



AMERICAN WHITEWATER

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BY BOATERS FOR BOATERS
Sep/Oct 2020

HISTORIC GREAT AMERICAN OUTDOORS ACT SIGNED INTO LAW

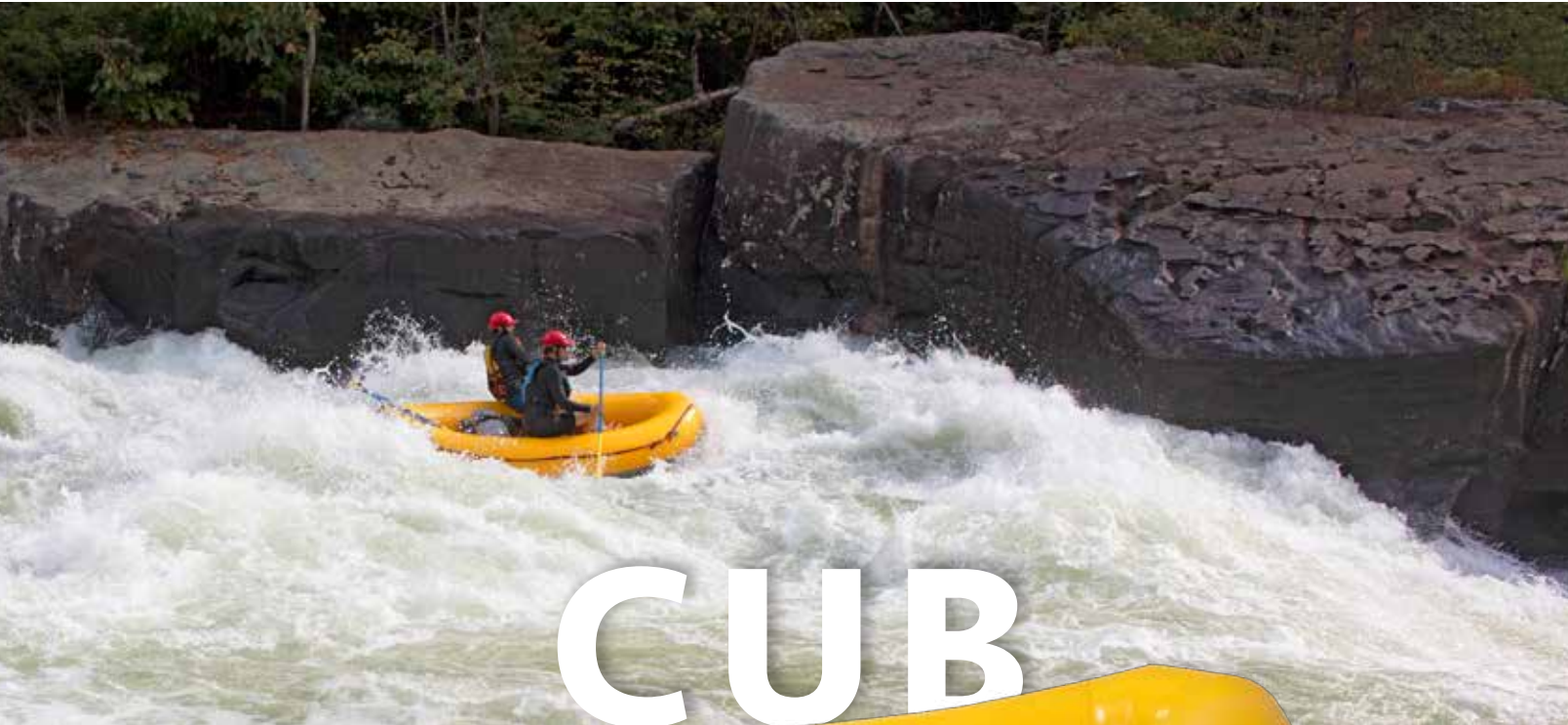


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AMERICAN WHITEWATER

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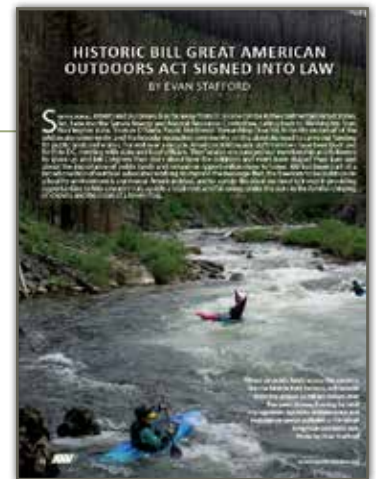
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It's official The Great American Outdoors Act was signed into law August 4, 2020. Your voices made this a reality. We, the people, the paddlers, and the public lands and rivers stewards demanded action on funding for rivers and the outdoors – and we got it. American Whitewater will be working hard to make sure the fully funded Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and public land management agencies have projects identified that support improved whitewater recreation opportunities. The White Salmon River (WA) has benefited from LWCF program funds with the securing of public access at BZ Corners.

Photo by Leif Anderson

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PURPOSE

RIVER STEWARDSHIP: AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

EDITORIAL DISCLAIMER

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

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THE JOURNEY AHEAD

THIS HAS BEEN a summer like no other in memory; the impacts of COVID-19 are real. Here at American Whitewater, we've had to make some hard adjustments. In an effort to keep you, our staff, volunteers, and the communities that host our events as safe as possible, we made the incredibly difficult decision to cancel the in-person nature of our events and move to an online virtual format. We did this starting with our Deerfield River Festival (MA) back in June with positive feedback from the paddling community. As you read this we will have just wrapped up Gore Fest (CO) and Gauley Fest (WV) will be just around the corner, followed by Feather Fest (CA).

These events highlight our past stewardship success stories and provide a venue to share information on upcoming issues that impact the paddling community. Our virtual event format will not replace the opportunity to gather at the river and exchange stories, but they will provide a connection to the stewardship work of American Whitewater that continues today despite a global pandemic. Our virtual Gauley and Feather Festivals will focus on maintaining and building membership. Be aware that there will be some great paddling product giveaways from our industry partners for those who participate in our virtual events. Hold the dates in your calendars (these have been scheduled in the evenings mid-week so they will not limit your ability to paddle come the weekend).

Virtual Gauley Fest – September 23 @ 7:30pm eastern time

Virtual Feather Fest – October 7 @ 7:00pm pacific time

Scheduled releases on the Gauley and Feather Rivers will continue in the fall (check with the land management agencies for any last-minute changes in their operations).

Since the spread of the COVID-19, American Whitewater has tried to respond in proactive ways by sharing early public

health guidance and guidelines for paddling in a pandemic. Currently we are in negotiations with utilities to reschedule releases that were canceled in the spring due to the pandemic. What was reinforced through the summer is that Americans value their access to natural rivers. We saw a dramatic increase in front-country river use as many Americans looked to reconnect with the natural world and seek out individual outdoor recreation opportunities like paddling, hiking, and riding bikes. This provides great hope for the future, that we, as one country, can join together to provide protections for special natural resources.

As turbulent as the current COVID-19 crisis is, there is still much to be grateful for—the outdoors, rivers, community, and family all provide a sense of security in uncertain times. This crisis has bought into sharp focus how important close-to-home access to rivers is. Moving forward, we know that access to rivers will play an important role in the economic recovery of our country and help heal and connect us with our environment and local communities. The team at American Whitewater is working hard to drive home this vision.

The passage of the Great American Outdoors Act this summer is an example of this effort. Our voices as—paddlers, river stewards, the public—made it possible. The Great American Outdoors Act included full funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). The program is based on the simple concept of using revenues from the depletion of one natural resource—offshore oil and gas—to support the conservation of another precious resource—our land and water. Every year, \$900 million in royalties paid by energy companies drilling for oil and gas on the Outer Continental Shelf are put into this fund. Unfortunately, the existence of this program has not guaranteed that the \$900 million put into the account every year will be spent on conservation and recreation. Over the 55 years of the program, billions of dollars have been siphoned from the fund

for other non-conservation purposes. In fact, this past fiscal year 2020, only \$495 million was appropriated for LWCF, far short of full funding, yet still the largest amount in 15 years.

American Whitewater staff is working with public land management agencies to prioritize LWCF projects that support improved whitewater recreation opportunities, like new river access areas, acquisition of key land, and protecting viewsheds in river corridors. Some examples of past projects that utilized this program are; Skagit (WA), Green (WA), White Salmon (WA), Salmon (ID), Sandy (OR), Gauley (WV), Rio Grande (NM), Green (UT), Arkansas (CO), Youghigheny (PA), Winnepesaukee (NH), and many others.

Our work isn't done here though. We'll need your help holding managers and elected officials' feet to the fire to make sure these, and other funds, go to projects that support access to clean, healthy rivers. Acquisition and improvements of the Mason's Branch and Woods Ferry access areas on the Gauley River are a prime example of how LWCF funding can work for paddlers.

Please join us for our virtual Gauley and Feather Festivals to celebrate the importance of whitewater rivers and the many connections they make possible.

See you on the river,



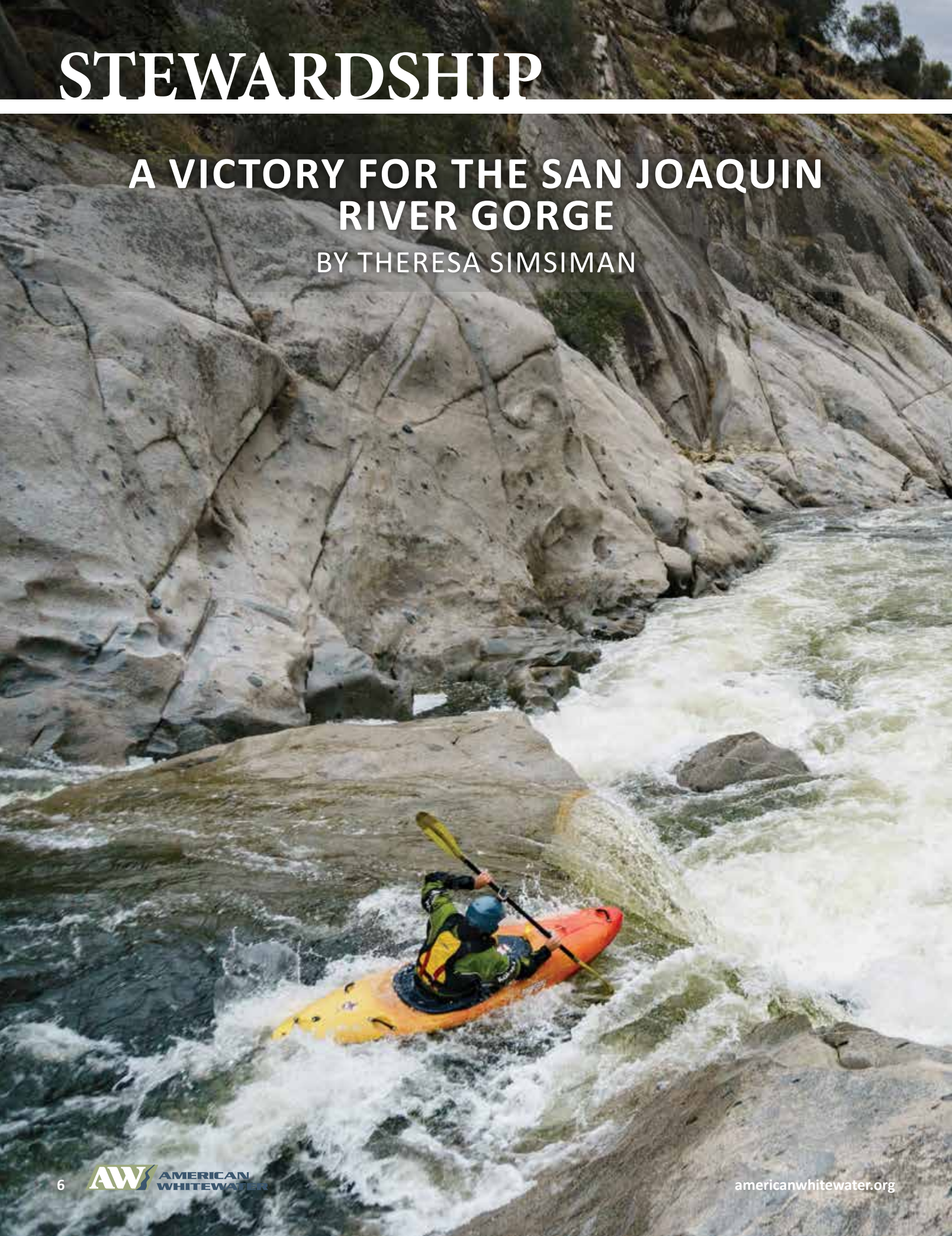
Mark Singleton
Executive Director

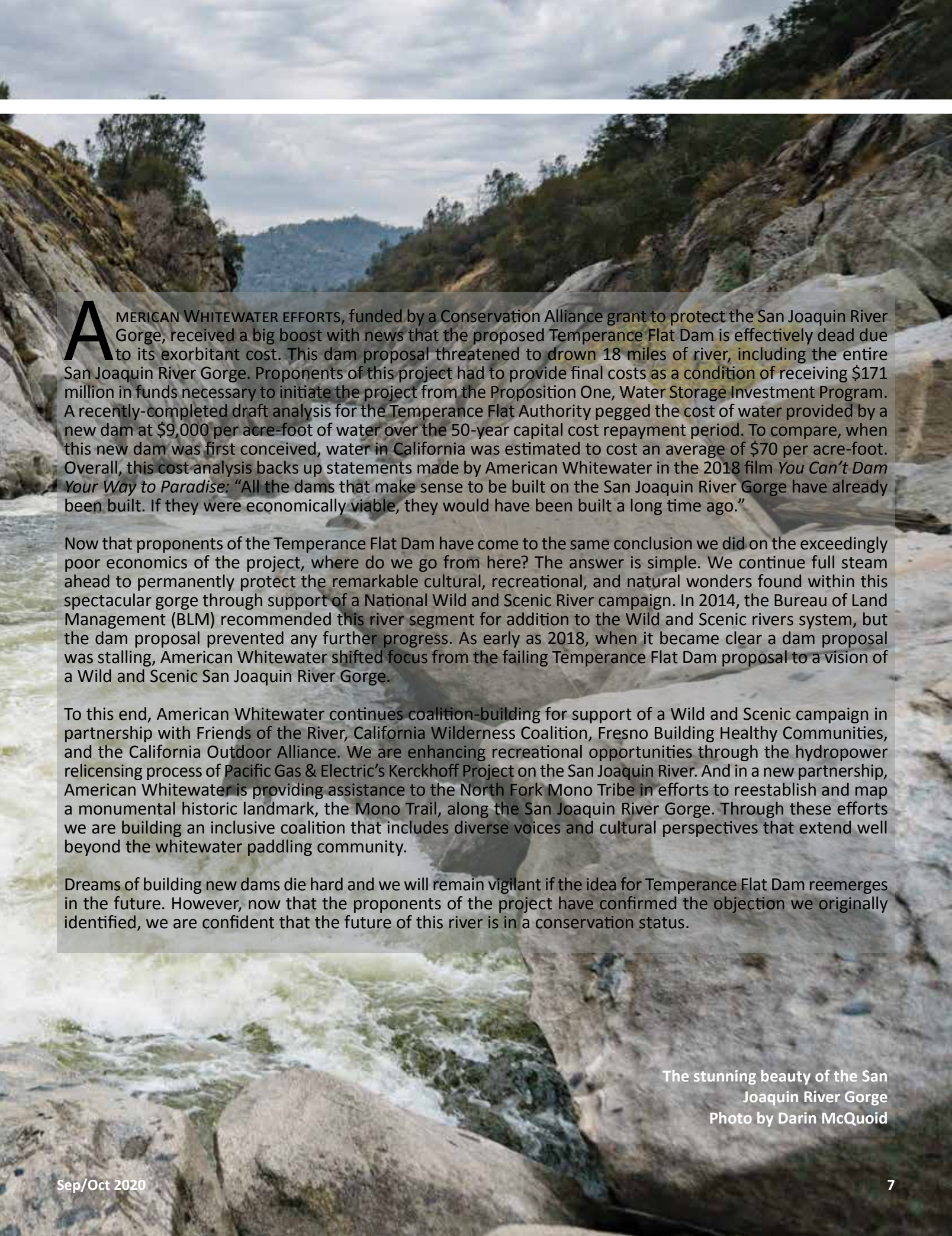
P.S. The true unsung heroes of all our festivals are the hundreds of volunteers who have made events possible over the years. Thanks to them, we've been able to celebrate these remarkable rivers and look forward to doing so again in 2021.

