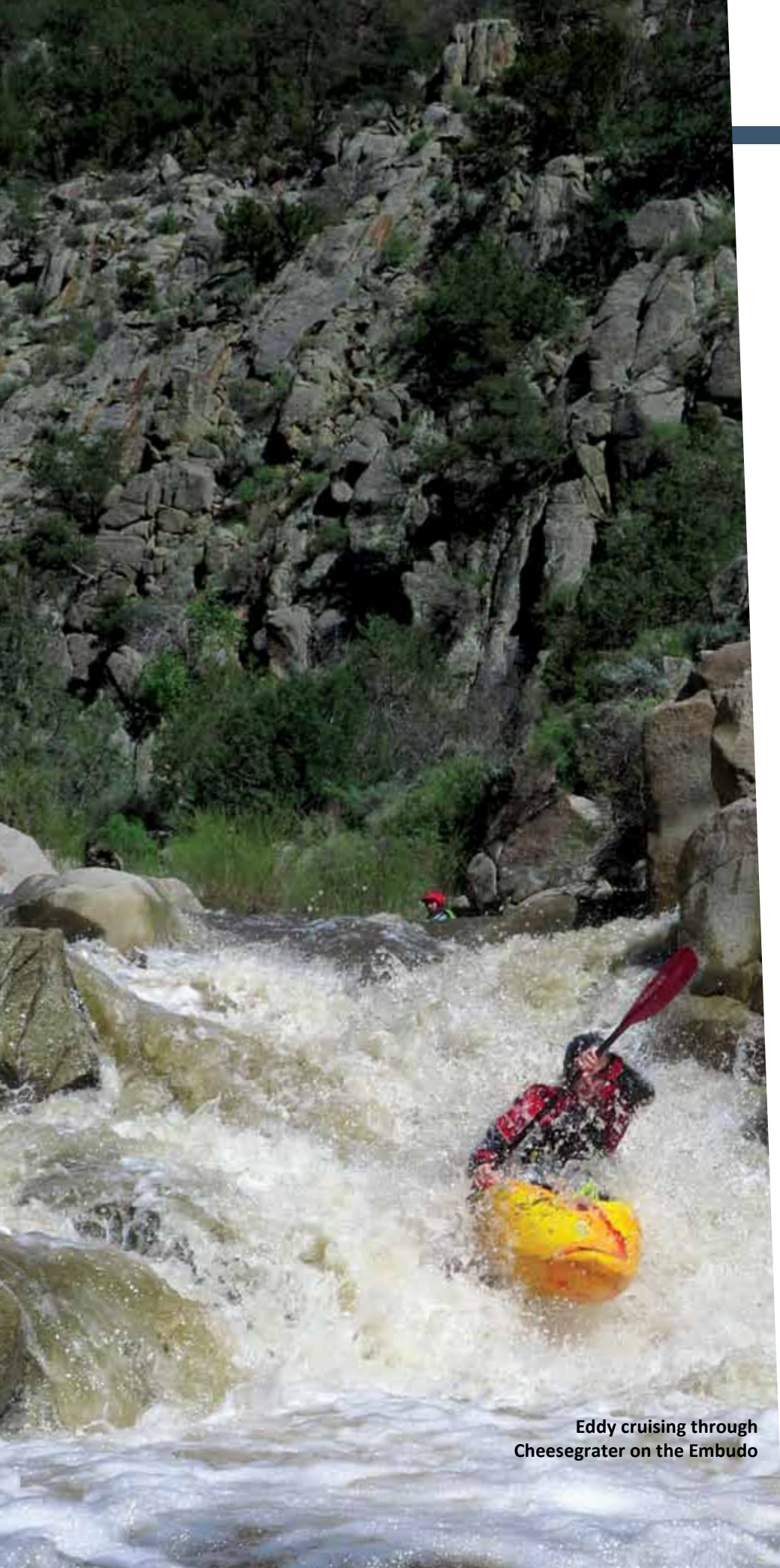
*Marsh Creek put-in*

bobbing and swinging back and forth across channels like an overdone Hollywood booby trap. After the second log jam portage and countless other navigable but log-choked rapids, we'd had enough. Never had I seen a river so blocked with wood. Worse still, the water was so brown we could not see an inch below the surface. I applauded the relicensing effort, but cringed every time any water splashed over my bow.

The Sultan needed a biblical flood to clean itself, and that was not going to happen with the huge reservoir upstream.

Four and a half hair-raising hours into the run we made it to the diversion dam that marked the start of the middle gorge. There we made friends with a PUD employee and talked him into driving us four miles downriver to the powerhouse. The release





Eddy cruising through  
Cheesegrater on the Embudo

had stopped an hour prior and the water was already dropping. *Skunked!* we joked. Realistically, there was still plenty of water, but none of us had any interest in continuing through the larger middle gorge rapids. At the take-out paddlers gathered to drink and swap stories of the day. We confessed that we had portaged the middle gorge. *What!?! You missed the best part!* they all said. I disagreed: my beer was the best part, and I savored every sip.

That night we camped at the put-in for the South Fork of the Skykomish. We put on the next morning, and after the first rapid I turned to Scott. I've already had more fun than all of yesterday, I said, grinning. The water was clear and the rocks of the riverbed were visible. We didn't have to wonder what death trap lay just inches below the surface. It was a great day.

That afternoon we continued to the Bavarian village of Leavenworth to do a quick lap on Tumwater Canyon. Afterwards it was time for Alison to head back to BC. Scott and I were to continue somewhere to the southeast. McDonald's Wi-Fi would provide the specifics. We settled in to a booth to plan our trip. Mainly, though, we just sat and listened to the greeter extol the virtues of the Leavenworth McDonald's sauces to anyone who walked in the door. *I'm a connoisseur of tartar sauce,* he said. *If I don't like it, I don't tell you about it,* he explained. *This is the best McDonalds this side of Telegraph!* an enthusiastic customer responded.

That night we made it to Palouse Falls. In the morning we scouted the 180-footer. *It looks low,* Scott said. *Yeah, too low,* I agreed. Skunked again. We continued on to the Lochsa, dropped a bike at the take-out, and drove shuttle. We put on in glorious sunshine to a river all our own. Ten miles downstream we met a sole kayaker surfing Pipeline Wave. We chatted about Idaho rivers and asked about the South Fork

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*Opposite: Scott hiking up the Rockwood Box*

# ROAD TRIP

Salmon. *Great run!* our new friend said. He had a week off, but try as we might we couldn't get him to join us for a trip. He planned to hang out on the Lochsa and we preferred to have a third for the Class IV-V multiday run. We put the South Salmon on the backburner and drove to the South Fork of the Clearwater instead.

The South Fork Clearwater ran along a dead-end highway to a town called Elk City. It was a gray, drizzly day, and both the road and the river were empty. We road scouted the Golden Canyon, then played, boofed, and hopped our way down the read-and-run rapids. Then Scott biked shuttle and we drove south to Banks, Idaho. On the way, we stopped briefly to gaze at the mighty North Fork Payette. *It's dark,* I mentioned. *Yeah, too dark,* Scott agreed. Skunked. That night we camped in a gravel pit and discussed our options. *How about the Middle Fork Salmon?* I suggested.

The next day we organized our trip from the Wi-Fi of Wild Bill's Coffee Bar in Garden Valley. We needed a pre-season permit and a shuttle. We debated hitchhiking, then looked at the map, then debated again. In the end, we opted to pay Blackadar Shuttle

\$300 instead. We also needed a fire pan, a self-contained outhouse, and a bin for ash containment, so we bought a gold pan and a small bucket that could be wedged in front of my bulkhead. We bought some food and Old Crow whiskey at the general store, posed in front of the Frank Church River of No Return sign, and put in on Marsh Creek in the late afternoon. It was a pleasant float through an alpine meadow to a closed campsite a mile downstream.

Below our camp the valley was vacant and burned out. We soaked in the silence, drifting down quick rapids and making short ferries around fallen trees. A few hours later we were at Dagger Falls, a blasted ledge beside a fish ladder that marks the put-in for the normal raft section. We scouted Dagger Falls for a long time. Finally, we pushed the remote factor out of our heads and ran it down the middle. Much later we passed an airstrip and an empty ranch. A prop plane flew overhead with lazy passes.

Our campsite had two hot spring pools perched above a cliff. A wooden spout funneled hot water out of the lower pool into a shower by the river's edge. My hands



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# ROAD TRIP



*Surfing a MF Salmon wave above Dagger Falls*

and feet were numb from the long, chilly day and the hot water made them tingle. *Is this too hot?* I asked Scott. *Can't tell*, he said, as he dropped into the pool. The pools were filled with algae, but we picked it out and threw gobs onto the rocks on the side. A family of deer lingered nearby.

The next day we paddled down the deepening valley through Tappan Canyon to the Camas Creek Camp. There were new hoof prints and fresh horse manure along the trail leading up Camas Creek. Human signs. We slept under the canopy of a large ponderosa pine beside a pile of deer skulls. The rapids of the last day were

bigger volume and the gorge walls locked in granite 1,000 feet high. The occasional rapid required an eddy-hop boat scout, but we just leaned back with our knees up and took in the scenery. At the Main Salmon confluence Scott's truck sat alone in the parking lot. We hiked up to the truck and pulled warm beers out of a pool of melted ice at the bottom of our cooler. Success.

That night we drove south to the Greys River in Wyoming. We basked in the Wyoming sun and pulled our dry suits on in a field of mountain flowers at the empty put-in parking lot. The run was a raging 15 minutes of pushy boulder drops, good to

get us leaning forward again and to shake the kinks out of our joints. That night we camped at 10,000 feet elevation on the edge of Douglas Pass in Colorado and discussed our next move.

The Embudo marked the farthest south we were likely to drive, and was featured prominently on the Tyler Williams *Classics* map. A lively Internet debate had sprung up on whether the spring melt would bring it up. We drove to Moab and checked levels. The Embudo was low but runnable and rain was falling! It was time to get to Taos. We powered through the drive to the comfort of my friend's roof.

The next day we messaged around before driving to the Embudo. A friend of a friend had a nice take-out on his property, and he encouraged folks to camp on his lawn. There we linked up with two locals and two boaters from Colorado. We took a leisurely pace and talked rivers with our new friends in the sparse eddies between the stacked ledge drops. It was great to paddle with others for a change, and the tight granite gorge of the Embudo was fantastic. Catching this elusive run was a definite highlight of the trip.

The next day we ran the Lower Taos Box with my friend and the raft crew. It was low and quite mellow, so we passed beers around the shuttle van and on the river. Mountain goats picked their way along the towering basalt walls on either side of us. The guides discussed notable desert plants along the banks. Near the take-out we passed a tributary. It was dumping brown water through a pile of basalt boulders barely wide enough to float a boat. *That's the Rio Pueblo*, one of the rafters pointed out. *It's a good run. I've never seen it with that much water!* he said. We drove up to check it out. At the parking area, a man emerged from the bush.

*Hey, what's your name? You guys running the Pueblo?* he asked. *Come with me, we will scout it*, he said. We followed him through the willows and cacti. *I'm stoked*



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# ROAD TRIP



*Deep in the first Embudo Gorge*

*to see you guys, I'd guide you down, but I just had shoulder surgery, he explained. I glanced at his sling. It was a tear, but I kept crashing on it and chipping pieces off, he said. I had a big crash on Oh Be Joyful. I got screws and bolts and other metal in there. Come this way, we will look at Brett's Shoulder, he said as he motioned to us.*

Brett's Shoulder was the last big drop on the run. *Usually, we run the left, our guide said, but there is a willow growing in it now, he explained. It probably still goes, but I would run the right today. It looks cleaner.* So we regarded the left channel flowing through a small willow, then walked up to look at triple drop. There were some branches sticking up out of the hole after the second ledge. *There's something in there, I said. Oh, that? That's nothing, you'd go right over that. This creek is all overgrown, it hasn't run in a couple of years, he explained, and then with some urgency said, I've got to get back, I left my friend to come show you guys around. She is burying her cat.* At that our guide disappeared back into the bushes, whence he came.

