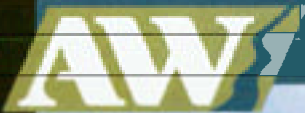


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# american whitewater

September / October 2002

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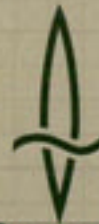


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Forum .....	4
Corner Charc .....	8
Letters .....	9
Conservation .....	15

- California Rivers Legislation is on a Roll

Access .....	17
--------------	----

- Top 10 Conservation and Access Issues
- White Salmon Access Secured
- Zirkelbach Colorado Access Fund Established

Events .....	31
--------------	----

- A W and Teva Whitewater National Championships
- A W Sanctioned Series at an All Time High
- Riversense: A Film About You

River Voices .....	76
--------------------	----

- Strength and Conditioning for Whitewater Enthusiast
- The Real Zonedoggy
- They Call Us "Kayaker Trash" ...and Maybe for Good Reason
- Memorial to H2O Joe

Safety .....	84
--------------	----

- January - June 2002 by Charlie Walbridge

## Our Apologies

In the table of contents of the July issue the article entitled The Sniper and the Stallion was mistakenly attributed to Beezer Molton. It was, in fact, written by W. Scott Morris.

- Cover photo by Barbara Brown©: American Whitewater staff (left to right): Nick Lipkowski, Jessie Rice, Michael Phelan, Risa Shimoda, Bob Taylor, Scott Collins, A.J. McIntyre, Jason Robertson, Kevin Colburn (missing: John Gangemi, Carla Miner)



Printed on Recycled Paper

American Whitewater Journal  
Volume XLIII, No. 5

## F e a t u r e s

### Whitewater Santa Comes to California

Whitewater Releases on North Fork Feather River

by Lila Thomas **36**

### Kayaking in Iceland

by Jon Heloar Runarsson **42**

### A Divine Kayak Expedition for Action Asia

by Inka Trollås **51**

### A Legend Lost

by Gary Edgeworth **55**

### When A Legend Dies

by John Mattson **58**

### A Cricket Match on the River

by Barry Tuscano **61**

### Crime & Punishment on the South Merced

by Ambrose Tuscano **66**



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# YAHOO!!!!

It was a dark and stormy night.

The fancy SUV hesitated, then charged into the torrent that had been a quiet street just minutes before. It plowed through the deluge, throwing a majestic flume more than twenty feet into the air. The murky water lapped first at the hubcaps, then at the bumpers, and finally round the fenders. By now the SUV and its occupants were midway through their daring ford, and for a breathtaking moment it almost seemed as if they might make it to safety.

Almost... but then calamity struck! Water poured under the hood and the vehicle lurched to a stop. Then the SUV started to spin in the current end for end. Next it started to bob and bounce downstream, slowly at first, but soon with alarming speed. That SUV could no longer rightly be labeled an all-terrain vehicle; now it was a rudderless boat... destined soon to become a submarine.

When the SUV lodged on a new fallen strainer, its terrified occupants climbed out the windows onto the roof. They were waving their arms and screaming.

Just then the Goddess of Meteorology and the Queen Mother of the Weather Channel, Jeanetta Jones, appeared in the foreground, her arms folded sternly. Jeanetta was pregnant again, but that is not why she was looking so cranky. She was showing her displeasure with the fiasco that was being projected behind her.

Now those of you addicted to the Weather Channel, and what self-respecting whitewater boater isn't, know that Jeanetta usually has a lovely disposition. But now her countenance was as dark as the stormy night.

"During a flood you must **never** attempt to drive your vehicle through moving water!" Jeanetta said emphatically. "Never underestimate the power of moving water," she continued. "You could be swept to your death."

"These people were lucky," she observed reproachfully, as the hapless victims were plucked by a helicopter from the roof of the SW, just seconds before it rolled under the strainer and disappeared into the maelstrom. "Very lucky, indeed!"

Sitting on the other side of my living room, my friend Alicia rolled her eyes. "Those Weather Channel people tell you that all the time and I just hate it," she said. "It is an insult to peoples' intelligence."

"That's for sure," my buddy Troy added.

"Anybody dumb enough to drive into a flood has no one to blame but themselves. Who would be that moronic?" They glanced at me, no doubt expecting one of my usual witty retorts... perhaps a reflection upon Darwin's Theory of Natural Selection. But on that particular dark and stormy night, your intrepid editor chose to remain uncharacteristically silent. And not without reason.

Unbeknownst to Alicia and Troy, I had recently experienced a little vehiculoaquatic misadventure of my own. As a consequence the subject of people who drive vehicles into raging floodwaters was a touchy subject.

But that was several months ago. Maybe it's time to come clean.



me set the stage. Another dark and stormy night. Well, actually a dark and stormy February afternoon. Nearly dusk. I was driving along Route 281, a remote road that parallels the headwaters of the Big Sandy not far from the West Virginia-Pennsylvania line. I had just paddled Mill Run, a tributary of the Youghiogheny River that is so minuscule that it is navigable only a few days each year. But there had been plenty of water; every stream within fifty miles was spilling over its banks.

The gauge on the Big Sandy at Rockville was already registering twelve feet. To put this in perspective, most prudent people do not paddle the Big Sandy when it is higher than seven. Flood warnings were in effect; lowlanders were scrambling to higher ground. It was a kayaker's Christmas.

During the past twenty years I have driven 281 thousands of times. It certainly was no secret to me that when the Big Sandy raged, it flooded a section of the road. I'm sure I had detoured around this mess at least ten times;

the detour takes ten minutes. It is no big deal.

I don't really know what was different about that evening. I wasn't in a hurry. I wasn't in a bad mood. I wasn't drunk. Maybe I just hadn't been getting enough. At any rate, I was in the mood for a little excitement.

As I rounded the bend that drops into the valley, I spotted the barricade that the local cops had placed across the road. "Danger, Road Flooded" the sign said. Fifty feet beyond the barricade Route 281 disappeared into the raging Big Sandy. There it remained for about four hundred feet, before emerging on the outskirts of hamlet of Elliottsville.

Now let me make a couple of points in my defense. First, I was quite familiar with this road and I remembered that the stretch buried under the swirling water was almost completely flat. At least I *thought* I remembered that. Secondly, you could still see the yellow line in the middle of the road under the water for the first hundred feet. Finally, the cops hadn't put the barricade the whole way across the road/river. It was still possible to drive around it. This suggested to me that there was no absolute prohibition to driving through the wash; the cops just wanted to encourage folks driving low set vehicles, like Volkswagen bugs, to consider an alternate route. Surely the police figured that good old country boys like me, driving four-wheel drive pickups, would sail right on through that ornery puddle.

I hesitated for a moment, just like the driver in the Weather Channel footage. Then I mounted my charge. No, I did not let out the classic red neck battle cry, "Hey y'all watch this!!!"

I just whispered it to myself.

Staying in the center of the road was easy until the water got so deep that you couldn't see the yellow line.

Then it got a little harder. Perhaps a more timid driver would have taken that as a sign, and backed out. But, not me. It was just starting to get fun. I pushed a little harder on the pedal, thinking that speed and momentum would carry me right on through. I glanced in the rearview mirror and proudly observed that I was throwing one hell of a wake. It was spectacular.

I was still grinning when the water reached the middle of my hubcaps. I was still confident when it spewed around my front fenders. Actually it wasn't until it started to surge over the hood that uncertainty started to gnaw at my gut. I put the pedal to the metal and hoped for the best.

Here's a question for you. How long does it take to plunge from an adrenaline crazed state of euphoria to the deepest depths of despair?

Answer: About as long as it takes for a 96 Dodge Dakota to sputter and stall in the middle of three feet of fast flowing water.

Another question: What are the chances that such a vehicle will start when you turn over the ignition?



Answer: About the same as my chances of beating Andrew McEwan in the next Gauley Race.

Final question: What did Bob do next?

Answer: Decorated his soggy cake of stupidity with a thick icing of blasphemy.

After the cursing was over, I decided it was time for prayer. Maybe I should have tried that first, but like Lisa Simpson says, "Prayer is the last refuge of a scoundrel." After I finished praying, it was time for action. After all, I had no way of knowing whether the Big Sandy was falling or, God forbid, rising. And I suddenly remembered that several years ago after just such a flood we had chuckled about a ruined automobile lying upside down in the middle of the Big Sandy creekbed. That was certainly a cheery thought.

Admittedly Route 281 doesn't see a lot of traffic. But it is a favorite of kayakers traveling to and from northern West Virginia. Not just boaters from Pittsburgh, mind you, but Keelhaulers from Cleveland. My pickup is fairly well known in these circles. There was no way that I was going to let any of them see my beloved Dakota lying bottom up in the middle of the creek like a harpooned whale.

I quickly donned my paddling pants, grabbed my throw rope, and clambered out through the side window. I didn't dare open the door. Sloshing through the thigh deep

ice water, I tied one end of the rope onto the front bumper and carabinered the other end onto a nearby pine. At least my precious truck wouldn't float away.

Just about then I spotted an agitated man standing where the road reemerged from the creek. Even at that distance I could tell that he was impressed with my driving skill and judgement. I waded up the road to his side.

"Did y'all stall out down thar?" he asked. It didn't seem to me like the brightest question. I wanted to tell him, "No, I just stopped to check my lobster trap." But I decided against it. After all, I was hardly in a position to pass judgement on anyone else's intelligence. I'm sure he was thinking that I was certainly no rocket scientist.

"I seen what happened and I already cal't for help," he said.

I didn't know whether to thank or strangle him. Help might mean that my truck would be snatched from the eve of destruction. On the other hand, it almost certainly meant that my predicament had become public knowledge. Before you laugh, remember that there was a kayak tied to the roof of my stranded vehicle. So, in a way, your honor was at stake, too.

Now on rainy winter evenings there isn't a lot to do in Elliottsville. Nor in the neighboring communities of Gibbon's Glade and Wharton Furnace. Small wonder that ogling

dummies who get stuck in the creek is so popular. Within a matter of minutes there were at least twenty spectators to my predicament. They came on foot and in pickups and on ATVs. The poured out of the woods like deer to a salt block.


Great, I thought. All I need now is Jeanetta Jones and the Weather Channel video crew! I tried to ignore the ever-expanding crowd and look inconspicuous. Perhaps they would think the truck belonged to someone else. But that seemed unlikely since I was the only one drenched from head to toe and shivering uncontrollably.

Fortunately a gigantic guy with an even more gigantic Bigfoot pickup appeared. It was one of those jacked up jobs, with monstrous balloon tires and dual exhausts and a mega winch on the front and Dale Earnhart stickers on every window. It had chrome spotlights on the roof and chrome bugle horns on the hood. It was a manly vehicle. If my truck was Tom Cruise, this guy's truck was Arnold Schwarzenegger! The driver surveyed my sorry situation, spat on the road, and started to grin. Clearly dragging vehicles out of floods was his favorite thing. I knew I was going to like this guy.


"I'll back down as far as I kin," he grunted. "If'n your rope will stretch far enough to reach my hitch, I'll haul your sorry ass on out of thar."

I waded back to my truck and untied it

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from the tree as he backed in till his tailgate hit the water. My rope was just long enough to reach his hitch. After I secured it, I climbed into my cab through the side window and we were off.

Getting towed through three feet of Class I whitewater is like wakeboarding in a pickup truck. It is way kewl. You should try it some day. Really!

I know the Elliottsville spectators enjoyed our little version of Cypress Gardens. You should have heard the applause. The Wharton Township cops apparently liked it too. They arrived just in time to see my Dakota emerge from the murky waters of the Big Sandy. I thought for sure that I was in for a lecture and a ticket, but they just laughed and laughed. Then they drove away. A lot of the other spectators left too. I couldn't blame them; it was starting to snow. Besides, I was not sorry to see them go.

But I was not out trouble yet. True, I was out of Sh\*# Creek, but I still didn't have a paddle. The water on my clothes was starting to freeze and I was nearly hypothermic. As I watched the rivulets cascading from under my hood, I doubted that my engine would ever run again. I accepted this philosophically, after all my pickup already had 190,000 miles on it and, like Emily Dickenson said, "Nothing gold can stay." I tried the ignition again but heard nothing but a feeble click.

"If n you let it dry out a bit it might just start. I've witnessed stranger things," said an optimistic guy, who was driving a Pa. Department of Transportation pickup. "I'll run up the road and fetch a can of ether."

I wasn't very hopeful, but it seemed worth a try. While I waited one of the remaining locals threw an oily old blanket over my shoulders. The others gathered round, they clearly wanted to talk. They were a small but diverse group, but I sensed right away that they were different than the rest of their neighbors, the ones who had abandoned the scene as soon as my truck reached terra firma. Of course I still anticipated a lot of condescension, but that is not what I got. What I got was helpful advice.

And not the kind of advice you might have expected. It turns out that all these people were kindred spirits. They didn't think I was least bit stupid at all for trying to drive through the flood! They seemed to take driving through floods as a matter of course. In fact, I soon learned they considered it nothing but fun. They did not fault my intelligence, only my technique.

Over the years every single one of them had stranded vehicles in the Big Sandy. That is how they perfected their puddle jumping methodology. One by one, they shared their secrets.

"I mind the first time I got stuck in that puddle," one jovial guy about my age said. "Took the shop three days to get her run-

ning. But it was still under warranty, and I told 'em my wife dun it."

So that's why guys get married, I thought.

"I find that if you stick to the side of the road closest to the creek, you generally fare better. Don't make much sense... but that's how it usually is," said a weathered old farmer.

"What you gotta' watch out for is water getting sucked up your exhaust," added a skinny kid dressed in camo. "Before you launch, slip her into the lowest gear and then give her plenty of gas. That way you'll have plenty of RPMs, but you won't be going too fast. And don't take your foot off the gas, even for a second. If you do she'll suck water up your tailpipe like Mountain Dew through a straw."

But a plump gray haired lady who was almost certainly someone's grandma quickly became my favorite. "All that's well and good," she said, "but when I'm feeling gamey and going for a big, deep one, I always slip the fan belt off. It's the spinnin' of the fan that throws the damned water up on the ignition. That's what stalls them nine times out of ten. You put a stop to that, and you could cross the Atlantic!"

The others nodded respectfully. This was the Queen Mother of Puddle Jumping. This was the Goddess of Yahoo!

I guarantee this lady could whip Jeanetta's butt before you could say "Flash Flood."

I found out later that she drives a school bus. Isn't that reassuring? I'll bet those kids have lots of fun!

About then the Penn DOT guy came back and I popped the hood. We sprayed about ten times more ether into my carburetor than the can recommended and I hit the ignition. At first my Dakota just made a sad little noise. Then there was a sequence of deafening explosions that sounded real encouraging. The guy sprayed some more ether into the general vicinity of the carb and my engine started to cough and sputter. Suddenly my Dakota started to jump up and down, like it was having a seizure. Finally it started to dance... and to roar.

Oh, what a happy sound!

Of course I didn't dare shut it off. So I quickly dropped the hood, thanked my new friends and sped away. When I got home I siphoned the Sandy water out of my cab. I ate the trout that were swimming around in there for supper.

Since then my truck has been running like a clock. It's a clean, mean puddle-jumping machine. Just like me!

But I learned an important lesson that dark and stormy night. You can slip the fan belt off a Dodge Dakota in less than five minutes.

So come the next flood... I'll be heading back to Elliottsville. I've got some wild and crazy friends there and, Jeanetta Jones be damned, we're gonna have us some fun!

Bob Gedekoh



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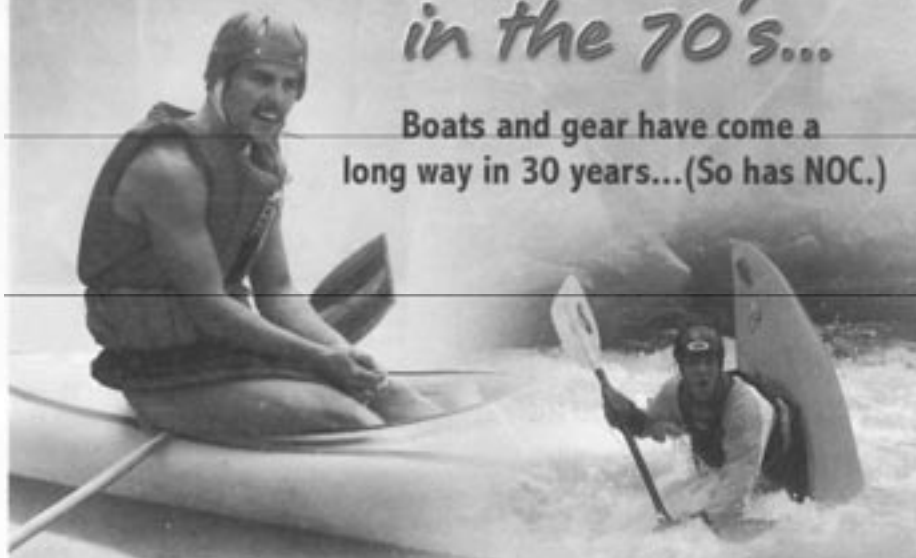
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The Gauley River drawdown releases provide the most well publicized schedule of whitewater in the country. At one time, this was a time during which we simply hoped for a late rain, or started thinking about traditional wintertime sports ahead. In the eighties, the Gauley became the uniquely celebrated 'post-Labor Day' river destination and has grown to bring thousands of rafters and paddlers, and millions of dollars of revenue to the deserving economy of central West Virginia.



Risa Shimoda  
Executive Director  
American Whitewater

Today, there are nearly a dozen rivers running according to specifically negotiated settlements with dam managers (utility companies or Army Corp of Engineers) thanks to the efforts of AW volunteers and staff members. First of all, restoring these rivers (well, okay - to extent we can...) has been great for the rivers. As at the Gauley, restoration has revived many rural economies and enabled us all to extend our paddling season at these now common destinations:

- Gauley (Mid-September to early October)
- Beaver (September)
- Moose (October)
- Russell Fork (October)
- The Deerfield (six days in September and October)
- Occee (to the first weekend in November)
- Tallulah (November)


And...ta dah... two 'born again' rivers will have been celebrated with intense boater attendance and community enthusiasm this fall:

**North Fork Feather (CA):** first-week-end-of-the-month releases will continue in September and October (releases started for the first time in June 2002)


**Racquette (NY):** the first ever, scheduled release - Labor Day Weekend Saturday

California, Oregon and Washington have several relicensing projects underway that will yield additional scheduled releases (the timing is still undetermined at this point) Chelan (Sept) ... What can we say - the western power companies were late to the licensing table, so their licenses are expiring later! If you are interested in helping keep paddlers at the bargaining table on the Pit, Klamath, Sandy, Stanislaus, Clackamas, Spokane, Sultan or others on the table, please step forward, grit your teeth and help us make them happen.

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## Notes on Preparing to Die

By Risa Shimoda  
AW Executive Director

When we met, David Cohen was nearing the end of his life, not certain whether candles would adorn his 48<sup>th</sup> birthday cake on July 15th. He was dying of colon cancer and he and his family were receiving able coaching by the local hospice. Resting with grace and peace, he was wearing his AW Ender Club tee shirt and getting supreme joy out of 'attending his own funeral,' as he put it, greeting friends and family members from the den of his home.