STEWARDSHIP

A VICTORY FOR THE SAN JOAQUIN RIVER GORGE

BY THERESA SIMSIMAN





AMERICAN WHITEWATER EFFORTS, funded by a Conservation Alliance grant to protect the San Joaquin River Gorge, received a big boost with news that the proposed Temperance Flat Dam is effectively dead due to its exorbitant cost. This dam proposal threatened to drown 18 miles of river, including the entire San Joaquin River Gorge. Proponents of this project had to provide final costs as a condition of receiving \$171 million in funds necessary to initiate the project from the Proposition One, Water Storage Investment Program. A recently-completed draft analysis for the Temperance Flat Authority pegged the cost of water provided by a new dam at \$9,000 per acre-foot of water over the 50-year capital cost repayment period. To compare, when this new dam was first conceived, water in California was estimated to cost an average of \$70 per acre-foot. Overall, this cost analysis backs up statements made by American Whitewater in the 2018 film *You Can't Dam Your Way to Paradise*: "All the dams that make sense to be built on the San Joaquin River Gorge have already been built. If they were economically viable, they would have been built a long time ago."

Now that proponents of the Temperance Flat Dam have come to the same conclusion we did on the exceedingly poor economics of the project, where do we go from here? The answer is simple. We continue full steam ahead to permanently protect the remarkable cultural, recreational, and natural wonders found within this spectacular gorge through support of a National Wild and Scenic River campaign. In 2014, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) recommended this river segment for addition to the Wild and Scenic rivers system, but the dam proposal prevented any further progress. As early as 2018, when it became clear a dam proposal was stalling, American Whitewater shifted focus from the failing Temperance Flat Dam proposal to a vision of a Wild and Scenic San Joaquin River Gorge.

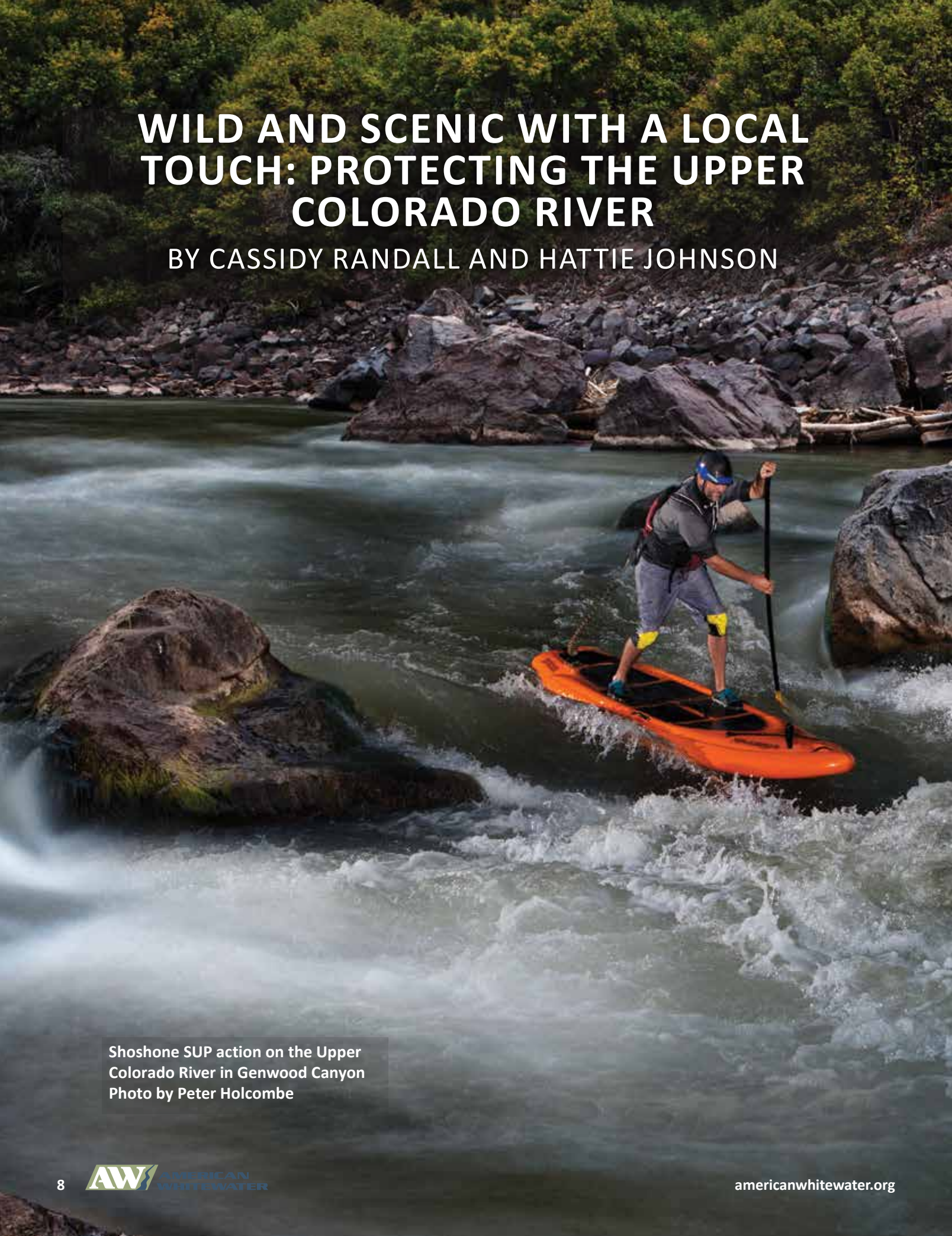
To this end, American Whitewater continues coalition-building for support of a Wild and Scenic campaign in partnership with Friends of the River, California Wilderness Coalition, Fresno Building Healthy Communities, and the California Outdoor Alliance. We are enhancing recreational opportunities through the hydropower relicensing process of Pacific Gas & Electric's Kerckhoff Project on the San Joaquin River. And in a new partnership, American Whitewater is providing assistance to the North Fork Mono Tribe in efforts to reestablish and map a monumental historic landmark, the Mono Trail, along the San Joaquin River Gorge. Through these efforts we are building an inclusive coalition that includes diverse voices and cultural perspectives that extend well beyond the whitewater paddling community.

Dreams of building new dams die hard and we will remain vigilant if the idea for Temperance Flat Dam reemerges in the future. However, now that the proponents of the project have confirmed the objection we originally identified, we are confident that the future of this river is in a conservation status.


The stunning beauty of the San
Joaquin River Gorge
Photo by Darin McQuoid

WILD AND SCENIC WITH A LOCAL TOUCH: PROTECTING THE UPPER COLORADO RIVER

BY CASSIDY RANDALL AND HATTIE JOHNSON



Shoshone SUP action on the Upper Colorado River in Genwood Canyon
Photo by Peter Holcombe



AFTER 12 YEARS of hard work, the Upper Colorado River Wild and Scenic Alternative Management Plan was finalized and formally accepted by the BLM and USFS to protect and enhance the flow-related values—like recreational boating—of the Upper Colorado River.

The first meeting of the Upper Colorado River Wild and Scenic Stakeholders Group, composed of a dozen representatives of water utilities, city governments, and federal agencies like the Bureau of Land Management and United States Forest Service, convened in 2008. Among these traditional water interests, whitewater boaters didn't have the best reputation; they were viewed as dirty paddlers looking for the biggest Class V to hurl themselves down, real-life concerns like fish habitat, agriculture, and city drinking needs be damned. Just release the flow, and they're happy. The only other nonprofit at the table at that time was The Nature Conservancy, which didn't exactly consider itself an ally to the "hedonistic" paddling community. Nathan Fey, AW's newly hired Colorado River Stewardship Director, knew all this as he sat down at that inaugural meeting—he'd grown up in this state, and he understood how people thought. But he planned to change their minds.

The issue under discussion around that table was how to manage the Upper Colorado like a Wild and Scenic River (WSR), but without the actual WSR designation. The year before, the Bureau of Land Management and US Forest Service had released a report that identified nearly 55 miles of the Upper Colorado—from the top of Gore Canyon down nearly to Glenwood Springs—as eligible for federal Wild and Scenic designation. But the state's water issues are nuanced, with water from the Upper Colorado allocated to both sides of the divide and for multiple uses; a WSR designation could preclude future development of the water and wouldn't ensure collaborative and cooperative management.

STEWARDSHIP

The federal agencies agreed to defer their plans for pursuing the designation and rely on the new Stakeholder Group to develop a plan to cooperatively manage the river to protect and enhance the outstandingly remarkable values (ORVs) the report identified (which included this stretch's spectacular boating opportunities), while meeting the state's existing and future water needs for consumptive uses like agriculture and drinking water.

To identify the range of flows that support boating on the Upper Colorado, AW was going to need more than just anecdotes and paddling terms. Fey needed to bring

studies with metrics, numbers, and data that spoke the same language as the water policy experts in the Stakeholder Group.

Along with Evan Stafford, now AW's Communications Director, Fey created an online survey and sent it to frequent boaters of the Upper Colorado through forums like Boater Talk and Mountain Buzz, and lists of past and present AW members; kayakers, rafters, inflatable kayakers, all kinds of boaters who knew the river well. The survey asked them: what's the lowest minimum flow for a good experience? What's the highest? What's optimal?

Stafford then took that range of acceptable flow rates for boating and overlaid it with the historical record on the river gauge, determining year types from dry to wettest, to output a hydrograph that counts the number of days for a range of acceptable flows.

But getting this "boatable days" analysis accepted as a legitimate tool for river management remained an uphill battle over the course of several years. AW had the science, but it was a fairly new concept at the time that turned traditionally accepted water use in Colorado on its head.



The conservation stakeholders at the table came around first. Generally, rivers managed for fixed flow have tanked ecosystems to show for it; in contrast, natural riparian areas experience a range of flows that contribute to sediment transfer, healthy riverbanks, and habitat for fish and other wildlife. In managing a range of flows for boatable days, it was possible to marry ecological benefits to the metric as well.

Prior to his leaving AW, the Upper Colorado Stakeholder Group, now nearly 90 people strong, voted Fey in as its chair. “We went from being the dirty boaters that always

want to paddle Class V to leading the group forward,” he says. “We gained a reputation for bringing good science and good policy decisions to the conversation, using metrics to inform discussions around trade-offs. In the end, it’s not just about having a seat at the table. It’s the kind of seat you occupy.”

Conversations progressed, and boatable days was finally accepted into the Upper Colorado Alternative Management Plan toolbox as a guide for protecting recreational outstandingly remarkable values in June 2020, when the plan was formally accepted by the federal agencies.

The Stakeholder Group will continue to convene to ensure the metrics established are met and, most importantly, to discuss ways the group can collaborate to keep the river wild and scenic. Because of the collaboration and trust built among the diverse stakeholders, the plan provides avenues and tools for protection and enhancement of the Upper Colorado outside the scope of a federal Wild and Scenic designation.



Fluffy levels on the Shoshone section of the Upper Colorado during spring runoff
Photo by Peter Holcombe

AW CHALLENGES NEW EPA RULE WEAKENING STATES' ABILITY TO PROTECT RIVERS

BY ROBERT NASDOR

AERICAN WHITEWATER, ALONG with several other river conservation partners, has filed litigation challenging new Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rules that would limit the ability of states to protect water quality at federally-licensed hydropower and other energy projects. The new rule effectively sidelines the role the states and the public have long played in permitting decisions affecting clean water, undercutting the central role of the states in protecting rivers under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act.

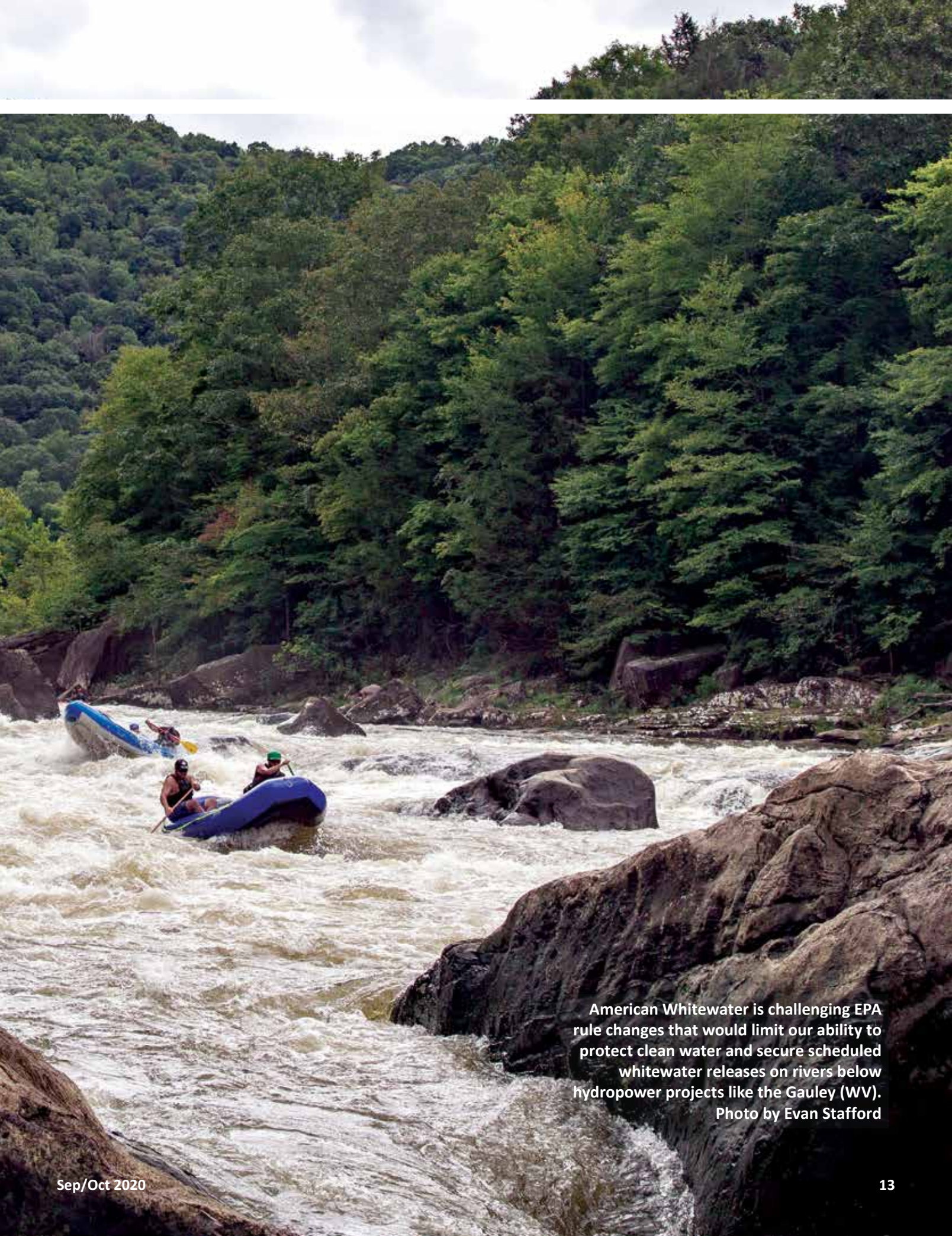
"These new regulations are a brazen attack on the Clean Water Act with the goal of undermining the public's ability to protect our rivers from harmful impacts of federally-licensed energy projects on the environment and outdoor recreation," said Bob Nasdor, American Whitewater legal director. "Rather than protecting and restoring our rivers, these rules will weaken water quality by limiting the information, time for review, and ability of the states to require that projects meet state standards."

The new rule guts the Clean Water Act's Section 401 provisions, which for nearly 50 years have provided for states' and authorized Tribes' self-determination in permitting for a wide array of projects requiring federal approval within their borders. The rule also suppresses state and Tribal public participation processes that moor U.S. water policy in the harbor of democracy.