Later we boofed the second drop of triple and landed in a bush. He was right: we both went right through. Then I thrashed my way through Brett's Shoulder, banging down the left through the willow, almost leaving my own shoulder behind. I looked upstream just in time to see Scott sail perfectly off the right side boof. The next thing I remember is being ejected into the middle of the Rio Grande on the same spout of muddy water we had looked at so skeptically earlier in the day. *That was silly, I laughed. Fun, but silly.*

We still had another week and a long drive back, so we drove northwest to the Piedra in Colorado. Once again, we had the river all to ourselves. We meant to paddle the full Upper Animas the next day, but it was too low, so we settled on the abridged Rockwood Box. We got some beta and carried our boats up two and a half miles of railroad tracks from the rail yard. The rail line was a narrow bench squeezed between cliffs. (Check the train schedule. The hike is easily as committing as the box canyon below.)

On the drive through Utah we stopped and camped at the take-out to Westwater Canyon on the Colorado. In the morning, we dropped Scott's bike and drove 17 miles up a marginal desert track to the put-in. Sometime during that drive the last day permit got scooped. We drove to the put-in anyway with some vague thoughts about how to talk our way onto the river. Scott chatted with the park rangers while I absent-mindedly watched a dead cat float down the muddy water. The river was high, and as much as we wanted to get slapped around by big muddy waves, it just wasn't happening. *Let's just go climbing, I suggested. After all, we had brought the gear and had yet to use it.* Westwater: the one section we'd found with too many boaters. A government-sponsored beer bin the size of a garage sat beside the take-out ramp proudly displaying the river's popularity.

That night, in a surge of energy fueled by In-N-Out burger and Krispy Kreme, we drove all the way to a field on the Idaho-Oregon border. We arrived at 5 am, slept for a few hours, and woke surrounded by cows and manure. Groggy and confused, we packed quickly and sped off back to Leavenworth. We had friends there. We had a guide. His name was Tpot.

That afternoon we pushed out into the crisp, clear waters of Icicle Creek. We cruised through the upper section and scrambled our way through the final and biggest rapid, Log Limbo. Later, at a Bavarian restaurant, our waiter asked us what we had paddled. He advised us to go to California for the best whitewater in the world. We mentioned the drought and he nodded, wondering openly if, after four years, anyone still paddled there. Then he reminisced about the old days when the Leavenworth rivers held higher for longer. Days when hundreds of boaters would flock to Tumwater and Icicle.

At home people asked me where I had been. At first I would rattle off river names to blank faces. Later, I just said New Mexico. My conversation points included our brief stopover at Mesa Verde, walking by Donald Rumsfeld's Taos vacation ranch, and seeing a bunch of EarthShips on the Mesa. Every other part of our trip was simply indescribable to the non-paddler. The trip worked because we embraced the chaos and kept a loose plan, something people seem less and less willing, or able, to do.

During the trip we joked that we were the last kayakers on earth. The few boaters that are around become instant friends it seems, out of necessity. Whether it be throwing brown claws to strangers as you pass on the highway, or sharing take-out beers with people you just met, there is a camaraderie in whitewater I have not seen anywhere else. The small whitewater community makes some things easier, and a lot of things harder, but above all it is unique.



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# OVERNIGHT TRIPS

## EXPLORING THE LEGENDARY “TSATU-GI”

BY JULIET EDMUNDSON



James Clinkscales at Bull Sluice on a later trip down the Chattooga.  
Photo by Jim Glaze

**I**N CELEBRATION OF my boyfriend’s 37th birthday we decided to embark on a three-day overnighter with friends on Sections III-1/2 and IV of the Wild and Scenic Chattooga River. This would be a self-contained trip on which each boater would paddle his or her own boat and carry enough food, water, and supplies to last three days. Our trip would be excellent practice for longer expeditions. I spent some time preparing for this trip, finding lightweight dehydrated meals, meals-ready-to-eat, a small water filtration system, a compact hammock, a first aid kit, and a few other items that I considered essential. After packing and weighing the inflatable dry bags that would ride in the stern of my kayak, it became clear that some things I thought were so essential really weren’t, and I reduced the total bag weight to roughly 16 pounds.

Troy Matthews, James Clinkscales, Matthew Martin, Morgan Martin, Crystal

Johnson, Leslie Segal, and I set out on this adventure together. Many paddlers before had set forth on the same journey before, but for my friends and me it would be filled with challenges, personal firsts, and an abundance of exciting moments. We weren’t the first and wouldn’t be the last, but for a few days we were very much a part of the legendary Chattooga River. Not only did we descend her waters and enjoy her beauty, but we replenished our water bottles and prepared our dehydrated meals with water from the river.

We met at one of my favorite camping spots, just a hundred yards or so off of Thrift’s Ferry Road that first night before the trip and set camp. There, we gathered downed wood and limbs and had a toasty roaring fire, thanks to Morgan’s skills. Troy and I put up our hammock tents and canopy, and with a little chill in the air, slept comfortably through the night.

The next morning we put on at Thrift’s Ferry. I was so excited! I had run Section III-1/2 several times before but this would be my first descent of the remainder of Section IV. The first thing all of the kayakers did was to check their rolls. Everyone’s roll looked solid, but I was barely re-surfacing, and coming up on the back deck, of all places. Suddenly, my confidence in my combat roll was shaky. I did, however, feel confident in my ability to scout and decide whether or not to run or walk a rapid.

The weather was sunny; temperatures were in the mid-80s. I couldn’t wait to get to Bull Sluice. I had boofed the center line at the Bull all the other times I had run it. I had yet to run the double drop but I felt I was now ready. The water level was at 1.3 feet; I was told this was a good level for kayaking the double drop. Where the river took a sharp left turn we approached the bank on the Georgia side of the Bull and eddied out to scout our lines. Troy, Morgan, James, and I



would attempt the double drop and Crystal would take the middle line; Matthew and Leslie would maneuver the raft down the double drop.

I decided to go first. I got back into my boat and reminded myself to sit up straight and focus on taking good strokes at the right time and set my angle prior to entering the double drop. As I rounded the bend my heart rate accelerated. At the last minute, I could see where I needed to be and took a few solidly planted forward strokes to get some speed. In what seemed slow motion I moved my paddle to the lip of the rock on the first drop, took a good forward stroke, lifted my knees to my chest, and was high enough in the air to see that I would clear the rock on the left and the rock on the right in the bottom of the drop. One right brace on the landing and one slice forward

into a forward stroke on the left side, and I was through the second drop.

Troy, Morgan, and James had good clean lines through the double drop, and Crystal got her first boof off the middle line at the Bull. While they initially approached the double drop backwards, Matthew and Leslie made it through clean. For me it was a moment of fulfillment. Ten years earlier I had sat on the South Carolina side of the Bull in awe of the boaters who descended, thinking I would never be able to do it. At this moment, I was so glad I had changed my mind.

After running the Bull, we quickly paddled down to Surfer's Rapid, where Crystal capsized but executed a prompt combat roll. It would be her second combat roll ever, with the first happening between

Thrift's Ferry and Bull Sluice. Somewhere between Surfer's Rapid and Woodall Shoals we found a large sandy beach on river right with lush tree coverage. This would be our campsite for the night.

Crystal, having just begun kayaking a few months before, packed her boat in her car at the Woodall Shoal's parking lot, planning to ride in the raft for the remainder of Section IV. At this point we decided we had just enough time to hustle back to the Bull to make one more run down to the campsite before the sun began to set. Having taken longer to hike up the hill at the Woodall take-out and run shuttle back to the Bull than anticipated, I became concerned that we might be cutting it close to making it back to camp before sunset. We put back on the river and paddled fast. The gear in



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# OVERNIGHT TRIPS

my boat felt heavy but I managed to paddle carefully back to the campsite.

Fortunately, there was just enough time to put up our hammock tents and make a fire. After a refreshing river bath with some Dr. Bronner's peppermint soap and a change into dry clothing and shoes, I sat down to a delicious rehydrated dinner of chicken and rice and a cold one. By this point, we were using my \$25 purifying device to filter and drink water straight from the river. The moon shone and reflected off the river that night and we all slept snug and sound under the tree-covered mountain.

A few hours after sunrise, we began to see commercial rafts coming down the river. As we were breaking down camp and the fire smoldered, Gabe Latini rounded the corner in his kayak. He would be the next addition to our group and critical in helping me make informed decisions for running the remainder of Section IV. As we passed the bend at the take-out at Woodall Shoals, I knew I was committed to run the remainder of the river. I knew my roll wasn't solid but I

felt 100% confident that my ability to swim to the bank quickly was spot on, and so we went.

I only remember four parts of the remainder of the river. The first was approaching and running Seven-Foot Falls, the second was the amazingly beautiful waterfalls that flow into the river, the third was swimming at Raven's Chute, and the last was the Five Falls section. I had watched videos of kayakers angled perfectly as they dropped off Seven-Foot Falls. What I didn't think about was making sure I didn't hit the wall on river left at the bottom of the rapid. Gabe took off in front of me to show me the line. I peeled out, took a few good strokes, and set my angle, all while aiming for the rock on the right of the drop. As I slid off the rock and into the pool, I realized that I was quickly approaching the rock wall on river left and failed to take a quick correction stroke. I side planted into the wall and capsized. A lot of things went through my head while I was upside down. I thought about all of the undercut rocks and potholes on the river and wondered if this rock was undercut.

What I did not think about was setting up and rolling myself back up, and thus began swim number one. I quickly gathered my boat and paddle and swam to the bank. At this point, I realized how irrational I was being. My perception was that the rock on the left below the drop was undercut, and instead of focusing on that, I should have set up and attempted my combat roll.

Everyone else had good, clean lines through Seven-Foot Falls with Matthew and Crystal styling it in the raft. At some point we reached a rapid called Raven's Chute. I followed the guys down the center and failed to account for what I should have done on the landing. I flipped over and tucked. Rocks pounded the back of my PFD and helmet. I could hear Morgan's words in my head. "Tuck up and hang out until you feel the water calm, then try your roll." I remained tucked, set up, swept and hip-snapped, raised my head, and fell right back over. Not sure whether I had time to try my roll again or whether I should just wet-exit and get my rear to the bank, I swam. At this point I was concerned. I emptied

**James Clinkscales and Matthew Martin rafting through Woodall Shoals on a later trip.**  
Photo by Jim Glaze



my boat and got back in. My friend James asked me if I could relax a little. I looked at him with the words, "RELAX!" and, "Are you crazy?" running through my head, but instead decided to tell him I would try.

It wasn't long before we approached the Five Falls section. This section of the river drops approximately 100 feet per mile and consists of some seriously undercut rocks and sieved out spots. It was time to sit up straight, pay attention, and get ready to charge when necessary. I followed Troy, Morgan, and Gabe around the corner into Entrance Rapid. We didn't scout the rapid but made it through the first of four more falls cleanly.

The next rapid we approached was Corkscrew. Troy and I climbed to the top of a tall rock to scout the rapid. I had to see it from the bottom up to the top so I would know it start to finish. Troy pointed out the sneak on river right. I looked at Troy and told him that I felt it would be best if I ran the sneak. But as I walked back to my boat I changed my mind. I could see the line and

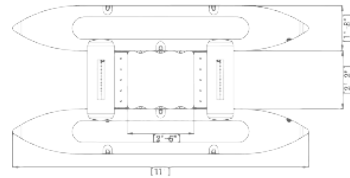
knew I could get to where I needed to be. The only thing holding me back was fear of a swim above the Cracks. The time felt right to run it.