David Cohen described himself as an 'everyman' boater, saying his life had followed a familiar and enviable path. He first learned to paddle at the Nantahala Outdoor Center in the mid-eighties. He managed to fit time for paddling into his professional and family life (he has a wife and two daughters). His time on the river included annual trips with his buddies Lloyd, Bart and John. Their friendship had been reinforced by their common, shared folio of river tales. Two years ago David fulfilled his lifelong dream by visiting the Chile's Futelefu, paddling with Chris Spelius and Ken Kastdorf. The Fu was everything he had hoped it would be.

As we chatted, David hatched an idea to support his favorite sport and source of fun, whitewater boating. Because paddling has been such a source of personal reward and has been the basis for so many irreplaceable friendships, visitors at David's memorial service will be asked to contribute to American Whitewater, the one organization that exists to protect whitewater rivers and their recreational access. David has also asked his family to encourage contributions to American Whitewater in his memory.

As members of the paddling community, you have played a valuable role in the life of this man. Seriously. Each of you participates in the sport that he loved. Some of you knew and paddled with David on his favorite rivers. David said he loved paddling with others and vowed early on never to paddle alone. We always felt that paddling solo was simply not as much fun as having someone else along to bear witness to a spectacular trick, or the undeniable goof up.

Few of us will have the opportunity to plan such a thoughtful memorial. David and his gesture to raise funds for AW is heroic. He has taken some of his precious remaining time to place his love for paddling on a very special pedestal.



## Saluting Phyllis Horowitz... We're Gonna Miss You!!!!

In 1986 Marge Cline, then President of the American Whitewater Affiliation, was grilling pork chops in the back yard of Phyllis Horowitz in Phoenicia, New York. Phyllis was sewing as Editor of the Kayak and Canoe Club of New York's Newsletter, and Marge really admired her work and ability to sell advertising. Marge asked Phyllis to join the board of AW and the rest is history. Phyllis sewed on the volunteer AW Board from 1986 to 1990, and became AW's Executive Director and sole employee in 1990.

Between '86 and 2002 Phyllis sewed as the business face of AW. Phyllis also managed our membership, services and development. She single handedly grew AW's membership from less than 1,500 to over 8,000!

When Phyllis came on board, we all knew that AW needed to improve its business practices. Phyllis took it upon herself to learn about the operation of non-profit organizations. She organized the books, oversaw membership services, sold the advertising and managed countless events and fund-raisers. She changed AW from a small whitewater club to a productive and professional organization. She forced us to be fiscally responsible. Phyllis was always the voice of moderation and reason. And there were plenty of times when we needed that voice!

Many of the tasks that Phyllis faced were low profile and less than glamorous, but because she did them so well, AW was able to operate in a way that allowed our dedicated volunteers and growing staff to focus on the access.

safety and conservation issues so important to our members. None of the things that AW has accomplished since 1986 would have been possible without Phyllis's tireless efforts. She provided the "means" by which we



Top bottom: Phyllis Horowitz with her Morgan mare, Starfire, and her new granddaughter, Bailey Rose. "From the Sept 1986 issue of American White Water. Phyllis Horowitz (far right) in her glory....posing as a Carmelite Kayaking nun-gold lame sprayskirt, neoprene high heels and Munn Gam stockings. This woman means business!

reached the "ends." Because of her work with AW Phyllis deserves to be remembered, as one of this country's most dedicated and productive whitewater conservationists.

Perhaps Phyllis will most be remembered for her indefatigable efforts to make the Gauley Festival the premiere whitewater event in the United States. She began with the inception of the Gauley Marketplace and Silent Auction (with Chris Koll) in 1987. And for the past twelve years, Phyllis and husband Denis McLane have been the pillars upon which Gauley Fest stood. They literally made the party go: coordinating logistics with the town of Summersville, selling, setting up and managing the exhibitor booths, stocking the auction, arranging for the entertainment, keeping the books, handling complaints and helping to clean up the mess the morning after. In 1998 Phyllis also began producing a popular 20-page newsprint tabloid about West Virginia boating in conjunction with the Festival - *Gauley Season and Beyond*. And earlier this year she obtained a \$20,000 matching grant from the West Virginia Department of Tourism.

Phyllis did it all and she did it rain or shine. Old timers on the AW Board will remember Phyllis cheerfully wading through ankle deep mud in a pouring rain, clipboard in hand, going about the business of "creat-

ing" the Festival as if it were a perfect sunny day. Phyllis would always promise us that the rain would stop before the Festival opened at 6 o'clock... and somehow it always did!

Phyllis has touched the lives and hearts of a great number of present and former AW Board members. While preparing this note of appreciation I talked to many of those who know and love Phyllis. If I were to include all their fond remembrances in the journal, we wouldn't have space for any our ads. And Phyllis would never stand for that!

Suffice to say that the entire American Whitewater community, from those as ancient as Walbridge and Skinner and Barrow and Koll, to the 15 year old trickywoosters new to the whitewater scene, owe a huge debt to Phyllis.

Phyllis, our sport and our organization are immeasurably better because you touched them.

As you leave our employ please know that you will never leave our memories. We wish you the best in the future.

Thank you Phyllis and Denis!!!!  
Chris Kelly, for the entire AW Board of Directors

## Whitewater Dancer II

This video has it all! Underwater rolls, the 89 Worlds, Rodeos; Hot wave and hole surfing, Class V wipe-outs, Tunes by world famous fiddlemaster PAPPY JOHNCREACH! HI-FI stereo 55 Min.

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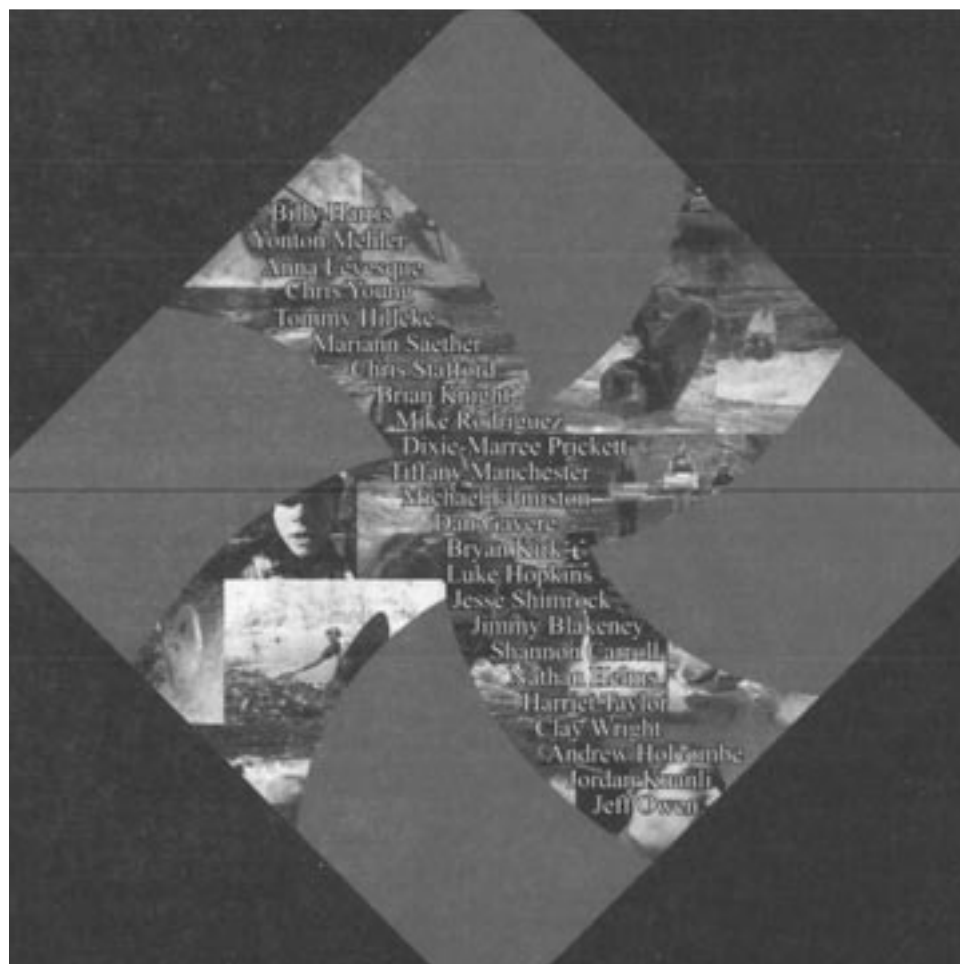
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Please read this carefully before sending us **your** articles and photos! This is a volunteer publication, please cooperate and help us out. *Do not send us your material without a release – signed by all authors and photographers(attached)!!!*

If possible, articles should be submitted on a 3-1/2-inch computer disk. (Microsoft Word if possible – others accepted.) Please do not alter the margins or spacing parameters; use the standard default settings. Send a printed copy of the article as well.

Those without access to a word processor may submit their articles typed. Please double space.

Photos may be submitted as slides, black or white prints, or color prints or electronic, digital photos, 300 dpi tiffs or high res jpegs minimum 3"x5." Keep your originals and send us duplicates if possible; we cannot guarantee the safe return of your pictures. If you want us to return your pictures, include a self-addressed stamped envelope with your submission. The better the photos the better the reproduction.

American Whitewater feature articles should relate to some aspect of whitewater

boating. Please do not submit articles pertaining to sea kayaking or flat water.

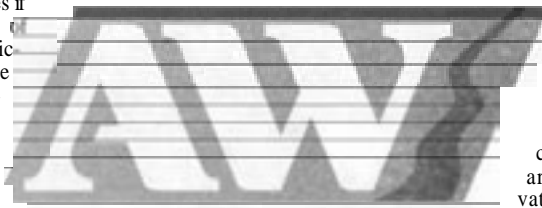
If you are writing about a commonly paddled river, your story should be told from a unique perspective. Articles about difficult, infrequently paddled, or exotic rivers are given special consideration. But we are also interested in well written, unusual articles pertaining to Class III and IV rivers as well. Feature stories do not have to be about a specific river. Articles about paddling techniques, the river environment and river personalities are also accepted. Pieces that incorporate humor are especially welcome. Open boating and rafting stories are welcome.

Profanity should be used only when it is absolutely necessary to effectively tell a story; it is not our intent to offend our more sensitive members and readers.

Please check all facts carefully, particularly those regarding individuals, government agencies, and corporations involved in river access and environmental matters. *You are legally responsible for the accuracy of such material.* Make sure names are spelled correctly and river gradients and distances are correctly calculated.

Articles will be edited at the discretion of the editors to fit our format, length, and style. *Expect to see changes in your article. If you don't want us to edit your article, don't send it to us!* Because of our deadlines you will not be able to review the editorial changes we make prior to publication.

American Whitewater is nonprofit; the editors and contributors to *American Whitewater* are not reimbursed. On rare occasions, by *prearrangement*, professional writers receive a small honorarium when they submit stories *at our request*. Generally, our contributors do not *expect payment*, since most are members of AW, which is a *volunteer* conservation and safety organization.



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# Purpose

## American Whitewater

**Our mission is to conserve and restore America's whitewater resources and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely.**

**The American Whitewater (AW) is a national organization with a membership consisting of thousands of individual whitewater boating enthusiasts, and more than 100 local paddling club affiliates.**

**CONSERVATION:** AW maintains a complete national inventory of whitewater rivers, monitors threats to those rivers, publishes information on river conservation, provides technical advice to local groups, works with government agencies and other river users, and-- when necessary-- takes legal action to prevent river abuse.

**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, resists unjustified restrictions on government managed whitewater rivers and works with government agencies and other river users to achieve these goals.

**EDUCATION:** Through publication of the bi-monthly magazine, and by other means, American Whitewater, (AW) provides information and education about whitewater rivers, boating safety, technique and equipment.

**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 AW Whitewater Safety Code.

**EVENTS:** AW organizes sporting events, contests and festivals to raise funds for river conservation, including the Ocoee Whitewater Rodeo in Tennessee, the Gauley River Festival in West Virginia (the largest gathering of whitewater boaters in the nation), and the Deerfield Festival in Massachusetts.

AW was incorporated under Missouri nonprofit corporation laws in 1961 and maintains its principal mailing address at 1430 Fenwick Lane, Silver Spring, MD 20910 (301) 589-9453. AW is tax exempt under Section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code.



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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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## Paddling Toward Protection: **California Rivers Legislation is on a Roll**

*By Jessica Rios*

On May 21, the largest river conservation bill in California history was introduced in Congress. Senator Barbara Boxer's California Wild Heritage Act of 2002 (S 2535) will add 480 miles of the state's most beautiful free-flowing streams to the National Wild & Scenic Rivers system, ensuring that no dams will be built on those streams and that their recreational and ecological values are protected. S 2535 will also protect 2.5 million acres - more than a third - of California's last unprotected public lands as Wilderness. Companion bills have also been introduced in the House by Representatives Mike Thompson and Hilda Solis.

More than two years of education and grassroots outreach has gone into the preparation of this landmark legislation. Friends of the River's (FOR) statewide inventory found more than 4,000 miles of rivers in California that are eligible for Wild & Scenic protection, but still at risk from hydropower and other forms of development.

Some of the more popular proposed Wild & Scenic Rivers in S 2535 include the South Fork Tuolumne, North Fork Stanislaus, Kings, Lower Kern and Clavey Rivers, as well as lesser-known waterways like the North Yuba watershed's Pauley and Lavezzola Creeks.

Lavezzola and Pauley Creeks are both Class IV runs. Upper Pauley Creek is Class V and only accessible via a hike over the Third Divide pass. Truckee, California resident and boater Jeff Trauba describes Lavezzola and Pauley Creeks as "beautiful little intimate runs with gorgeous waterfalls. When you're boating there, it feels pristine. You're completely surrounded by tight lush canyons."

The success of this bill will depend on the support and involvement of people whose backyard areas are proposed as Wild & Scenic Rivers or Wilderness. Support from individual boaters and local paddling clubs is critical.

The quickest, easiest thing anyone can do to support this legislation is write a letter. Senator Feinstein has not yet taken a position on the bill. To lend your voice in support of S 2535 or for specific rivers in the bill, write to the Honorable Dianne Feinstein, One Post Street, Suite 2450, San Francisco CA 94104. Please send a copy of your letter to Friends of the River, attn: Pam, 915 20<sup>th</sup> Street, Sacramento CA 95814.

And of course, if you have a minute, please send a note thanking Senator Boxer for having the foresight to protect California's natural heritage. Send letters to the Honorable Barbara Boxer, 1130 "O" Street, Suite 2540, Fresno CA 93721.

For a copy of the bill or for more information, contact Jessica Rios, 530-343-9541 or [Jessica@calwild.org](mailto:Jessica@calwild.org).

## Unraveling the Mysteries of the Middle Stanislaus River, California

On June 11<sup>th</sup>, a team of boaters assembled below the stunning 450-foot spillway of Donnell's Dam on the Middle Fork of the Stanislaus River in California. This stellar group was invited to help American Whitewater chart the boating opportunities on the Middle Stanislaus for the relicensing of 6 dams and powerhouses on the Middle and South Forks of the Stanislaus River. The stairway of hydropower dams and diversions divert water around this eight-mile reach of the Middle Stanislaus as well as five other whitewater reaches.

As a result of the dewatering, this reach of the Middle Stanislaus, known as Hell's Half Acre, had eluded many elite boaters looking for a first descent. The river averages a gradient of 183 feet over the eight-mile length with individual miles ranging from 220 to 150 feet per mile. The team of boaters included Dustin Knapp, Alex Nicks, Jared Noceti, Scott Collins, Lars Holbeck and John Gangemi.

The utility, TriDam, and numerous stakeholders in the hydropower relicensing proceeding felt American Whitewater's interest in this reach was foolhardy. After all, the chosen name for this reach, Hell's Half Acre, they felt was symbolic of the terrain. In their opinion this reach would certainly not be navigable. American Whitewater persisted in the relicensing process advocating for a feasibility study to determine the following: 1) the navigability of the reach; 2) the whitewater difficulty; 3) if possible, identify appropriate flows for whitewater recreation; and 4) determine if further study (i.e., controlled flow study) was warranted. Furthermore, the new license would be granted for 30 to 50 years. Who knows what boaters will be paddling in the year 2025? The study was scheduled for June 10-11, 2002.

To meet TriDam's liability concerns several of the boaters flew the reach by helicopter equipped with a video camera on June 10<sup>th</sup>. Back at TriDam's offices in Strawberry, the entire team of boaters viewed the video footage and poured over topographic maps and aerial photographs of the reach. The team of boaters collectively gave the green light to proceed with the feasibility study the next day. The stage was set for the adventure into unknown rapids of the Middle Fork Stanislaus below Donnell's Dam.

So what mysteries did the team unravel? They found a classic sierra run on polished granite with continuous Class IV-V paddling opportunities. The rapids were almost overshadowed by the stunning granite walls and boulders throughout the run. My eyes kept tracing the countless unclimbed crack

lines leading out of the water. A total of eight rapids were portaged due to boulder sieves. Several other Class V+ drops were portaged selectively by some team members. Don't let the portages discourage you— all of the them were relatively short on spectacular granite bedrock and boulders with several terminating in fun seal launches.

**Next Steps:** American Whitewater will now apply the results of this feasibility study in the negotiations with TriDam for a new hydropower license. Hell's Half Acre is not only navigable, it's a whitewater gem. The lack of reliable and timely flow information for the public is clearly a deterrent to whitewater use. American Whitewater will work to get real-time flow information for this reach, access improvements and evaluate the need for scheduled whitewater releases. The outcome of these negotiations will be posted on the American Whitewater website and in the journal.

**Why Go?** The put-in alone will blow your mind. Water spills 450 feet from a granite apron to the river below. If this isn't enough check out the continuous rapids and backdrop of this stellar gorge. There is dispersed camping at the take-out or along the road to the put-in.

**Directions:** From Sonora, California take highway 108 to the town of Strawberry. Several miles up the hill from Strawberry look for the Beardsley Reservoir road dropping off to the left. On the Beardsley Dam Road go 1.2 miles to the first dirt road on the right (5N09?). Go two miles on this road to an intersection for road 5N09X. Left at this fork takes you down to the take-out. Right on 5N09X takes you to the put-in 8.2 miles upstream. This 8.2 miles takes approximately 40 minutes to drive due to the rough surface but you'll never be bored because the views are incredible during this shuttle. Two wheel drive cars with high clearance can make it fine.