"With this rule change, the Administration has given corporations the green light to run roughshod over local communities, and has proven it is more interested in corporate rights than states' rights," wrote Andrew Hawley, lead attorney with Western Environmental Law Center, who filed the litigation on behalf of American Whitewater, American Rivers, Idaho Rivers United, and California Trout.

This rule change is separate from rollbacks to the Waters of the US Rule (WOTUS), which eliminates protections for many waterbodies throughout the country, but represents an equally dangerous threat to clean water and public health nationwide. Section 401 applies broadly to any proposed federally licensed or permitted activity that may result in a discharge into any waterway that is covered under the law. Projects that may be approved against states' and Tribes' wishes include pipelines, hydropower, industrial plants, municipal facilities, and wetland development.

For more information on American Whitewater's litigation challenging new EPA regulations that weaken the Clean Water Act, contact Bob Nasdor, bob@americanwhitewater.org



American Whitewater is challenging EPA rule changes that would limit our ability to protect clean water and secure scheduled whitewater releases on rivers below hydropower projects like the Gauley (WV).
Photo by Evan Stafford

IN DOGGED PURSUIT OF A GREAT FOREST PLAN FOR WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA

BY KEVIN COLBURN

The Thompson River (NC) is among nine new rivers and creeks set to become eligible for Wild and Scenic designation under the new Nantahala-Pisgah National Forest Plan.
Photo by Taft Sibley

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LOOKED AROUND THE room and recognized none of the 25 faces at “the table.” The woman I was sitting next to was pregnant, and I introduced myself with the mix of tribal enthusiasm and tired trepidation that new parents and parents-to-be share. We were there to create a vision for the new management plan for the Nantahala-Pisgah National Forest and then to get the Forest Service to adopt it. Two years, tops, and we’d be celebrating a new plan and moving on. But it wasn’t two years. Our kids are reading chapter books now, and we only recently got to read the Draft Forest Plan, with the final plan expected in a year or so. It’s been a seven-year collaboration odyssey, but one that is richly informing the future of the Southeast’s wildest rivers and forests.

The Nantahala-Pisgah National Forest spans 1.1 million disjunct acres across Western North Carolina. Ever heard of the Nantahala, Nolichucky, Cheoah, or French Broad rivers? They’re all part of the Nantahala-Pisgah. If it were a National Park it would be the third most visited one. Tourists flock to the Forest’s waterfalls and nearby breweries, and lots of us that live here avidly paddle, mountain-bike, and climb in the remote hidden folds of these lush mountains. It rains over 100 inches annually in the mountains, the rivers are old and varied in geology, and it’s warm. That makes for some seriously vivid jungle-like conditions and some of the finest creek boating anywhere. Not surprisingly the area is a hotbed for whitewater paddling history, innovation, instruction, gear-building, and guiding.

Back in that meeting, and the seven years of meetings that followed, the value of these rivers and forests stayed in the forefront of my mind. In the early getting-to-know-you phase of forming the Nantahala Pisgah Forest Partnership, or the Partnership for short, we each gave short presentations to the group about our interests and dreams for the new management plan. Mine, on behalf of American Whitewater,

laid out a few goals. I wanted to protect a bunch of streams as eligible for Wild and Scenic designation, to ease the remaining Upper Chattooga paddling prohibitions, to have recreation and its economic benefits supported in the plan, and to ensure that water quality, scenery, and biodiversity were protected. Others wanted more timber harvest, more trails, more wilderness—we all basically wanted more of whatever facet of the Forest we liked best.

We chased the Draft Plan like greyhounds at the track chasing the mechanical rabbit—with it always running just out of reach. All the while, the Forest Service attended meetings, and we swapped knowledge and ideas with them. We did some really cool stuff along the way. A few of us helped democratize the use of maps by getting all interests mapped and shared on a web-application that anyone could use. Using this tool, we figured out that our group already agreed on how 83% of the National Forest should be managed in terms of allowing more active management like logging to create younger forest, or opting for more passive management like Wilderness designation to foster older forest. Both kinds of management can, if done right, restore natural biodiversity. What we thought was an intractable conflict across the landscape shrank to 17% of the Forest when we mapped it. This was a game-changing finding in our path to agreement. I pitched a Wild and Scenic River eligibility proposal several times and was surprised to get consistent support from every group. They voted to endorse my proposal while I was on vacation—a testament to the value of collaboration if there ever was one. In 2017 the Partnership submitted collaborative comments to the Forest Service and the agency set to work writing the Draft Forest Plan.

The Draft Plan dropped this year, 2020, and contained a lot of the ideas that the Partnership cooked up. It contains tiered objectives, basically stretch goals that lay

out what the Forest Service would like to do if they suddenly got more resources than those described in their meager budget—like extra volunteer help, or a windfall of the magnitude of the Great American Outdoors Act. The Draft Plan had all win-win alternatives that deflated polarization by pitching different approaches to meeting key interests rather than alternatives that created winners and losers on key issues like timber harvest and Wilderness. The Draft Plan doubled the number of eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers, based in part on many presentations, agreements, and data led by American Whitewater. There were a lot of good things in the draft plan for a lot of interests, but also some unnecessary constraints on outdoor recreation.

The Partnership got to work writing comments on the Draft Plan this spring, and I was on too many committees to count: recreation, designated areas, comment drafting, leadership team, etc. Our comments topped 100 pages, and pulled zero punches. We celebrated the many good parts of the Plan and excellent work by the agency, and called out some needs for change, especially around recreation. The Draft Plan proposed some recreation rules that were draconian and would have likely led to limits or bans on adventurous recreation in some areas. We proposed improved solutions for management of climbing, biking, horseback riding, and paddling that would protect the environment while supporting sustainable enjoyment.

Remember the Upper Chattooga? Paddling was banned on this 21-mile section of Wild and Scenic river in 1976 for unknown reasons. American Whitewater asked the Forest Service to lift that ban in 1995 and finally, after federal court and a drawn-out conflict, the Forest Service eased those restrictions in 2012 and started monitoring use. About half of the Upper Chattooga flows through the Nantahala-Pisgah National Forest, and the bans live in the Forest Plan. So naturally we assumed

STEWARDSHIP

the Forest would reconsider the bans in the 2020 Plan based on eight years of monitoring data—except they refused to and would not say why. The monitoring has shown that fewer than 1 in 1,000 visitors to the river are there to paddle, and that paddlers are there at high water when other users are not. Paddling numbers are more than 95% lower than expected. There were no conflicts or issues between user groups. Paddling use totals a whopping average of 12 groups per year spread across two sections. Removing the limits would at most double that very small number to another very small number.

So what did the Partnership’s fishing groups, logging companies, environmental groups, and others do when the Draft Plan ignored paddlers’ interest in improved management of the Upper Chattooga? They backed us—unanimously. The Partnership comments on the Draft Plan asked the Forest Service to remove the seasonal and flow limits, and generally reconsider the need for other limits on paddling. The Partnership also asked for reconsideration of a few really important and special streams for Wild and Scenic eligibility, namely the North Fork French Broad, the Upper Tuck streams in Panthertown Valley, and the forks of

Overflow Creek. And the Partnership voted to immediately support congressional Wild and Scenic designation for the Nolichucky River, and future designation of other rivers. And we asked for many other improvements to the Draft Plan for all interests—together. Turns out these seven years of collaboration built trust, empathy, friendships, and understanding. By working together on this Plan, we also built a solid team that is primed to work together on the management of the Forest for many years to come.

CURRENT AND NEWLY ELIGIBLE STREAMS

We’d like to thank the Outdoor Alliance, the Community Foundation of Western North Carolina, Darby Communications, and the Conservation Alliance for supporting American Whitewater’s role in the Nantahala Pisgah Forest Partnership. Thanks also to all of our members who wrote comments and attended meetings during the planning process, and all of the dedicated members of the Partnership.

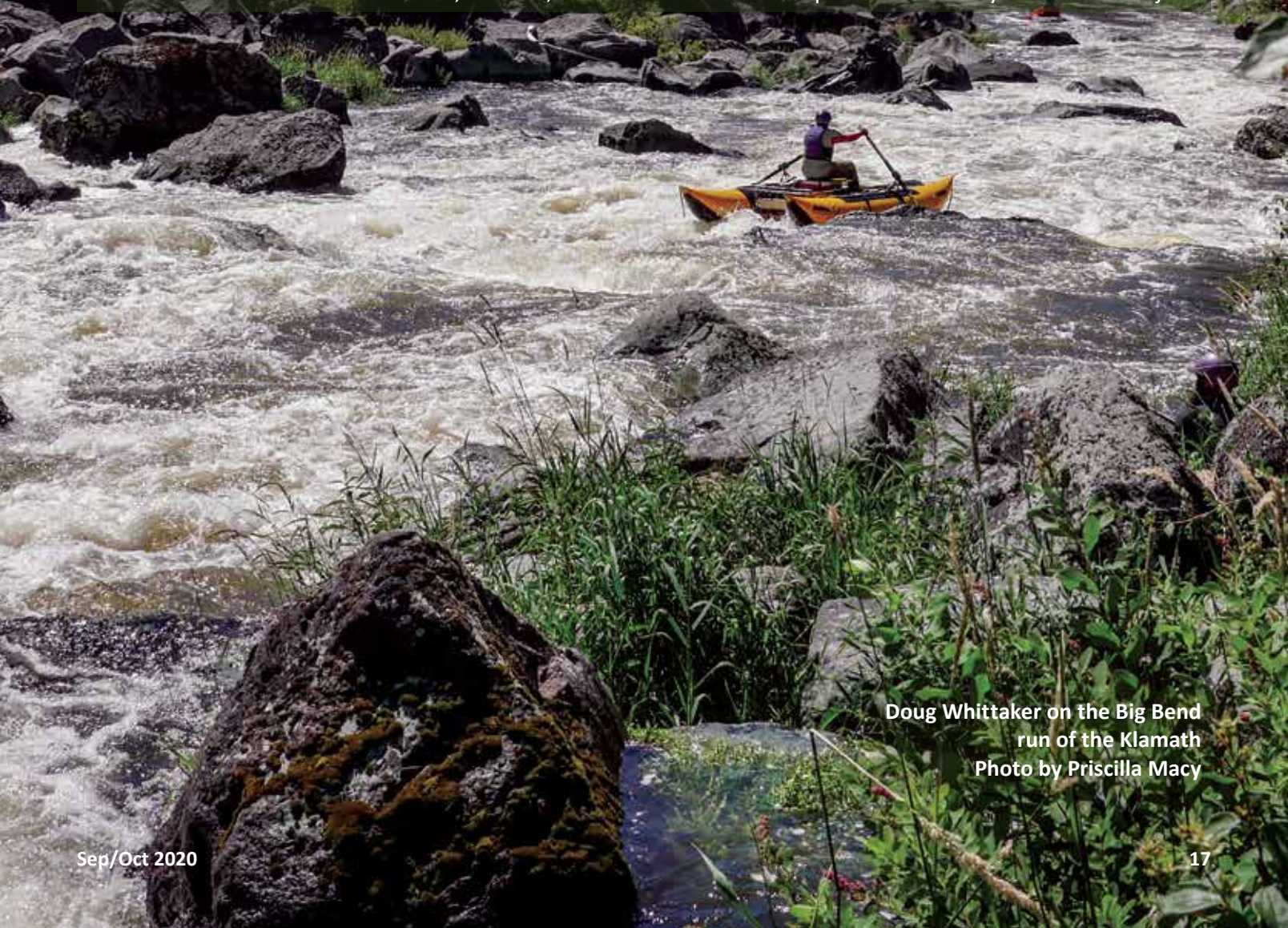
| Pre-existing Eligible Streams | New Eligible Streams Secured in Draft Plan | Priority Requested Additions |
|---|--|------------------------------|
| Big Laurel Creek | Cullasaja River | North Fork French Broad |
| Davidson River | Fires Creek | East Fork Tuckasegee River |
| Big East Fork Pigeon, Yellowstone Prong, Dark Prong | Flat Laurel Creek | Panthertown Creek |
| French Broad River | Overflow Creek | Greenland Creek |
| Linville River | Santeetlah Creek | West Fork Overflow Creek |
| North and South Mills River | South Toe River | East Fork Overflow Creek |
| Nantahala River | Thompson River | |
| Nolichucky River | West Fork Pigeon River | |
| Snowbird Creek | Whitewater River | |
| Tellico River | | |

THE LONG ROAD TO KLAMATH DAM REMOVAL

BY THOMAS O'KEEFE

THE KLAMATH RIVER begins in Southern Oregon and flows through Northern California, carving a path through the Cascade Range on its 250-plus-mile journey to the ocean (see “Resurrecting the Klamath: A Gift to be Claimed,” Bill Cross, *American Whitewater Journal*, Sept/Oct 2011). One of the West Coast’s major river systems, the Klamath was historically one of the region’s biggest salmon producers, providing a resource that was central to the cultures of the Yurok, Hoopa Valley, Karuk, Shasta, and Klamath Tribes who have lived in the basin since time immemorial. Spanning three physiographic provinces, this vast river system is known for impressive ecological diversity. The Klamath’s headwaters include a network of marshes and four tributary rivers that converge into Upper Klamath Lake, the largest body of fresh water in Oregon. The river doesn’t take on the name of Klamath River until it flows out of Lake Euwauna, a short distance downstream of Upper Klamath Lake. This area is also the diversion point for the Bureau of Reclamation’s Klamath Project, which uses a significant amount of Klamath River water to irrigate 225,000 acres of farmland.

Shortly below Keno Dam, agricultural activity ends and the river is put to work for hydropower. In 44 miles from Keno to Iron Gate, the Klamath River drops 1,900 feet, for an average gradient of 43 feet per mile. Well before whitewater boaters came on the scene, the gradient caught the eye of hydroelectric developers who constructed the various dams, tunnels, and flumes that make up the Klamath Hydroelectric Project.



Doug Whittaker on the Big Bend
run of the Klamath
Photo by Priscilla Macy

STEWARDSHIP



The development began with the Copco 1 Dam, built in 1918. Impacts to salmon were considered, however it was deemed *just too costly* to build a fish ladder. This same injustice was carried out a half century later with the Iron Gate Dam in the 1960s.

Today, the project has an installed capacity of 169 megawatts, producing a nominal amount of power with a massive environmental impact. Water quality issues, exacerbated by the stagnant water of the reservoirs that brew up a stew of toxic algae, extend well downstream of Iron Gate. In 2000, PacifiCorp initiated the process of seeking a new license to continue operating the project and submitted their license application in 2004. American Whitewater participated in studies that identified impacts of the hydropower project on the river's recreational opportunities. The Tribes, whose interests were shelved when hydropower development began, successfully led an effort to put dam removal on the table. It ultimately became apparent that mitigating the ongoing impacts of the dams would not be possible; dam removal was the responsible course of action.



In February 2010, PacifiCorp and more than 40 other signatories executed the Klamath Hydroelectric Settlement Agreement (KHSA), providing a framework for the



Top: Zane Reinard threads the needle through the rocky debris of Side Cast Slide in the Big Bend section of the Klamath at a test flow of 1000 cfs.

Photo by Priscilla Macy

Middle: Iron Gate Dam is the lowermost dam on the Klamath River, 190 miles upstream of the Pacific Ocean. It blocks over 400 miles of salmon habitat and buries a seven-mile-long Class II/III whitewater run, both of which will be restored with the dam's removal.

Photo by Scott Harding

Bottom: Pelicans take flight above the Klamath River just upstream of Hell's Corner.

Photo by Priscilla Macy

removal of the hydropower project. Federal legislation authorizing the agreement stalled in Congress. The parties amended the KHSA in 2016 to achieve the purposes of the original agreement, but in a way that would not require Congressional approval. The amended agreement provided for transfer of ownership of the project to a new entity, Klamath River Renewal Corporation, for the purposes of dam removal. The agreement included a cost cap for PacifiCorp ratepayers as well as protection for the utility and its customers from any liabilities associated with dam removal. The goal was to begin dam removal in 2020 through a two-step process in which the hydropower license would be transferred to Klamath River Renewal Corporation, who would then file an application to surrender the license and proceed with decommissioning the project.



Ward's Canyon, the dewatered, rugged basalt gorge on the Klamath River between Copco 2 Dam and powerhouse will flow once again after dam removal! The gradient here is over 80 feet/mile.