I got back to my boat and looked at Troy and Gabe and said, "I'm running it." Troy looked me dead in the eyes and said sternly, "If you swim you had better get to the bank fast. The Cracks are right below you; you can't swim into them, and you run the risk that we may not get your boat unstuck if it pins in one of the Cracks." I understood and would do what it took to have a good clean line. Gabe went over the route with me again and told me that I could follow his line. Taking into consideration that he is a Green River Narrows kayaker, I was more than grateful to follow him. Gabe looked over his shoulder before he peeled out, and in a friendly but serious voice said, "Be aggressive, Juliet!" I followed closely behind going into Corkscrew and through the big hole where I had a second of whiteout, then landed safely in the eddy. Oh, the joy of a good clean line!



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# OVERNIGHT TRIPS



*The author running switch at Woodall Shoals a few weeks later.*  
Photo by Jim Glaze

The next rapid was Middle Crack. Troy, Gabe, and Morgan ran clean through Middle Crack and Matthew and Crystal had no choice but to portage because their raft wouldn't fit through the Left, Right, or Middle Cracks. At this point, the river began to draw on me in a different way. Going into this trip, all I could think of was how beautiful and exciting she would be. Upon reaching this particular rapid, I was reminded of those who had succumbed to the river's force and power. I wasn't afraid to run Middle Crack, but I did feel the need to take a moment in my life to appreciate the power of the river and show some respect for those fellow boaters before me who didn't make it to the lake. On this day, I walked.

Jawbone was next, and apart from my getting turned backwards at the bottom of the rapid, everyone had a clean ride. One very nice, very big, smooth, elongated tongue of a wave channeling through a gorge of rock appeared as I peeled out of the eddy above the rapid.

I was glad that Will Leverette had told me over and over to turn my head and look over my shoulder towards the next gate while practicing slalom because when I got turned backwards at the bottom of Jawbone I instinctively looked over my left shoulder towards the eddy where I needed to be and ferried to it.

A few weeks later a female kayaker would flip towards the bottom part of Jawbone rapid, right about where I got turned backwards. People said her paddle got tangled with a rope under the water, and when she tried to roll she was pulled upstream with the rope still around her paddle. She swam when her skirt imploded but she was safe and able to retrieve her boat and paddle. I couldn't help wonder if that rope was underneath me while I came through the rapid, and I was glad to not encounter the hazardous thing.

There was only one more big rapid in the Five Falls section, and that was Sock-Em-Dog. I knew only one thing about Sock-Em-

Dog and it was that I wanted to make sure I had a good approach and clean line coming off that drop. I definitely did not want to be upside down through any part of that rapid. We scouted and determined our lines. Gabe again reminded me to be aggressive. My boat was aimed towards an irregular but triangular and pointy rock as I approached the drop. When I came off the lip of Sock-Em-Dog right where that pointy rock stuck out, I felt my stern shift off line. I landed and flipped over immediately. Exhausted, I swam. While I normally feel ecstatic at the end of a river trip, on that day I paddled across Lake Tugaloo with mixed emotions, a strong headwind, and sun and rain all at once. It was the first time I got to see what was around the corner of Woodall Shoals. The beauty of the pristine clear water, rock cliff gorges with their narrow channels, and naturally flowing rapids filled my soul with a smile. I also felt hugely embarrassed for having swum three times and for not having my mental game on enough to bring my boat back upright.

I suppose growing pains exist even in the world of kayaking, and for an intermediate kayaker wanting to advance, it was time to grow. The first thing I did once I returned home to Asheville was sign up for a half-day private instruction with Girls at Play. Through some excellent instruction from Anna Levesque on the French Broad I learned how to take charge of both the physical and mental components necessary to successfully perform a combat roll. I couldn't wait to get back on the water, but even more so to return to the Chattooga to enjoy her company once more. I see why so many have been drawn to her over the years. There are a lot of myths surrounding this river; legend says that her name, Tsatugi, means to "drink by sips" or "cross the river." On this trip I did both and was glad that my friends and I could become a part of her legend.

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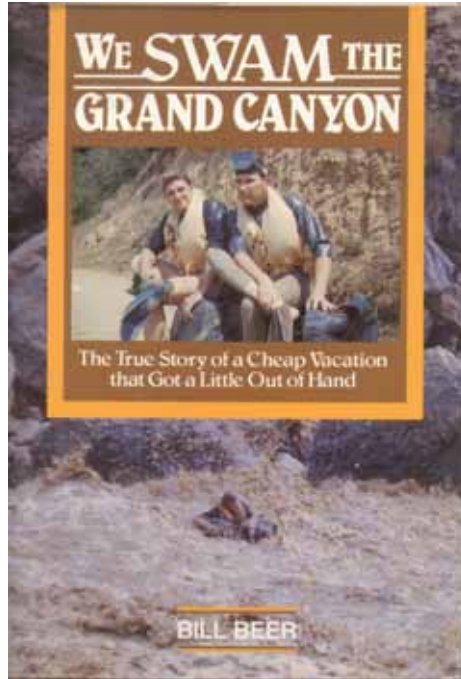
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# BOOK REVIEW

## THEY DID WHAT? AN IN DEPTH LOOK AT *WE SWAM THE GRAND CANYON*

BY SCOTT PATTON



**W**HAT FOLLOWS HERE is just my introduction to a permitted reprint of an article from another river-runners' publication. I think *American Whitewater's* readership will find this article interesting. It all started about a year ago; my good friend Barry Tuscano gave me a copy of a tattered paperback book and advised me that it would affect my perception of river-running considerably. It wasn't a "new release" (as one might have guessed by its tattered condition...), having been published in the late 80s. I had never heard of it before but I generally trusted Barry's opinions and we certainly share interests so, seeing as this book was only about 190 pages, I cracked it open within the week and waded in.

Whoa! Was I ever hooked by this story.

It was an adventure yarn that would easily have passed for exaggerated fiction—but this story was for real.

The title, *We Swam the Grand Canyon*, is purely descriptive, but the subtitle sounds like a judgment of one of Barry's many colorful life experiences: *A Cheap Vacation That Got a Little out of Hand*. Yes, literally, the book is about two guys who swam the entire length of the Grand Canyon and—surprisingly—lived to tell the tale. (Otherwise, of course, there'd be no book for me to tell you about.)

The book is written by Bill Beers, one of the two adventurers. His partner in the "crime" was his college buddy John Daggett. (Actually, the episode in question was being considered a crime. Beers and Daggett's preparations and launch had garnered publicity and the Park Service was out to get them. The helicopters were circling!)

Mr. Beers was not a professional writer and thus the tale unfolds in a very straightforward manner. There is no verbiage wasted on detailing the setting

or on character development, and before Chapter One is finished the duo is swimming off into the Colorado from the shores of Lee's Ferry. To us river runners, their story is especially amazing. But for anyone who enjoys tales of adventure (like something out of *True* magazine) it would be a good read.

I was so pumped by the story that, when I finished reading it, I bought a half a dozen copies and passed them among my river-running friends "library style"—that is, they read it with the obligation that they sign the inside of the cover when finished then pass it on to another paddler. A note at the bottom of the inside cover page instructs that the book eventually gets back to me. Well, two or three copies of the book have made the round trip and there are dozens of names in them! So I'm getting a kick out of that.

The book might never have happened except that Bill took his own two kids down the Colorado via a commercial Grand Canyon raft trip in the 1980s. At that time the kids were in their 20s and Bill must have been in his 60s. The group sat around the campfire one night and, as is typical, the lead river guide was telling stories. He launched into the one about these two guys—river legends—who had swum the river without a boat back in the day. The guide had no idea that one of those two men sat right there in his presence. The kids had heard Bill’s stories often over the years but had more or less dismissed them as Dad’s exaggerated yarns. Now here they sat in the Grand Canyon, the supposed “scene of the crime,” and they were hearing unprompted confirmation of the adventure tale right from the mouth of a bona-fide expert Colorado River guide! NOW the

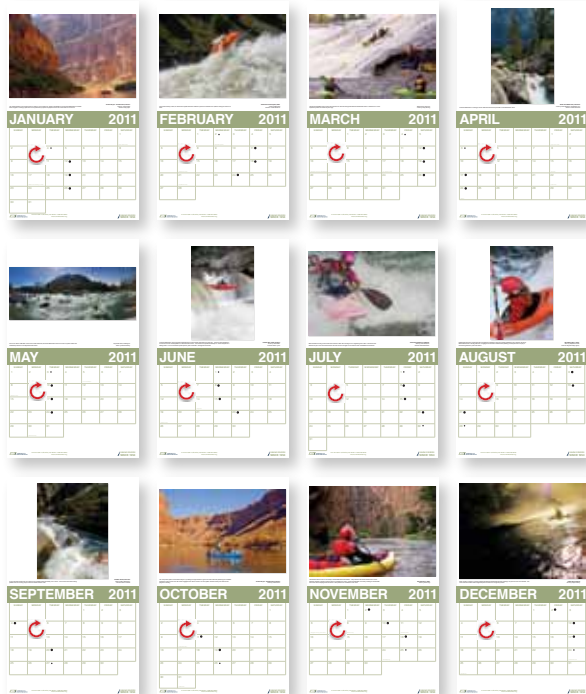
kids were impressed! They elbowed their Dad saying, “Tell him Dad, tell him who you are!” The guides picked up on the family “discussion” which had gotten louder and louder and grudgingly, Bill came to confess that he was one of those two crazies and big fanfare was made of the celebrity in their midst right there on the banks of the Colorado. The kids suddenly had a whole new respect for their Dad and the Canyon and the river. When they got back home the kids insisted that Dad had to write it all down—and thus the book came to be.

Later printings of the book contain an epilogue written by Bill Beer’s family. Shortly after the book’s release Bill died in an ultra-light aircraft-related incident. Had the kids been less persuasive, the book might never have happened.

I had never heard what became of the other adventurer, John Daggett, until recently when I stumbled across an online PDF of a quarterly publication called *The Journal of the Grand Canyon River Guides*. The article interestingly summarizes the contents of the book, but the occasion of the article was the recent death of John Daggett who had died just weeks before he was to make a presentation at one of the winter meetings of their organization. Wow, John’s back-story is a real heart string tugger. Again, it is a story that I think all river runners will, in our own way, embrace.

So I contacted Grand Canyon River Guides Association and received permission from them and from the article’s author, Tom Myers, to republish it her. Thanks to them for the permission to share the following story with you.

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# BOOK REVIEW

I hope you find this interesting and that you may even be inclined to seek your own copy of this unique book.

## FAREWELL TO “POOR-OLD-JOHN-WITHOUT-A-PISTOL-DAGGETT,” 1928–2010

BY TOM MYERS

*Reprinted with the permission of author Tom Myers and The Grand Canyon River Guides Association.*

Few Grand Canyon river stories capture the heart and the imagination as does the legendary swim down the Colorado by Bill Beer and John Daggett in 1955. And few characters in river history have

ever been as beloved as this flipper-clad duo. Only about 200 people had made the full traverse of the Canyon in boats when these soggy, twenty-something, southern Californians—insurance-selling surfers turned frogmen—flopped onto the silt banks of Lake Mead and into folklore.

They had done what most experts thought to be impossible: traversing the entire length of the Colorado through Grand Canyon with no boat at all.

Their saga is beautifully captured in gritty, self-effacing eloquence in Bill Beer’s book, *We Swam the Grand Canyon: The Story of a Cheap Vacation that Got A Little Out of Hand*. In this wonderful book, often hysterical, bumbling downstream by Beer and Daggett is mixed with incredible competence and inspiring courage. Indeed, the pair seemed a perfect blend of wits, daring, and humor. It’s probably a safe bet to say if it wasn’t for the uniqueness of the two fellas who pulled off this stunt, there’s a good chance such an amphibious trip, and thus, the wonderful tale of it, would have never happened. It’s an even safer bet that the recounting of the feat wouldn’t have been near as damn much fun for the rest of us.