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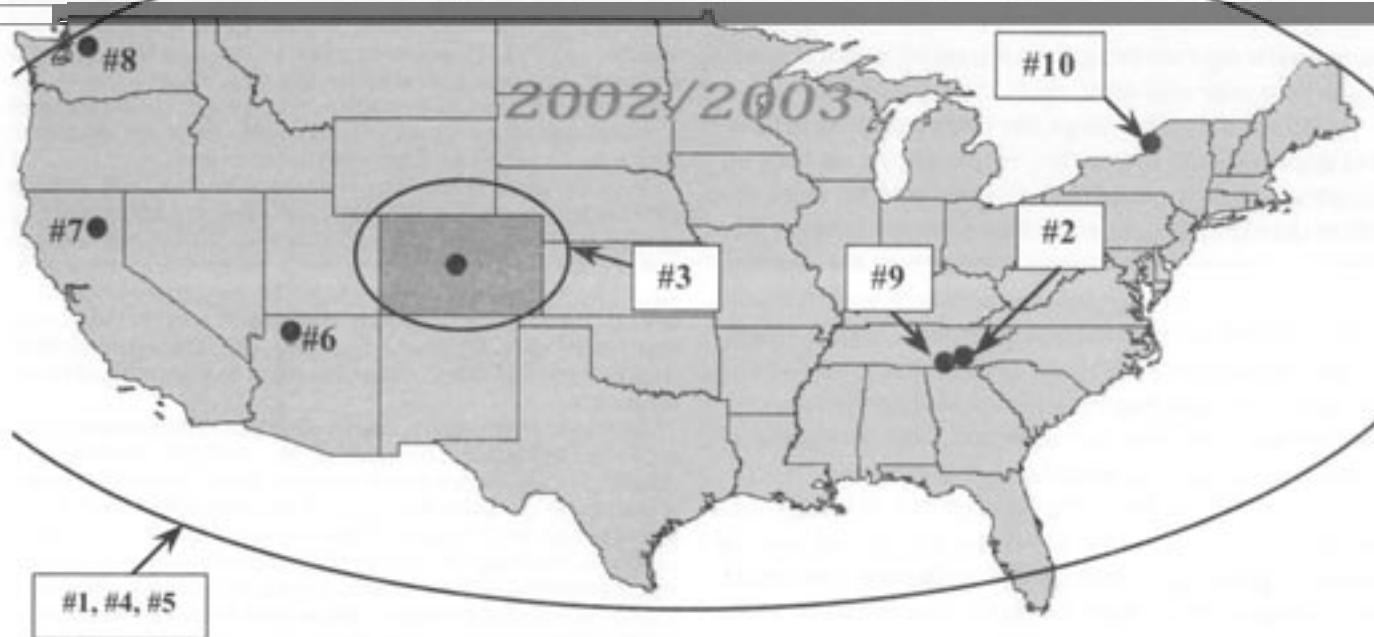
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# Access

## AW's Top Ten Access and Conservation Issues



Priority	Location	Type	Description
1	Nationwide	Conservation/Access	Waning AW Membership
2	Cheoah River, NC	Conservation	Dam Relicensing
3	The State of Colorado	Access	Right to Float
4	Nationwide	Access	Homeland Security
5	Nationwide	Conservation/Access	Hydropower Legislation
6	Grand Canyon, AZ	Access	Recommencement of River Plan
7	N. Fork Feather River, CA	Conservation	Multiple Hydropower Relicense Proceedings
8	Skykomish River, WA	Access	Improved Access Sites
9	Ocoee River, TN	Conservation/Access	Free Future Releases and More
10	Rt 3 Wave - Black R., NY	Conservation/Access	Potential Alteration of Wave

Thanks to Alex Zendel for the creation of the map.

## Top 10 Conservation and Access Issues

2002/2003

**American Whitewater** is poised for another amazing year of river advocacy, possibly one of our most impressive ever. In the next 12 months the AW team will be bringing you releases on several phenomenal new rivers that will revolutionize paddling in those regions, protecting and restoring fair public access to some of the nations greatest rivers, conserving thousands of acres of riverside land, representing you in the halls of federal government, and working hard to make sure we can keep doing all of these amazing things for paddlers and rivers that we do every day. The following 10 conservation and access issues represent a cross section of the work we will be doing this coming year all across the country. They are ten of our most important and challenging issues and are indicative of literally hundreds of other projects that our small and effective program staff is constantly working on.



**In June**, the American Whitewater staff got to revel in the work we do, while paddling down the first ever release on California's North Fork of the Feather River. While we were getting pummeled in holes and swimming (and soaring off granite boofs and throwing huge splat wheels) we had the time to think about all the incredible things we brought to the paddling community in the past year and what made it all possible.

What we did were things like re-opening the permitting system on the Grand Canyon for review, pulling off numerous flow studies that lay the ground work for future dam releases, signing numerous settlements that create or enhance whitewater runs across the county, and being selected to represent paddlers and rivers by National level decision makers including Congress itself.

How we did it was with your help, as volunteers and as members. Without your help we could not do what we do, and without AW and our members, the thousands of rivers that we protect would be left unguarded.

After our runs down the Feather the AW staff was ecstatic and proud as we sat down for several days of strategic planning. Through our collective river-buzz, one ominous issue kept creeping into virtually every discussion we had: membership.

Our sport may be rapidly growing but AW membership is not, and that is a huge threat to all the rivers that we protect every day. For that reason the conservation and access staff decided to break from tradition and add membership as one of our top 10 conservation and access issues for the coming year.

The coming year stands to be one defined by huge accomplishments for AW and the paddling community. We look forward to making the country an even better place to paddle for years to come. Read on to see what some of our biggest challenges of the coming year will be, and how you can help!

## **1. Membership (National) - Conservation/Access**

*Issue: Waning American Whitewater membership.*

*Goal: To restore and increase membership so that we at AW can be most effective.*

**Current Status:** Believe it or not, boaters present one of the greatest threats to our nation's whitewater rivers. We aren't talking about overuse, but rather apathy among our paddling community, and the resulting drop in American Whitewater membership.

American Whitewater works hard on many fronts to protect and restore whitewater rivers across the country, and if we are not

there, much of this work will not get done. Without a strong membership base, we are politically and economically crippled. The tremendous work we do benefits the entire paddling community but is funded by an increasingly small minority.

Many boaters in the paddling community take advantage of releases on the Tallulah or access to the Ocoee and Gauley but neglect to contribute to the organization that made these releases and access sites possible. American Whitewater is the steward of these opportunities and places. Without us there, the rivers will one day run back into someone's bank account, instead of under our boats, and new opportunities like the Cheoah River will go untapped. American Whitewater's conservation and access work is more dependent on membership and donations than ever before, at a time when those sources are waning.

With the growing numbers of new boaters out there, and the increase in popularity of the sport, we've begun to experience an apathetic attitude among the boating community. The assumption remains that rivers are open to all boaters, and will remain open. The community forgets the history behind the rivers; that without the work of American Whitewater and its volunteers, many of the rivers we paddle on a daily, weekly or monthly basis would be dry, dammed, or inaccessible to boaters (or could be in the future).

By our estimates, fewer than 1 in 10 whitewater boaters is an American Whitewater member. If we could just increase that number a little bit we could all sleep more soundly at night, knowing that our rivers are secure. If we were able to double that membership, we'd be able to hire regional experts in Colorado, California, Washington, and the Northeast to help us with our core efforts protecting your favorite local rivers. American Whitewater's strong record of successes in preserving America's whitewater rivers is threatened by boater apathy. Thus, even if you don't have the time to volunteer to see a relicensing through from start to finish, or visit a court house in southeastern Colorado, simply registering your friends as members would be a huge help and substantially increase our ability to work for you and for rivers.

**Precedent:** American Whitewater has some of the most loyal and passionate members imaginable that donate countless hours of their time and significant in-kind and financial contributions. Still, our membership is waning in a tough time and compromising our ability to work effectively.

**Contact:** Jessica Rice, Membership Coordinator, 866-BOAT-4-AW (866-262-8429)

## **2. Cheoah River (NC) - Conservation**

*Issue: Dam relicensing of an incredible Southeastern river.*

*Goal: To reach a settlement agreement that includes recreational releases, access, flow information, and land protection.*

**Current Status:** Thanks to a broken turbine, boaters were able to paddle the normally dewatered Cheoah River this spring on a much greater frequency than ever before at flows ranging from 600 to over 3000 cfs. What was reaffirmed is that the Cheoah is absolutely one of the best rivers in the southeast: awesome scenery, easy access, 100 feet per mile of consistent gradient, clear blue water, and lots of local creeking and hiking options. AW is working through the dam relicensing process to secure sched-



uled whitewater releases on the Cheoah For the next 30 years. We hope to integrate these releases with future releases on the Cascades of the Nantahala and the West Fork of the Tuckasegee, also in negotiations right now. In addition to the recreational enhancements we hope to protect a large amount of wildlands, restore healthy continuous instream flows, and promote the natural biodiversity of the Cheoah and Little Tennessee River Corridors. The paddling community has more to gain with the restoration of this river than most boaters can even imagine. American Whitewater has been working on this river for several years, laying the groundwork for the current negotiations.

The challenges of the next few months are equally as immense as the potential rewards. American Whitewater has been carefully drafting proposals that blend the interests of the resource agencies, private and commercial boaters, and other stakeholders like lakeside homeowners and the power company. These proposals have helped the ongoing intense negotiations move forward toward the goal of a healthy river. American Whitewater hopes to sign a settlement in early 2003 that includes a robust schedule of recreational releases that have the potential to increase over the years. We are there at the table with several amazing volunteers several days each month, working to bring you an epic new paddling destination in the Southeast.

**Precedent:** Dam relicensing is an opportunity for citizens to require that a power company share a river with the public. There are many competing interests that must come together through negotiations to reach settlement on complex issues. Dams take 5 years to relicense and the licenses last 30 to 50 years.

**Contact:** Kevin Colburn, Conservation and Access Associate

### 3. Colorado (State-wide) - Access

*Issue: Your right to float in Colorado is threatened; there are at least a dozen serious access threats that could blow up into legal battles that significantly limit your rights and privileges to float and fish on the state's waterways.*

*Goal: To clarify the public right to float in an unassailable legal context that ensures boaters are not harassed and can navigate, float, and recreate on Colorado's rivers and streams.*

**Current Status:** In 2001, American Whitewater has successfully helped to defend the public's right to float on many of Colorado's rivers, some of our recent successes include:

- In May, board member Tim Kelley secured boater access to the Cheesman Gorge.
- In June, American Whitewater's attorneys obtained a settlement that protects access to the South Platte for American Whitewater and Colorado White Water Association members.
- In June, American Whitewater's attorneys helped to protect the public right to float on the Lake Fork Gunnison. Access had been threatened by a private landowner's suit against a rafting company. While access remains vulnerable, it appears that the threat is muted for now.
- In July, American Whitewater volunteer Patrick Tooley helped restore access to the Blue River below the Green Mountain Reservoir. Access had been closed by the Bureau of Reclamation in the wake of 9/11 (see below for more about the effect of 9/11 on boating access).

However, even with these successes, there are dozens of other access threats in Colorado. American Whitewater will work to resolve these other issues with your support. We estimate that we need a standing fund of \$10,000 dollars to continue to fight the short-term battles and prepare the battlefield for long-term solutions favorable to paddlers.

**Precedent:** Some well funded individuals and corporate interests are seeking to limit your right to float and recreate on Colorado's rivers. Colorado has the most vulnerable navigability laws in the country and some individuals want to limit public access on Colorado's rivers as a regional precedent for closing rivers in neighboring states.

**Contact:** Jason Robertson, Access Director

### 4. Homeland Security (National) - Access

*Issue: Following the terrible events on 9/11, many rivers have been closed or are threatened with closure by dam managers citing "security" concerns.*

*Goal: To work with security personnel at the dam and river management agencies to address their security needs while protecting the public's river use and access traditions for boaters and fishermen.*

**Current Status:** In June, the Washington Post quoted Assistant Attorney General Michael Chertoff, when he affirmed that "to destroy a dam physically would require 'tons of explosives.'" Such a volume of explosives is far in excess of the volume or carrying capacity of a whitewater canoe, kayak, or fishing bag. Further, in response to questions about the Sultan River closure, Dave Harris, a spokesman for the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers in Seattle, was quoted by *HeraldNet.com* that there have been no confirmed incidents of any security breaches regarding any dams or water sources under the Corps' jurisdiction. Nevertheless fishing and boating access downstream of many dams has been closed in the wake of 9/11, and we continue to get new reports of both actual and threatened closures on a regular basis.

A short list of closures and boater restrictions made in the wake of 9/11 include the following:

- Mongaup River closed below Rio Dam (NY)
- Sultan River closed below Spada Lake (WA)
- New River threatened with closure through the Radford Army Ammunitions Plant (VA)
- Ausable river threatened with closure (NY)
- South Fork of the Flathead closed below Hungry Horse Dam (MT)
- Lower Blue River below Green Mountain Reservoir closed but

re-opened in July (CO)

- Statewide boater registration requirements proposed, temporarily blocked (CT)

We are very concerned about any plans to restrict or limit recreational boating access to America's rivers in the wake of 9/11. While we respect and understand the need for security, and acknowledge that certain appropriate sacrifices will be made in the immediate future, we believe that it should be possible to provide security and also protect existing public access, privileges, traditions, and freedoms.

The past year has been a difficult one for the nation. In response to President Bush's plea to continue supporting the economy and protecting core American values, AW is committed to safeguarding the special places that make this country such a wonderful land. It is our civic responsibility to rise and support both our war efforts and the way of life we had before 9/11. We are fighting a war to protect our security, freedoms, public services, and a way of life that we value. Whenever we sacrifice any of those freedoms, then in the words of President Bush "We are letting the terrorists win." That is not an acceptable outcome. Please join us in protecting and restoring access to the country's special places, such as the Mongaup, Sultan, New, and South Fork Flathead, which have long traditions of public use and heritage.

**Precedent:** While many rivers have been closed since 9/11, few of these closures have done anything for public safety. The objectives of these closures need to be defined and the security concerns need to be examined to determine whether the closures satisfy the security needs and are truly in the public's interest. Our volunteers' July 2002 success in convincing the BuRec to re-open the Blue River below the Colorado's Green Mountain Reservoir provides a model for future cooperation and action.

**Contact:** Jason Robertson, Access Director

## 5. Hydropower Legislation [National] - Conservation/Access

*Issue: Legislative Reforms of Federal Power Act*

*Goal: Protect river resources and existing environmental standards in the Federal Power Act*

**Current Status:** In knee-jerk fashion following the aftermath of California's energy crisis politicians have proposed legislative reforms to avoid future crises and solve the "relicensing problem." This issue has largely been brought before legislators by utility lobbyists capitalizing on public resentment toward increased energy bills. These lobbyists have carefully steered legislators toward the "problems" inherent in licensing private hydropower projects. The search for a solution to the crisis ultimately fell upon reforming the environmental regulations contained in the Federal Power Act.

The Senate energy bill, S.517, contained multiple drafts of reform language all of which failed the bipartisan litmus test. In April, Senators Ben Nelson (NE) and Larry Craig (ID) successfully amended (SA 3140) Title III of the Senate energy bill, S.517. The amendment basically permits utilities to draft alternative environmental conditions to those proposed by resource agencies. In short, the Nelson-Craig amendment gives utilities the following: 1) a loud voice than any other interest in deciding how our rivers are managed; 2) undermines the environmental standards that hydropower dams must

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## ■ Top 10 Conservation and Access issues

meet, and 3) opens a loophole for utilities to challenge basic environmental protections on the grounds that they harm profit margins. The Nelson-Craig amendment further skews the licensing process in the favor of utilities, at the expense of equal public participation and critical environmental protections.

**Next Steps:** The Senate and House must now rectify any differences between the Senate and House energy bills in a Senate-House conference committee. Both the Senate and House must approve the final bill that comes out of the conference committee, and the President must sign it. American Whitewater will post alerts when this vote comes up.

**Precedent:** The Federal Power Act should not be altered in a fashion that skews the process for licensing a hydropower project in favor of the utilities with an economic self-interest in the outcome. The nation's rivers and streams are a vital resource that should not be monopolized for power production alone. Public input and resource agency review are critical components in the licensing process to ensure that non-power values are balanced with power generation.

**Contact:** John Gangemi, American Whitewater Conservation Director

## 6. Grand Canyon [AZ] - Access

*Issue: The private boater permit Wait List is over 25 years long. The Park Service is*

*Goal: American Whitewater's fundamental requirement of the Colorado River Management Plan is the preservation of the Colorado River corridor within the Grand Canyon as an unimpaired natural and cultural area, to the extent possible given the downstream effects of Glen Canyon Dam. Within resource protection and visitor experience parameters, visitor opportunities should be maximized and equitably distributed to the greatest number of participants as practicable, while maintaining a diversity of trip styles and experience opportunities.*

**Current Status:** In February 2002,

the Park Service (NPS) settled the lawsuit brought by American Whitewater and other plaintiffs and agreed to recommence the Colorado River Management Plan (CRMP) planning efforts.

Now, as a result of the Park's agreement to settle, the NPS is preparing an environmental impact statement (EIS) for the CRMP for Grand Canyon National Park. The purpose of this EIS/CRMP is to update management guidelines for the Colorado River corridor through Grand Canyon National Park. The settlement requires the NPS to complete the EIS/CRMP by December 31, 2004.

This effort will identify and evaluate alternatives for **visitor use** and levels of **motorized and non-motorized trips**, the **allocation and distribution of use** for user groups, and a **permit distribution system for noncommercial users**. The NPS will develop and evaluate alternatives to address resource protection issues, potential resource impacts, user capacities, and mitigation measures necessary or desirable to avoid or minimize impairment of natural and cultural resources. The NPS will also consider alternatives that include no-action (status quo), no motorized use, and varying levels of motorized and non-motorized use.

Major issues include the following: Appropriate levels of visitor use consistent with natural and cultural resource protection and preservation mandates; allocation of use between commercial and non-commercial groups; the private boater permitting system; the level of motorized versus non-motorized raft use; the range of services provided to the public; and, the termination of use of helicopters to transport river passengers from the Colorado River near Whitmore Wash.

More information is available on our website at <http://www.americanwhitewater.org/archive/article/487/> or may be obtained from CRMP Project Leader, Grand Canyon National Park, P.O. Box 129, Grand Canyon, AZ 86023, 928-638-7945.



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**Precedent:** The Park Service's decisions in the 2004 CRMP will establish the management direction for at least the next decade. Decisions in the Grand Canyon also receive significant publicity and are used as a baseline for comparison by river managers throughout the country. Good decisions will lead to positive ripples through the community of river managers. Bad decisions will splash through this community and could result in further bad decisions on other rivers.

**Contact:** Jason Robertson, Access Director

### 7. North Fork Feather River (CA) - Conservation

*Issue: Traditional confrontation oriented approach by PG&E in Multiple Hydropower Relicense Proceedings on the North Fork Feather River.*

*Goal: American Whitewater is applying a watershed approach to re-establish the North Fork Feather's natural and recreation resources through river access, scheduled flows and real-time flow information as well as increased minimum instream flows for aquatic habitats and land easements for conservation.*

**Current Status:** You might be wondering why the North Fork Feather River appears on American Whitewater's Top 10 list in 2002 while in the same issue we are celebrating the first whitewater releases on the river since construction of the Rock Creek and Cresta dams. The answer lays in PG&E's complex stairway of power on the North Fork Feather. While there is much to celebrate with the new settlement for the collective fourteen miles of river below Rock Creek and Cresta dams with monthly whitewater releases for the next 30 years American Whitewater is still a long way from restoring the remaining thirty-six miles of the North Fork Feather dewatered by PG&E hydropower projects. These projects include the Poe hydropower project and the Upper North Fork hydropower project. Early in the settlement negotiations American Whitewater encouraged PG&E to take a watershed approach wrapping all the dams and powerhouses into a single proceeding. A watershed approach focuses enhancement opportunities on reaches where that resource attribute is best manifested. This enables stakeholders to apply limited hydrologic resources and mitigation efforts for the greatest outcome.