Photo by Scott Harding

As the Klamath River Renewal Corporation prepared to take ownership of the hydropower project, they went through an extensive regulatory process to ensure they had the ability and capacity to take on the project. American Whitewater participated in this process in partnership with the Upper Klamath Outfitters Association to identify impacts to whitewater recreation and opportunities to provide new and enhanced opportunities through dam removal. In addition to making new reaches of the river available, the dam removal will improve water quality on sections downstream of Iron Gate currently used by recreational boaters.

The revised schedule called for dam removal in 2022, but this was contingent on a ruling from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission approving transfer of the license, followed by approval of a license surrender and decommissioning. In July 2020 the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission took the first step in issuing their ruling on transfer of the hydropower project to Klamath River Renewal Corporation and decided on a partial transfer: PacifiCorp would cease to be the sole owner and PacifiCorp and the

Klamath River Renewal Corporation would become co-licensees. In their ruling, the Commission noted that they have “not previously considered an application to transfer a license to a new entity whose sole purpose is to surrender the license and decommission the project” raising “unique public interest concerns.” They further stated that “because of the magnitude of the proposed decommissioning, the uncertainties attendant on final design and project execution, and the potential impacts of dam removal on public safety and the environment, we conclude that, should we ultimately approve a surrender and decommissioning plan, it would not be in the public interest for the entire burden of these efforts to rest with the Renewal Corporation.” They noted that “there is a significant degree of uncertainty associated with the project,” and Klamath River Renewal Corporation “might ultimately be faced with matters that it is not equipped to handle.” In contrast, “PacifiCorp has additional resources as well as experience in removing a major project and the experience of operating the facilities associated with the Lower Klamath Project for the last nearly 32 years.”

While the parties to the KHSA structured that agreement to protect PacifiCorp from any liabilities associated with dam removal, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission ultimately determined that, “it would be inappropriate for PacifiCorp, which has been the licensee for the Klamath Project since 1988, to relieve itself of all liability.” This decision from federal regulators puts PacifiCorp in the position of deciding what to do next, as it is not consistent with what they agreed to in the KHSA. Several groups, including American Whitewater, have appealed to PacifiCorp and their parent company Berkshire Hathaway, owned by Warren Buffet, to do the right thing and work with parties to continue efforts to remove the dams and restore the river. As we wait, the plan to remove the dams in 2022 is in jeopardy. While we fully expect that dam removal will happen, further delay means that salmon populations continue to decline and Tribes who depend on these fish for food and their cultural identity continue to feel the pain of promises that remain unfulfilled.

A TASTE OF THINGS TO COME

BY BILL CROSS



Dramatic basalt walls in the Ward's Canyon section of the Klamath
Photo by Thomas O'Keefe

PARADOXICALLY, LIFE'S MOUNTAINTOP moments sometimes come at the bottom of a canyon. So it was on June 11, when I had one of my most memorable canyon-bottom moments: After two decades of imagining it, I finally realized my dream of running Ward's Canyon on the Upper Klamath.

I'd seen the place a couple of dozen times before, but always on foot, beginning with my first exploratory hike to the canyon rim some 20 years ago. It's an arduous cross-county trek across a field of jagged black lava that looks like it erupted about a week ago and cooled only yesterday—a great place to break a leg, and a major deterrent to hikers. Which explains why few people have ever heard of, let alone peered into, Ward's Canyon.

But no one who has stood on the rim would disagree: This magnificent basalt defile is

surely the most spectacular gorge on the Klamath's entire 250-plus-mile journey to the sea. Ward's is short—only three miles—but utterly breathtaking. At the heart of the canyon, the Klamath sweeps through a stately left bend, arcing past a half-mile colonnade of columnar basalt that towers 300 sheer feet above the right bank, a fluted stone curtain where peregrine falcons and golden eagles soar.

But there's always one thing missing: water. Except during rare springtime peaks when the Klamath may briefly overflow Copco 2 Dam, PacifiCorp diverts all but 10 cfs into a pipe that bypasses the natural channel. PacifiCorp returns the water to the river only at the canyon's mouth, leaving Ward's eerily silent when it should echo with the roar of rapids. The riverbed is plenty steep to produce challenging whitewater—the Klamath knives down through the lava at 85 feet per mile—but thanks to the diversion,

all you'll find is a tepid stream trickling over parched bedrock ledges.

This perpetual lack of water explains why, until this June, Ward's Canyon had been boated only once. Back in 2002, American Whitewater lobbied for flow studies to evaluate the possibility of scheduled recreational releases from the dams. More recently, for the past decade, AW has been pursuing a far grander vision: removing all four Klamath dams so boaters can enjoy Ward's Canyon—and other runs on the Upper Klamath—year-round. We're inching ever closer to that golden ring, but it's a slow slog through political quagmires and bureaucratic bogs. I'm an optimist, but at times, my spirits have sagged.

Then, on a brilliant June day, came the inspiration we all need to see us to the finish line. For a few precious hours, we brought the Klamath out from PacifiCorp's tube and

STEWARDSHIP

back to its rightful place, racing and dancing through Ward's Canyon. Our goal in this second round of flow studies was different from the first; we wanted to see what three reaches of the Upper Klamath would be like at projected post-dam summertime levels. Ward's was our first "test-drive," followed a month later by studies of two reaches farther upriver. Securing these releases was a drawn-out and much-delayed process, and at the last moment the whole affair was nearly derailed by the virus-that-must-not-be-named. But all those difficulties were forgotten on that magical morning when 11 of us saw the Upper Klamath as it once was...and will be again.

Ward's Canyon is a dream come true, with nearly continuous technical Class III and IV drops and scenery to die for. At 800 cfs, the run was a joy in every boat we brought: hardshell kayaks, 13- and 14-foot oar rafts, and one paddle cat. The only flaw—caused by a century of water diversion—is an unnatural overgrowth of alders and willows, many sticking right up in the active channel. Tree-dodging definitely added some excitement, but thankfully nobody got speared, and we determined that the problem is entirely fixable;



Waiting for PacifiCorp to turn on the water at the base of Copco 2 Dam prior to a test flow of Ward's Canyon
Photo by Thomas O'Keefe

midchannel strainers can be removed as part of efforts to restore the river to its pre-dam condition.

Ward's Canyon is glorious, and best of all, it represents just one short stretch out of a total of 44 boatable miles on the Upper Klamath. When the dams come out, boaters will be able to explore a host of new day trips and string together outstanding multi-day journeys. The flows studies proved what we've been arguing all along: that a restored Upper Klamath will be one of the West's great whitewater rivers.

Sometimes, Klamath dam removal seems like it's taking forever. We're all impatient, and people always ask me: When? My answer: We're getting so close you can almost taste it. In the meantime, take it from someone who was lucky enough to get a glimpse into the future: Your canyon-bottom moment is coming, and it is so worth the wait.



Bill Cross taking in the wonder of Ward's Canyon
Photo by Thomas O'Keefe

HISTORIC BILL GREAT AMERICAN OUTDOORS ACT SIGNED INTO LAW

BY EVAN STAFFORD

SEATTLE, FOR ALL intents and purposes, is as far away from DC as one can be in the continental United States. Yet, here was the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, calling back to Washington from Washington state, Thomas O'Keefe, Pacific Northwest Stewardship Director, to testify on behalf of the whitewater community, and the broader recreation community, on the absolute need to carve out funding for public lands and waters. For well over a decade, American Whitewater staff members have been back and forth to DC, meeting with state and local officials. They've also encouraged our membership and followers to speak up and tell Congress their story about how the outdoors and rivers have shaped their lives and about the importance of public lands and recreation opportunities close to home. AW has been part of a broad coalition of outdoor advocates working to impress the message that, the freedom to be outdoors in a healthy environment is a universal American ideal, and to sustain this ideal we need to invest in providing opportunities to hike a nearby trail, paddle a local river, and fall asleep under the stars to the familiar chirping of crickets and the croak of a lonely frog.

Rivers on public lands across the country, like the Middle Fork Salmon, will benefit from the almost 10 billion dollars over five years in new funding for land management agencies' maintenance and restoration needs outlined in the Great American Outdoors Act.

Photo by Evan Stafford

STEWARDSHIP

The Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) was signed into law on August 4, 2020. The passage of this Act is the culmination of decades of advocacy from hundreds of recreation organizations, the chorus of your public voices, and the political waves lining up like a rolling set of perfect blue corduroy at Trestles. The Act restores the original intent of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), permanently dedicating \$900 million per year to fund the outdoors. These are funds that in the past we've utilized through the program to put river corridors in public ownership, and establish access on rivers like the Skagit (WA), Green (WA), White Salmon (WA), Salmon (ID), Sandy (OR), Gauley (WV), Rio Grande (NM), Green (UT), Arkansas (CO), Youghiogheny (PA), Winnepesaukee (NH), and many others.

The program is based on the concept of using revenues from the depletion of one natural resource—offshore oil and gas—to support the conservation of another—our land and water. If you flip through the pages of old *American Whitewater Journals*,

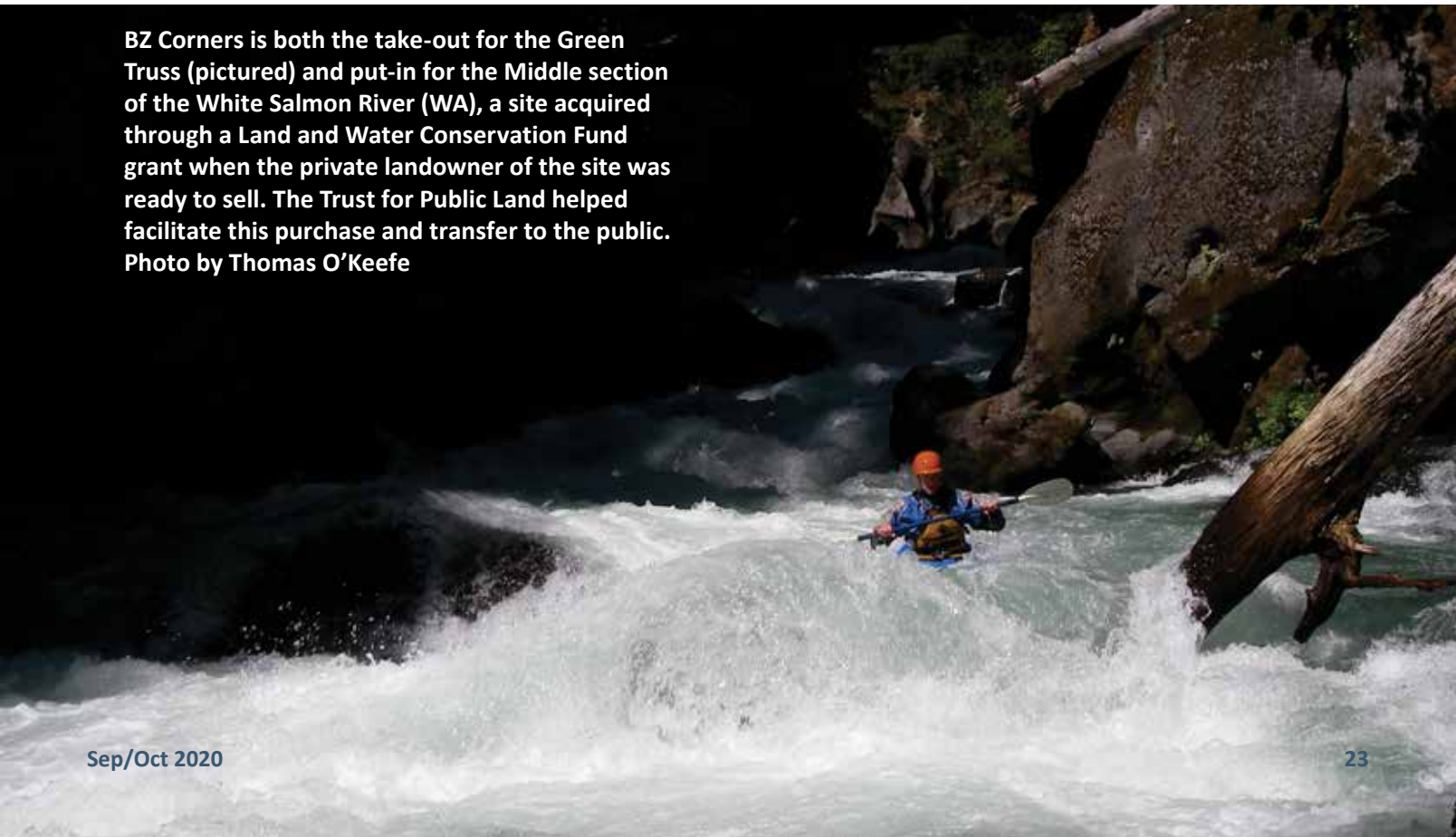
you'll find that we were early advocates for the LWCF when it was established in 1964, and we've continued to advocate for it and use what funding has been provided to benefit rivers. We know our job here is not done. We'll now be working hard to make sure the Fund has projects identified that support improved whitewater recreation opportunities, and that Congress hears about them.

The Act also addresses years of inadequate funding by Congress for our country's land management agencies like the National Park Service, Forest Service, and Bureau of Land Management, by ponying up a maximum of \$1.9 billion per year for public lands maintenance and restoration for five years. When American Whitewater staff members found themselves in DC advocating for things like the LWCF, or for Wild and Scenic rivers, we made sure to also highlight the growing backlog of maintenance and restoration needs on our public lands. National Parks are the crown jewels of our public land system and, at first, were the only recipients of funding

through GAOA. The Forest Service and other federal agencies arguably manage more of the whitewater rivers we love to paddle, and while American Whitewater supported this funding proposal, we joined with many others in the recreation community to make the case that this legislation needed to include all land management agencies and not just the National Park Service—which it now does!

Our next move is to make sure public land management agencies know where and how they can improve whitewater recreation opportunities, like adding new river access areas, improving and securing questionable access to rivers, and new maintenance projects that support the protection and recreation in designated, and eligible for designation, Wild and Scenic streams. We'll need your help holding managers' and elected officials' feet to the fire to make sure these funds go to projects that support getting us out on clean, healthy rivers, so stay involved and let's continue to make our community's voice heard!

BZ Corners is both the take-out for the Green Truss (pictured) and put-in for the Middle section of the White Salmon River (WA), a site acquired through a Land and Water Conservation Fund grant when the private landowner of the site was ready to sell. The Trust for Public Land helped facilitate this purchase and transfer to the public. Photo by Thomas O'Keefe



KIDS IN WHITEWATER

WILD AND SCENIC ROGUE FAMILY STYLE

BY MAYA MUSGROVE, AGE 10

PHOTOS BY EMMA MUSGROVE



Dad talking through the line for the rapid ahead on day two.

MY FAMILY AND our friend Laura went on a trip to the Rogue River on Labor Day weekend. We put in at Grave Creek on Saturday morning. It took a long time because we had to pack all of our supplies into our kayaks. On the first day the rapids were quite hard; I thought they were about as hard as the Gorge section on the South Fork American, where we live. On one rapid, our friend Laura flipped over and my mum went down to help her, leaving us at the top of the rapid with my dad; I was really scared. We camped on the right side of the river that day, which still had sun, so we could dry out our stuff. We had Mountain House dried food for dinner.

The second day had a few scary rapids, but it was mostly fine. When we got to

Coffee Pot Canyon we found some rafters who were willing to put Hannah and me in their raft because my mum and dad didn't want us to kayak this rapid. They didn't want us to have a bad swim if we didn't roll. After Coffee Pot was Blossom

Bar, which my sister and I walked around with the rafters. When we put back in after that there were lots of whirlpools and I got sucked towards a dory and I had to drop my paddle to attempt to push off it, but I got sucked under the boat anyway and



Packing for a self-support kayak trip takes a long time!



Above: Camp dinner
Below: Ice creams at Paradise Lodge

then I did a handroll. When I rolled up, everyone cheered.

On our way to our next campsite we stopped at Paradise Lodge to get ice cream. Unfortunately, the lodge had just closed. We went inside anyway and the man who worked there was nice enough to let us buy ice creams.