Daggett had recently lost his expecting wife and two small children in a tragic accident when a train struck the family car. Coping with the loss, he found himself rooming again with his old college roommate from Stanford, Bill Beer. One rainy day the roomies, inexperienced in river-running, pooh-poohed “heroics” of river runners. During a burst of bravado, Daggett blurted that they would swim the Colorado. Beer and Daggett were exceptionally bright, independent, and adventurous and they were looking for a “vacation on the cheap.”

Slowly their brainstorming shaped a secret plan for an illegal conquest of the Colorado. Their clandestine approach didn’t last. A couple of months into the planning, during a party, Daggett hollered, “Hey everybody,

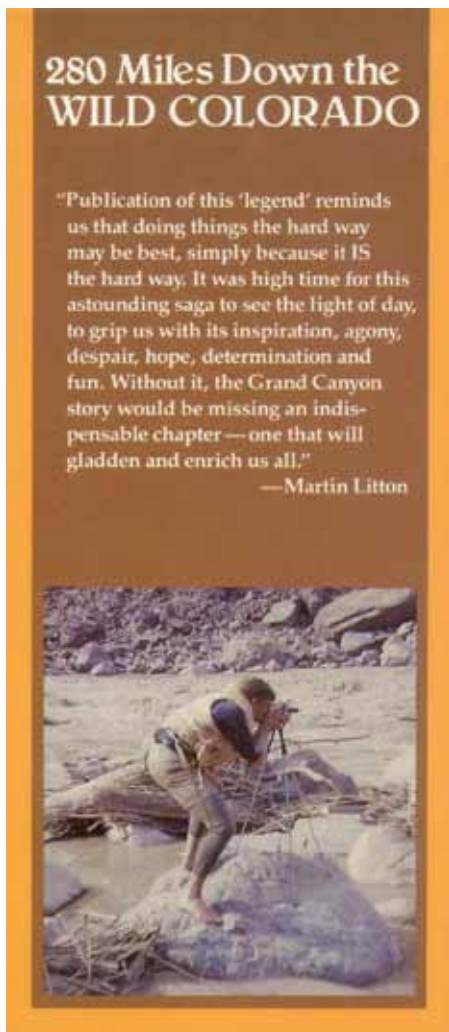
Bill and I are going to swim down the Colorado! Tell ‘em, Bill.”

Now needing to put up or shut up, in April of ‘55 they made good on their boast by jumping into the icy, 51-degree spring-runoff water of the Colorado at Lees Ferry. Their gear? Wool long johns, thin-rubber \$15 shirts, and “rubber suitcases.” The pair had purchased these surplus rubber generator boxes for 89 cents each and stuffed them with supplies and river gear, including a movie camera to record their daredevil feat. Indeed, the launch of the swimmers’ expedition looked so dubious, a small boy standing nearby warned them: “You better watch out, Mister!”

For the next 26 days the intrepid twosome floated, swam, clanked, banged and dragged themselves and their waterlogged river boxes downriver. As the unconventional flotilla meanders downstream, one cannot help but root for these amiable underdogs, especially Daggett. He’s a lovable, tragic-hero, no doubt still searching for meaning in life, as well as a diversion from the grief haunting him in the fresh wake of his loss.

One particularly poignant moment occurs early in the trip while the pair is floating quietly in Redwall Gorge. They start yelling to hear their voices reverberate off the Canyon walls. Then Daggett calls out the names of his dead children. The silence proved deafening when those echoes faded.

More frequently the journey resembles slapstick comedy. If the two aren’t hanging out on shore wearing swim goggles during sandstorms, they’re freezing their butts off in the river, slipping and sliding on muddy banks, getting caked in nasty goo, and lugging sopping-wet “dry” boxes up steep banks only to find their contents drenched and the boxes needing to be drained. Or they’re lighting huge driftwood bonfires, dancing around them to warm their hypothermic bodies, dining on soggy grub coated in grit, or barbecuing a burro rustled up with .22 pistols after a barefooted chase.





Another memorable and pivotal moment involves Daggett at President Harding Rapid when he nearly joined his departed family. Daggett almost drowns when the two dry boxes he's tethered to himself float past one side of the living-room-sized boulder and he on the other. For several horrifying seconds he's trapped underwater and dashed against the jagged edges of this huge boulder that forms the rapid.

Indeed the rapid might be more aptly named Daggett's Tooth after he came close to losing a few. He was eventually able to pull himself free, but his up close and personal encounter with this rock is a one-of-a-kind survival in Grand Canyon.

The trip barely survived a few days later when the two hiked to the Rim from Phantom for some real chow and to re-

supply. They arrived to find the National Park Service ready to yank their flippers.

Presumed dead, Beer and Daggett had created a media ruckus, as well as an embarrassing and expensive search. Now the NPS was determined to kibosh the rest of their trip. Call it charisma, smarts, or just dumb luck, but the duo was able to finagle their way back onto the river in a tag-team of salesmanship for the ages. Their tactic? A convincing bluff: "When all those guys hear we've been stopped after getting this far, they'll be up here in droves, jumping in the river from everywhere, drowning all over, cluttering up the landscape."

Perhaps the image of the river clogged with bodies of frogmen was too much for the Park Superintendent. The feds relinquished, basically shoving off Beer

and Daggett to flush downriver and set the record so no other fools would be tempted to kill themselves while trying to grab that particular "first."

Daggett's personality emerges at Bedrock Rapid. Daggett follows Beer's run but gets slammed against a boulder while funneling along the rock island... "Damn you, Beer! You're the luckiest guy in the world. I was way to the right of you. When I saw you get by with no problem, I was sure I was safe. Then the goddam wave disappeared! It was there for you, but when I came along, no siree. No way the Colorado is going to make it easy for old John. All of a sudden the way was nice and clear and all downhill into that rock. No wave for old-hit-the-rocks John. I was pushing and shoving all along that rock. Right next to the son of a bitch!"

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# BOOK REVIEW

Another revealing episode occurred in camp below Fossil Rapid. As he's cleaning his .22, Daggett loses the pistol's pin in the sand. While downing a few drams of whiskey, he sifts mountains of sand, desperately searching for it into the night, like Gollum for the ring of power... "Pin's hiding...doesn't want me to find it...doesn't want me to have a pistol. It keeps moving, right now it's under a big pile of sand. Can't sit here and look, pile's too big. Go to sleep poor John. Go to bed. Poor-old-John-without-a-pistol-Daggett."

Daggett and Beer floated all the big stuff, including Lava Falls. They arrived at Lake Mead, astounding photographer Bill Belknap, his son Buzz, and a newlywed NPS ranger. It was a minor prelude to the attention and media salvo that would follow, which included a TV series. Daggett, along with Beer's help, eventually wrote, edited, narrated, and produced a film of their trip, *The Big Swim*, a visual experience as fun and enduring as *We Swam the Grand Canyon*.

Bill Beer and John Daggett had made good on their claim that running the river wasn't all that dangerous. Truth be told, the publicity of their float would change river running forever. The very next year numbers of river runners in Grand Canyon would double. "We turned a lot of heroes into just ordinary people," Beer would simply say. A lesson in humility for us all.

For John Daggett, perhaps more than any other, it was a Canyon journey worthy of the "life-changing" cliché. He found reason to carry on. He remarried in '55 and graduated from UCLA Law School in '56. By '58 he had produced two television documentaries and he and his wife had started a new family. Within the next few years he would become a third-degree mason in Hollywood and was elected commander of an American Legion Post. Heartbreakingly, he endured the death of another child, an infant son, who drowned in 1965.

Like a decade earlier, it inspired a voyage. This one, too, involved Bill Beer. With his family, Daggett sailed his own boat from California thru the Panama Canal to the Virgin Islands, where Bill Beer was living with his family. There, the Daggetts and the Beers would be neighbors for a few years. No doubt John and Bill, at least a time or two over a shots of whiskey, relived the glory of their Colorado swim. Eventually, John sailed back to the mainland finding home and financial success in Florida real estate and cattle ranching.

Last fall John Daggett had committed to coming to Marble Canyon for the Grand Canyon River Guides spring Guides Training Seminar to show his film. Sadly, he became ill before he could make the trip. He died in July, 2010, joining his old pal Beer who preceded him in death in June of 2000, when he died of heart failure while flying his Ultralight ["Ultralight Beer"] in Kayenta, Arizona.

The Daggett family kindly submitted the following summary of John's life. John himself drafted it, shortly before he died:

John Stewart Daggett died in Florida on July 25th at the age of 82, his wife of 29 years, Barbara, at his side. He was born in 1928 of John Stewart Daggett and Marguerite Bunton in Los Angeles, Ca, the 13th generation of "Daggetts of America": Martha's Vineyard, 1630. He attended Le Conte Jr. High School, Burbank Military Academy, graduated Chicago Latin School, Class of 1946, was appointed Midshipman, United States Navy in 1947, graduated Stanford University, B.A., Class of 1950, was commissioned 2nd Lt. USMC in 1950, 7th Basic Class, Quantico, VA, and honorably discharged as Major USMC in 1953.

He married Paula R. Smith in 1950, fathered Mary Stewart Daggett, Polly Stewart Daggett, John Stewart Daggett (in utero); was widowed/children killed in 1954—Santa Fe train crossing, Solana Beach, Ca. After this tragic accident he swam 270 miles down the Colorado River, documented in

the DVD *The Big Swim* and the book titled *We Swam the Grand Canyon* by Bill Beer.

He worked as a fearless tree surgeon climbing tall redwoods during college, an agent for New York Life Insurance Company 1953-1956, graduated UCLA Law School, 1956, produced two television documentary shows, *The Open Road & Let's Play Golf*, 1956-1958, appointed to Third Degree Mason, Hollywood, Ca in 1959, elected Commander, American Legion Post 8, Los Angeles, Ca in 1963.

He married Virginia Doty Davenport of Santa Barbara, CA in 1955, and fathered Mary S. Daggett (1958), Carol S. Daggett (1959), John S. Daggett (1963—drowned in 1965). He then sailed the 40-foot wood sloop Merinda with surviving family from Huntington Beach, CA down the Mexican and Central American Coast, Galapagos Islands, thru the Panama Canal, to the U.S. Virgin Islands, and lived there until 1968, then sailed to Bahamas, then settled again in Ft. Lauderdale, FL.

In 1977 he divorced Virginia. He re-married Barbara Ann Kovacs in 1981, and returned to live in St. Thomas, VI until sickness forced him to seek treatment in FL, where he passed away after a painful last year. He is survived by his wife Barbara Ann; his daughters Mary and Carol; grandsons Harry and John, and granddaughter Frances.

He was buried with military honors at Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell, FL on August 9th.

*Editor's Note: The above excerpt was written by Tom Myers for Boatmen's Quarterly Review, The Journal of the Grand Canyon River Guides, Vol. 23, Number 4, Winter 2010-2011, pp 5 - 7.*



# NEWS & NOTES

## THE LEAVE NO TRACE LIFESTYLE

BY THERESA AND PATRICK BEEZLEY



*Thanks to the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics, Leave No Trace Principals now have traveling advocates and educators.  
Photo by Theresa and Patrick Beezley*

**E**VERY PADDLER LOVES going on a road trip, visiting different areas of the country, new towns, different breweries, challenging him or herself on different rivers and paddling with new people or old friends. We are both fortunate to be able to say that we have our dream job working as Subaru/Leave No Trace Traveling Trainers for the non-profit, education based organization Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics.