PG&E shied away from a watershed approach choosing instead to relicense the projects individually in the traditional style. That style typically equates to resource conflict. Stakeholders fight for limited resources. PG&E opposes whitewater releases on the Poe, Belden and Seneca reaches claiming that whitewater flows will cause serious impacts on the aquatic environment particularly amphibians. The very existence and operation of PG&E's hydropower projects are the root cause of dwindling amphibian populations. PG&E's arguments against whitewater releases are simply attempts to further their own self interest in a dewatered river where the bulk of the river flows through pipes from dams to powerhouses.

American Whitewater works closely with resource agencies



and public stakeholders to develop appropriate ramping rates, and flows to mimic the natural hydrograph to eliminate biological impacts.

**Poe hydropower project:** The Poe project diverts water out of a nine mile section of the North Fork Feather. In May 2000, American Whitewater conducted a whitewater controlled flow study on this reach. The first half of the reach contains excellent Class IV-V paddling. The second half contains excellent Class III paddling. There is access at the mid-point allowing paddlers to select their appropriate skill level. **Upper North Fork hydropower project:** The Upper North Fork project contains three reservoirs and three powerhouses each of which divert water away from substantial reaches of the North Fork Feather, sixteen plus miles. In October 1000, American Whitewater conducted a whitewater controlled flow study on the six mile Class III Belden reach and the ten mile Class V Seneca reach.

**Precedent:** PG&E's stance on the North Fork Feather requires American Whitewater to hammer away at the negotiation table in each individual proceeding rather than taking a progressive watershed approach for the river system.

**Contact:** John Gangemi, American Whitewater Conservation Director

## 8. Skykomish River (WA) - Access

*Issue: The preferred put-in on the South Fork Skykomish below Sunset Falls is closed. The preferred take-outs are on private property.*

*Goal: To secure safe, legal, long-term public access to the Skykomish.*

**Current Status:** During the past 6 months, American Whitewater volunteers lead by Regional Coordinator Tom O'Keefe, have been meeting with State officials, politicians, real estate agents, paddlers, and local landowners to determine the best options for safe, long-term public access to the Sky.

In May 2001, American Whitewater and the Washington Kayak Club established the Skykomish River Access Fund with \$5875 from the 2001 Sky Fest. Private donations have raised the holdings of the fund to about \$6625 (at press time the 2002 contribution amount had not yet been determined).

This fund recognizes the fact that legal river access opportunities along the whitewater sections of the Skykomish River in Washington State are limited and diminishing. There are few public right-of-ways or easements, and there is little publicly owned land allowing legal access to this popular river. We are seeking to build the fund to about \$20,000 in order to apply for matching funds from government agencies and private foundations, and acquire a permanent take-out facility.

**Precedent:** The successful acquisition or lease of an access point in Washington State will improve relations with state agencies and could provide a model for future access acquisitions by state agencies for the boating and fishing community.

Contact: Jason Robertson, Access Director

## 9. Ocoee River (TN) - Conservation/Access

*Issue: TVA is ending free releases on the Upper Ocoee after this fall, and charging boaters and outfitters for water.*

*Goal: To secure 74 free recreational releases annually on the Upper Ocoee.*

**Current Status:** The Upper Ocoee continues to be an issue that American Whitewater considers a top priority. It is a challenging project for us to work on; butting heads with a massive archaic political organization like the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) is no easy task! American Whitewater is attempting to work with the TVA, as the formal representative for downstream recreationalists in TVA's Reservoir Operations Study (ROS). AW is also working to educate our members, regional business owners and citizens, and politicians about the importance of recreation on the Ocoee and all that we stand to gain through the ROS. We are advocating

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for free recreational releases at monthly meetings that will wrap up with the completion of the ROS late in 2003.

This being said, the TVA continues to state that the Upper Ocoee is simply not an important issue for them, and that releases there will cease unless boaters and outfitters pay for them. American Whitewater is continuing to assert that the TVA has a legal and social obligation to share the Ocoee River with the public, free of charge. The TVA is not subject to federal regulations so we must use creative approaches to affect change within TVA (not to mention the Army Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Reclamation and other similarly exempt organizations). If TVA refuses to address our concerns through the ROS than they will be proving to the world that they are taking advantage of the public, and we will seek to reform TVA.

There are several proposals being made in the Ocoee Community that are considering cost sharing with TVA to provide releases. AW will take part in these discussions while working to convince the TVA to do the right thing and provide the water free of charge. We are hosting the TEVA National Freestyle Championships on the Upper Ocoee in October, which will be the last event on the Upper Ocoee that the TVA intends to provide water for without charging exorbitant prices for the water. Your chance to help save the Upper Ocoee will come early next spring with the opportunity to comment on the final phase of the ROS. Let AW lead the way, and support us in our quest for an Upper Ocoee River that supports the regional economy and the growing paddling community of the Southeast!

**Precedent:** TVA has little to no oversight and is not ethically managing their rivers. Their answer to a public process is their Reservoir Operations Study, which may or may not fairly address the needs of the public.

**Contact:** Kevin Colburn: Conservation and Access Associate

### 10. Route 3 Wave (NY) - Conservation/Access

*Issue: The potential alteration of an existing play-wave to make it attractive for competitions.*

*Goal: To make sure that a fair public process is in place that protects the river, the community, and the regional boaters.*

**Current Status:** Plans to alter a small glassy surfing wave in downtown Watertown New York have sparked national attention and intense debate. The wave, known as the Route 3 Wave, is on a highly altered and developed section of the Black River, but is still well loved by local intermediate paddlers. Plans to alter the wave to make it a more advanced feature suitable for freestyle competitions have upset the paddlers who like to surf on the wave as it currently exists. These paddlers were also concerned that access to the wave would be limited.

American Whitewater has entered the process by first making sure that there is a process, a fair one with ample opportunity for public comment. We also worked closely with regional paddling clubs to design a set of recommendations that will put safeguards into place that prevent damage to the river, ensure a completed and well designed wave, ensure free public access to the site, and protect the city of Watertown from getting stuck

with any economic burden. We'll be working through volunteers and traveling to New York to assist on the resolution of this issue in a way that is best for paddlers and the river itself.

So why is this a conservation/access issue? First of all, AW does not encourage paddlers to alter natural rivers for any reason. The Route 3 is a highly altered site and the actual on-site ecological impacts of such a small alteration would be negligible. We therefore considered the proposed project on a watershed scale. Increased use of the Black River at a site like Route 3 could actually help the river and boaters alike by assuring that use triggers are met which will lead to additional releases on the river from an upstream dam. The visual nature of a well designed whitewater park in such a populated urban area would also likely lead to a community that thinks about upstream and downstream uses of the river. Essentially, it could create a community of river advocates by casting a spotlight on the river. We chose to get involved in this project from an access point of view because there was a potential to increase access or lose it entirely as a well-loved site.

**Precedent:** Every indication we have shows that play parks are at least a wave of the future. We at AW feel that we have an obligation to make sure that these projects only happen in appropriate places, through public processes, and for the benefit of the river and the public at large. The Route 3 project highlights some of the tough issues that we'll face in the near future as whitewater parks become more prevalent.

**Contact:** Kevin Colburn, Conservation and Access Associate

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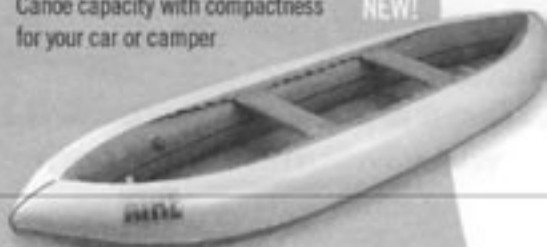
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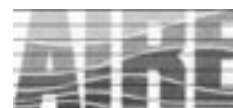
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## Popular White Salmon Access Secured in Public Ownership (WA)

By Regional Coordinator Tom O'Keefe

When the rural community of BZ Corners was founded in 1930, few could have imagined that this would one day become the primary access point for the most popular whitewater river in the Columbia River Gorge. Over 18,000 boaters from around the Pacific Northwest and across the country enjoy paddling opportunities that are available year-round in this federally designated Wild and Scenic River gorge.

While many paddlers historically paid for access across private property, there was concern over what the future held for this important corridor to the river. In fall 2000, the Trust for Public Land acquired this primary access point at BZ Corners and transferred it to public ownership during the summer of 2001. The 11 acre parcel is now managed by the Forest Service as part of the Lower White Salmon Wild and Scenic River. Support for this acquisition (\$306,000) came from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund. The Forest Service has built a new access trail and slide for rafts (there were liability concerns and operations/maintenance costs associated with the mechanical cable system). There is currently no fee for use of the site, as it was determined that revenue generated would be lost in administering a permit system, but the Forest Service reserves the right to revisit this if use patterns change significantly. The process

of removing structures on the property will likely be completed by year's end with the exception of the rest room which has received a face lift. The total cost of upgrades to the site has been \$100,000.

Paddlers are urged to contact their Senators and Representatives to either thank them or encourage them to support the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Those in Washington and Oregon in particular should encourage support of additional access opportunities along the White Salmon River, and full restoration of the White Salmon River system through removal of Condit Dam. Finally, be sure to thank the folks with the Trust for Public Land who made this acquisition possible. More information is available at <http://www.americanwhitewater.org/archive/article/492/>.

**Editor's Note:** Tom O'Keefe was recognized by Conservation Director John Gangemi as American Whitewater's Volunteer of the Month at [www.americanwhitewater.org/archive/article/484/](http://www.americanwhitewater.org/archive/article/484/) for his work on the White Salmon, Skykomish, and many other Washington rivers.

## Grand Canyon Comments Due (AZ)

By Jason Robertson



In February 2002, we convinced the Park Service to go back to the drawing board and finish modifying the management plan for the Grand Canyon. As a result of our successful lawsuit, the Park is seeking your help with drafting the plan. Park planners know what is broken, now they are particularly interested in hearing your thoughts on what you think a Grand Canyon trip should be like in 2005 or even 2050. They want to know what parts of the Canyon experience you most value and want to see protected. They also want to hear your ideas, from the creative to the outlandish, for fixing some of the management problems in the Canyon, such as the Wait List or damage to the historic Indian sites and artifacts. More information is available at: <http://www.americanwhitewater.org/archive/article/487/>

## 9/11 Closure Lifted on Lower Blue River (CO)

By Jason Robertson

In July, American Whitewater volunteers helped to reopen the popular river access point on the Lower Blue River below Green Mountain Dam. Paddlers in the Steamboat Springs and Summit County areas have long enjoyed this late season Class III stretch of river, as water is released from the Green Mountain Reservoir for irrigation purposes. The stretch of river includes steep, dramatic canyon scenery with no roads or trails adjacent to the river. However, access to the river downstream of the dam has been restricted since the September 11th events, while the reservoir itself has been reopened to motorized boats and recreation.

Happily, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation has agreed to reopen this access as part of a pilot program within Reclamation's security program. Thus access during daylight hours has been restored.

Hours of open access will be Friday-Sunday, 8 a.m. until 7 p.m. The conditional access will be strictly enforced. All people, cars, equipment and etc. must be removed from the area prior to 7 p.m., closing, each day.

This success is the result of several months of wrangling between the local fishing and boating communities and the Bu Rec. Volunteers including American Whitewater member Patrick Tooley and AW's former Presidents Ric Alesch and Jay Kenney spent many hours trying to solve the closure and address the BuRec's security concerns. Their efforts included writing to Congressman Mark Udall. More information is available at [www.americanwhitewater.org/archive/article/5121](http://www.americanwhitewater.org/archive/article/5121).



## Zirkelbach Colorado Access Fund Established (CO)

By Jason Robertson

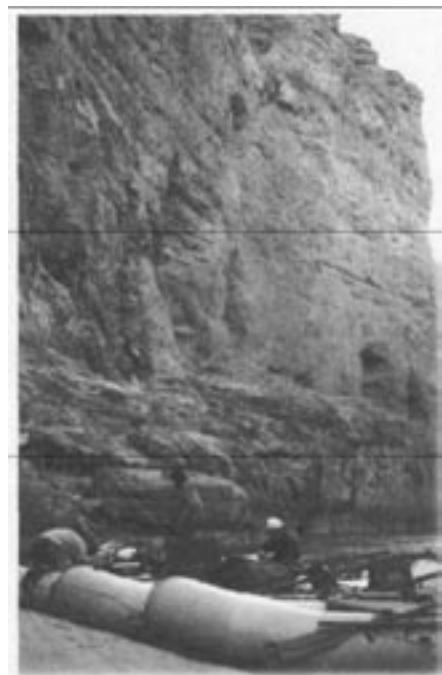
In July, American Whitewater was asked by friends of Paul Zirkelbach to establish a memorial fund dedicated to river access issues in Colorado. The fund will be used to maintain and improve access to Colorado's rivers. The funds will be used to establish that the public has the right to navigate and recreate on the natural streams and rivers of Colorado. As Paul's friend and AW Board Member Tim Kelley expressed, "I can think of no greater memorial than to link Paul's name and legacy with fixing river access in Colorado. Paul was a legendary paddler known for '*hanging it out*' and rising to the most difficult paddling challenges he could find. I cannot think of a more deserving cause than to let his legacy help secure access to Colorado's rivers. Thank you for your support in Paul's memory." More information is available at <http://www.americanwhitewater.org/archive/article/511/>.

## In Colorado, Parents Can Not Waive Liability for Minors

By Jason Robertson

June 24, 2002: The Colorado Supreme Court has ruled that parents of minors have no right to sign liability waivers for their children under 18. This decision will affect all recreation liability waivers throughout the state, including those used by the commercial rafting industry.

The case stems from an accident in 1995, when David Cooper, then 17, suffered injuries, including blindness, when he lost control and crashed into a tree while training on a ski race course. Both David and his mother had signed a release of liability prior to the injury. The trial court held that David's mother's signature on the release bound David to the terms of the agreement and barred his claims against Defendants. The court of appeals affirmed, holding that the release signed by David's mother was enforceable against David, even though he was a minor both when the release was signed and when the accident occurred. However, the Colorado Supreme Court reversed the lower court's findings and



held that "*the public policy of Colorado affords minors significant protections that preclude a parent or guardian from releasing a minor's own prospective claims for negligence.*" More information is available at <http://www.americanwhitewater.org/archive/article/493/>.

## New Fee Legislation Introduced in Congress

By Jason Robertson

In June, two new bills were run up the flag pole that would give the federal land management agencies greater authority to charge visitor fees.

The first, S.2473 was introduced by Senator Thomas and seeks to expand the fee authority for the Park Service. This bill is essentially an extension of the status quo with a few minor changes related to the ability to share fees between state and federal agencies.

The second, S.2607 was introduced by Senator Bingaman and seeks to create a single overarching fee authority for the Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Park Service. I met with Senator Bingaman's staff to discuss both bills and also attended a June hearing in the Senate's Natural Resources Committee.

S.2607 attempts to address problems with multiple fees and limits the kinds of activities for which fees can be charged. I suggested taking this one step further and deleting some sections of the bill that expand the agencies' temporary fee authorities in brand new directions.

American Whitewater's principle concerns are that (1) the bill may create involuntary new incentives for fees, and (2) there is no legislative cap on the amount an individual or group may be charged under the fee authority.

Additionally, a June 26th article in the *Washington Post*, reported that the agencies intended to use recreation fees to subsidize fire-fighting activities, and we recommended modifying the legislation to curtail this potentially bottomless use of recreation fees in the future.

Finally, we were concerned that this bill does not include a strong oversight requirement, whereas the Thomas Bill for the Park Service does. Strong oversight or reporting requirements could help address inadvertent funding offsets from the appropriations process. There is a growing problem, as evidenced by management on the Salt and Verde National Forests, in which managers are not passing their real baseline funding needs up the ladder for the appropriations committee to review. Instead, these managers have limited their baseline funding requests in favor of fee collection.

If you are concerned about the expansion and proliferation of forest and national park fees on your favorite rivers, you should take 5 minutes to call your Congressional representative (the Congressional switchboard is 202-224-3121). More information is available at <http://www.americanwhitewater.org/archive/article/489/>.







## American Whitewater and the Teva Whitewater National Championships NEED YOU!

The 2002 Teva Tour whitewater freestyle series, sanctioned by American Whitewater, culminates October 11-13, with the first ever Teva Whitewater National Championships, presented by Dagger. The best freestyle paddlers from across the country will gather on the Ocoee River 1996 Olympic Whitewater Course to battle it out for the National Championship crown.

This, while the TVA expires the five year agreement developed at the time of the Olympics, in which the Tennessee Valley Authority agreed to provide 20 days of water for

competitions each year. This defining competition marks a defining moment for whitewater kayaking as the TVA pulls the plug on the free water for Upper Ocoee events. Events could continue if organizers could pay for the water but the fees proposed by the TVA are prohibitive. In recognition of the impending loss of this important whitewater venue, American Whitewater selected the Ocoee to host its first National Championships.

Your help is needed to make this event a huge success and to stage a proper farewell to

free event water on the Upper Ocoee. There are many ways to get involved. Staging a National Championship event requires the time, energy and talents of more than 150 volunteer staff working in a variety of capacities. Jobs available include everything from general office work to construction and set-up to competition judges to risk management to checking IDs at the party. There's plenty of work to go around.

### VOLUNTEER STAFF BENEFITS

Volunteering to work for the Teva Tour National Championships competition or party is not only fun but helps raise money for American Whitewater's river conservation and access mission. And we sure do appreciate the help — all volunteer staff working 4 or more hours receive:

- a free Teva Tour National Championship T-shirt
- free entrance to the event
- free entrance to the Teva Liquid Lifestyles party
- 1 free beer ticket (must be 21 or over)
- a chance to win great stuff in the volunteer-only raffle (1 ticket for every 1 - 3 hours worked with a 3 hour minimum / maximum 20 tickets).
- volunteer staff who work an all-day shift will be provided with lunch
- volunteer staff who work 3 full length days or more will receive a free Saturday night dinner

### JOBS AVAILABLE

This list is not definitive, other needs may arise, but it covers our primary volunteers needs. For descriptions of each job, log on to our website:

[www.americanwhitewater.org/events/twnc](http://www.americanwhitewater.org/events/twnc)

Pre-event: Food Manager  
Volunteer Manager

At the river: Timers/Flaggers (October 11-13)  
Scribes (October 11-13)  
Safety Boaters (October 11-13)\*  
Shore Safety (throw ropes) (October 11-13)\*  
Technical Judges (October 10-13) \*\*  
Set-up & Construction Volunteers (October 5)  
Set-up Assistants (October 10)  
Clean-up/Tear Down Volunteers (October 13)  
Athlete Registration Assistants and Check-In (October 10 & 11)  
Administrative Assistants (October 10-13)  
Competition Assistants (October 11-13)  
Food Assistants (October 11-13)  
Admission Gate Hosts (October 11-13)  
Parking Czars & Wizards (Oct. 10-13)  
Clean-Up Crew (October 11-13)

At the party site:  
Silent Auction Volunteers  
Sell Raffle Tickets  
Party & Auction Set-Up  
Party Gate Volunteers  
Sell/Take Dinner Tickets  
Check IDs  
Party Clean-Up/Tear Down

\* Safety boaters and shore safety personnel must be trained, experienced, and will be screened for safety suitability.