On the third and final day we saw a bear. I had gone ahead of the group so I did not see it, but my mum got a picture. There was a lot of flat water paddling that day, and not as many good rapids. But that meant we didn't really have to worry about the river being scary. When we finally got off the river, the unpacking wasn't nearly as bad as the packing. We pretty much just threw our kayaks into the back of the truck and drove home.

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Dane Jackson put the HustleR to the ultimate test by completing the first decent of Malupa Falls, Pakistan. Photo: Johnny Chase

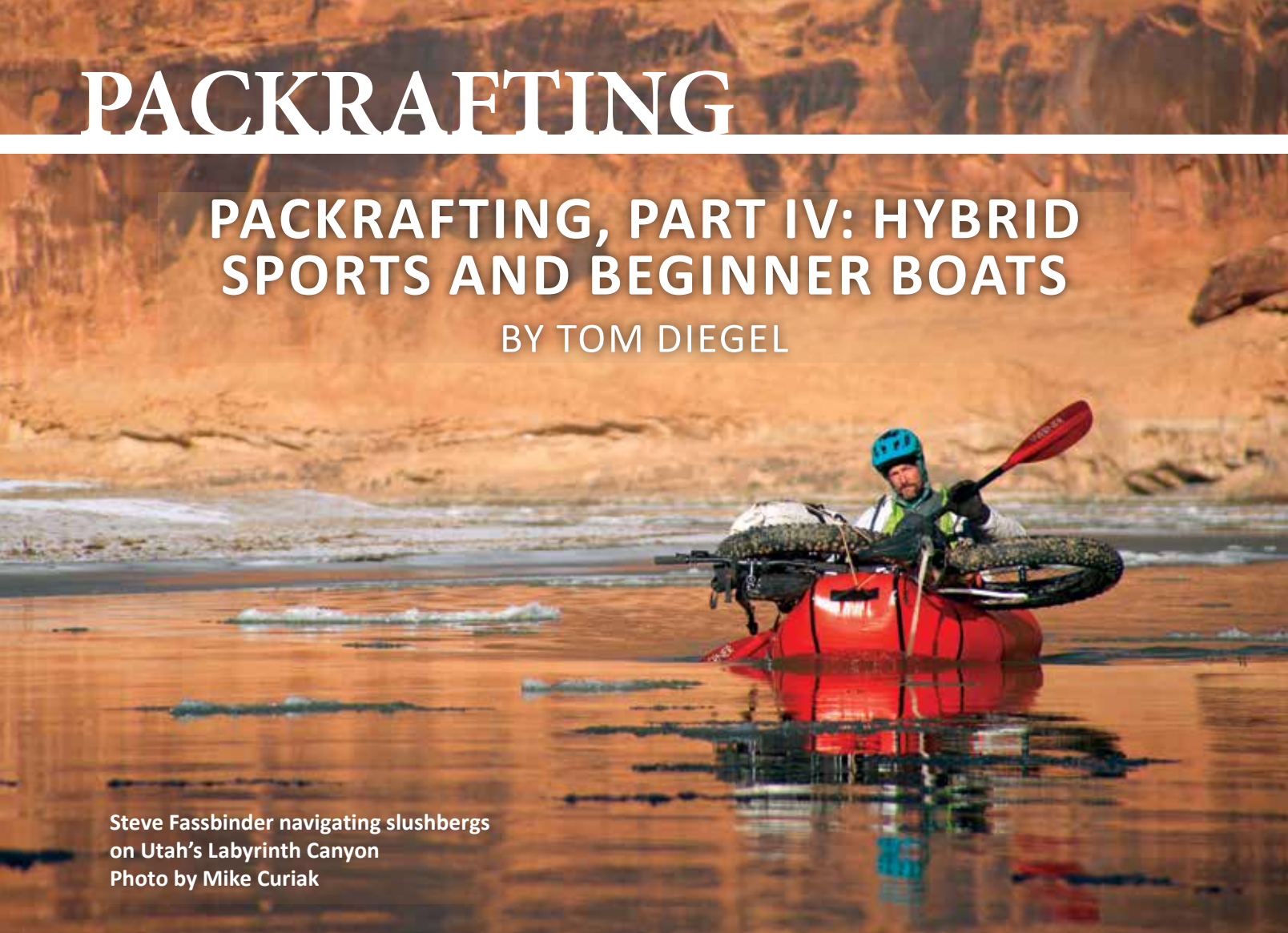
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PACKRAFTING

PACKRAFTING, PART IV: HYBRID SPORTS AND BEGINNER BOATS

BY TOM DIEGEL



Steve Fassbinder navigating slushbergs on Utah's Labyrinth Canyon
Photo by Mike Curiak

IN THE FIRST three episodes of this packraft series, we've talked about the history and evolution of packrafting, used a trip report of the ever-elusive river loop trip (much-desired by commercial raft passengers!) as an example of the possibilities that a packraft can unlock, and an anthology of packraft trips that show some of the advantages that packrafts represent. In this version we'll talk a little more in depth about a couple of the main attributes of modern packrafts: creativity and versatility of adventuring and user friendliness, as well as pointing out a few of their limitations.

The most obvious benefit of packrafting is that you can carry your eight-pound boat farther (much farther!) to remote river put-ins than you can a 50-lb hardshell kayak, a 30-lb ducky, or a 100-lb raft. But after getting a packraft and using it a little, one

somehow develops a profound sense of enlightenment. Suddenly, adventures involving rivers—or any water-based travel—no longer seem challenging, inconceivable, or impossible.

In Episode One we introduced Roman Dial, an accomplished Alaskan adventurer who helped put packrafting on the map by using the earliest packrafts to cross rivers on what he called "hell biking": a traverse of the Alaska Range on mountain bikes. Today, people are using modern packrafts to take mountain and fat bikes on new, creative adventures. For instance, Roman joined Mike Curiak, Steve "Doom" Fassbinder, and others in riding over 200 miles of the wild Lost Coast of South East Alaska between Yakutat and Gustavus. Along the way, they used their boats approximately 25 times to cross the many rivers and bays that punctuate that remote coastline. Doom,

in particular, has embraced the concept of bikepacking with a packraft, using the boats to enable ambitious traverses in Pakistan, Tajikistan, and even South West Colorado's San Juan mountains, finishing with a float down the Rio Grande. Take the wheels off, be conscientious about the various pointy, sharp things on a bike (like pedals), strap it on the bow, and float away. Of course, you don't need to go to Tajikistan to try this; just ride your bike up your favorite local river (with a bike strapped on it's not realistic to do anything more than Class II) and float back down!

The ability to carry a lot of unlikely gear inside the tubes of the modern packrafts has given rise to the new hybrid sport of "skirafting." In fact, it has become a passion of Jeffrey Creamer, the most prolific packrafter in the lower 48. This year he has done skiraft trips up and over the

PACKRAFTING

San Juan mountains into upper Vallecito Creek, and an ambitious solo January Grand Canyon adventure that involved starting at Lee's Ferry, floating to Phantom Ranch, climbing to the North Rim, skiing across to the Nankoweap drainage, hiking back down to the river, floating to Phantom again, then hiking out to the South Rim. I was also able to join him on a ski variation of Wyoming's "DuMor" packrafting route deep into the Absaroka mountains, where we skied over rolling terrain for a few days until we reached a previously-unskied peak, skied a 3,000-foot line into the drainage, and after skiing and walking a couple of miles found enough water to float our boats. A few years ago Nick Gottlieb, Paul Yelda, and Wally McFarlane did a skiraft, north-south crossing of Iceland. Even a smallish boat will hold 178cm skis inside the tubes (you want to wrap them in your pack, skins, etc. to protect the boat from the steel edges) and with them nicely tucked away your river-running ability is not compromised at all, so it's a great way to access those early-season runs before put-in roads melt out.

The user-friendliness of packrafts is a huge benefit. All of us remember our first kayak experiences when the boat felt so tippy, and we've all seen our newbie friends lean the wrong way, grab the upstream sides of the boat as they are flipping over, and all of us have been scared and exhausted trying to haul the swamped boats to shore when we've swum.

Packrafts address all these issues so well that the learning curve is easier to navigate. Some years ago we did a post-permit season trip down the Selway. After hiking through the Bitterroot mountains to get to the put-in (saved money on the shuttle, and as it turns out, saved our trip—the road had been washed out and was impassible by vehicle) we reached the river wondering about the prospects of one of our crew. She said she'd "done a lot of canoeing," was a good athlete, and based on the extent of her blistered heels from her new shoes, knew how to suffer, but could she paddle the whitewater? At low water the Selway is Class III, and based on our experience with newbie kayakers, we wondered how

she would do, but by following our lines she aced it. She actually did so well that it made us wonder why we'd spent so many years honing our kayaking skills.

The primary stability of the packrafts means that someone with a little gumption can do big trips with moderate whitewater without any prior paddling experience. This enables you to bring inexperienced kayakers into your adventure-partner fold, and as an experienced boater it's a fulfilling and memorable experience to see the joy and enthusiasm of these folks being able to run their first whitewater outside of a ponderous raft. Yes, old school inflatable kayaks serve the same function, but not in a compact eight-pound package!

The friendliness and adventure possibilities have also had another effect: luring old paddlers back into the sport. I've seen a number of former Class V kayakers who for one reason or another (one too many bad beatdowns, one too many lost friends, becoming unfulfilled by anything less than the Big Stuff, or the Realities Of Life got in

Jon Bailey and Steve Fassbinder traversing Alaska's Lost Coast with fatbikes and packrafts.
Photo by Mike Curiak





Above: Mike Coyle on his first-ever packrafting trip, leaving the river and heading back into the Absaroka for some skiing!

Photo by Tom Diegel

Middle: Paul Diegel, Zinnia Wilson, and Drew Hardesty hiking between drainages deep in the Teton Wilderness

Photo by Tom Diegel

Below: Recovering kayaker Jon Jamieson on his first multi-day whitewater trip on the Dolores River.

Photo by Tom Diegel



the way of paddling) have almost totally exited the sport get back into it in a packraft. Some of these same paddlers have gotten pretty excited about packrafting for the same reason that newbies have: fun, stable boats that represent possibilities for newer, deeper rivers.

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention some of the drawbacks to packrafts to temper



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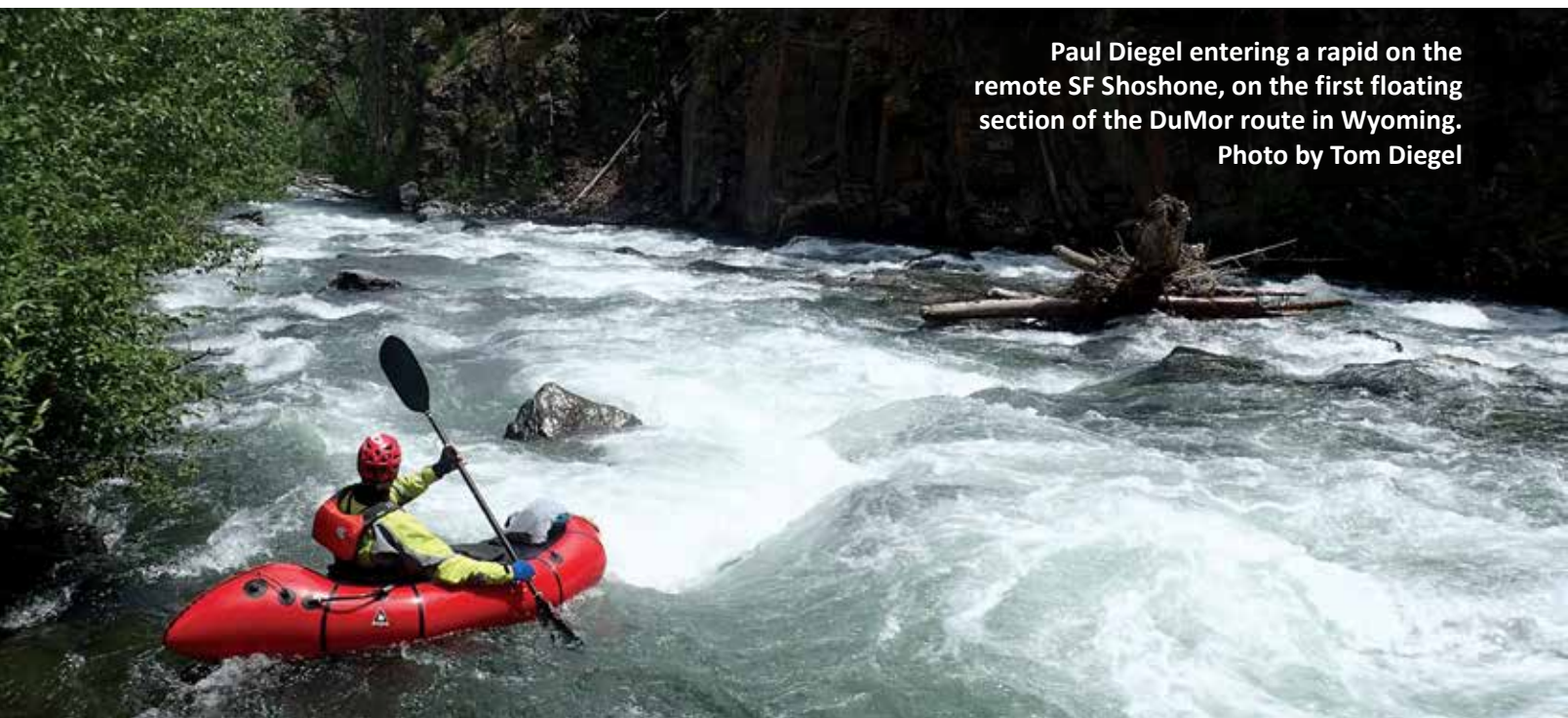
Emboldened by his success on the Dolores, on Jamieson navigates Big Drop 3 on Cataract Canyon at low water.
Photo by Tom Diegel

expectations. Soft inflatable plastic is simply not as durable as hard polyethylene,

repaired, even with something as simple as Tyvek tape, which is a remarkably good repair material. The waterproof, airtight cargo zipper can be finicky and can be compromised by sand, which sometimes exists on rivers; however, even though I—as an example—am not very good with finicky things and have a tendency to break stuff, it's worked out okay for me. If cartwheels, stern squirts, tricky woos, blunts, loops, space godzillas etc. are truly your thing, packrafts might be a tough sell; they can surf (surprisingly well) and no doubt there will be an evolution of boats and paddlers, but they aren't playboats by any means. And it's likely that if you run at-your-limit whitewater, you'll likely swim a bit more. But packrafts are easily righted so you can hurl yourself back in. Plus, they retain no water when flipped back upright, and are infinitely easier to get to shore than a half-submerged kayak.

If your zest for adventure and the rest of your gear closet enables multi-modal adventures, adding a packraft to your bike and ski adventures can add rivers to those adventures. And if you either want to get back into paddling rivers in a friendly, fun, travel-sized craft or have non-boating friends who want to join you on your riparian adventures...get a packraft!

and the possibility always exists for tears and punctures. But they are very easily



Paul Diegel entering a rapid on the remote SF Shoshone, on the first floating section of the DuMor route in Wyoming.
Photo by Tom Diegel



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MAGICAL MIDDLE FORK

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DAWSON REYNIER

Morning Yoga

A FIRE CRACKLES IN the early morning, layering the blueish mountain light with flickering orange. The sun slowly creeps over the far hillside, backlighting the mixture of healthy and crispy ponderosa pines that litter the river valley. Dagger Falls rumbles in the background, its ominous roar reminiscent of the committing nature of the canyon below. A kaleidoscope of rafts negotiates its way around massive sweep boats and compact, beautifully constructed drift boats, whose clientele swing their fly rods back and forth in mesmerizing displays. Mere hours from now, you will commit to six days maneuvering through the seemingly endless rapids, pine needle-infested bench campsites, and numerous rattlesnake hidey holes emblematic of the Middle Fork of the Salmon River in Idaho.

Despite its dry, desert air that turns fingers and feet into flakey, cracking parchment, many describe this run as the trip of a lifetime; it's a must-do for wilderness and whitewater enthusiasts alike. The Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness is a 2.3 million-acre region that humbles even the most experienced rafters, kayakers, and fisherman, as its remoteness and severity demand respect and practiced preparedness. The Middle Fork of the Salmon flows directly through this primordial expanse, snaking its way through sprawling grassy hills and sawtooth ridges. On our last day on the river in June 2019, our group counted the cumulative number of Middle Fork trips we've experienced. The number was 93. Despite floating 93 times down this immense canyon, we still can't get enough of it.