We live a nomadic lifestyle as educators, advocates, and paddlers. We drive around the country and camp over 200 nights a year. Our Subaru is packed full of camping gear, educational supplies, a Hyside Paddle Cat raft, and two whitewater kayaks on the roof that allow us to live a truly unique lifestyle. From the Chattooga in Georgia/South Carolina to the White Salmon in Washington, we get to travel all throughout the United States paddling and teaching.

Each morning we wake up, remember what city or town we are in, make coffee, pack up camp, and either go to work or go on an adventure. We love getting to teach something that we appreciate and respect, as well as having the opportunity to see the country and paddle. Before we started

this job we worked or were in school with busy schedules that did not allow us, as a married couple, the freedom to spend time together like we do now.

The organization that we work for, the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics, teaches people how to minimize their impact when they are traveling and camping in the outdoors. We work with everyone from paddlers to backpackers, climbers, hikers, equestrians, geocachers, anglers, hunters, and many other outdoor enthusiasts. As Traveling Trainers, we travel from state to state teaching everyone from Boy/Girl Scouts, to land management agency personnel, kindergarten through university students, environmental educators, guiding services, and anybody who travels and camps in the outdoors about Leave No Trace. In a nutshell we want to teach people how they can enjoy the outdoors responsibly. You can find out more at [www.LNT.org](http://www.LNT.org).

So what questions does Leave No Trace answer? Should I pee directly in the river or on the bank? Who yields to whom when a kayaker is surfing a hole and a raft is about to crash through that hole? Why do I have to elevate my campfire on a fire pan when

I'm camping on the river? As you can see, Leave No Trace has an important role to play for all paddlers.

Here is our list of suggestions for paddlers to use that correspond with the Leave No Trace 7 Principles.

### Plan Ahead and Prepare

- Learn about river-specific issues, regulations, and permits.
- Use a river guidebook and map to plan your trip.
- Schedule your trip so that you encounter appropriate river flows for your group's ability.
- Prepare for extreme weather, hazards, and emergencies.
- Schedule your trip to avoid times of high use; visit in small groups.
- Repackage food to minimize waste.
- Know river skills and carry the necessary equipment to minimize your impact.

## Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces

- Durable surfaces include rock, sand, and gravel.
- Focus activity where vegetation is absent.
- Concentrate use on existing trails and campsites.
- Select a campsite large enough for your group.
- When on day hikes in the river corridor, walk single file in the middle of the trail, even when it's muddy.
- In pristine areas, disperse use to prevent creation of new campsites and trails.
- Leave campsites clean and natural looking.

## Dispose of Waste Properly

- Pack it in, pack it out.
- Use a washable, reusable toilet or other approved method to pack out human waste, toilet paper, and tampons. Check local regulations.
- Liquid waste can be dumped into main current in many high volume (over 500 cfs) rivers. In low volume rivers, scatter liquid waste 200 feet from water, away from camp and trails. Check local regulations.
- Urinating directly into the river is often the best option. Check local regulations.
- Use a trap in the kitchen to catch food and trash, which attracts unwanted animals.
- Pack out small food particle and small pieces of trash.

## Leave What You Find

- Appreciate ancient structures, artifacts, rock art and other natural objects, but leave them undisturbed.
- Do not build structures or dig trenches in campsites.
- Avoid introducing non-native species, including live bait, by cleaning equipment between trips.

## Minimize Campfire Impacts

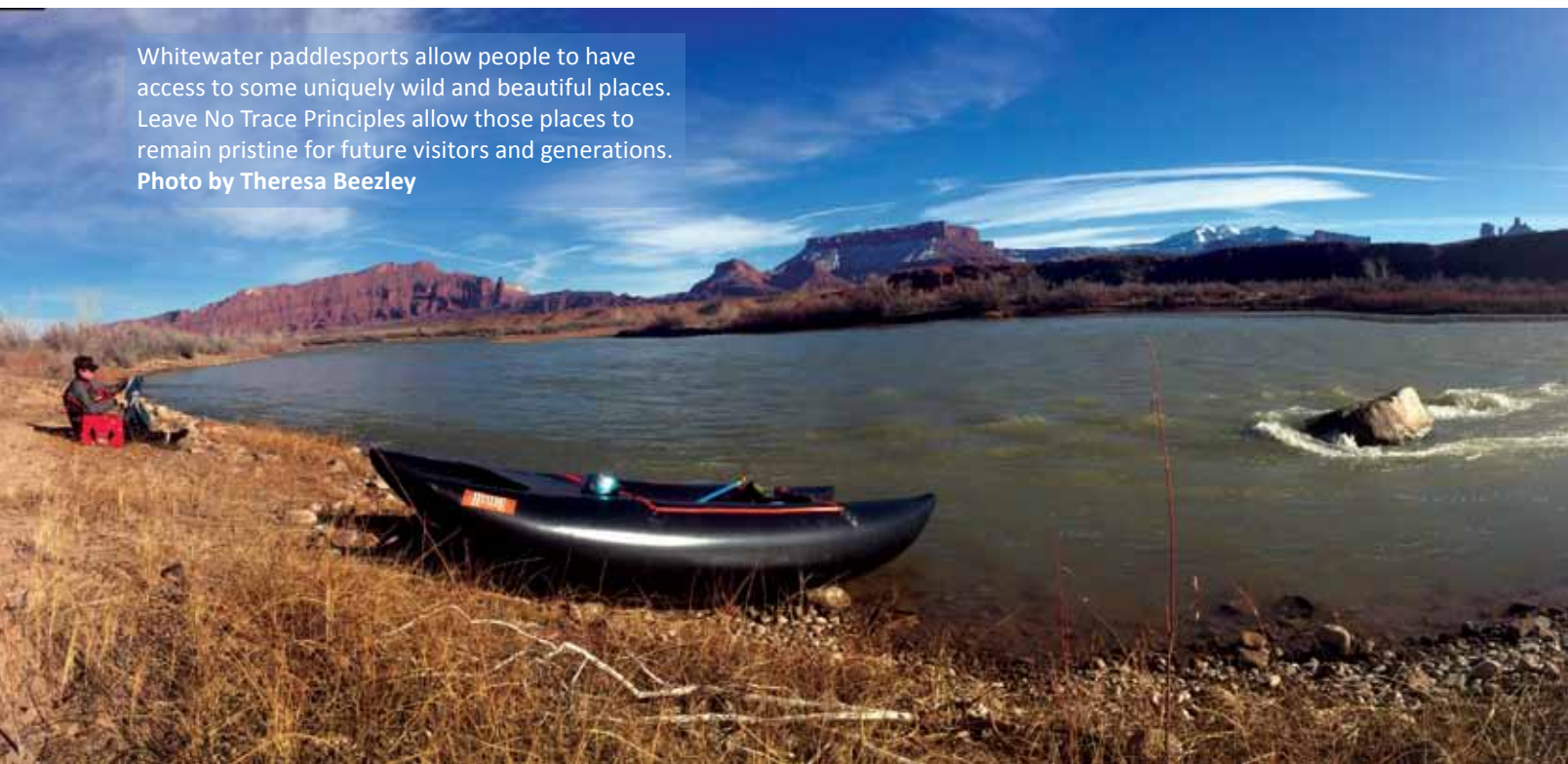
- Minimize campfire impacts by using stoves.
- Use a fire pan or designated fire ring for open fires and charcoal.
- Elevate fire pan and use a fire blanket to catch embers.
- Use dead and downed wood no thicker than an adult's wrist to keep the fire small.
- Consider bringing your own firewood or charcoal.
- Burn all wood and charcoal to ash. Carry out ash with other garbage.

## Respect Wildlife

- Observe wildlife from a distance. Do not follow or approach them.
- Never feed wildlife; it damages their health, alters natural behaviors, and exposes them to predators and other dangers.
- Protect wildlife by storing food and trash securely.

Whitewater paddlesports allow people to have access to some uniquely wild and beautiful places. Leave No Trace Principles allow those places to remain pristine for future visitors and generations.

Photo by Theresa Beezley



# NEWS & NOTES



*Planning and preparation are keys to minimizing our impact on wild rivers and to being safe on the water.*

**Photo by Theresa Beezley**

- Control pets or leave them at home.
- Avoid wildlife during sensitive times: mating, nesting, or when food is scarce.

## Be Considerate to Other Visitors

- Respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experience.
- Communicate with other river visitors about your floating and camping plans.
- Leave larger camps for larger groups.
- Avoid camping or eating near major rapids where scouting and portaging take place.
- Non-motorized crafts usually have right-of-way over powerboats; slower boats should keep to the right.
- Let nature's sounds prevail.

*Leave No Trace Principles apply to what we do as whitewater paddlers.*

**Photo by Patrick Beezley**

Not all of these suggestions from our 7 Principles will apply specifically to the river you paddle. These are general suggestions and we encourage people to research through their local land management agencies for recommendations on the appropriate techniques to minimize their impact out on the river. We hope that



paddlers will use these Leave No Trace 7 Principles suggestions listed above to ensure that they keep their rivers impact-free, accessible, and continually amazing places to enjoy the best outdoor sport possible.

If you are interested in your outdoor group receiving a free educational workshop on Leave No Trace please go to our Request a Visit page at <https://lnt.org/learn/request-a-visit>. These visits from the Subaru/Leave No Trace Traveling Trainers are free and can be anywhere from 30 minutes long to full-day workshops tailored to your group.

We are lucky to be able to travel the country and teach and work for Leave No Trace. As of April 2015 there are four teams traveling the country in four regions. Thanks to the office staff in Boulder, Colorado for their continued support of the Traveling Trainers program.

We hope that all of the paddlers out there enjoy their rivers and minimize their impact like the Leave No Trace mascot Bigfoot!

# REMEMBRANCE

## REMEMBERING XAVIER ENGLE

PHOTOS AND STORY BY OLIVER DESCHLER



*Written in memory of Xavier Engle, who drowned November 30th, 2014, paddling near Seattle.*

**X**AVIER ENGLE WAS the brightest of lights. His face seemed most relaxed under a broad grin, which he wore for hours at a time. During the moments his face assumed a more pensive expression, his grin was only seconds away, a natural reflex of his face that the smallest of sparks could ignite. It could not be extinguished; in the darkest of hours, surrounded by dour expressions, his grin was steadfast, buoyed by boundless optimism. Xavier's optimism, just like his grin, was unassailable. Quietly and humbly, he went big in all facets of his life.

"Xavi" was a gifted and natural paddler whose technique emanated calm and composure even in the most ferocious rapids. During his short paddling career he tackled the hardest rivers in North America—including multiple descents of the Middle Kings (CA) and Grand Canyon of the Stikine (the only known springtime descent). He was an expedition paddler at heart: tough, humble, and careful. He holds the record for most vertical feet

**Left:** Xavier and Rolf Kelly in the middle of a high water "Balls to the Wall," Clarks Fork Yellowstone.

**Middle:** Xavier Engle.

**Right:** Xavier takes the "Leap of Faith," Clarks Fork Yellowstone.

descended in a kayak in one day—racking up a boggling 11,900 feet and 105 miles of Class V paddling after completing seven North Fork Payette laps in a single day. He paddled all over the world including Siberia, Africa, South America, and New Zealand.

Many paddlers of Xavier's caliber are one-dimensional; kayaking at such a high level can push aside many other important facets of life. Not for Xavi. A world traveler fluent in two languages, he graduated from Dartmouth with a degree in cellular biochemistry, and was in his third year of medical school at the time of his death. Unassuming and humble, Xavier juggled med school, a four-year relationship, and kayaking with the same poise and skill that carried him through huge rapids. While the rest of us struggled to balance careers, relationships, and kayaking, Xavier did it all with his typical grin. He was just as excited explaining his passion for medicine as he was talking about his latest adventure on the river. He was a Rubik's Cube of energy,

excited and inspired by every aspect of life. Ten years younger than I, he was an inspiration, and a paragon of optimism, energy, and joy.