\*\* Judges must have successfully completed an American Whitewater judges training certification program and have experience judging.

## CAN'T DECIDE ON A JOB?

No problem. Contact Karen V'Soske, [kvsoske@aol.com](mailto:kvsoske@aol.com), tell her what you do for a living, your interests and skills, tell her when you will be available, and she will find a job to suit you.

## TO VOLUNTEER

Contact Karen V'Soske, Event Manager, at

a) e-mail [kvsoske@aol.com](mailto:kvsoske@aol.com) (best method)

b) call 419-877-9215 or, starting two weeks before games, 828-644-0819

c) write to Karen at 10562 Obee Road, Whitehouse, Ohio, 43571

## INFORMATION NEEDED

When you contact Karen, please provide ALL of the following information:

- 1) full name
- 2) e-mail address (don't include it if you never check it)
- 3) full mailing address
- 4) phone numbers (include all that you don't mind if we call: home, work, cell) and indicate which one is the best to use and when
- 5) note the volunteer job you would like to do - if you have a preference
- 6) what days will you be available to help - and what hours on those days; note that some of the jobs are on days prior to the event
- 7) tell us your occupation and any other skills you have - this will help us best utilize your abilities by finding the best volunteer job for you

## VOLUNTEER NOW

Some jobs and times fill up fast. The sooner you contact Karen, the sooner she can place you. Be sure to include the dates and times you are available.

## WHAT HAPPENS AFTER YOU SEND IN YOUR VOLUNTEER INFORMATION

Once Karen receives your volunteer information, she will contact you within 5 days, often sooner. She will make a placement suggestion (job / day / time) but won't ink it in until you confirm to her that you want that placement. It will be important that you get back to her as soon as possible because others may be contacting her wanting that same placement. She operates on a first-to-confirm-gets-the-job basis. Then, about 3 weeks prior to the event, you will receive a mailing with all the information you need to do your job: when to report, who to report to, any training needed, information about parking, etc. This year we will e-mail the info whenever possible unless you prefer snail mail. Prior to the mailing, you are encouraged to contact Karen any time you have questions or if your availability should change.



## Participation in American Whitewater Sanctioned Series is at an All Time High

*Michael Phelan, Events Director*

Only four of the thirteen qualifying events on the Teva Tour sanctioned by American Whitewater remain before the final blowout at the Ocoee River in Ducktown, Tennessee. Competition has remained fierce as paddlers battle for the opportunity to represent their regions at what will be the most prestigious event in the United States. Participation at events has been the highest it has been in years. Athletes have been pounding out the road miles traveling to competitions collecting as many points as possible so that they may be one of the chosen few invited to compete at the National Championships. One of the most exciting developments this year has been the resurgence of amateur participation. When asked about this recent phenomena, many amateurs claim that the development of regions has made it much more accessible for them to compete and work towards the goal of competing at the National Championships. Father and son teams like Andrew and Andre Hongach have been driving from New York to places like Wetumpka, Alabama and Watertown, NY, for the weekend, to compete and ensure their place at the Championships. Andre Hongach managed to edge his dad, Andrew, out and receive 1<sup>st</sup> place in the combined Mens Junior and

Beginner class at the Potomac. Andrew came in a very respectable 3<sup>rd</sup> place.

Pro paddlers have also been spinning the wheels on the odometer as they travel the entire country representing their sponsors and trying to ensure that they keep their coveted Pro status. This year only forty men out of the sixty registered will have the opportunity to challenge each other for the honors of being crowned the National Champion. The remaining twenty will be in for the fight of their lives as they try to protect their Pro status from the nation's top experts. For the 2003 season, the only way to move up from an expert to a registered Pro is to seize one of the twenty spots currently being held by a Pro. The competition at the Ocoee between the hungry experts and the struggling Pros promises to be one of the most dramatic in the history of freestyle paddling. Come and watch as legends fall and new legends are born.

For Current Teva Tour Standings check out the American Whitewater website at [www.americanwhitewater.org](http://www.americanwhitewater.org).

# Riversense: A Film About You.

By: Kevin Colburn

This is not a movie review, I would never write a movie review. This is a story about a story, and a story about an artist's vision. That artist is Kate Geis, and her vision is what is brought to fruition in the movie *Riversense*.

There was excited talk among the AW staff one day about a young filmmaker named Kate Geis who was working on this ambitious self-funded feature-length film that Risa was sure related to what American Whitewater does, *somehow*. Shortly thereafter, Kate presented a 10 minute trailer of her movie to the AW staff. We were all transfixed by her film and were convinced *thatsomehow* her work did in fact relate to AW's mission. It was beautifully filmed and even in 10 minutes it powerfully captured what we boaters are, and what we do. It was the first honest and accurate portrayal of the subculture to which we all belong that I had ever seen. It was something that my grandparents and my paddling friends would both think was cool. I was psyched to work with Kate.

Since that first introduction I have had the pleasure of working with Kate on a very unique project, which involved her volunteering countless hours of video production. She made the AW public service announcement that ran on the big screen in New York City's Time Square every 10 minutes for months last summer. The time on the big screen was donated by a wonderful AW supporter that I met on an airplane, and Kate and her friend Tom did all the Video work. Serendipity at its finest. That was just the first time that Kate stepped up to help us, and blend our work with hers. *Riversense* is another example, and what an example it is... Suffice it to say that her work

definitely relates to ours.

Kate herself is a piece of work, you must understand. Kate is one of those people who just resonates within virtually everyone that she meets; like a rich memory triggered by a fleeting scent, like a child's "hullo?" called into an empty grain silo, like a morning's forgotten dream that gives you haunting confidence all day. And that kind of resonance is exactly what she carried into her interviews and filming in *Riversense*, and what most viewers will walk away feeling. No one else could have made *Riversense*. The mosaic of images and depth of the stories truly capture what it is like to be a boater: the profound beauty, the physical risks, the emotional risks, the community, the joy, and the power that is *out there*.

*Riversense* follows a series of paddlers through their days and months and years to reveal some of the lessons that rivers tend to teach. Each story is linked so that the movie, well, flows. It follows T.R. from the peanut shack to the rodeo circuit, Lonnie Carden as he works to save the Saluda River, Five Dollar Frank flying high above the New River Gorge, Dunbar Hardy down the river of recovery, and his mother as she follows her bliss into retirement. *Riversense* also follows William Nealy down the golden Haw River and into his unique and timeless world of creativity. Weave all those stories seamlessly together with sparkly aesthetic filming of the paddling world, and a stellar soundtrack, and you will approach *Riversense*.

So what the heck does *Riversense* mean? What does it mean to you? I think Alan Watts knew when he wrote, "Tranquility in disturbance means perfection..." I think Lao Tsu also knew when he wrote, "When two great forces oppose each other, the victory will go to the one that knows how to yield." Lots of people know. I think I know; instead of a watch I wear a bracelet that says *Riversense* on it as a reality check when I am searching for the time. The important question though, is what does it mean to you? Go see the movie. It resonates.

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John Foy: (859) 296-4967 or go to <http://lsutfbwa.org/russellforW>

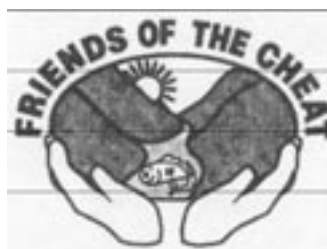
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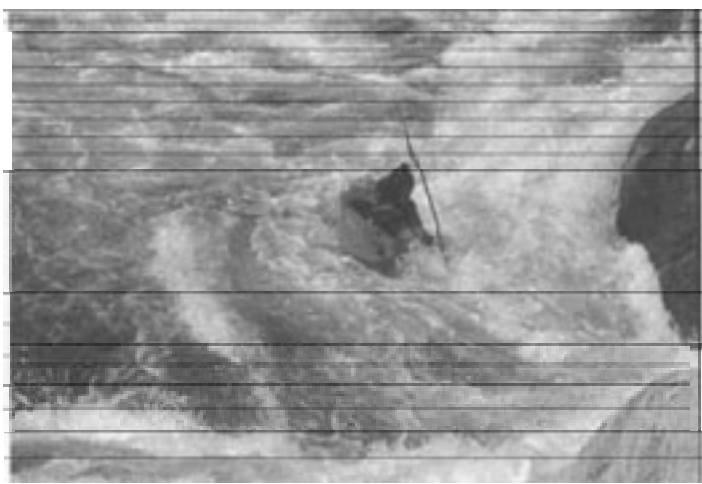


# Whitewater Santa Comes to California



## AW Celebrates First Whitewater Releases on the North Fork of Feather River

*by Lila Thomas*



The night before the first scheduled whitewater release on the North Fork of the Feather River in northern California a group of AW staff and board members huddle in the back of Kevin Lewis' converted school bus... the ultimate river vehicle. There is a flurry of excitement as they discuss the organized shuttle, dinner and activities for the weekend. Kevin Lewis, AW Vice President, and John Gangemi, Conservation Director at AW, have worked with environmental organizations, state and federal agencies and Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) for over five years in a complicated and exhaustive dam relicensing process... all to make this weekend happen.

"Of all the projects we've been working on this has the greatest potential for meeting the needs of boaters... because of the location, dispersed camping and the variety of the whitewater opportunities this project offers," says a bright-eyed Gangemi.

The North Fork of the Feather, nicknamed the "Stairway of Power" because its huge number of hydroelectric facilities, is situated 100 miles from Sacramento. The river promises whitewater ranging from Class III to Class V. But for over fifty years there has only been a trickle of water meandering around house-sized granite boulders in the barren riverbed. Finally on June 1st and 2nd, 1600 cfs of clear blue water roared into the gorge- turning the river into a fantastic playground for more than 200 boaters.

And so this special weekend marks the revival of a river that will certainly be a major resource for California boaters. The new settlement will ensure whitewater releases which will help to relieve the overcrowding common on the few rivers in California that run in mid to late summer. The releases will also improve the overall health of the river.

Because of the high volume of traffic on highway 70 and the limited availability of sites to access the river, AW provided a shuttle on both days of the release. A five dollar donation was requested to cover costs.

By 10:00 am on Saturday the water was on and the take-out was packed with boaters. Members of Chico PaddleHeads and Shasta Paddlers, who spent the past five years negotiating for these flows, showed up to celebrate the victory. The shuttle soon began transporting boaters to the put-in for the Class IV Cresta reach. Blue skies, clear water and the gigantic granite boulders lining the riverbed made the view spectacular. Excited boaters scouted lines from the road on the ride to the put-in.

The first couple of miles on the Cresta section featured several Class IV rapids with big rock pour-overs and rooster tails jetting up over the horizon line. There were also several big wave trains with sweet spots for play. The river mellowed to a Class II-III in the last three miles above the take-out, but the views of the deep verdant gorge cradling the river kept everyone happy.

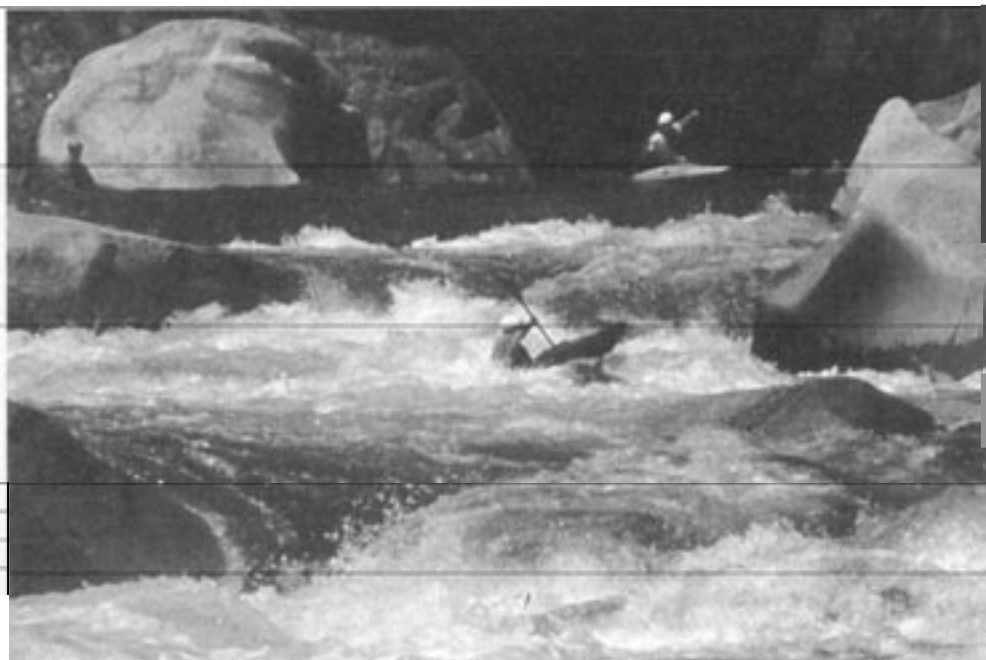
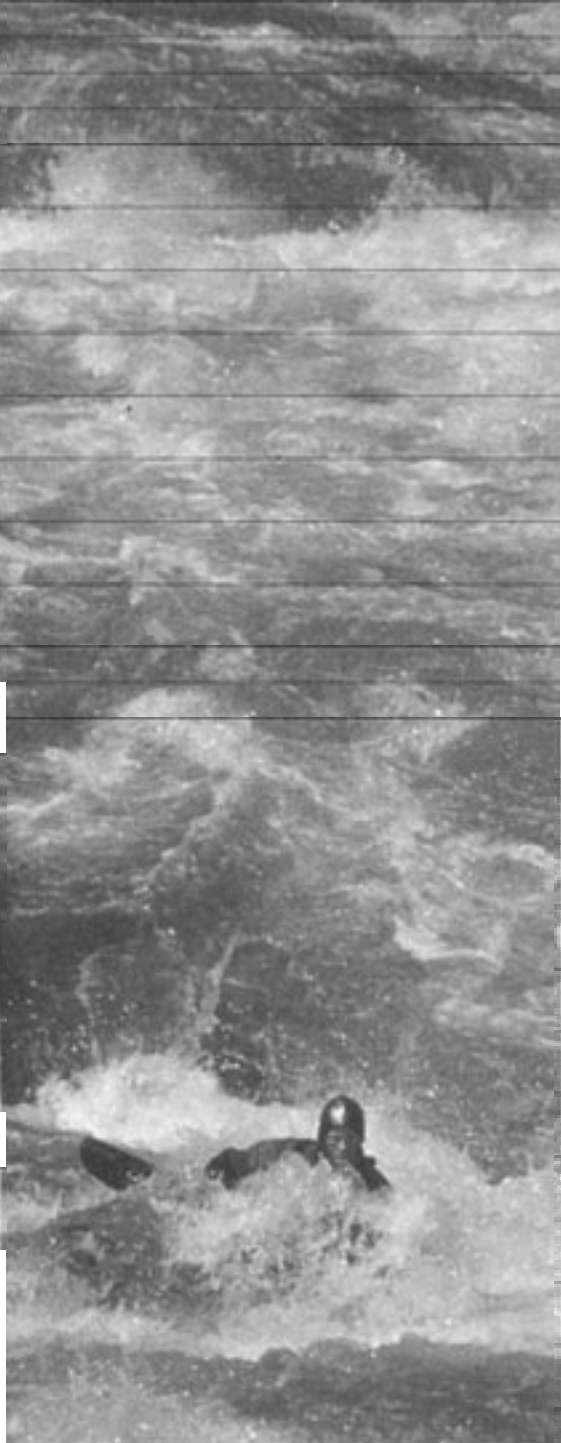
"The Cresta Reach was fantastic," says Adam Eichberg, an AW board member, who was one of the first on the river. "It was intense, not knowing any of the lines and being on a what is essentially a new river."

On Saturday evening AW held a special "William Nealy Lives" event upstream at the Belden Town Resort. There was music, food and a silent auction. To add to the festivities a flatwater boat race was held. Boaters lined up for a 50 yard dash- then, to their surprise, the judge

explained that they had to compete with their boats upside down in the water. Competitors clung to the bottom of their boats and paddled (or breaststroke kicked) their way to the finish line. Although it wasn't pretty, Willy Kern was the winner in a recreational boat. The veteran hair boater won a William Nealy original artwork.

On Sunday the nine-mile Rock Creek Class III-V section was running. The run is broken into two sub-sections, Rogers Flat and Tobin. Rogers Flat is a Class III section and begins below the Rock Creek diversion dam and ends at the "Tobin Vista" river access. The run is approximately five-miles with an average gradient of 50 feet per mile.

The Class V Tobin section begins shortly after the Tobin Vista access site. Only advanced boaters ventured onto this more difficult section of the North Fork of the Feather. Here the



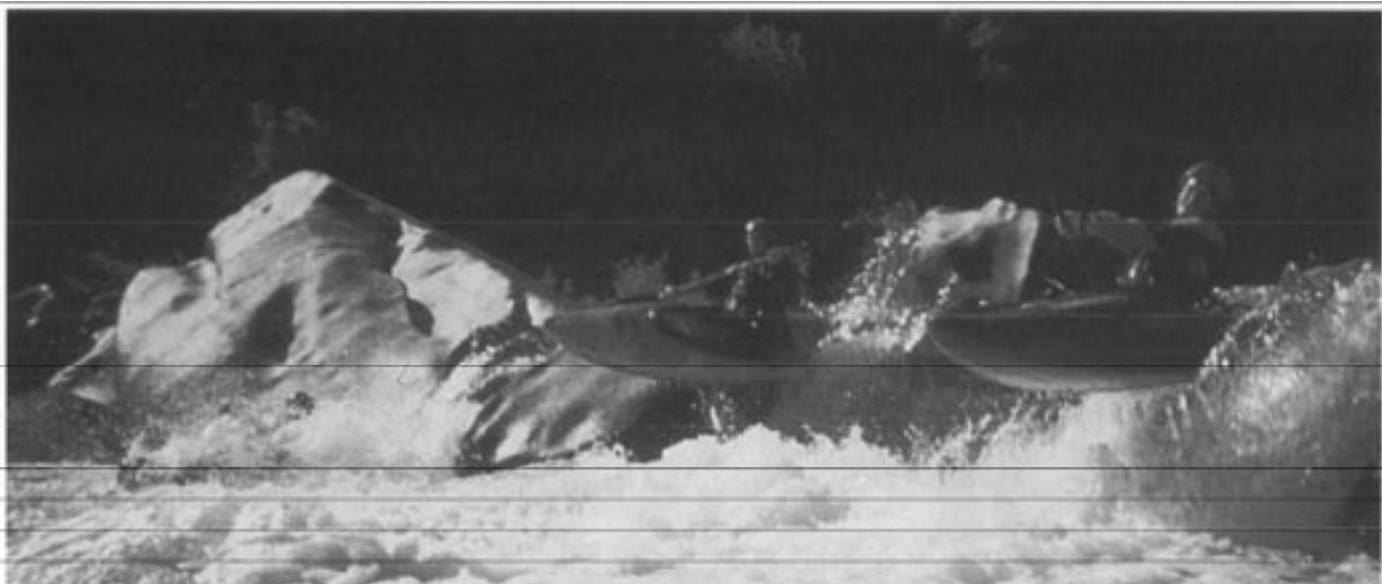
**"Of all the projects we've been working on this has the greatest potential for meeting the needs of boaters... because of the location, dispersed camping and the variety of the whitewater opportunities this project offers," says a bright-eyed Gangemi.**

Left Page down Johnnie Kern in Tobin #3 Photo by John Gangemi Tobin #2 Photo by John Gangemi Risa in "Piece of Risa." Photo by Kevin Colburn.