The trip begins at the Boundary Creek anthill—sorry, boat launch. The reality of the launch is the former, however, with hundreds of people scurrying around, performing one job or another, trying to do their share of the work to get on the river. The boats get rigged up almost a hundred vertical feet from the water, and are lowered (hopefully slowly), down a long, steep wooden ramp. The ramp itself is a marvel; wooden stepping blocks assist the three to four people needed on each side of a fully loaded raft to blunt its descent into the icy water of the Middle Fork. Secure your cooler! The angle is steep enough that any unstrapped goodies will surely be floating downstream to Velvet Falls, one of the first major rapids on the run. Once rigged, a safety talk is necessary for all river-goers. The river ranger on duty explains the

WILDERNESS PADDLING



Morning light down the canyon

rules that apply to this pristine wilderness, including the basics of Leave No Trace, the protocol when seeing a rattlesnake or other wildlife, and the responsibility of the participants to respect the river valley. They also check for dangerous invasive species that threaten the integrity of the water life in the river, in an attempt to keep

the water pristine for all those who explore the Middle Fork in the future.

This year, we were blessed by the presence of an indigenous member of the Shoshone tribe, who indicated where on the river pictographs could be observed, and which campsites contained former native dwellings that should not be traipsed on

or used for tent sites. For thousands of years, Shoshone Indians utilized the many resources of what is today called the Frank Church region. The Tokuduka, or Sheepeaters, took solace in the remoteness of the steep grade of the hills on either side of the Middle Fork, which proved nearly impenetrable for fur traders in the 1820s and '30s. In addition, the area didn't hold much interest for miners in the early 1860s, as the Salmon drainage was nearly devoid of gold. However, conflict arose through their contact with outsiders, which led to the Sheepeater Wars and the Tokuduka's eventual exodus from the region. Today, floaters can observe images of the hunt on the walls of Rattlesnake Cave, see the remnants of pit houses at the campsite dubbed "Pungo," or simply soak in the beauty of the Shoshone Indians' ancient homeland.

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Ben Dann @ The Clark's Fork of the Yellowstone

WILDERNESS PADDLING



After beer has been properly iced, snacks properly stored at an arm's reach, and lifejackets buckled, you begin the descent of the Middle Fork. The first day scurries by in a blur, as anticipation and adrenaline combine in an action-packed start to the 98.9-mile trek. Snaking through Murph's Hole, Sulphur Slide, Velvet Falls, Chutes Rapid, and Powerhouse, the first 12 miles of whitewater are sure to get your blood pumping. Don't forget to make a stop at Sheepeater Camp and hike up to the hot spring pools, the first spa-like stop on the run. A few miles downstream of here are the ever-intimidating Lake Creek and Pistol Creek Rapids. Lake Creek is a long wave train caused by a number of landslides, and the rapid continues to change by the year. It flows around a corner into Pistol Creek Rapid, a highly intimidating s-turn that crashes into a river-left wall. Kayakers have to navigate extremely swirly water, complete with whirlpools, while rafters had better loosen up their shoulders for a hard move away from a bedrock ledge; quick reactions are needed to avoid washing up on the wall and dumping your family into the water.



The river mellows a bit after the first couple of days, with a stretch of boogie-water mixed in with varying Class III and IV rapids. Ski Jump, Marble Creek, and Jackass offer exciting lines, making sure the rafters keep their rowing muscles warm. The final two days bring the excitement level back up, as the Tappan series, Haystack, and Bernard Creek all demand respect. These rapids are split up by the must-see destination of the Flying B Ranch. Situated in one of the flatter areas of the Middle Fork, surrounded by rolling yellow and green hills, this ranch houses a small store, horses, and a scenic airstrip. Visitors can treat themselves to an ice cream sandwich, a cold beer, or some of the FBR's unique apparel. Due to prior obligations, my family had to cut a 2015



Above: *Sunset at the put-in*
Middle: *Overwatch*
Below: *Restful camping*

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WILDERNESS PADDLING

trip short and had scheduled to take a small plane out of the FBR. The attendants were kind enough to grant us permission to camp on the side of their airstrip, and even gifted us a large Ziploc of spaghetti for dinner, which tasted extravagant after multiple days of freeze-dried mac-n-cheese. So make sure you pull over, restock on water, and buy a Snickers ice cream bar.

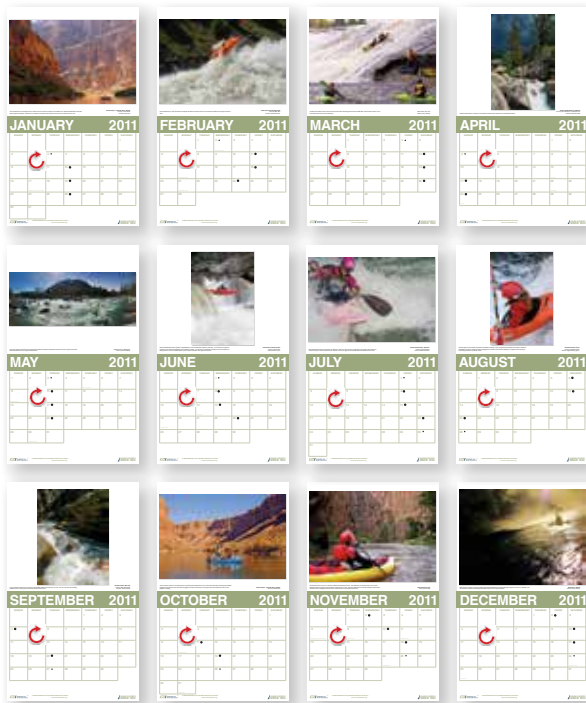
The final stretch of water canyons up heavily as you pass Otter Bar Camp, virtually the last camp on the Middle Fork. But don't think the last day is a leisurely float! You'll soon be met by Rubber Rapid, a massive, Grand Canyon-like wave train that could easily flip a fully loaded raft. It is followed by Hancock, Devil's Tooth, House Rocks, and Cramer Creek, all of which hold consequences for the unwary traveler. After a couple of hours on the

river on your last day, you emerge from the steep sawtooth cliffs into a slightly less intimidating canyon where the Middle Fork meets up with the Main Salmon. From here the float out wassmooth, as you can admire the shuttle drivers rallying down the elevated dirt road on the shore, your first real sign of civilization in days.

Arriving at the takeout, Cache Bar, instills both a feeling of gratitude and a feeling of sadness. The gratitude appears because you have successfully negotiated one of the most sought-after rafting trips in the entire world. You have spent quality time with friends or family, descending dozens of miles through mountain sheep, deer, ponderosa pine, mountain juniper, bull snakes, and cutthroat trout. However, the feeling of gratitude is tainted by a feeling of sadness, as every trip on the Middle

Fork could be your last. The competitive nature of the trip only allows for so many people per year, and the lottery does not lean in yours or my favor. I have been lucky enough to descend the canyon six times in my 22 short years of life, but the most recent trip is the only one during which I truly appreciated the opportunity I was presented. I soaked up every twist and turn of the river, every sun ray, every hail pellet. I cherished every Budweiser, every application of ChapStick, and every grain of sand found somewhere it didn't belong. I hope I get to repeat my journey down the Middle Fork again someday. But until that time, the memories will have to suffice.

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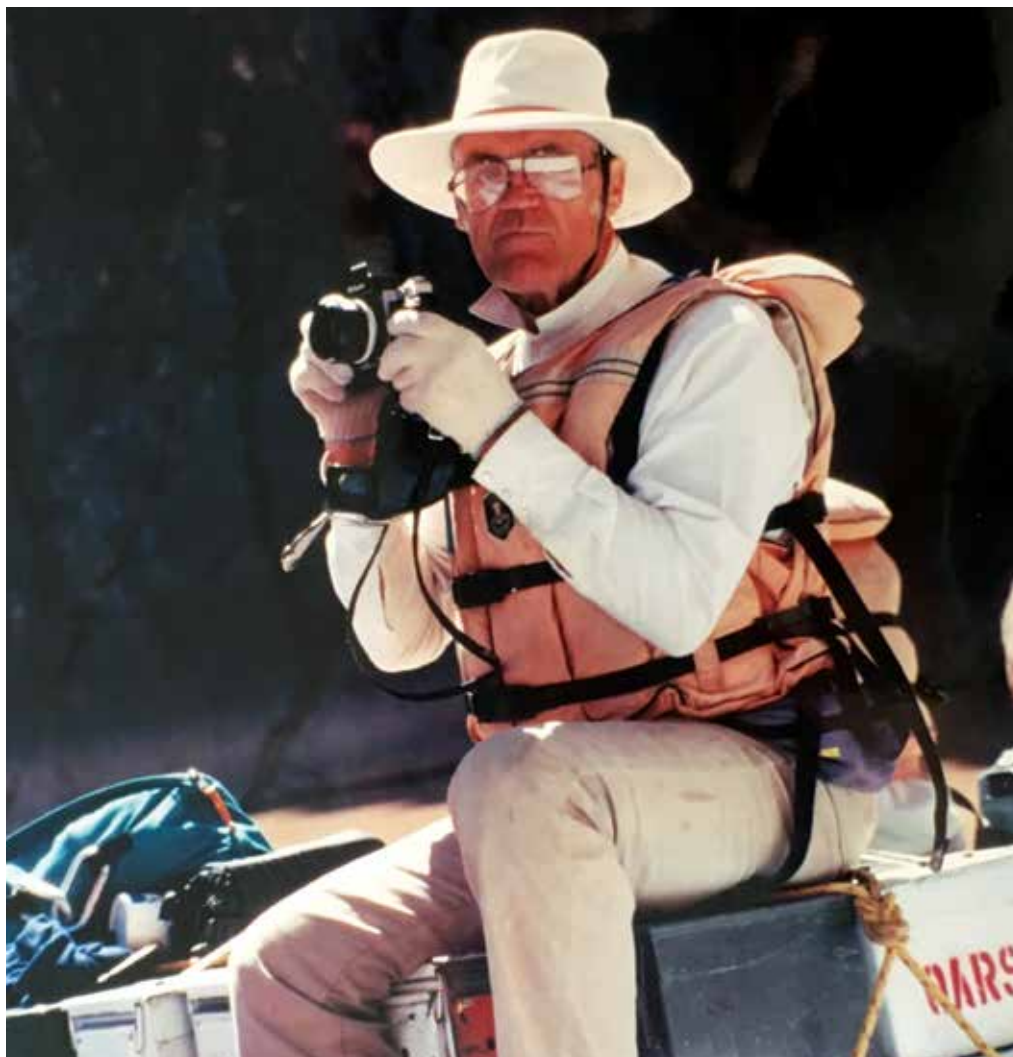
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REMEMBRANCE

REMEMBERING LES JONES, RIVER PIONEER, CARTOGRAPHER, AND ADVOCATE

BY CHRISTIAN JONES



*Les on an "Old Timer's" trip down the Grand Canyon in 1994.
Photo by Richard Jackson and Kathy Lampros*

THE RIVER COMMUNITY has suffered a great loss. Les Jones, age 98, passed away on June, 14, 2020. "Buckethead" Jones first solo-boated the Grand Canyon down to Phantom Ranch in 1953 in his homemade oared kayak. He was a founding member of the Western River Guides Association and its safety director. Les is known for creating the first printed Grand Canyon river guide in 1962 and credited as the 207th person to run the

Grand Canyon. In 1953, he soloed Cataract Canyon (UT) from Moab to Hite in a record time of two days.

Les Jones was born on August 4, 1922 in Winnet, Montana and spent his formative years herding cattle, rounding up wild horses, and "messing around in boats" on the Missouri River. He began running rivers at the age of 11. This early tutelage of learning to navigate eddies, whirlpools,

currents, and rapids would fuel his intense love for river running, boat building, exploration, and map-making. He built his own kayaks, ran most rivers solo, and made movies with a camera mounted on a football helmet.

Les made significant contributions to early river running with his Scroll Maps. According to legendary river advocate Herm Hoops, "by the early 1950s Les

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Les' boat pinned in Tuna Creek Rapid, Grand Canyon in 1957.
Photo by Ulrich Martins

began taping USGS maps together and filling in the missing contours (early USGS maps were usually detailed only to the headwaters of the planned impoundment). Les began using aerial photos, USGS maps, and his own drawings and notes to trace and draw detailed maps on a scroll paper strips seven to 10 inches wide. The maps were not waterproof and faded in sunlight, so they had to be protected from water and sun. Later his maps were copied onto waterproof mylar. Jones copied the river profile on the map above the river segments, labeling rapids and features on both. The maps contained rapid ratings, drawings of major rapids, Powell and other historic river camps, historic inscriptions, and other detailed information. Jones' maps were among the first to contain conservation messages." Les created river runner maps for all the major rivers in Utah, Colorado, Idaho, and Arizona.

In 1955, Les ran and mapped 203 miles to Riggins Idaho on the Middle Fork and Main Salmon. In the spring of 1956, he

Les running Saphire on the Grand, 1957
Photo by Ulrich Martins

ran Westwater Canyon of the Colorado with a some fellow co-workers with the sole objective of mapping and diagraming its rapids. Due to a late start and complications navigating the rapids, the paddle boat expedition was forced to camp at "Whirlpool Rapid." Later that evening, a human skeleton was discovered in the rocks and the rapid was renamed "Skull."

In the 70s, Les explored a number of Southern Utah creeks, namely the Muddy, Black Box on the San Rafael, Escalante,

North Fork of the Virgin, and Main Virgin. He also targeted the Uintah Range, just a few miles from his home in Midway, Utah, and explored the Yellowstone River, 75 miles of the Provo River, Hayden Fork, Stillwater Fork of the Bear River, Henry's Fork, and Blacks Fork. He has over a dozen first descents to his credit.

In 2018, Les donated his 17-foot homemade aluminum kayak to the Grand Canyon National Park Museum. The Museum loaned his kayak to the Special Collections and Archives at the University of Northern Arizona to be featured in their annual exhibit "Splendor and Spectacle: The 100 Year Journey of the Grand Canyon National Park."

In the Spring of 2020, due to Lake Powell's receding waters and the Colorado reclaiming its canyon corridor, local Outfitters gathered in the pre-season to review Les' original notes and study his early Cataract Canyon scroll map to prepare for the newly uncovered rapids in the lower canyon.

I once asked Les what his favorite river was. He responded, "The river I haven't run yet." Words to live by.

Rest in peace, my friend. It was an honor to know you and I'll see you on the river.