I met Xavier in the spring of 2010 just before snowmelt, when he was an Emerging Infectious Disease Fellow for the CDC in Fort Collins. Kayaking is ephemeral in the Rocky Mountains and a dependable partner is gold. It took us two weeks to become close friends. Nearly every day, as the Poudre awoke from its winter dormancy, we paddled. Every day the river was higher and the rapids we'd run the day before that much harder. Ten years older than Xavier, I'd often express hesitation, which he would acknowledge by grinning broadly. His infectious optimism replaced fear with inspiration.

The snow banks were deep in the high country and the water kept rising. We started walking some of the harder rapids, but kept pushing ourselves to run the Lower

# REMEMBRANCE



*Xavier in the run out of "Double Suck," Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone.*

Narrows, a long rapid choked with rocks and holes. The day the river peaked it was cloudy and overcast. I was camping with some friends and Xavier showed up early so he could kayak before work. The Lower Narrows was ferocious, a liquid freight train of brown water exploding in every direction. As we scouted, cars began to pull over to watch, adding to our trepidation. We climbed in our boats. My look was one of grim determination, and Xavier's featured a broad grin; we rode the freight train to the bottom.

That summer I was determined to run the Middle Kings in California, something I'd dreamed about for years. Xavier wanted to go before the words left my mouth. All summer we kept pushing each other, doing trail runs, paddling loaded boats, practicing rolls in Class III, all to the beat of our war cry, "Middle Kings Training!"

Finally, in late July, we were there. Xavier broke his paddle one mile into the 13-mile hike to the river. We offered our breakdown paddles but Xavier refused,

choosing instead to paddle one of the most difficult runs in the world with his breakdown paddle, which had no feather. It was akin to skiing Denali on an old pair of skinny skis. Xavi's infamous smile might have disappeared for a few seconds, but it was back before anyone noticed as he shrugged off the setback and continued towards Bishop Pass.

The Middle Kings was as difficult as we had hoped, and pushed us to our limits. Late on the second day we reached the Waterfall Gorge, a famous part of the run. I was exhausted but worried I'd be filled with regret if I portaged. Would I ever make it back? Xavier shouldered his boat quietly and, unaccompanied, started walking, a decision I envied when I blew my line in the first rapid. Xavi was bold but never reckless.



*Xavier finishing "Snollieguster" on the Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone while Ben Luck looks on.*

Paddling, for him, was as it should be, a personal challenge free of hubris or ego.

Xavier moved away after that summer but I saw him the next spring, in Anchorage,

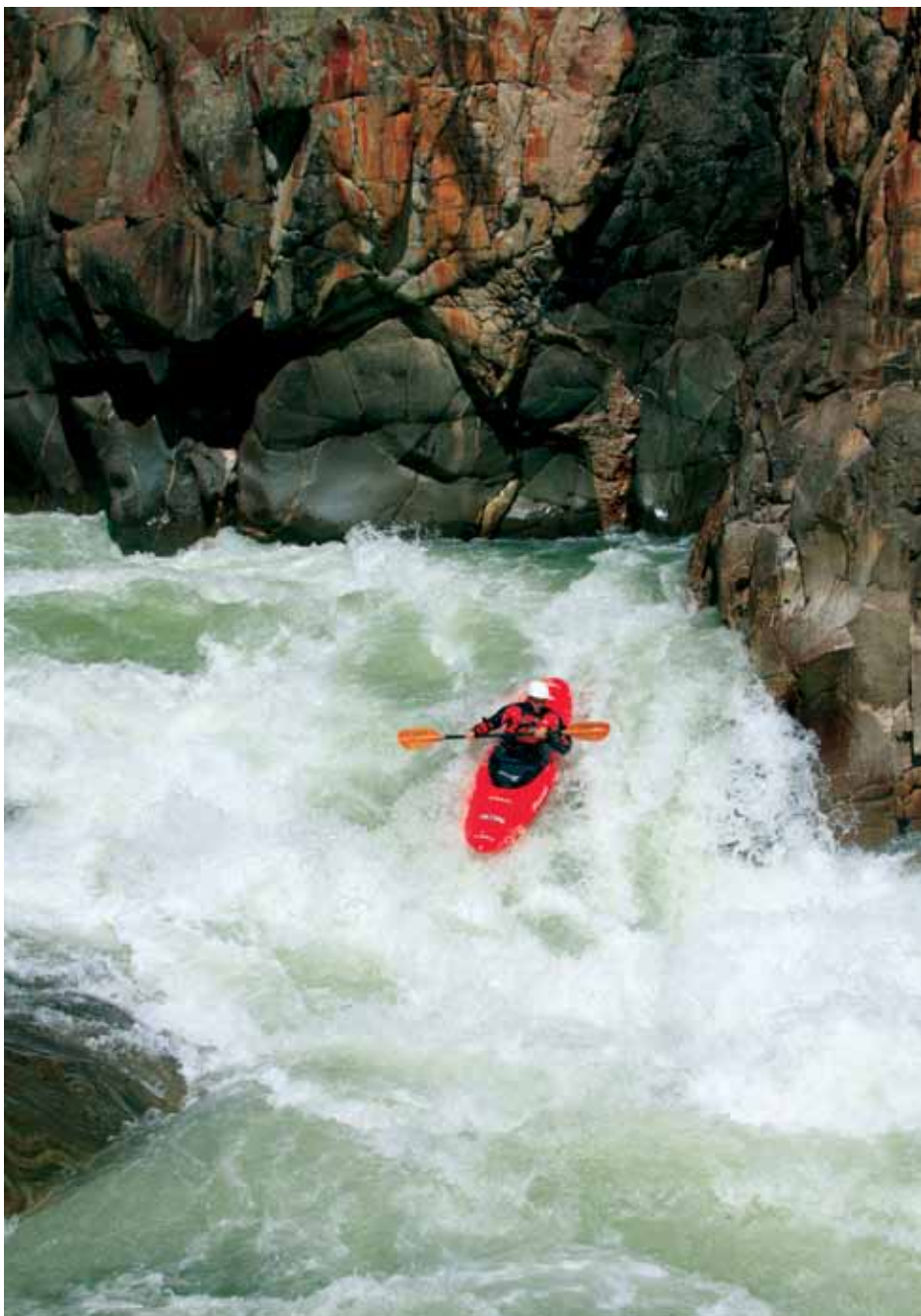
as I was preparing for a climbing trip to the Alaska Range. A selfless friend, Xavier loaned us his car for errands and did anything he could to help us prepare.

Later that summer we paddled the Clark's Fork of the Yellowstone in Wyoming. Any illusion I'd had about being a mentor was soon shattered as I wondered if I could keep up. Xavier had taken any expedition boating tutelage I'd offered and never looked back. That summer he was on an expedition boating binge that I could only dream of: Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone, Devils Postpile on the Middle San Joaquin, a return to the Middle Kings. Not only was he younger and stronger, he also liked a little bit of a disadvantage, paddling the Clarks Fork with a ridiculously heavy boat packed with jars of mayonnaise, mustard, and lunch meat he'd obtained from a rafting company in Idaho. When I pointed out how his packing could have been more strategic, Xavi just smiled and quipped that it helped him train.

When we reached Upper Deliberation Corner, the most difficult rapid on the run, I could only see the hazards, and not the path through. Xavi, brimming with optimism and wearing his ever-present smile, joined me as we held ropes for the first in our group to give it a shot. We were the last two to go, and as we took a final look I kept pointing out the problems with each of the moves, scared and fearful. Xavi was relaxed and full of excitement. His optimism and joy were contagious. I rose to the challenge, and once again, Xavi followed me as I paddled into the maelstrom. I've been unable to muster the courage to run it since.

My last kayaking trip with Xavier was the following summer, when we ran the Clarks Fork for a second time at high water. Xavi was starting med school that fall and the first night three of us (Xavier, Rolf Kelly, and I) sat around the fire talking about life. Xavier told Rolf and me (both more than nine years his senior) about his dreams and aspirations in medicine. When the two of us had been his age we'd cared about little else





Xavier in "Lower Deliberation Corner," Clarks Fork Yellowstone.

than paddling, and like circling vultures we probed and prodded for any sign of doubt or dread about the sacrifice that lay ahead of him. Xavi, eternally optimistic, wouldn't take the bait. His determination and dedication to medicine was unshakeable. He'd often call after starting med school,

just as excited about his studies as he was about his next adventure.

The previous summer Xavier had learned how to fish with a hand line tied around a water bottle, but with limited success. Like all things, it wasn't long before he was proficient. On the second day it was raining

when we got to camp. Xavi spent the afternoon fishing in the rain, happily out-fishing Oliver "Trout Slayer" Deshler. We feasted on trout that night, sipped whiskey, and enjoyed the comfort of close friends in one of the most spectacular places on earth. Living large, Xavier style.

Thank you, Xavier, for sharing some of the richest moments of my life. You were an inspiration to all who knew you and it was an honor to call you a friend. May I be reminded of your incredible energy and love of life every day. The ripple of your short life spread far; may it continue to spread. May the memory of your life inspire us to boldly tackle audacious challenges, sacrifice selflessly, and do it all wearing a good-natured grin.

Xavi, you will never be forgotten.

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Ben Dann @ The Clark's Fork of the Yellowstone

## ACCIDENT SUMMARY: JANUARY-JUNE 2015

BY CHARLIE WALBRIDGE

**T**HIS HAS BEEN a year of extremes. Thanks to nationwide low water and a cold, long-lasting Eastern winter, the first four months of 2015 saw very few whitewater accidents. But when record snowmelt in Colorado and heavy rains from Texas to New England brought rivers to high levels, trouble followed. There have been 10 kayak, two canoe, and 12 rafting fatalities (five commercial and seven private) reported so far in 2015. Colorado had eight deaths, many due to high water, plus a cluster of tubing fatalities. Causes break down as follows: nine flush drownings, five low head dam deaths, five fatal strainer pins, and three heart attacks.

### Skilled Kayakers

Four of this year's deaths involved skilled kayakers; all involved swims or pins against strainers. On March 11th the international community was shocked by the death of top New Zealand kayaker Louise Jull. She was paddling the "Gnarly Gorge" section of the Kaituna River, which she had run several times. This section is steep, blind, and narrow with few eddies. Ms. Jull, 26, washed under a log at the bottom of the first major drop. Her group was unable to reach her. The following day authorities dropped the flow from an upstream dam so they could recover her body.

That same day saw another fatality on West Virginia's Camp Creek. After a run on the Bluestone River, Guillaume "Frenchie" Bonnot and a friend decided to run this local tributary of the Bluestone that flows into the main river about 400 yards above the Eades Mill Bridge. It's two miles long and contains several bedrock ledges. They put on the creek about 5 pm; both were caught in big hydraulics and bailed out. Mr. Bonnot swam left, his friend swam right. She made it ashore, but he washed around a bend and under a tree. Suddenly, what was billed as a 45-minute cruise became a

desperate struggle. His friend took hours to walk out and summon help.

About two months later, on May 16th, there was an accident on the Class V Green Truss Bridge section of the White Salmon in Washington. Twenty-year-old Logan Jauernigg flipped in the entrance to Upper Zig Zag Canyon. He bailed out, washed against the undercut left wall, and pinned underwater. Because he was running last, no one saw him flip or pin. His body was very hard to spot and several other groups came through without a sighting. His companions paddled out and summoned help.