Clockwise:  
Tim Kelly in "Piece of Tosa,"  
North Fork Feather. Take-out for the  
Cresta Reach  
Photo by Kevin Colburn



*Whitewater Santa continued* **»**



**"Nobody expected the Tobin section to be so pushy and challenging," says Scott Collins, AW's website guru. "Even some of the pro boaters were getting spanked on Tobin."**

Above: Tobin #1. Photo by John Gangemi.  
Bottom: Kevin and Lana Lewis: No Hands on "Piece of Risa." Photo by Kevin Colburn.

river drops 150 feet over the next 1.2 miles, through a large boulder field replete with undercuts and sieves. several potentially serious pins occurred in this section during the whitewater flow study years ago. Below the Storrie Bridge, the gradient eases and the difficulty level drops back to Class III-IV.

"Nobody expected the Tobin section to be so pushy and challenging," says Scott Collins, AW's website guru. "Even some of the pro boaters were getting spanked on Tobin."

The settlement reached during the dam relicensing process ensures whitewater releases for the first weekend of each month, June through October, from 10:00 am until 4:00 pm. It also creates a balance between generating hydropower and a healthy aquatic ecosystem. It strives to protect fish habitats by maintaining appropriate water temperatures, providing year-round instream flows. It also opens the gates of dams to enable gravel to move downstream, thereby providing spawning habitat for fish. Other ecosystem restoration measures include planting trees and other vegetation along river and establishing an Ecological Resources Committee, which makes resource and management decisions over the life of the license.



*Whitewater Santa continued* ►



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PHOTO: JACOB BARNES







The settlement also mandates developing a river recreation **access** plan that **provides** up to \$300,000 to improve access to the river.

"It was a collaborative effort," says Kevin Lewis, the **volunteer** AW Board member who has done the **most** locally to make the releases possible via the relicensing agreement. "**Whitewater** is really just a small part of the settlement. The overall health of the North

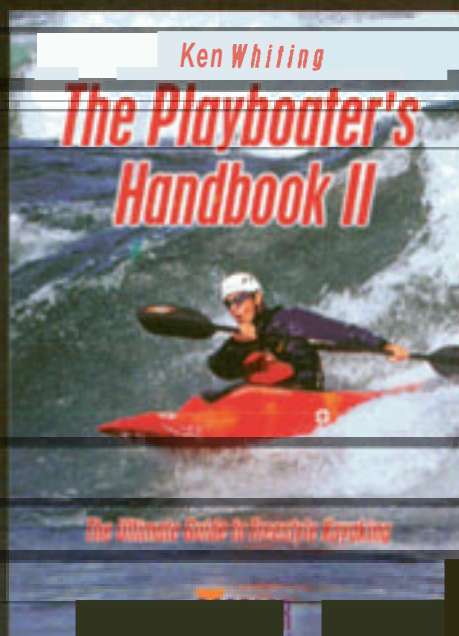
Fork of the Feather is going to improve dramatically as a result of the agreement we negotiated."

The first weekend release of the North Fork of the Feather River went off without a hitch. It represented a gratifying access success story for recreational boaters nationwide. But, even more importantly, it represented a step in the right direction for river conservation.

To schedule your future paddling weekends at the North Fork Feather releases check the American Whitewater **website** [www.americanwhitewater.org](http://www.americanwhitewater.org) Release schedules and additional information regarding **AW's** ongoing work to restore other dewatered rivers are posted there.

Above: Tobin #4. Photo by John Gangemi.

## The Ultimate in Kayak instruction - by World Champion Ken Whiting



*The Playboater's Handbook II* follows up on the best-selling success of the original Handbook with a completely updated look at freestyle kayaking technique. It covers almost 3 times as many moves as the first edition with the help of other elite freestyle paddlers, including Corran Addison, Tyler Curtis and Steve Fisher. From the fundamental skill sets and 'catching your first wave', to the latest moves like the tricky whu and aerial loop, *the Playboater's Handbook II* will be a must have for both those who did and did not take advantage of the first.

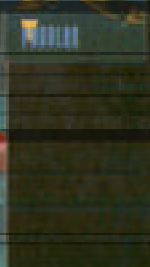
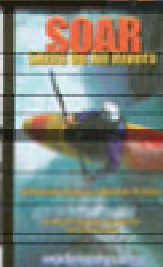
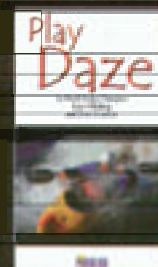
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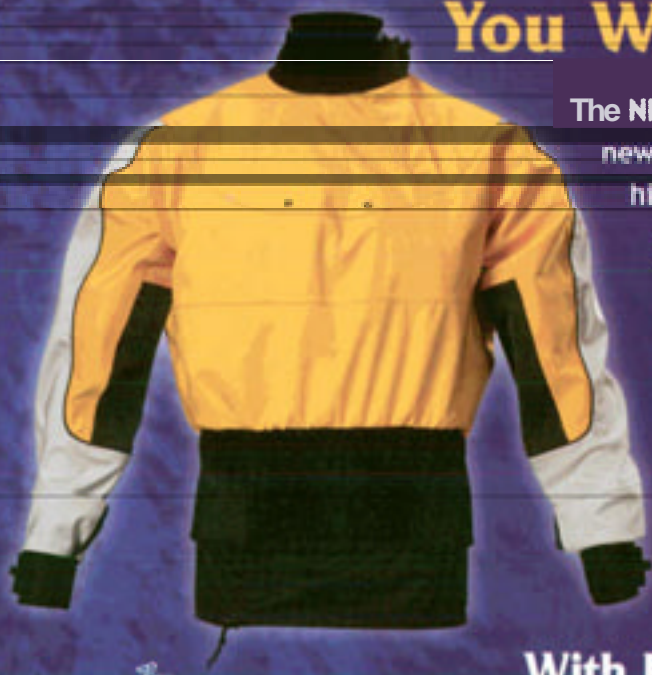
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# Kayaking in Iceland

Story and photos by Jon Heioar Runarsson



Top: Johan being trashed in a hole during the second descent of the Rage rapid on the Svarta.

Bottom: Jonsi running the left (12 meter high) side of Godafoss on the Skjalfandaflijt.

Right: The author in Sea of Flames rapid on Hruteyjarkvisl Creek.

It's the 13th of May and it should be spring but the sun is not shining and I don't think I'm going paddling this week. It's about one degree Centigrade, snowing, and the forecast says that the weather will be like this until next weekend. I must admit that I should be getting used to this weather, taking into account the fact that I was born, and have lived my whole life, on the island of Iceland.

The most unusual thing about this Icelandic spring was the fact that it came early, so my paddling friends and I were able to cancel our weekly pool sessions and start paddling rivers by the end of March. Many of us had new boats and were really impatient to try them out on rivers. Last summer we had our first big kayak rodeo in Iceland. The foreign paddlers opened our eyes to the possibilities with new boat designs. So last winter Icelandic paddlers imported all manner of kayaks... Boosters, Super Egos, Aces, and Sub 7s. We also managed to import some new model creek boats.

So, let's cut to the basics about Iceland. The population of Iceland is about 286,000. The nation is well educated and English is widely spoken. Iceland is a volcanic island in the middle of the North Atlantic. It's a very rough country with jagged mountains and deep valleys. 75% of the country is above 200 meters in elevation and there is little vegetation. Forests are very small and the trees are low to the ground. A common riddle is "What do you do if you get lost in an Icelandic forest?" The answer is "You just stand up and look around." We never have to worry about tree strainers in the rivers.

The biggest glaciers in Europe are found in Iceland and they give birth to many of Iceland's most exciting rivers. The winters are long and hard and the summers are short and mild. The average temperature in the summer is about ten degrees C and the best months to paddle are June, July and August, though Icelandic paddlers paddle from May



to October. In the middle of the winter the daylight lasts only two hours, but in the middle of the summer the sun is up for 24 hours.

Now let's consider the rivers. Iceland is covered with rivers; they are everywhere. You can travel around Iceland by road and there are fantastic rivers practically every one or two hundred kilometers. Route One circumvents the biggest part of Iceland and is only 1339 km long. From Route One you can access many of the best rivers in the country. Usually you don't have to drive more than 40-50 km from the main highway to get to the put-ins and take-outs. The main road is fairly good, but four wheel drive is sometimes needed when driving on some of the smaller roads that lead to the put-ins and take-outs.

There are basically three kinds of rivers in Iceland; rivers that originate from springs, rivers that are formed by many small creeks, and rivers that come from glaciers. The rivers that come from springs have very stable water levels, but both the collective rivers and the glacial rivers have rather unstable, variable flows. The glacial rivers are often laden with silt and so run brown. The glacial rivers are often big and explosive with huge waves, man eating holes and powerful waterfalls. The other rivers are more creek like, with lots of boulders and technical rapids to negotiate.

Very few rivers in Iceland are long enough to offer multi-day trips. Icelandic boaters

usually paddle rivers that take about two to four hours to run. But often there is another good river nearby, so we usually paddle two or three rivers in one day.

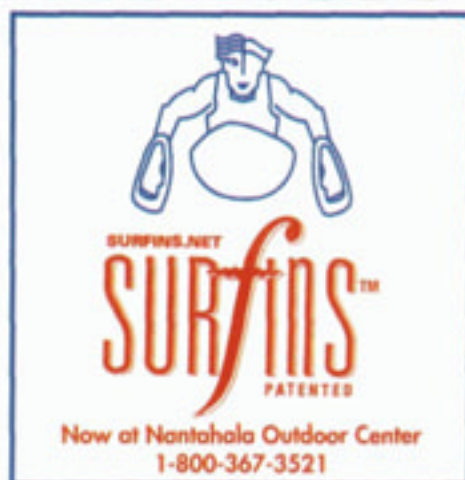
Even though you don't have to worry about tree strainers on Icelandic rivers, there is another kind of hazard, very sharp rocks. Many rivers run through relatively new lava. Since the rivers and glaciers have not had time to polish this rock, our new boats soon look like they have been used for a long time.

There are three main centers for kayaking in Iceland: Reykjavik in the south, Akureyri in the north, and Egilsstaioir in the east.

The most popular rivers in the southern part of Iceland are Tungufjot, Hvita and Ytri Ranga. These rivers are about a one and a half hour drive from Reykjavik. The Hvita is a Class III river with a few small holes and nice waves. The main attraction to the river is one great surf wave. Tungufjot is a Class III-IV creek with one six meter waterfall named Faxi. This falls has been run numerous times. Ytri Ranga is Class III-IV river with drops, playspots and few nice rapids.

Egilsstaioir in east Iceland is a great place to visit. Close to the town are at least three good rivers: Eyvindard, Grimsa and Jokulsa a Fljotsdal. In Egilsstaioir you usually find the best weather in Iceland. Eyvindard is about a fifteen-minute drive from the town, in fact the take-out lies

where the town begins. The upper part of the river is Class IV, but the lower part is Class III+. The river is divided into two parts by a drop that has only been tackled at very low levels. The lower section runs through spectacular, narrow gorges. Grimsa is a Class II-III run about a thirty minute drive from Egilsstaioir. It's not an exiting run, but it has two nice waves and beautiful scenery. It flows through gorges where the water is so clear that you can see the bottom of the river, even at its deepest. Jokulsa a Fljotsdal is totally different from the Grimsa. It's a Class




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Clockwise: Johan in Sea of  
Flames Rapid on  
Hruteyjarkvisi Creek.

Johan on the second descent  
of Ullarfoss on the Svarta.

Reynir running Faxi on the  
Tungufjot.

IV glacial river with brown water, packed with big holes, waves and significant drops. It's about 50-60 min drive from Egilsstaioir.

In the 100 km radius around Akureyri are some of the best rivers in Iceland: **Laxa** in **South Pingeyjarsysla**, **Skjalfandafljot**, **Jokulsa Austari** and **Jokulsa Vestari**. **Laxa** lies about 80 km east of Akureyri. It's a Class III-IV river which runs through open country. It offers plenty of excitement with holes, waves, good playspots... and one notorious rapid called The Thumbledryer. **Skjalfandafljot** is a Class III glacial river. When the river is high it's fun to run it because there are waves everywhere. But in low water it offers few waves and playspots. The main attraction to **Skjalfandafljot** is **Godafoss** Falls. This is a river-wide horseshoe waterfall, about 8 meters high on the right and about 12 meters high on the left. Both sides have been tackled numerous times, but paddlers should be aware that there is a horrible drop not far below Godafoss which must be avoided.

**Skjalfandafljot** is about 50 km east of Akureyri. **Jokulsa Austari** and **Jokulsa Vestari** (Glacier-River East and Glacier-River West) are located in **Skagafjorour**, about 100 km west of Akureyri. These are two of the most popular river rafting and kayaking rivers in Iceland. **Jokulsa Vestari** is Class III river which takes about 1-2 hours to run. On the other hand, the **Jokulsa Austari** is an action packed Class IV river. It has some very difficult rapids, with names like Green Room (also known as Three Steps) and Commitment. It takes 3-4 hours to run this river.

I have only mentioned some of the most popular rivers. We are always looking for new places to explore and there are many rivers in Iceland that have never been paddled. We have a holiday weekend coming up and a number of my friends from the **Akureyris Kayak Club** and I planning an expedition to explore new rivers. We have already targeted two rivers for first descents. One has a six meter waterfall that has never been run. Perhaps next time I will be able to tell you about our adventure.

Finally I would like to invite you to visit Iceland and paddle with us. Icelandair flies from a number of cities in the US. It lands at the international airport at Keflavik. There are many car rental companies here. Whitewater kayaks are not for rent in Iceland, but sea kayaks are.

#### Further information:

<http://www.icelandair>

<http://www.rafting.is>

<http://www.this.is/kayak> (the kayak club in Reykjavik)

<http://www4.mmedia.is/jhr> (the kayak club in Akureyri)

<http://www.iceland.org>



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photo by Charles Murphy



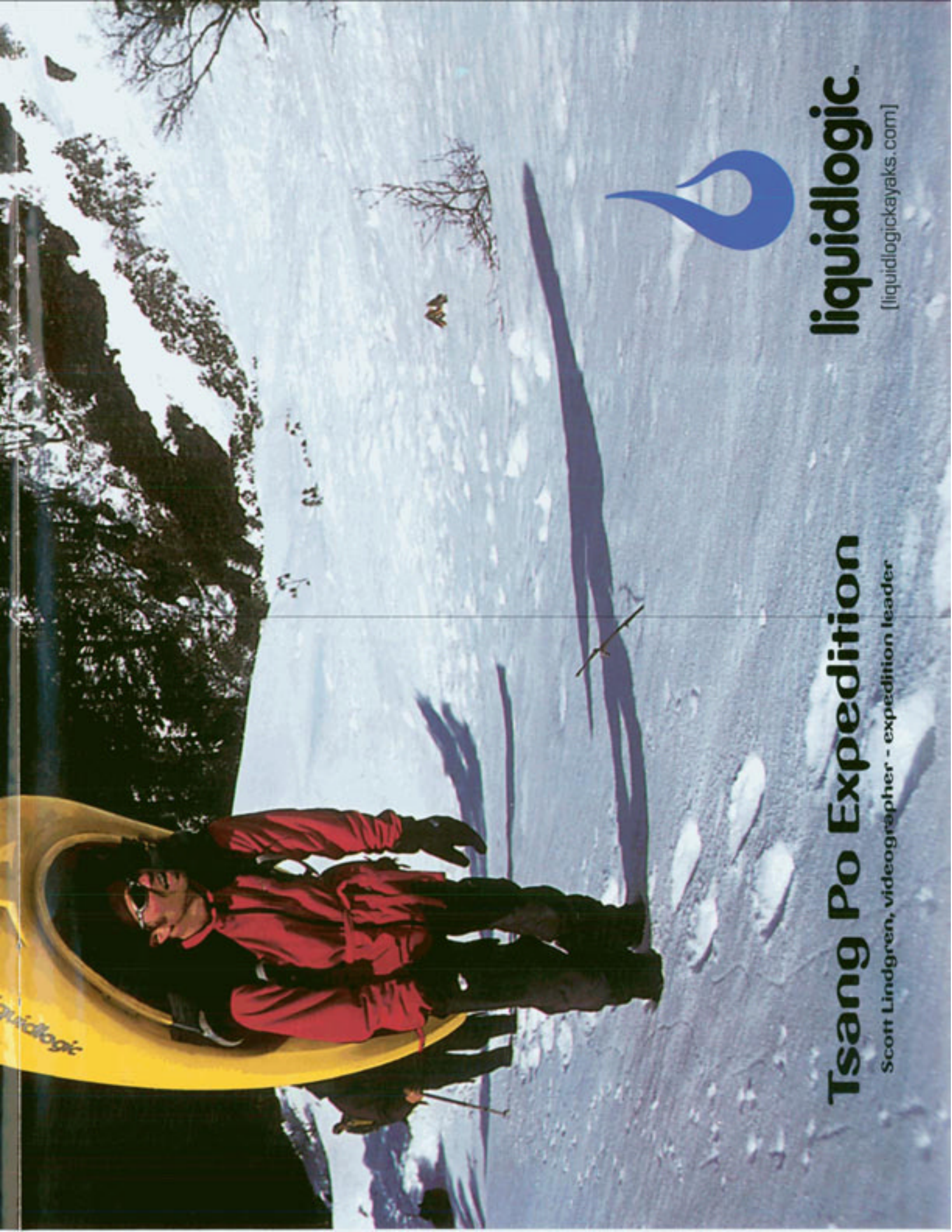


AMERICAN  
**AW**  
WHITEWATER

photo by Charles Murray







# Tsang Po Expedition

Scott Lindgren, videographer - expedition leader



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A high-action photograph of a kayaker in a red liquidlogic kayak navigating through white water rapids. The kayak is tilted upwards, and the water is splashing around it. The kayaker's hands are visible on the paddle. The background shows the turbulent water and a dark rock formation on the left.

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# A Divine Kayak Expedition for Action Asia

By Inka Trollsås

**When winter comes to Nepal** it is the off-season for Ram and I, a time for us to explore new whitewater rivers. Recently I followed Ram across the border to India. With our kayaks tied to roof we traveled from Kathmandu to Rishikesh, ready for adventure.