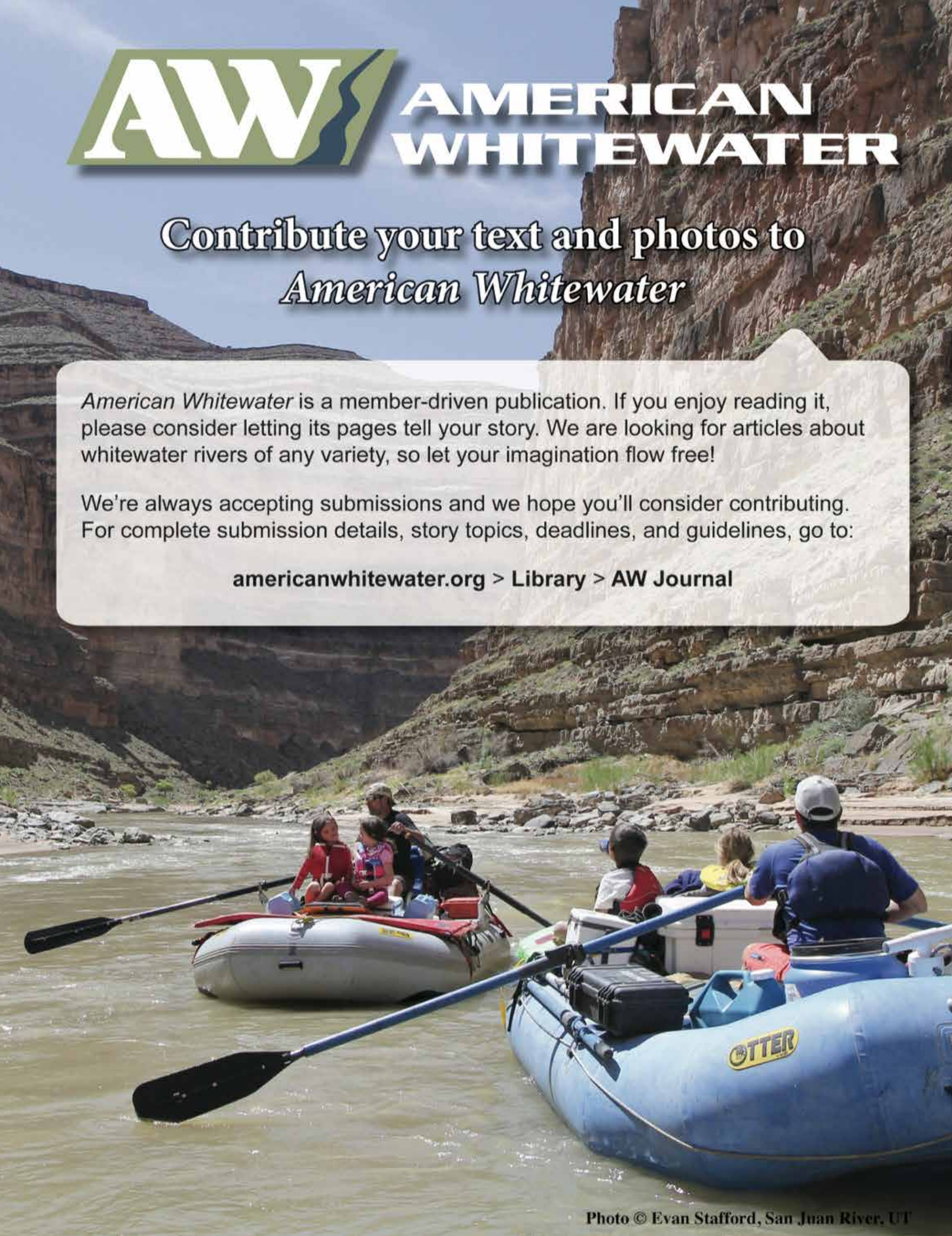
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AMERICAN WHITEWATER ACCIDENT SUMMARY JAN-JUNE 2020

BY CHARLIE WALBRIDGE

Python Rapid on the Cheoah, site of a fatal accident in 2020, and two others in the past six years
Photo by Boyd Ruppelt

IT'S BEEN A strange year in so many ways, on the river and off. While the number of deaths reported to American Whitewater in the first six months (30) is about average, their character was not. There have been very few fatalities among experienced paddlers, but this was offset by a big increase in deaths involving inexperienced people. Half of the accidents (15) were in recreational kayaks; most of them happened in fast water or mild rapids, often on streams not listed in AW's National Whitewater Inventory. In more than half (16) life vests were not used. Other craft included two whitewater kayaks paddled by skilled paddlers, 10 rafts, two inflatable kayaks, and a paddleboard. I suspect that that while many of us stayed home because of COVID-19 lockdowns and travel bans, other people with access to flatwater kayaks and cheap inflatables have been getting out on their local creeks. Most

basic paddling classes were cancelled this year, adding to the problem of ill-equipped individuals and groups on the water. Many rescues were reported, most involving first responders called out to pick up stranded paddlers. Since experienced paddlers often deal with these situations themselves, this also points to an influx of newbies on fast moving water.

Experienced Whitewater Kayakers

Two very experienced paddlers died so far this year. The first accident occurred on the West Virginia's Middle Fork of the Tygart River on February 8th. Jamie Gray, 41, was with a strong group when she flipped in a rapid above Triple Drop. She missed her roll and was pushed left into a giant boulder that proved to be very undercut. Both she and her kayak went under the rock; the boat washed free, but she did not. The

group probed the undercut as best they could, using rescue PFDs, ropes, paddles, and tree branches. There was no sign of her. One of the paddlers hiked up a ridge, got a cell signal, and dialed 911. Recovery efforts were thwarted by heavy rains that brought the river up several feet for almost a week. On February 15th, after the water finally dropped, the West Virginia DNR sent a swiftwater rescue team to the site. They closed the river and searched the undercut thoroughly using a tethered raft, but found nothing. The next day Chris Evans, a state forester working the recovery who is also a skilled kayaker, organized a group of skilled paddlers to search the river downstream of the site. Ms. Gray was found a few miles downstream on the main Tygart, washed on shore in the big eddy above S-Turn. The full report can be seen in the AW Accident Database.

SAFETY

The second fatality happened during the June 20th water release on North Carolina's Cheoah River. Chris Clark, 46, was an expert kayaker who had run the Cheoah and Green Narrows many times. The section where the accident occurred is very difficult. Bear Creek Falls, a 12-foot drop, has a long, pushy lead-in studded with pour-overs. The falls itself has three routes, none of them easy. Below here the river divides, with much of it going into Python Rapid, which has a couple of nasty holes backed by downstream boulders and several hidden sieves. There is an easier route (The West Prong Line), but you need really good boat control to work your way left from the base of the falls. No one saw exactly what happened, but an excellent report by Jamie O'Donnell provides some useful clues. Mr. Clark was showing a friend down the river when he swam at the bottom of Bear Creek Falls. He washed into Python Rapid. Another group spotted him in the rapid, but did not see his entire swim. Downstream, Mr. Clark and his boat were later found by other kayakers, who began CPR. They continued for 45 minutes until EMS arrived and pronounced him dead.

Mr. Clark was the third person to die at Python in the last six years, making this one of the deadliest rapids in the country. Several expert Cheoah paddlers have provided useful commentary, and these have been added to the accident report in the AW Accident Database. Links to the two previous fatalities in this rapid (Maria Noakes in 2018 and Michael Huggins in 2014) can be found in an article on the American Whitewater Safety Page titled [A Close Look at Cheoah River Fatalities](#). There's also a link to Kirk Eddelmon's outstanding article describing the Chaos/Bear Creek Falls/ Python area. It includes both aerial and river-level photos and strategies for managing risk. It's worth close study before your next Cheoah run.

Flush Drownings

Three rafters died this past season during long swims, despite their PFDs, due in some cases to running a one-boat trip that

provided no safety backup in the event of a mishap. On May 2nd Idaho's Lochsa River was high (11,400 cfs) when two men launched a 12-foot raft at White Pine. This is continuous big whitewater with large waves and an occasional monster hole to avoid. The two men had a good quality raft and were fully equipped. They had run the river previously, but on the date of their previous run, the Lochsa was nine feet lower! The pair had one flip from which both men safely emerged; they were rescued by another paddling group and were told they should take out, but declined. They flipped a second time in Lone Pine Rapid and were carried downstream for miles. A second group of paddlers rescued them and unsuccessfully performed CPR on one of the men.

On June 8th Michael Rounph, the wrestling coach at Colorado State University, died after his raft flipped in Royal Gorge of Colorado's Arkansas River. The river was running at 2,780 cfs, a medium high but rowdy level, when his boat hit a hole in Narrows Rapid and capsized. This was a one boat trip, with no rescue backup. His friends swam to safety, but he washed downstream and was found pinned on a steel I-beam used to reinforce the shore below the railroad grade. He was also found with a head injury despite his helmet. The Coroner ruled his death a drowning, and it's not clear if the blow to the head contributed to it.

The year's lone commercial rafting death occurred on June 6th. The river was running at 2,700 cfs, a high level, when a commercial raft ran the "Town Section" Colorado's Animas River. They flipped at the Durango Whitewater Park; everyone swam to safety except Patrick Southworth, 61. He washed some distance downstream before his guide, running along a riverside trail, was able to catch up, wade out, and get him ashore. CPR was ineffective. The coroner thought that Mr. Southworth might have gotten a splash of cold water down his throat. This could have cause

a laryngospasm, blocking his airway and leaving him helpless.

Strainers

Strainer are a continuing danger to paddlers, especially at high water. In four of five accidents the victim's life jacket was not enough to keep him safe. On May 16th rec-kayaker William Easley, 51, washed into a tree on Arkansas' Crooked Creek at high water. His two companions were unable to rescue him. The next day Justin Parcel, a 34-year-old outdoor athlete, drowned on Arkansas' Kings River when his rec-kayak washed into a tree and capsized. Water levels were quite high; his friends said he'd had no problem with the river at lower flows. Then, on June 31st, Hannah Rippy, 25, died on Oklahoma's Illinois River after her rented raft hit a tree and pinned. This Class I "party river" was seeing very high use. In this case, no life vest was in use.

Two teenage girls drowned in similar incidents in June. A 15-year-old drowned on June 1st while kayaking Tennessee's Duck River with her parents. An upstream dam was releasing 1,000 cfs, four times the normal flow. When they reached Courtner's Mill, an old low head dam, they attempted to run a bypass channel. There was a strainer in the chute; the teen washed into it and was securely pinned. June 6th saw a similar death on Washington's Klickitat River. Fourteen-year-old Jezell Barrera was rafting with her family when their boat flipped on a downed tree and she was trapped underwater. The outfitter who made the rescue said that the strainer was only a few hundred yards below the put-in.

There was a strainer-related paddleboard accident on March 22nd. Kelly Hughes, 41, was doing a high-water run of Arizona's Verde River with friends when her paddleboard pinned on a strainer. She was tethered to the paddleboard and held underwater. Every year ropes and tethers lead to injuries and deaths. The AW Safety Code says that paddlers should never tie themselves to their gear. An exception can be made for a quick release tether that you

SAFETY

have personally tested in strong current. Most paddleboard tethers are designed for flatwater and won't release under pressure, posing a significant threat on moving water.

Low Head Dams

Low-head dams killed four paddlers in recreational kayaks this year. Jean Claude Mutabazi, 40, was paddling with three other people when he washed over a low-head dam on Michigan's St. Josephs River. The accident occurred on New Year's Day; rescuers found his body a few hours later. One of his companions paddled to safety and called for help; a second got out of the water quickly; a third grabbed a safety cable just upstream and held on until help arrived.

On April 25th, Michael Brannon, 32, missed the portage at a dam on Tennessee's Richland Creek. After kayaking over the dam and making it to shore safely, he got back in the water to rescue his dog. He was pulled into the hydraulic from downstream and drowned. A friend who had successfully portaged the dam called for help.

Michigan's Raisin River in Monroe, Michigan was the scene of another dam-related fatality. Four rec-kayakers ran a dam just upstream of Veteran's Park on May 23rd. Water Levels were high and no life vests were in use. Three of the four men survived, but Brandon Lee Flatford, 26, perished.

Finally, Joshua B. Jennings, 45, was paddling a sit-on-top kayak on the James River near Richmond, VA. He was not wearing a life vest. After he portaged Z-Dam he got too close to the backwash. He was pulled in, recirculated, and came out face down and unconscious. A fisherman pulled him into his canoe and got him ashore at the Pony Pasture Access. EMS arrived, started CPR, transported him to a hospital where he was pronounced dead.

Two rafters were killed running a low head dam on the Arkansas River below the Pueblo, Colorado whitewater park. Three

men fell out of the raft and were caught in the hydraulic below. Firefighters saved one man, but Ricardo Valencia Sanchez, 46, and his son, Jose Louis Valencia, 16, died. Both were entangled in ropes attached to the raft, which complicated the rescue.

Inflatable Kayak Pinning

On May 29th, Steven C. DeVroom, 69, died after his inflatable kayak pinned below a diversion dam on Utah's Weber River. Here's a description of the hazard and the rescue attempt by Dawna Little Zukirmi, a local livery operator:

"Last June, the high water pushed the barricade a foot or two downstream from the dam, so it was no longer a functional part of the diversion structure.... The barricade is laying on its side, creating a concrete shelf where current pushes under. It is not visible from upstream until you come right up on it, at which point it is too late to adjust your path.... The man was in a tandem inflatable kayak with another paddler.... The man's IK wrapped around the barricade and he was pinned on his side at about waist or chest level.... His head was above water but...the lower half of his body was probably pushed up under the barricade.... It is a big enough cavity under that concrete shelf that a whole body could easily be completely submerged and pinned under.... The rescuers struggled hard for about 15-20 minutes after I got there.... I estimate that he was in the 45-degree water for at least 30-40 minutes... The force of that little spillover made it almost impossible to get him unpinned, even with the help of seven rescuers who were in the water in close contact with him, and several more rescuers at the bank with ropes.... When they finally got him unpinned and to the bank, they said he didn't have a pulse and immediately started CPR."

Thanks to follow-up work from Ms. Zukirmi and others, the dam owner removed this hazard from the river.

Life Vests Not Worn

Life vests are essential for safe river paddling and swimming. People who fail to wear PFDs on the river put themselves at risk. We have reports of 11 accidents that could have been prevented if the victim had been wearing a PFD, including 6 rec-kayakers, 4 rafters, and an IK paddler. Almost all of the deaths occurred in easy whitewater with only one in Class III, at Balcony Falls on the James River. The stories are distressingly similar: a paddler flips unexpectedly after hitting a rock, turbulence, or nothing in particular and disappears underwater. The body turns up hours, and sometimes days, later.

Three of these deaths occurred on Washington's Spokane River within a few days of each other. This section has fast current and small waves, but no real obstacles. The water is very cold. In one instance a man swam out to help two kids who had capsized a kayak. They were wearing life vests, and survived. The man was not so equipped, and drowned. Two others drowned on Oklahoma's Illinois River, a popular float trip with a few easy rapids that was running high at 6,000 cfs.

Miscellaneous

Two other accidents are worthy of note. Although it did not occur in whitewater, the April 2nd deaths of Mauve Kennedy Townsend McKean and her son in Chesapeake Bay has useful lessons to teach us. The family was quarantining at a waterfront house. Her kids were playing soccer, and their ball rolled into the water. Mrs. Kennedy and her son launched a canoe to get the ball. The ball drifted out farther, and they followed. Suddenly they were outside their protected cove, in an open area where unusually strong winds created large waves. They flipped quickly, and were pushed farther out into bay. They had no life vests and were now in desperate trouble.

As outdoorsmen and whitewater paddlers, we learn to identify dangerous conditions and avoid them, and have the gear and

skills that allow us to handle rough water safely. Nonetheless, we can all relate to a situation when we inadvertently move out of our comfort zone into something far too dangerous. I sometimes ask myself when in an unfamiliar environment, "What am I doing right now that an experienced person would think was foolish or ignorant?"

On June 22nd, an unidentified woman was tubing Arkansas' Spring Creek when she fell into the water and was pulled into an underwater pothole. Such features are found in areas of karst geology; there is another similar death in the AW Database. Many river hazards are visible to the trained eye, but some are not. There is an element of random danger in all river running that we will never completely eliminate.

Close Calls

There were a number of close calls reported to American Whitewater in the past six months. The ones selected for this report involve the young children of inexperienced paddlers.

May 2nd saw a near miss on Yellow Breeches Creek south of Harrisburg, PA. Christina Brandon Wise reported what happened via Facebook:

"Went out for a nice day of fishing.... Steve said I just seen a canoe flip over...So I said, 'I'll walk down check it out.' Next thing you know I screamed so loud everyone came running. This family had two little boys, one of which was on the canoe...and another who was stuck under the canoe from current.... Apparently a tree fell down and the tree stump was sticking out. So

when canoe flipped it wrapped under the tree and the boy's leg was in between. The dad got caught by current and went down the creek.

"Brandon jumped in...to swim over to the canoe.... We then all threw out a rope to Brandon. He tied himself off, and we all held on for life, 'cause the father of the boys used our rope to get back out to his son. He and Brandon then ended up getting the boy up far enough. He was unconscious and Brandon held his head up while his amazing dad performed CPR."

A May 16th float trip down West Virginia's South Fork, South Branch of the Potomac took an awful turn when a family of six was swept into a strainer. A story in the Mineral County, WV *Daily Tribune* tells the full story. Five of the six kayaks capsized

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CONTACT Bethany Overfield : 1.866.262.8429 or bethany@americanwhitewater.org

SAFETY

and Joshua Shirk, eight, was snagged by his life vest strap and held underwater. As the family washed downriver, two fishermen who were also first responders heard the commotion and ran to help. They were able to free the boy after a desperate struggle. He had been under water for ten minutes and was completely lifeless. They started CPR. Paramedics arrived, and he was taken to a local hospital then airlifted to Ruby Hospital in Morgantown. He's now making a strong recovery. He has a long way to go, but his parents are hopeful.