Wet Planet Whitewater, a rafting outfitter, works closely with the Klickitat County Search and Rescue team on difficult whitewater rescues. According to Todd Collins from Wet Planet, they located Mr. Jauernigg's body at the base of a high overhanging cliff the same day he drowned. It wasn't clear how he was stuck; the most likely scenario is a foot entrapment in a crack in the wall. They lowered a rescuer, but he couldn't reach the cliff base because the overhang put him too far out over the water. He eventually reached out and made contact using a garden rake. The team grabbed Mr. Jauernigg's tow tether and applied a Z-drag, but this only pulled his PFD off. The person being lowered was spun, inverted, and otherwise manhandled during the attempt, which was very unnerving.

After taking Saturday to study the area, the group came up with one of the most demanding technical swiftwater/vertical recovery scenarios I have ever heard of. It took most of Sunday to set protective anchors in the cliff wall. On Monday, after a dry-land walkthrough of a Mather Cinch, which would be managed by people hanging from the cliff, the team was able to snag Mr. Jauernigg's body and bring him ashore.

The "Farmlands" section of Washington's White Salmon River was the scene of

a another serious accident on April 12th. Canadian Denis Brown, 63, was an accomplished mountaineer and a solid paddler. According to April McEwan's report, Mr. Brown flipped in the third tier of Triple Drop rapid, a long, continuous Class IV. He failed to roll and washed over another ledge into a downed tree on river right. This log was way off to the side and no one expected it to be a problem. He was caught on the log with his boat pinned behind him on the upstream side. Several of his companions had their hands on him within minutes. They pulled his head above water, but couldn't hold on. They were joined by two other paddling groups and more attempts were made to free him. Later a Search and Rescue team cut the tree with a chain saw and released his body.

Two other kayaking accidents involved less skilled paddlers. On January 25th a group from a local running club was paddling California's Class I Eel River. Samantha Dweck, 24, was in a double kayak that pinned against an abutment on the McCann Bridge. Her partner escaped, but she was held under water. Then, on February 8th, Thomas Shepard was paddling with a friend on Michigan's icy Rogue River. They were wearing wetsuits but no life vests when they came to a spot where the river was blocked by ice. Mr. Shepard, 62, was trying to land on the ice shelf when his boat was pulled underneath it by the current. The other man got ashore safely and notified authorities.

### Rafting Deaths

Some parts of the Rocky Mountain region saw near record snowmelt and extremely high river levels this year. This caused several "flush drownings," which occur in long, violent rapids where even life-jacketed swimmers can spend too much time under water to breathe adequately. People in poor physical condition or with health problems like asthma or heart disease are particularly vulnerable. In several instances skilled kayakers were instrumental in managing the aftermath.

A group of rafters who planned an easy Class II float encountered problems when they launched too far upstream on Washington's Sultan River. The river was running at 1400 cfs on April 25th, a medium flow that's typical for this time of year. The group had life vests but no helmets or cold water protection. They flipped in "Last Nasty," a powerful Class IV rapid below the powerhouse. Everyone made it ashore but the raft was caught midstream. Then Travis Albin, 38, swam out to retrieve the raft. He disappeared and was held under the boat for some time. He may have been caught in some badly-placed ropes attached to the raft. He washed out downstream, face down, without a PFD.

Experienced kayakers who'd just paddled the stretch above the powerhouse on a scheduled release found the three survivors, battered and hypothermic. The rafters said they were missing a member of their group and needed help. Their raft was stuck in the center of the river, held in place by a line caught on the river bottom. The kayakers cut the line to release the raft and helped the survivors reach safety. Other kayakers found Mr. Albin washed up on a rock some distance downstream.

Colorado's Green River in Dinosaur National Monument is a well-known Class III float trip. On June 23rd, with the river running a modest 1670 cfs, four men carried a small (nine-foot) paddle raft upstream to run the Birth Canal section of Triplet Falls. The raft hit a rock and flipped. Three of the paddlers swam ashore, but Ricky Zinter, 34, disappeared. He was spotted briefly below the drop; his life vest and a shoe were later recovered downstream. After a lengthy search the group called for help. A joint team from Moffat County's Sheriff's Office and Colorado Parks and Wildlife recovered his body five days later.

Two other rafting deaths involved inflatable kayaks. On June 15th Eugene Lamb, 37, died after his two-person Tahiti inflatable flipped on Oregon's Rogue River below Lost Creek Lake. Neither he nor his wife was wearing

a life vest and Mr. Lamb didn't know how to swim. Then on June 21st Jerry Young, a 63-year-old ski instructor, fell out of his IK during a high water run of the Fryingpan River through Basalt, CO. His partner had eddied out when he saw him floating by unconscious. Mr. Young was pulled ashore, but by then it was too late.

Four flush drownings occurred on commercial rafting trips. On May 22nd Michelle Math, 47, fell out of her guided raft at Hell's Corner Rapid on Colorado's Clear Creek. Although the 600 cfs flow was moderate, this particular section is relentless Class IV with few breaks in the action. The victim's raft-mates couldn't get her back in the boat, and when the raft hit a rock and stopped suddenly the water tore the swimmer away. According to a report from John Hopper, he and a friend were kayaking the river when they saw Ms. Math get flushed downstream. Her life vest had ridden up over her face, reducing support and restricting her movement.

The kayakers immediately gave chase. Although the friend was able to talk Ms. Math into grabbing one of his kayak grab loops she could not hold on to his boat. Mr. Hopper had positioned himself about 15 yards downstream, but by the time Ms. Math reached him, she was unconscious. He stayed with her through several more rapids and was finally able to push her ashore during a break in the action. It's clear that without help from these two paddlers she would have washed downstream for miles. Then guides from two rafting companies arrived. Together they lifted her out of the water and attempted CPR, but could not revive her.

On June 4th two men drowned after their rafts overturned at Funnel Falls in Westwater Canyon near Cisco, Utah. The river was running at 23,000 cfs, which is quite high. Charles McLynch, 50, was on a commercial trip; Adam Ericksen, 27, was rafting independently. The two rafts were running close together when they flipped and both men were unresponsive when

pulled aboard by other rafters.

## Low Head Dams

Dams were the scene of several fatalities this year, the first occurring on Big Creek near Gadsden, Alabama. Water levels were very high on April 25th when Dakota Brett Crandall, 25, washed over a four-foot high dam in his kayak and drowned. Rescue squads responded in flat-bottomed "John" boats. One boat got too close to the dam while searching for the body and was pulled into the hydraulic and flipped. A second boat went in to help the first one and also capsized. Rescuer Vicky Ryan, 46, drowned and several others were hospitalized.

June 21st saw a second multiple fatality on Little Beaver Creek near Leonia, Ohio. After the group had finished a river trip in their kayaks Garrett Vadino, 10, was washing the mud off his shoes at the lip of a low-head dam when he slipped and went over the drop. Carson Bonar, 14, jumped in to help, followed by the boy's father, Todd Vadino, 44. All three were caught in the backwash and perished. The moral of these stories: low-head dams are dangerous to both paddlers and rescuers, and under no circumstances should anyone jump into a dam backwash, even to assist someone else!

Lastly, 62 year-old Steven Hembree was killed on June 27th after his pontoon boat washed over a 50-foot high dam on Liganore Creek, a tributary of Maryland's Monocacy River. The lake was spilling after heavy rains and a deceptively strong current was headed for the spillway. The boat, containing eight girls celebrating a birthday party, fell 40 feet into a jagged rockpile. The passengers were clinging to rocks in a frightening cascade and had to be rescued by helicopter. This is a sobering reminder for all of us to respect spillways and intakes at large dams, even when the water looks calm.

## Trouble in Texas

After Texas saw considerable flooding following heavy rains, several casual

# SAFETY

kayakers blundered into unexpectedly dangerous situations. On May 23rd Joshua Reed, 29, and five others paddled into a restricted area just downstream of Eagle Mountain Dam on the Trinity River. A huge water release began without warning. Mr. Reed drowned; the others, which included a six-year-old girl, managed to get ashore. On June 24th two boys were paddling on flooded Village Creek near Arlington when John Cookson, 17, washed under a tree and drowned. Then, on June 27th, Edgar Castro was kayaking with a friend on the Trinity River when both boats capsized. The friend made it ashore, but Mr. Castro “did not resurface.” It sounds like he wasn’t wearing a life vest! It should be noted that area canoe liveries remained closed for much of this time due to high water.

## Heart Attacks

Three whitewater paddler deaths have been called heart attacks by local authorities, a cause that’s most likely underreported. The first occurred on June 14th when a 75-year-old man was stricken when he capsized on the Class II section of New York’s Hudson River below The Glen. A bystander on shore called for help, then swam out, pulled him ashore, and attempted CPR. On June 16th Jose Soto, 56, succumbed to a heart attack after his raft flipped in Durango, Colorado’s Animas Whitewater Park. Prompt attention by medics did not bring him back. Then, on July 2nd, Kenneth Worthington, 53, collapsed after dumping his boat after a swim on the “Greenbriar” section of Tennessee’s Middle Prong of the Little Pigeon. Friends attempted CPR, without success.

## Canoe

As kayaks have become more popular, canoeing accidents have declined, but not disappeared. On April 20th a canoe carrying three people flipped as they were trying to get past a downed tree on North Alabama’s Sipsey River. Lori Turner, 54, was trapped underwater. In a second accident, two young men died when their canoe capsized as they were attempting to cross Idaho’s Salmon River near French Creek.

Patrick Lusk, 27, and Jason Gritten, 35, were reported missing on May 17th. Their bodies were found several weeks later.

## Rope Entanglement

There were two fatal rope entanglements this year, the first being a February 13th death on California’s Redwood Creek. This run passes through a protected redwood forest. There’s some moderate whitewater here and one hard Class V drop, Rocky Gap, which is often carried. Jonathan Mellon, 33, was part of a group of three making the trip in a raft. At Rocky Gap they were lining their boat when Mr. Mellon became entangled in the rope and was pulled into the river. His friends were unable to free him in time. While ropes are often indispensable, their use is not without risk. That’s why most of us routinely carry river knives.

Interest in river surfing has grown in the past few years but some techniques are safer than others. On June 8th a 30-year-old from Park City, Utah drowned on the North Fork of the Flathead River while attempting to “river surf” on a surfboard tied to a snag. The man was climbing onto the surfboard when he got tangled in the rope. Afterwards, both he and the surfboard disappeared underwater. Witnesses cut him loose and attempted CPR, but were too late.

## On Shore

There were two “shore based” accidents worthy of note. On March 3rd Michael Davila, 20, climbed over the railing at the Ohiopyle Falls overlook on Pennsylvania’s Youghiogheny River to have his picture taken. The ground was icy and he fell into the river and washed over the 18-foot falls. The river was extremely high and he never resurfaced. Guides found his body a month later over eight miles downstream. On June 2nd Morgan Heimer, a commercial whitewater guide, disappeared from a riverside camp in the Grand Canyon of the Colorado River. He was last seen around 8 pm, wearing a PFD and carrying a water bottle. To date he hasn’t been found.

## Rescues

Thanks to the Internet I’ve become aware of many “rescues” of stranded paddlers by first responders. The “victims” are typically “stuck” on rocks, trees, or on the “wrong” side of the river. Although they don’t usually wear life vests or travel with a backup boat they do carry cell phones and aren’t shy about using them to summon help. Sometimes the rescues are truly serious, like a January 31st helicopter rescue of a kayaker from waist-deep water in the middle of the icy Potomac River near Harper’s Ferry, WV. Most are not life-threatening. Needless to say, they do not enhance the image of paddlers among rescue professionals!

Whitewater paddlers generally pride themselves on being self-reliant and prepared to take care of these routine problems themselves. We’re also ready to help people outside our groups when needed. One example: a June 9th incident when kayakers rescued a hypothermic rafter after a bad high-water swim at Dowd Chutes on Colorado’s Eagle River. They got the lady out of the water and summoned help. Many similar efforts are never publicized. If you’re involved in a rescue that’s a bit out of the ordinary, take time to write down what happened and send it to us. It’s always interesting, and it may be useful to AW in other ways.