I took a liking to that part of India almost immediately, with its gentle people who dress in yellow and orange - the colors of almost everything in Rishikesh. Rishikesh also offered countless Ashrams, temples, and stunning sunsets. The Ganges flows through the region like a dark green ribbon. The lush hills were much like those back home in Nepal, reminding us that we were still in the Himalayas.



Top 2: Ram on Ganges wave  
3rd down: AD on the Ganges  
Left: The Canyon  
Photos by Inka Trollsås



In Rishikesh we met Bhuwan AD, an Indian raft-guide and kayaker who is a good friend of Ram's. Together we decided to travel up to Chamoli. From there we would kayak 200 kms back to Rishikesh.

In the course of our journey we kayaked four days on the Alaknanda river and two days on the Ganges. A young trainee raft guide served as our road support. He followed on land using the local bus system, transporting our tents and sleeping bags. We carried some dry clothes, a little bit of food and a first aid kit in our kayaks.

We paddled about 35 km a day and spent most nights camping on a beach near a river confluence. Because any confluence is very holy to Hindus, there would always be a temple near our camp. There we would find friendly people, many





of them holy men or women looking after the temples. They were usually quite generous, serving us **tea** and sometimes giving us blessings for good luck. The temples were also the safest places to dry our gear and keep our kayaks at night. **Kayaking** in India is an excellent way to learn about the Hindu culture and religion. Twice during our journey we floated past burning bodies on the shore.

The Alaknanda was emerald green and very clear and cold. Since it was winter the volume very low, but there was plenty of gradient to produce lively rapids. As the weakest paddler of the three, I was quite nervous at first. But since the rapids were mainly Class **III**, I soon started to relax and enjoy the ride.

On the first afternoon we approached the rapid **known** as Hillary Point. This is where the famed explorer Edmund Hillary was forced to end his upriver "Sea to Sky" motorboat expedition. This was a wild Class **IV** full of big boulders. Concerned local spectators told us that no one had run the rapid before. Ram, the most experienced kayaker among us, decided to go for it. AD and I carried our

kayaks around and watched Ram winding his way around the rocks and down the drops. He bobbled a bit, but made it down safely.

As small tributaries poured in the **Alaknanda** got bigger and greener.

Late in the second afternoon we had a small epic. I was **tired and cold** after a long day of paddling. The **Kakar** Fall is quite a long Class **IV** rapid with big waves. Near the base of the rapid the river enters a spectacular gorge, where the water pools out. The gate to the gorge is narrow and a lot of the water is pushed to the right, into an eddy with rock cliffs surrounded by rock walls. The river left portage is an unpleasant affair, and if you choose to walk you miss the opportunity see the stunning gorge. I decided to give the rapid a shot, even though I was tired and cold after a long day.

I followed Ram through the turbulent waves until a juicy boil stopped me cold near the entrance to the gorge. I was literally sucked into the eddy. AD passed me and went through the canyon gate. I felt stranded and left out, thinking perhaps I wasn't welcome in the gorge below. Perhaps only Hindus could pass into this special canyon full of holy

water. I tried to ferry out into the main flow a couple of times but didn't make it. The water in the eddy bashed me about and suddenly I flipped, banged into the wall and came out of my boat. I was scared I would go into an undercut.

Ram scurried to climb up the wall inside the canyon and came back to where I was. He reached down into the eddy with his paddle and managed to pull me and my **kayak** out of the trap. To get back to the top of the rapid we had to clamber across the rock wall, which was even more terrifying than being in the eddy. I climbed back into my boat with Ram's help and slid off the shelf back into the river. AD had been looking after Ram's boat and managed to pass it up to him. Ram managed to fit it in between cracks in the wall, get in, don his spray-deck, and slide down safely. Luckily, nothing more than my confidence hurt. AD comforted me, telling me that every pilgrim must take a swim in the river's holy water to wash away his or her sins. But why did my baptism have to occur in ice water?

The canyon was spectacular. It was so narrow, dark and mysterious. There were many small caves in the cliffs and hundreds





of doves soared out of them. This was the most spectacular spot on the Alaknanda.

During the next two days the river mel-  
lowed a bit, but the currents were still fast  
and there were plenty of small, enjoyable  
Class II rapids. On our forth day we reached  
the town of Devprayag, where the bright  
glacial water of the Baghirathi tumbled in  
from the right. It mixed with the dark green  
water of the Alaknanda creating a magical  
confluence... this is where the sacred Ganges  
begins.

Our first day in the Ganges was a strenu-  
ous one. The volume was high but the water  
was very flat. But on the second day the  
gradient picked up and we had encountered  
some big rapids, including the Wall, the  
Rollercoaster and Golf Course. Golf Course  
lived up to its name, offering a number of  
excellent play holes. Here our friends Sorbir  
and Shalab joined us. They were the first to  
start a kayakschool on the Ganges, the Ganga  
Kayak School. They had just returned from  
Nepal with some new playboats and were  
really rocking in the waves!

The scenery on the upper Ganges is simi-  
lar to that on the rivers in Nepal. The wildlife  
is fantastic. We spotted several different kinds  
of kingfishers, eagles, Bramani ducks and the  
migrating cormorant. I caught a glimpse of  
an otter sneaking into the river on a beach  
one day and Ram managed to see a martin in  
the jungle. We also saw boisterous white  
monkeys with black faces and long tails play-  
ing on the shore.

As is typical in the Himalayas, we encoun-  
tered a lot of people along the river. They  
were always cheerful. Kids sometimes ran  
for kilometers to watch us. Sometimes con-  
cerned locals warned us not to paddle down  
into the rapids, and some of them asked  
where we keep our legs. Ram and AD joked  
with them, saying "our legs go straight down,  
we walk on the bottom of the river" or "one  
leg in the front and one in the back." Many  
children were convinced that we didn't have  
legs at all! Sometimes their mothers would  
scare them, telling them that if they didn't



behave, they would give them to us to take  
down the river.

But not all of the people along the river  
were carefree. At one place we met a family  
of Tibetan refugees that had come across the  
Himalayas and settled on the bank of the  
Alaknanda. It had been a difficult journey,  
but they seemed happy to be there.

To read about more of our adventures  
please have a look at our web-site  
[www.kayaknepal.com](http://www.kayaknepal.com)

Left page clockwise: The Holy Ganges Begins,  
Inka meeting local ladies. Photos by Ram H.  
Silwal. One of many Hindu Temples.  
Photo by Inka Trollås.

Above Clockwise: Ganges. Local little helper.  
Photos by Inka Trollås.

Inka on a Ganges beach. Photo by Ram H. Silwal.





# We Know what you're thinking!

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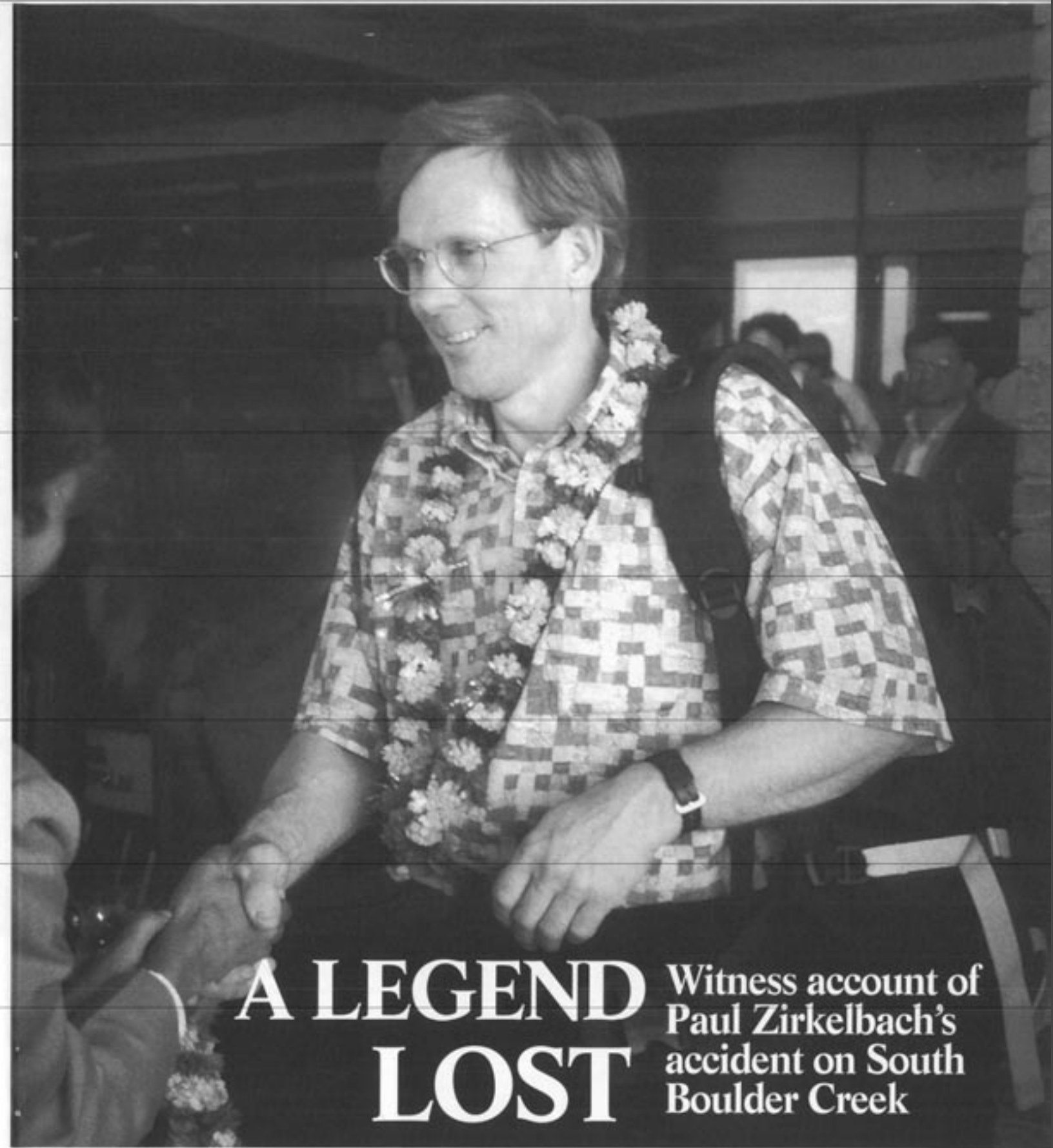
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# A LEGEND LOST

Witness account of  
Paul Zirkelbach's  
accident on South  
Boulder Creek



paddlers heading into the next major rapid, the Gash, which lies about a 112 mile downstream. The Gash is a Class V drop, normally portaged because of its serious objective hazards and the Class VI "screw up" consequences at the bottom of the rapid. It has a relatively easy, straight-down-the-middle entrance. Three quarters of the way down the fifty yard long rapid is a six foot river-wide ledge that pours directly into a huge flat, triangular boulder. This boulder lies at the base and center of the drop. The Gash feature extends from river-right to about halfway across the creek. Above the falls, the majority of the water pushes hard to a threatening slot/sieve

on river-left. This means that boaters must make a very tricky and committing move to the right, just above the Gash, and a last second river-right boof over the falls into a tight landing channel below. The landing is into an incredibly violent swirling maelstrom that funnels most of the water back into the drop against the huge undercut triangular boulder. Only a small amount of water moves downstream through a shallow right side exit. I was leading the group with Paul directly behind as we approached the Gash Rapid. I caught the portage eddy on river-right, just above the rapid, shouldered my boat, and started walking. After a couple of

steps, I watched Paul come around a big rock on the right, in the main flow. He was not planning to eddy-out. We made eye contact and I yelled, "Zirk!", but he gave me a confident smile and proceeded to line up to run the rapid without a scout or safety. I quickly walked the portage, which took about a minute, only to see Paul's boat pinned vertically (bow up, cockpit against the undercut) on the right side of the falls in the normal landing spot. I dropped my boat and ran to the bottom of the drop where Scott Young joined me. I got to the shore nearest Paul's vertically pinned boat and jumped out onto the slippery undercut boulder, against which his boat was pinned. I couldn't see Paul because the entire cockpit was submerged, but thought Paul was still in his boat. The current was strong, and Scott threw me a rope from shore. I tried to reach the boat and clip the rope to the bow grab loop, but I was having problems staying on the rock. The current was pushing me away from the boat.

Chris, one of the two that joined our group below Trainspotting, got behind me on the rock and we went up together fighting the force of the water. Chris simultaneously jumped and clipped Paul's grab-loop to the rope as he fell into the maw where Paul had disappeared. Fortunately Chris came free and was okay. Paul's boat was pulled out easily. About 4 minutes had elapsed since Paul had entered the rapid. We never saw Paul or any of his gear during the boat recovery. Immediately I got into my boat and paddled downstream to make sure Paul wasn't in front of us. Barret Burke scaled the cliff that pinches the bottom of the drop. He and two fishermen ran down the river-left bank to look for Paul. I paddled about a 1/2 mile downstream past Lumberyard Rapid to just above the S-Turn Gorge, where I eddied out below a tree strainer that blocked the main flow and 85% of the creek. I figured this strainer would have stopped a floating body. No one spotted Paul anywhere below. It was then that I realized Paul was most likely still trapped in the Gash.

I ran back and found the rest of our group probing the rapid. About twenty minutes had passed with still no sign of Paul. We were tossing two ropes into the drop in an attempt to snag Paul. Three people were probing the curtain under the falls and into the undercut boulder. Belay ropes were connected to the probes, which were being held from the river-right bank. In a final attempt Gordon Banks clipped into two throw-ropes that were anchored by two probes. Gordon then probed the undercut side of the big flat boulder that makes the Gash. The force of the water made this desperate search perilous and almost impossible. The only way to probe the complete undercut would have been to let Gordon go all the way under the rock. No way were we going to do that. After about fifty minutes, we faced the reality that our rescue attempt was now a body recovery. We huddled



Paul running Harmon Falls, South Boulder Creek, Colorado June 2000. Photo: Dr. Bill Bevins.

to discuss who was going for help, who was staying, and what task each person was going to do. During our discussion, a female witness who had been watching the whole rescue process and incorrectly thought we were looking for a lost paddle, tried to alert us that she had just seen a blue backpack float out of the river slot area. She (name unknown) had called to us, but the roar of the whitewater was too loud and we didn't see or hear her signaling us. I went downstream to retrieve my kayak. A fisherman ran up yelling, "He's down here!" I ran back to tell Gordon and Chris that one of three fishermen had found Paul downstream. One of the fishermen and I pulled Paul to shore. He had no pulse and had been in the river for approximately an hour. I administered CPR for 10 minutes, knowing he had been down way too long... I was only doing it for my own peace of mind. I put his head in my lap and cried until Gordon and Chris showed up. I remember looking into Paul's baby blue eyes and waiting for him to say, "Get the hell off me."

I will miss Zirk's smile and that unique laugh, which we inevitably heard when he eddied-out at the bottom of a big drop. Zirk ran a lot of big drops in his lifetime. Paul was a hero and a legend to the paddling community. He was one of the premier expedition boaters who had made many incredible first descents both in the US and around the

world. He was always ready to go for it. We will all miss him.

**Conclusions:** None of the six boaters ever saw Paul alive after he boofed over the ledge above the Gash sieve, because of their upstream positions. None of the six boaters or four witnesses saw exactly what happened to Paul in the Gash. Scott Young, who was at a vantage point above the rapid, believes that Paul had successfully made the desired line through the right side entrance drops. That would have set him up properly for the right side boof spot. It is possible that Paul came out of the second entrance drop and was pushed left, in which case he would have had to crank hard to keep speed and make the right boof.

What happened to Paul after he dropped out of sight will never be known. The group's best guess is that Paul was either pinned against the rock or getting hammered in the tight swirling river-right landing zone. He may have decided to swim and was sucked into the Gash sieve or trapped against the undercut side of the huge central flat boulder bordering the landing zone. His body likely came out the river-left constricted slot exit, since there are only two exits from this rapid. The right side exit is too shallow at 400cfs for a body to pass through without getting hung-up, at least temporarily. His boat may have

pinned before or after he swam, but we will never know. Paul was found with his helmet and life Jacket on. His helmet provided full coverage and had a hardvisor. Gordon Banks mentioned that it appeared that Paul had taken some hits to the forehead, but we have no way of knowing when they occurred.

A memorial service was held June 15<sup>th</sup> on the NF of the S. Platte at the Bailey Canyon put-in... a run Paul had done 100s of times. Friends from all over the state made the pilgrimage to toast Paul and watch his ashes make one last run down Bailey. Ironically, the largest fire in Colorado history started on the day of Paul's death and destroyed the pristine beauty of Cheesman Gorge, which was one of Paul's many 1st descents. The fire also caused the S. Platte drainage above Denver to be closed and kept us from paddling downriver with Paul's ashes. *Editor's note: The "fallout" of this accident is still uncertain, but hopefully will not effect the current FERC re-licensing of Gross Reservoir, which serves as the take-out for the run that Paul died on. The evacuation of the body from the Upper South Boulder Gorge involved two different counties, required railroad assistance and took more than three hours. AW and CWWA are monitoring the situation and working with the authorities to improve future rescue evacuation procedures.*



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# When A Legend Dies

By John Mattson

Paul Zerkelbach (1952-2002) lived a life filled to the brim with friends and rivers.

I remember the first time I met Pablo. It was on the Encampment River in Wyoming in the mid eighties. Since then we had shared many great adventures in some of the most remote canyons in the world. His charismatic personality and go-for-it attitude brought joy and laughter to his companions.

Paul was a master carpenter who spent his whole life in Denver. He started boating in 69 with a glass boat that he built himself. His great passion for rivers led him through



Above: 1995 - Mellowing out after a trip on the Illinois River, OR.  
John Moran, Paul, Gregg Moore, John Matson, Moira McSweeney, Jenny Goldberg, Larry Dunn, Joyce G



Above: Boating friends at Bailey Memorial 2002 Colorado.  
Below: First real food in 12 days Kimri Nepal, Karnali River? 1998?



many of the great canyons of the western U.S. and the world. He was the first to run several Colorado classics including Cheesman Canyon, and he paddled the Clark's Fork of the Yellowstone in the mid 80s. California and Idaho were like second homes to Pablo. He had many friends there and had paddled most of the difficult classic runs.

As we reached middle age we would often joke about mellowing out, but Paul's passion would not let him. He continued to hang with a much younger extreme boating crowd and was a great mentor for them. At 48 he completed an incredible first descent of the Langu Khola in the Dolpo region of Nepal. This necessitated crossing a 16,400 foot pass and paddling for 13 days through numerous vertically walled gorges and lots of Class V and VI rapids.



1999 Chile - Team Gato Negro Photo: Randy Kennedy: (L to R) Paul Z., Guan Marco Vellutina, John Moran, John Mattson, Randy Kennedy Team Gato Negro on the Futelafu touring Chile and Argentina.

At 49 he attempted the Miran, an intense Class V+ river in the middle of Peru's Atacama Desert.

This time the river won and he was forced to ride a burro out of the canyon with a broken knee. A twelve-hour bus ride on a dirt road ended at the nearest hospital.