May 24th saw a similar incident on Michigan's Rogue River. After flipping, a kayak washed downstream with a three-year-old boy stuck inside. His PFD was caught on the seat. Two other paddlers, drawn by his mother's screams, ran downstream to where the kayak had hung up in a shallow place. They waded out and rescued the boy.

Matthew Waltz reported a truly scary incident on May 25th. A father and son in double duckies were paddling Georgia's Cartacay River when they flipped in Class II Whirlpool Rapid. Here's what happened:

"The Father was able to get his son's head above water but something was wrong. We rushed to assist.... As the current pulled the boat downriver the father held his son as high in the water as possible. I asked the boy to grab the handle on the front of my boat but he couldn't. His had limited range of movement of his arm. We soon learned that he was entangled and somehow attached to the boat and a paddle. I made a very quick decision to jump out of my boat.... Once I was swimming in the water I was able to secure the young boy and discover he was wrapped around his one arm twice with a paddle leash and that same leash was also wrapped around his leg once. I was able to free him and swim him and his dad to shore river right, just past the whirlpool eddy. A Class II rapid and a pretty sunny day almost turned tragic. A little bit of information and I am sure

that father would have never attached the paddle leashes."

A group of expert kayakers provided vital support to first responders called out to rescue a family whose car had gone off the road into Utah's Logan River. The car was facing upstream in the middle of a Class III rapid! Marc Nelson and his group of experienced kayakers were shuttling along the road just after the accident occurred. Marc is an experienced rock climber and the rest of the group was trained in swiftwater rescue. One was a swiftwater trainer who had worked with fire companies.

Marc approached the Incident Commander and offered to help; he was told to "stand by", which he did. Time passed. As they waited, he continued to talk with the Incident Commander. Their biggest challenge was getting a rope across the river. Marc assured the IC that they could do this. The rope would also need to be securely anchored; Marc was familiar with the anchor the firefighters wanted and demonstrated it. After being given the go-ahead, they ferried the rope across the river and anchored it on the far shore.

After setting up the line, the group set and sat downstream safety for several hours. It was very fortunate that they had the time, and the car was aligned with the current and quite stable.. Five people were brought ashore using the rope. Rescues of inexperienced, poorly equipped civilians by professional rescuers move much more slowly than those involving experienced paddlers, and first responders are naturally wary of accepting help from unknown civilians. The kayakers' respectful, patient, cooperative approach gained the trust of the first responders and made a vital contribution to the rescue.

COVID-19 and Whitewater

Risk management is something we practice on every whitewater trip, balancing the dangers against the rewards of being on the water. Although we can't eliminate the risk, there is a lot we can do to avoid injuries

and fatalities. The COVID-19 Pandemic has forced everyone in the country to manage a new risk. As with paddling, there are a variety of approaches. Some people are very cavalier about the danger of infection, others are terrified. Most of us are somewhere in between. This intersects with whitewater paddling when planning shuttles and hanging out before and after runs. Because there is so much we don't know about the virus, I encourage everyone to be cautious and sensible. I'd also ask that you respect those who are more cautious than you are about pandemic precautions, just as you would someone who portages a rapid or declines a run because of high water.

You Can Help!

American Whitewater needs *your* help to gather the accident reports that we share with other paddlers. First person accounts from experienced paddlers, newspaper articles, forwarded emails, and social media posts are all important. Since many articles are inaccurate or incomplete, clarifying comments from paddlers familiar with the area are really helpful. Although serious incidents involving skilled whitewater paddlers are quite rare, they can teach us useful lessons, help us avoid trouble, and show how to better manage emergencies. Accurate accounts of these accidents also keep malicious rumors from at bay, something to consider in this age of Internet gossip.

To report a whitewater accident, near miss, or serious injury, please go to the Safety page on americanwhitewater.org, click "report an accident", and enter the information. Or you can email me at ccwalbridge@cs.com or message "Charlie Walbridge" on Facebook. Feel free to share newspaper articles, chat room posts, or even rumors! I'm not an "investigator," but I will often run down sketchy reports to find out what happened. I can also help you prepare an accident report if needed.

STAFF HIGHLIGHT

AW STAFF HIGHLIGHT: KESTREL KUNZ

BY EVAN STAFFORD



AW's Southern Rockies Stewardship Assistant exploring from camp on a trip down the Dolores River in SW Colorado
Photo by Hayley Stuart

How did you get introduced to paddlesports?

Both of my parents are avid paddlers. My dad used to teach at Madawaska Kanu Centre and my brother and I grew up doing multi-day whitewater canoe and rafting trips in remote areas of Ontario and Quebec. I did my first multi-day river trip when I was five and found a very large Moose skull. I carried the Moose skull with me for the next eight days (my mom still uses it in her science classroom), and rivers have been an integral piece of my life since then.

What's your most embarrassing paddlesports moment?

I was in a kayak camp in high school and when I took off my life jacket at the end of the day my bathing suit had fallen

completely off! This was a very traumatizing experience at the time, but now that I live and paddle primarily in Colorado I am always in a dry suit so that problem is solved.

What's your ritual before running an intimidating rapid for the first time?

I have had my fair share of pre-kayaking panic attacks. I can't claim to be an avid yogi, but deep yogic nasal breathing has been my go to when I am really nervous. I also try to avoid drinking coffee at all costs as it makes me extra jittery and nervous (not to mention the nervous caffeine poops). As soon as I am on the water, though, the nerves always go away. Flow state, baby!!

Who has influenced you the most in your paddlesport career?

My dad, Brian Kunz. My dad taught me everything I know about rivers, from canoeing to rafting to kayaking. I am so grateful for his patience and commitment to teach me how to kayak; his infectious love for rivers has made me the kayaking enthusiast and river advocate that I am today. His latest hobby is building his own canoes! I just wish that I was able to paddle with him and my mom more often. My dad has also been an AW member for decades and I first learned about AW from the Journal that was always on the coffee table. My parents think I have a pretty cool job.



Kestrel getting ready to launch off into the Pine Creek giant slalom race during the FIBArk Whitewater Festival in which she took the women's first place
Photo by Lizzy Bauer

What was the first AW project you engaged with?

I helped write a grant to Patagonia to fund my first summer job with American Whitewater as the outreach intern. I traveled around to all the paddling events in Colorado and that's where I first connected with a lot of long-time members and new members! Since then I have joined the stewardship staff full time and couldn't be happier to be a part of such an incredible team and have the opportunity to protect the rivers that I love as my main job.

River craft of choice?

You will most often see me in my Pyranha 9R, but I enjoy all crafts. I have most recently gotten really into multi-day self-support stand up paddle boarding.

What's your favorite river?

My favorite river is the Upper Cheakamus River in Whistler, British Columbia and my favorite US river is the Salt River in Arizona. But really, my favorite river is whatever new river I get to explore for the first time.

in New Mexico. Legislation was introduced this May and so I hope to get my bucket list achievement soon!

What's on your bucket list for an AW achievement?

Playing a key role in successful Wild and Scenic River legislation. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act is the most ironclad legislation to protect rivers from future development, and it is also the most controversial in the arid West. Colorado has only one Wild and Scenic River (Cache la Poudre). I am currently working with a coalition of organizations to designate 450 river miles in the Gila and San Francisco headwaters

Kestrel, age five, holding Moosey Head on her first multi-day river trip down the Riviere Bazin in Quebec.
Photo by Brian Kunz



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AFFILIATE CLUBS

AW'S ORIGINAL PURPOSE

BY BETHANY OVERFIELD

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

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

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

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

Supporting Affiliate Clubs

Alabama

Coosa River Paddling Club, Wetumpka

Alaska

Fairbanks Paddlers, Fairbanks

Colorado

Colorado Whitewater Assn, Denver
Dolores River Boating Advocate, Dolores

Georgia

Georgia Canoeing Association Inc, Winston

Kentucky

Bluegrass Wildwater Association, Lexington
Viking Canoe Club, Louisville

New Jersey

KCCNY, Flanders

North Carolina

West Asheville Canoe and Kayak Organization (WACKO), Asheville

Ohio

Columbus Outdoor Pursuits, Columbus
Keelhaulers, Cleveland

Oregon

Oregon Whitewater Association, Tigard

South Carolina

Foothills Paddling Club, Greenville
Palmetto Paddlers, Columbia

Washington

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

Affiliate Club by State

Alaska

Nova River Runners Inc., Chickaloon

Alabama

Huntsville Canoe Club, Huntsville

Arizona

Outdoors Unlimited, Flagstaff

California

Chico Paddleheads, Chico
Gold Country Paddlers, Placerville
River City Whitewater Club, Sacramento
Shasta Paddlers, Redding
Smith River Alliance, Crescent City

Colorado

Friends of the Yampa, Steamboat Springs
Rocky Mountain Outdoor Center, Buena Vista
San Miguel Whitewater Asso, Telluride
Team Colorado Whitewater Racing Club, Longmont
Upper Colorado Private Boaters Asso, Glenwood Springs

Connecticut

Housatonic Area Canoe & Kayak Sq, Lakeville

Delaware

AMC Delaware Valley Chapter, Oaks (PA)

Indiana

Hoosier Canoe Club, Brownsburg
Ohio Valley Paddlers, Evansville

Iowa

Iowa Whitewater Coalition, W. Des Moines

Kentucky

Elkhorn Paddlers, Lexington

Maine

Penobscot Paddle & Chowder Society, Freeport

Maryland

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

Minnesota

Rapids Riders, Eagan

Missouri

Missouri Whitewater Association, St. Louis
Ozark Mountain Paddlers, Springfield
Ozark Wilderness Waterways Club, Kansas City

Montana

Beartooth Paddlers Society, Billings

Nevada

Sierra Nevada Whitewater Club, Reno

New Hampshire

Ledyard Canoe Club, Hanover
New England Canoe and Kayak Association, Contoocook

New Jersey

AMC Delaware Valley Chapter, Oaks (PA)

New Mexico

Adobe Whitewater Club of New Mexico, Albuquerque

New York

ADK Schenectady, Schenectady
Zoar Valley Paddling Club, Machias

North Carolina

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

Ohio

Friends of the Crooked River, Akron

Oregon

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

Pennsylvania

AMC Delaware Valley Chapter, Oaks (PA)
Benscreek Canoe Club, Johnstown
Canoe Club of Greater Harrisburg, Harrisburg
Conewago Canoe Club, York
Keystone Canoe Club, Mertztown

Lehigh Valley Canoe Club, Lehigh Valley
Mach One Slalom Team, State College
Philadelphia Canoe Club, Philadelphia
Three Rivers Paddling Club, Bridgeville

Rhode Island

Rhode Island Canoe and Kayak Association,
Hope Valley

Tennessee

Chota Canoe Club, Knoxville
Clean Water Expected in East Tennessee,
Sevierville
East Tennessee Whitewater Club, Oak Ridge
Eastman Recreation Club, Kingsport
Tennessee Scenic River Association, Nashville
Tennessee Valley Canoe Club, Knoxville

Texas

Houston Canoe Club, Houston

Utah

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

Vermont

Vermont Paddlers Club, Montpelier

Virginia

Canoe Cruisers Association, Middlebury
Coastal Canoeists, Richmond
Float Fishermen of Virginia, Roanoke

Washington

Spokane Canoe & Kayak Club, Spokane
The Mountaineers, Seattle
Yakima River Runners, Selah

Washington, DC

Canoe Cruisers Association

West Virginia

Dbl Z! Whitewater Club, Fayetteville
WV Wildwater Assn, S. Charleston

Wisconsin

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

Wyoming

American Packrafting Association, Wilson
Jackson Hole Kayak Club, Jackson

Ontario

Guelph Kayak Club, Elora
Ontario Voyageurs Kayak Club, Otonabee

National

Team River Runner

DISCOUNTED AW MEMBERSHIP FOR AFFILIATE CLUB MEMBERS

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

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

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

JOIN AMERICAN WHITewater AS A CLUB AFFILIATE!

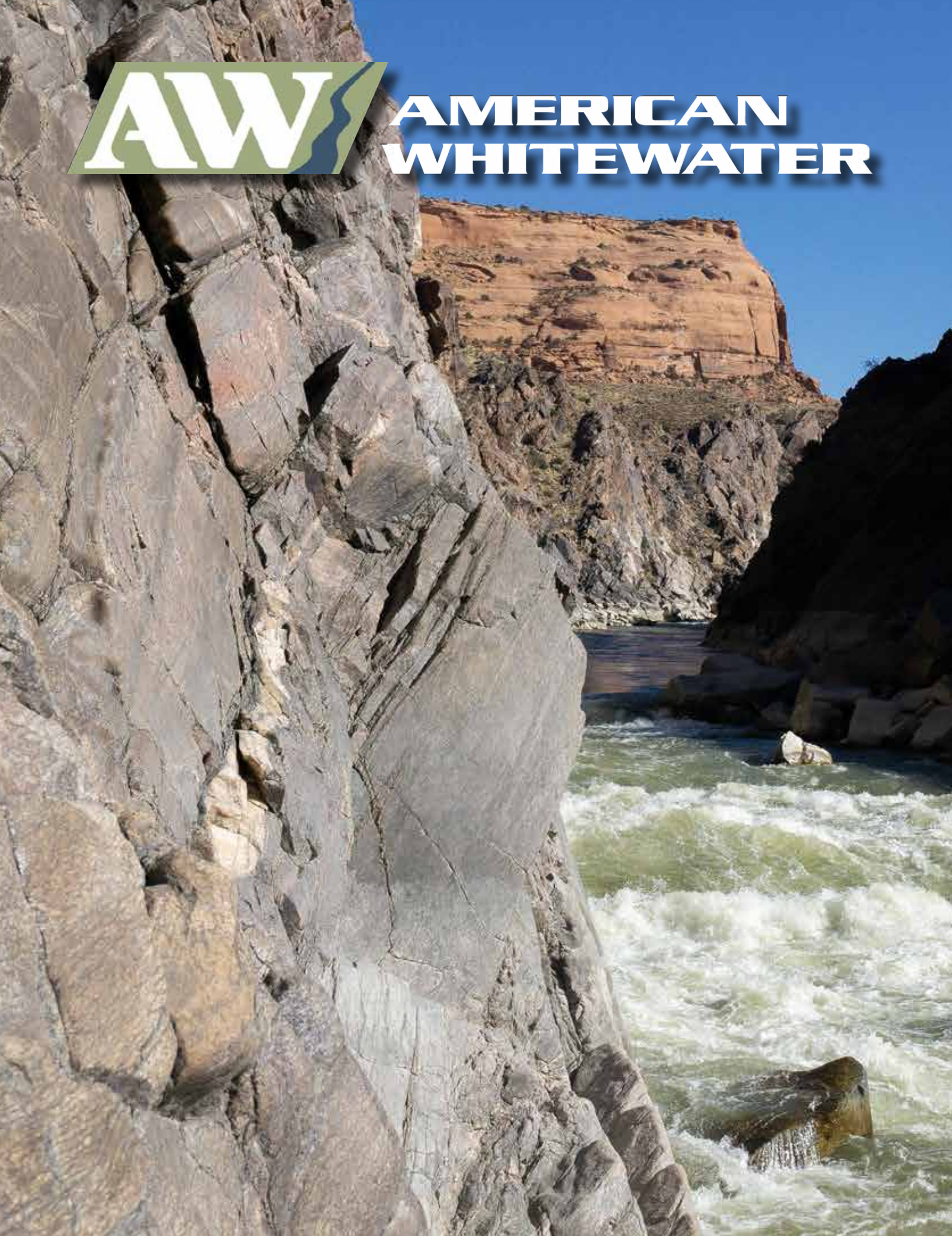
10 REASONS TO JOIN AW AS AN AFFILIATE CLUB

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

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



AMERICAN WHITEWATER



The Strength of Our Voice is Your Membership

| | |
|------------------------------|---------|
| Standard w/AW Journal | \$35 |
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| Platinum Paddler w/Hoodie | \$250 |
| Explorer w/Watershed Bag | \$500 |
| Lifetime | \$1,000 |
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*Incentive gifts change from time to time, please check the website for the latest rewards.

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