American Whitewater needs your help collecting accident information so we can share the facts and learn from them. These accounts teach us how to avoid trouble and manage emergencies. We can modify techniques, procedures, and river gear based what we learn. To report a whitewater accident, near miss, or serious injury, please go to the Safety page on the American Whitewater site, click “report an accident,” and enter your information. You can forward links to newspaper articles, chat room posts, and first person accounts to the safety editor at [ccwalbridge@cs.com](mailto:ccwalbridge@cs.com). I’ll even help you prepare a first person report if needed. Thanks!

*Leave a lasting legacy to the  
special places that made  
a difference in your life.*



Become a member of the American Whitewater Enduring Rivers Circle, created exclusively to honor and recognize people who have helped to continue our river stewardship efforts through a gift to American Whitewater in their estate plans.

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# PARTNER SPOTLIGHT



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

**C**LIF BAR & Company is a leading maker of nutritious and organic foods and drinks for people on the go. We are foodies and athletes with a passion for making wholesome foods that are good for people and respectful of the planet.

Every other year, Clif Bar hosts an employee whitewater rafting trip down the American River as a fun outdoor activity for coworkers and their friends and families. "It's a perfect way to connect in the great outdoors and inspire people to protect the places we play." —Nikki Ferenz, Clif Bar

The company's vision has always been bigger than the bar. Guided by Five Aspirations, to sustain its people, brands, business, community, and the planet, Clif Bar is committed to helping build healthy, sustainable communities locally and globally. Dedicated to inspiring outdoor adventure and preserving the environment, Clif Bar is proud to support American Whitewater and its programs to conserve and restore America's whitewater resources.



# Join



# AMERICAN WHITEWATER Today!

American Whitewater has been extraordinarily fortunate in our ability to leverage a strong grassroots base—members and other volunteers—to assist our limited staff with many whitewater river conservation and restoration efforts.

Over the years, American Whitewater volunteers have participated in numerous hydropower meetings as well as instream and recreational flow studies; filed comments and assisted with an uncountable number of filings; appeared as expert witnesses; lobbied; worked to fight new dams, remove existing dams, deny licenses, and improve public access to rivers and streams. In nearly every river stewardship issue AW has been involved with, the outcome has been favorable to paddlers. Not only has AW secured favorable decisions for the paddling community, but we are the only national organization representing paddlers as these decisions are being made.

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

Membership support is what will determine our ability to continue our river stewardship work in the years to come. Individual Annual Memberships are only \$35. If you are a member of your local paddling club and your club is an Affiliate Club member of AW, join as a Club Affiliate Individual for \$25. This is less than a tank of gas or an inexpensive night out. This is certainly not too much to pay to have a national organization representing your paddling interests all across the country.

Join on-line today at <http://americanwhitewater.org/content/Membership/join-AW/>, call 1-866-BOAT4AW (866-262-8429), or fill out the form on the back of this page and mail it to:

Membership  
P.O. Box 1540  
Cullowhee, NC 28723



\*Note: AW will never share your information with others

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Member Number: \_\_\_\_\_

↑ \_\_\_\_\_ if you have one and know it

### Membership Level

\$35 Standard

\$25 Member of Affiliate Club

Club: \_\_\_\_\_

\$25 Student

School: \_\_\_\_\_

\$50 Family

\$75 Affiliate Club

\$100 Ender Club (Shirt Size: \_\_\_\_\_)

\$250 Platinum Paddler

\$500 Explorer

\$750 Lifetime

\$1,000 Legacy

\$2,500 Steward

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

### Donation

Donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### Additional Subscriptions

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

### Journal Options

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

### Auto-Renew (No Renewal Notices!)

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

### Payment

Credit Card     Cash     Check # \_\_\_\_\_

Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name on card: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

# NEWS & NOTES

## 2015 NATIONAL PADDLING FILM FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS AND RECAP

BY BETHANY OVERFIELD

**D**ESPITE DEALING WITH several inches of snow, a layer of ice, and some significant hangovers from the pre-party, dedicated attendees still flocked to the Buffalo Trace Distillery in Frankfort, KY in droves for the 2015 National Paddling Film Festival on February 20th and 21st. This film festival, the only grassroots festival of its kind, was started in 1983 by members of the Bluegrass Wildwater Association and has grown larger and more successful through the years. The best in paddlesport videos and still images are highlighted at the festival each year, with submissions entered from all over the world. The festival has also proven to be a tremendous fundraising resource for American Whitewater and other organizations dedicated to river access and conservation.

The main Friday night highlight was a presentation given by Knoxvilleian Kirk Eddlemon. Kirk recently published the guidebook *Whitewater of the Southern Appalachians*, and his presentation, "The Importance of Sharing our Stories," kept the audience entertained and uplifted about our favorite pastime. Another highlight on Friday night included longtime BWA member and NPFF Godfather, Don Spangler, being awarded the William Nealy award.

Ben Marr handled beautifully the pressure of being the official 2015 NPFF guest host, despite losing his pants, his hotel room, and his hard drive on Friday night. Marr rallied to give us a superb talk on Saturday night as he focused on some of his new footage and regaled us with tales of his kayaking exploits and adventures.



2015 NPFF Guest Host Ben Marr.

### The 2015 NPFF winners list: **Best Accomplished General Boating**

#### **Best Professional Documentary (tie)**

1. The Coast by **Skip Armstrong**
2. The Chelan Gorge - 2014 by **Daniel Patrinellis**

#### **Best Professional Safety/ Instruction (tie)**

1. Top 10 Tips for Canoeing & Kayaking Safely by **American Canoe Association**
2. Top 10 Tips for Stand Up Paddleboarding Safely by **American Canoe Association**

#### **Best Professional General Boating**

DamNation by **Ben Knight and Travis Rummel**

#### **Best Accomplished Documentary**

Paddler's Pilgrimage by **James Roberts**

Secesh/South Fork Salmon Idaho by **Shawn Lono**

#### **Best Amateur General Boating**

Wildcat Creek by **Bradley E. Huie**

#### **Best Amateur Documentary**

Paillalco: The Story of the Puesco River Valley by **Kalob Grady**

#### **Best Still Image**

Colorado Boof by **Samantha Ruppelt**

#### **William Nealy Award**

**Don Spangler**



William Nealy Award recipient Don Spangler.

The National Paddling Film Festival would like to thank all of its donors/sponsors, filmmakers, judges, volunteers, and attendees for a tremendous festival. New NPFF director John Mello did a fantastic job wrangling all of the volunteers to pull off another top notch event. A total of \$11,300 was donated to organizations focusing on river conservation and access:

\$8,500 to American Whitewater

\$1,000 to Ecuadorian Rivers Institute

\$900 to American Whitewater Elkhorn Acres

\$500 to Juanito de Ugarte Scholarship Fund

\$200 to Town Branch Trail

\$200 Jess Albright Scholarship Fund

If you missed the festival and are interested in hosting a road show, check out information online and give us a shout out: [www.npff.org](http://www.npff.org).

Keep those cameras rolling throughout the next year and start thinking about submissions for the 2016 NPFF!



*Festival attendees Emily Grimes (l) and Bethany Overfield (middle) hang out with guest host Ben Marr.*

### It's Easy to Support AW!

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

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

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

# AFFILIATE CLUBS

## AW'S ORIGINAL PURPOSE

BY CARLA MINER

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

The AW Journal Club Affiliates by state:

### Alaska

Fairbanks Paddlers, Fairbanks  
Nova River Runners Inc., Chickaloon

### Alabama

Coosa River Paddling Club, Montgomery  
Huntsville Canoe Club, Huntsville

### Arizona

Outdoors Unlimited, Flagstaff

### Arkansas

Arkansas Canoe Club, Little Rock

### California

Chico Paddleheads, Chico  
Gold Country Paddlers, Lotus  
IRIE Rafting Co, Truckee  
Sierra Club Loma Prieta Paddlers, San Jose

### Colorado

Colorado Whitewater Assn, Denver  
Dolores River Boating Advocates, Dolores  
Friends of the Yampa, Steamboat Springs  
Pikes Peak Whitewater Club, Colorado Springs  
San Miguel Whitewater Assn, Telluride  
Upper Colorado Private Boaters Assn, Glenwood Springs

### Delaware

AMC Delaware Valley Chapter, Oaks  
Wilmington Trail Club, Newark

### Georgia

Georgia Canoeing Assn, Atlanta  
Paddlers4Christ, Ellijay

### Idaho

Backwoods Mountain Sports, Ketchum

### Illinois

Chicago Whitewater Assn, Chicago

### Indiana

Hoosier Canoe Club, Brownsburg  
Ohio Valley Paddlers, Evansville

### Iowa

Iowa Whitewater Coalition, W. Des Moines

### Kentucky

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

### Maine

Penobscot Paddle & Chowder Society, Troy

### Maryland

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

### Massachusetts

AMC Boston Chapter, Boston  
Zoar Outdoor, Charlemont

### Michigan

SVenture 8 / Troop 8, East Lansing

### Minnesota

SCSU Outdoor Endeavors, Saint Cloud

### Missouri

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

### Montana

Beartooth Paddlers Society, Billings

### Nevada

Sierra Nevada Whitewater Club, Reno

### New Hampshire

AMC New Hampshire Paddlers, Raymond

### New Jersey

AMC Delaware Valley Chapter, Oaks  
KCCNY, Flanders

### New Mexico

Adobe Whitewater Club of New Mexico,  
Albuquerque

### New York

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

### North Carolina

Base Camp Cullowhee, Cullowhee  
Carolina Canoe Club, Raleigh  
Landmark Learning, Cullowhee  
Mecklenburg Regional Paddlers, Charlotte  
Western Carolina Paddlers, Asheville

### Ohio

Columbus Outdoor Pursuits, Columbus  
Friends of the Crooked River, Akron  
Keelhauler Canoe Club, Cleveland

### Oregon

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

### Pennsylvania

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

### South Carolina

Foothills Paddling Club, Greenville  
Palmetto Paddlers, Columbia

### Tennessee

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

### Utah

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

### Vermont

Vermont Paddlers Club, Montpelier

### Virginia

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

### Washington

BEWET- Boeing Employees Whitewater &  
Touring Club, Bellevue  
Northwest Whitewater Association, Spokane  
Paddle Trails Canoe Club, Seattle  
Spokane Canoe & Kayak Club, Spokane  
University Kayak Club, Seattle  
Washington Kayak Club, Seattle  
Washington Recreational River Runners, Renton

### West Virginia

Dbl Z! Whitewater Club, Fayetteville  
Mason Dixon Canoe Cruisers, Berkeley Springs  
WV Wildwater Assn, S. Charleston  
WVU Whitewater Club, Morgantown

### Wisconsin

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

**Wyoming**

American Packrafting Association, Wilson

**British Columbia**

Thompson Rivers Univ Adventure Studies,  
Kamloops

**Ontario**

Kawartha Whitewater Paddlers, The Kawarthas

**Quebec**

Club de Canoë-Kayak d'Eau Vive de Montréal

## DISCOUNTED AW MEMBERSHIP FOR AFFILIATE CLUB MEMBERS

*By Carla Miner, Membership Manager*

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

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

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

## JOIN AMERICAN WHITEWATER AS A CLUB AFFILIATE!

### 10 REASONS TO JOIN AW AS AN AFFILIATE CLUB

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

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



# AMERICAN WHITEWATER

Saving Rivers Since 1954

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

**\$35** Cheaper than anything in your gear bag, twice as important.  
[americanwhitewater.org/join](http://americanwhitewater.org/join)

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

# AMERICAN WHITewater

## Contribute your text and photos to *American Whitewater*

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

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

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

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