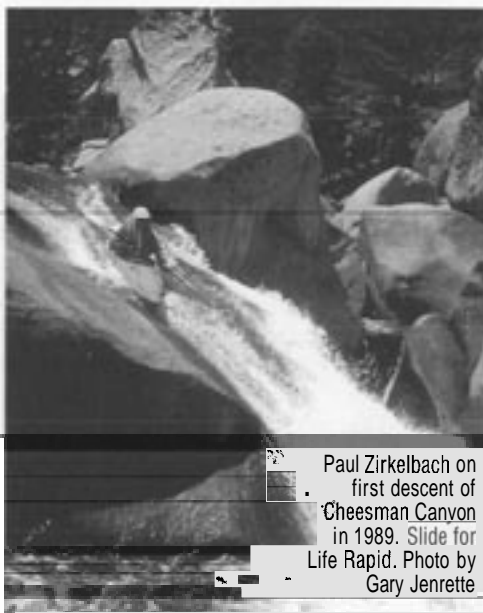
But even this epic could not destroy his passion. His 50th birthday seemed to give him new energy. He jumped right back in the saddle and paddled some of California's most extreme rivers.

Paul died June 8th on a very difficult section of South Boulder Creek near Pinecliff Colorado. He was last seen with a big smile on his face as he headed into a Class V+ drop known as The Gash. He had paddled the Gash many times and knew the line. But his luck just ran out.

His friends and family held a big wake for him on Bailey Canyon. We watched his ashes drift downstream while we drowned our own sorrow in wine, beer and tequila. The mood cheered a bit and we shared stories. Charlie Ebol from Vail told the one that I liked best, because it said so much about Paul. Charlie had been with Paul on the South Fork of the Merced, a tough multiday California classic. They were camped on a tiny ledge between two huge drops. As a consequence, Charlie said that he hardly slept at all. But Paul slept like a baby and was the first one up. He had his boating gear on first and aced the big drop.

His family and many friends will miss Paul a lot, but his spirit will always be with us. We will never forget his smile, his great energy, and his kind nature.

Mangri Camp, Nepal



Paul Zirkelbach on first descent of Cheesman Canyon in 1989. Slide for Life Rapid. Photo by Gary Jenrette

## Zirkelbach Colorado Access Fund

American Whitewater has been asked by friends of Paul Zirkelbach to establish a memorial fund dedicated to river access issues in Colorado. The purpose of this fund will be to maintain and improve access to Colorado's rivers with an end state leaving no doubt that the public has the right to navigate and recreate on the natural streams and rivers of Colorado. I can think of no greater memorial than to link Paul's name and legacy with fixing river access in Colorado.

### Memorial fund objectives

#### A Short-term

1. Ensure boaters are not harassed.
2. Ensure boaters can float the Lake Fork Gunnison, South Platte, Blue, and Gross Reservoir without threat of assault, criminal or civil trespassing charges.

#### B. Long-term

1. Ensure the public's right to navigate, float, and recreate on Colorado's rivers and streams.
2. Clarify the public right in an unassailable legal context.

### The Colorado Situation

The S. Platte was in Paul Zirkelbach's backyard and is one of Colorado's biggest access problems. Cheesman Gorge, one of Paul's 1<sup>st</sup> descents, has been the most contentious access issue in Colorado during the past 6 years. Paddlers have been harassed, assaulted, ticketed for criminal trespassing, and summoned to court for trying to paddle through Sportsmen's Paradise (SP) to gain access to the gorge. AW was finally able to secure an agreement with Sportsmen's Paradise this past spring, but it is very fragile.

AW & CWWA reached a settlement with a landowner below Deckers on the S. Platte, which ensured paddlers would not be harassed or threatened when floating past this man's property. Just after the spring runoff started, the landowner just down river threatened paddlers with his dog and by swinging an axe handle at them. AW & CWWA are working with the county sheriff and DA to solve the situation.

Egress off Upper South Boulder Creek across Gross Reservoir is about to be resolved as a result of AW efforts in the FERC re-licensing of Gross Reservoir. This agreement includes a new parking lot and access trail for Lower South Boulder as well.

The Lake Fork of the Gunnison Lawsuit, which involves a landowner suing a rafting company for civil trespassing, promised to be a precedent-setting case that AW joined as a codefendant. This appeared to be our best chance at a long-term solution to Colorado access problems. It has proven to be a dead end because the rafting company, Cannibal Outdoors, sold its equipment and the judge has ruled AW can't continue the case as the primary defendant. This case will remain open for two years and could proceed if Cannibal resumes operations on the Lake Fork.

There are several other hot access spots in Colorado and numerous others just under the surface. AW will continue the short-term battles and look for opportunities to resolve the Colorado access situation for good. This may be via the courts or it may be via a legislative initiative. Both are currently being considered.

Whatever the course, AW will see this through with your support. AW estimates it needs a standing fund of \$10,000 to continue to fight the short-term battles and prepare the battlefield for long-term solutions favorable to paddlers.

Paul Zirkelbach was a legendary paddler known for "hanging it out" on some of the most difficult paddling challenges in the world. Helping to secure access to Colorado's rivers would surely be a fitting legacy for Paul. Thank you for your support in Paul's memory.

Tim Kelley  
AW Board of Directors

Paul Z. Running Cool World  
in 1989. Colorado's Big  
South/Poudre. Photo by  
Ken Vanatta





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# A Cricket

## Match on the River

By Barry Tuscano" Paddling the Forks of  
AW Board President Idaho's Boise River

Kitty and I were in our fourth day of driving from western Pennsylvania to Idaho to join our son, Ambrose and friend, Dean Fairburn, for a three-day float on the Middle Fork Salmon. It was the short drive day as we had spent the night at a campground along the Snake River in central Idaho, and had stopped in Boise to do some last minute shopping. The route from Boise to Dean's home in Garden Valley along state highway 55 takes about an hour, but at the end of a 2300-mile drive it seemed longer. As the highway crested a ridge and started the drop into the Payette valley at Horseshoe Bend, we spotted one of those temporary electric road signs that usually warn of impending delays for construction. This one had a message though that I had never seen before, and probably will never see again: CAUTION SLIPPERY ROAD SURFACE AHEAD- CRICKETS!

Without the sign, I might not have realized what the little dots on the road were. They were spotty at first but soon melded into a solid strip of reddish brown goo that must have been very slippery. And I had taken my snow tires off right before leaving home. Thank you Idaho Highway Dept. for the warning.

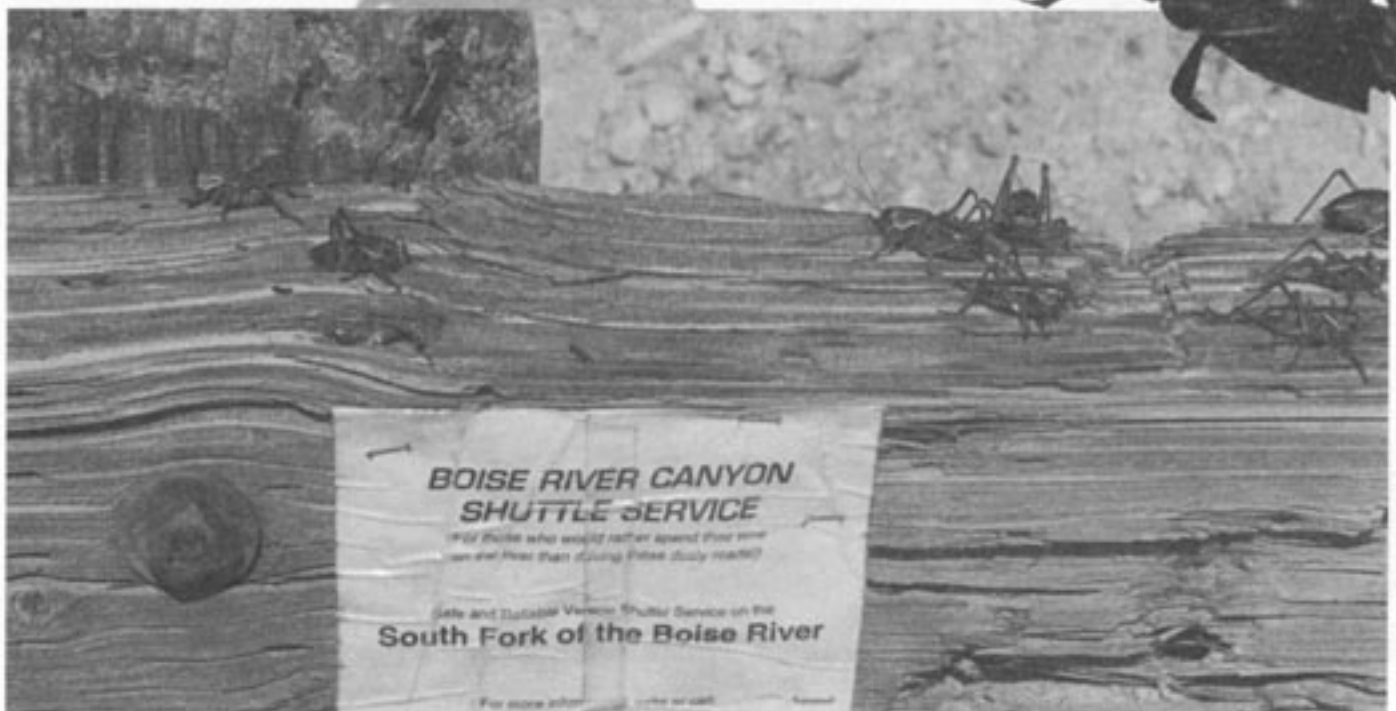
That night we discussed the phenomena of masses of insects on the move with Dean and Jenny. I have heard of locust and grasshopper swarms and the destruction that they wreak across the Great Plains. I don't recall ever hearing of crickets referred to as a pestilence, and there didn't appear to be any damage to the sparse vegetation in their path. They just seemed to be massing and moving. The two-lane highway was a minor obstacle, and the majority were surviving to the other side. Where were they going and why?

That question remained unanswered throughout the Middle Fork trip and the subsequent week of paddling on the Payette and South Fork of the Salmon. Now it was Memorial Day weekend and we were heading to the Boise River for a reunion with Dean on the North Fork. The traffic going into Cascade was bumper to bumper and every vehicle was loaded with hardware. Motor homes, power boats, jet skis, dirt bikes, and ATVs stacked two and three high passed us in a steady stream. The thought occurred to me that there was a pestilence of humans headed for our national forests for a weekend of destruction. Massing, moving and devouring. What was the strange mechanism that triggered this human migration?

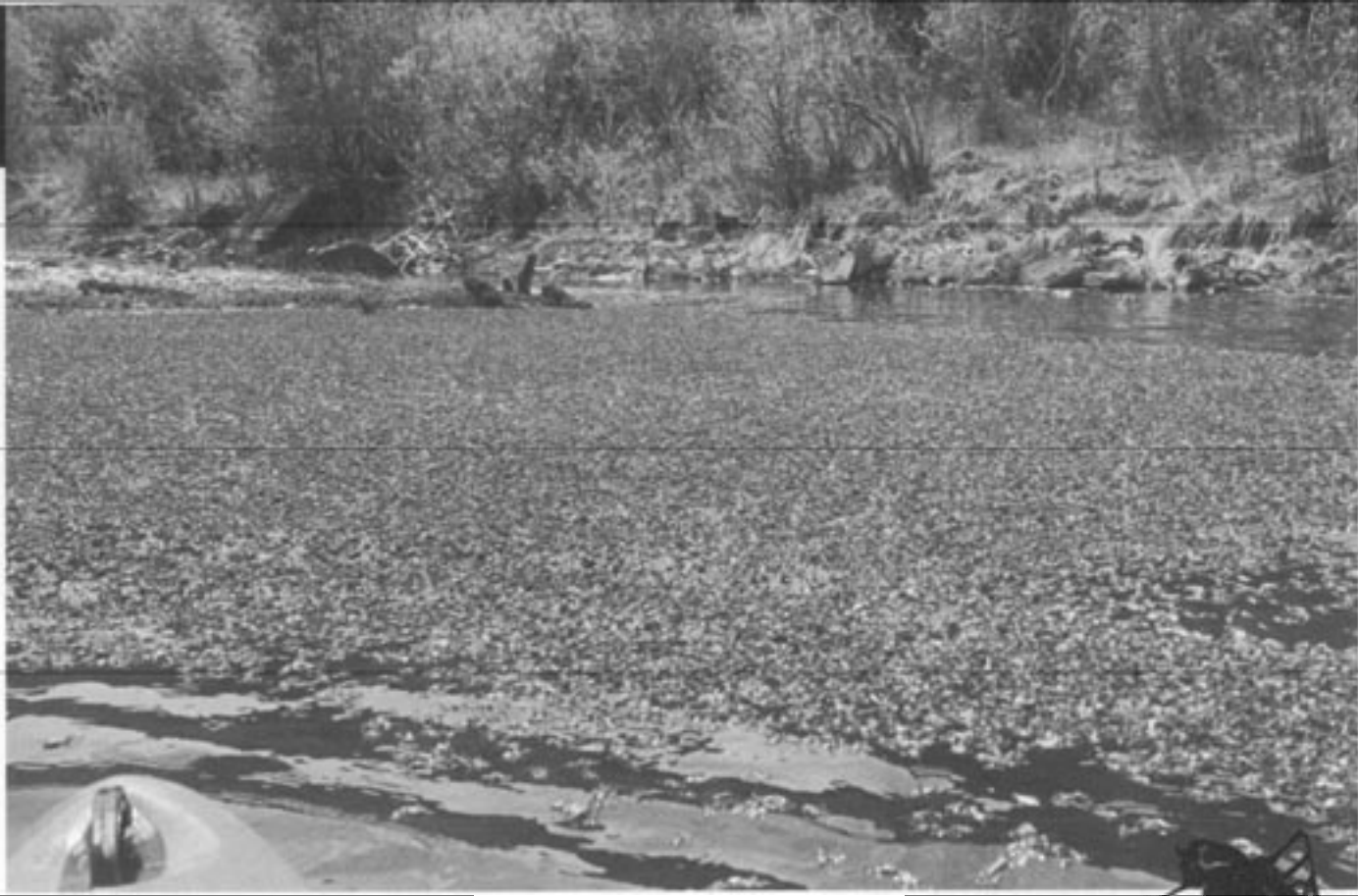
### North Fork of the Boise

The North Fork Boise is in an area of Idaho that remains mostly isolated. Not many of the motorhome crowd were willing to endure the long hard drive to the confluence with the Middle Fork, so we had a nice quiet campsite at the take-out. But after enduring the Class VI shuttle to the put-in, we found ourselves once again among the hoards. The whine of dirt bikes and ATVs slowly disappeared in the background as we descended the river. Dean, Ambrose and I took turns boat scouting and leading through the first three miles of Class II-III rapids. As the road and campgrounds disappeared the river picked up a notch and started a long, continuous Class IV rapid. We picked our way around and through holes until there was finally a break in a large pool on the right. Nestled into the were five people on three cataracts. They appeared grouping, so I paddled over sure they were all

I am including their story here just







because it is so bizarre. I never got their names or hometowns, so I was unable to recheck the facts, and I apologize if I don't have it exactly right, but it's worth telling anyhow.

None of them had done the North Fork of the Boise before, so they were scouting and as they went. One of the rafts was being rowed by a fellow about fifty, his wife was his passenger. I gathered that his wife had very little whitewater experience and that the rest of the party were feeling somewhat intimidated by the rapids. This guy was wearing a shorty one-piece wetsuit, but because it was 90 degrees he had the top off and rolled down to his waist. As they entered the rapid, he had a good view of the action and was maneuvering through rocks and holes. This rapid is close to a half mile long, and it rounds a bend in the river, so he had no way of knowing that the pace accelerated at the bottom. As they rounded the bend he was able to pick out a horizon line that signified a large hole in the middle of the river.

He immediately started pulling for the right shore. Unfortunately he overcompensated and had an encounter with a tree sticking out into the river. In fact the end of the tree nearly speared him in the midsection. As he ducked away from the branch, it neatly laced itself through the armholes of

his wetsuit and he felt himself being lifted out of the raft. But it wasn't bad enough to be hanging from this tree, because the raft wedged into the

strainer about five feet below him and came to a very ugly stop. His wife was unable to help him and he couldn't get himself unhooked. He wasn't carrying a knife, and probably wouldn't have wanted to cut himself free above a strainer anyhow. His buddies were downstream and had no idea what was going on.

What happened next is hard to picture, but I'll give it my best shot. Somehow he was able to pull himself up enough to extract a leg from the wetsuit. Then he stretched that leg out to get a foot on the raft. There was a tremendous lunge that left the wetsuit still hanging on the tree, and him buck-naked on the raft. After he maneuvered the raft from under the tree at the cost of an oar and a cooler he limped down the last of the rapid. You can imagine the surprised looks from the rest of the party when he pulled into the eddy minus his pants. This was too bizarre to have been made up.

After assuring me that they would be all right we left them with promises that we would keep an eye out for the lost gear. Evidently the rest of their trip was uneventful, because they were at the take-out before dark. We had a few chuckles that night over dinner, but the potential seriousness of the situation kept us from breaking up too bad. I still wonder how my brain would have processed the situation if I had come on the scene while he was hung on that tree.

## South Fork of the Boise

While the three of us were on the North Fork, Kitty took Ambrose's girlfriend, Megan, for a beginner's run on the Middle Fork. That night we decided that Sunday would be a

relaxing Class III day on the South Fork of the Boise.

Dean had to get back home to catch the Indy 500, and Megan offered to drive the shuttle for this family outing.

It's about 50 miles of dirt road through desert to the town of Prairie, then the road drops down into the Boise canyon. It was the last couple of miles, with the river in sight, when we re-encountered the crickets. The road never got slippery, because the surface was much more absorbent than blacktop, but there were long stretches of solid insect bodies. At Danskin Bridge, where we would start the river trip, the crickets were everywhere. Two fly fishermen were packing up in disgust. The South Fork Boise is a world famous trout fishery, but here the fish must have gorged themselves on crickets. They just weren't biting.

The rattlesnake on the path to the put-in wasn't biting either, but he did give me a loud warning before he slid into the bushes. I stood on the beach looking across the water. There were definitely some cricket bodies floating on the surface, but it was a big river. "No problem," I thought, and carefully headed back to the van for my boat.

We dressed quickly and stepped gingerly on our way back to the river, trying to avoid crickets and snakes. Although the temperature was in the 90s, we were wearing drytops because the water from Anderson Dam was frigid. Megan was going to take a bike ride and then drive the van to Neal Bridge to pick us up in three hours.

The South Fork Boise is a sixteen-mile run that flows lazily through desolate ranch country for the first four miles, picks up a

**little speed** for the next couple of miles, and then drops into a classic western canyon with some interesting whitewater that completes the run. This is not a remarkable section of river for Idaho — until you add crickets.

Before we had floated a couple of hundred yards, we noticed a weird phenomena taking place on the left shore. It was crickets, and everything was covered with them. Rocks, trees, bushes, logs, were all a solid mass of insects crawling over top of one another. There was no place else for them to go but into the water. I paddled over for a closer look. The shoreline was almost completely covered with crickets and there was a steady stream of bodies into the river. The eddies were beginning to fill with the floating corpses, and some were even drifting out into the current. It was only when our boats contacted them that we realized that they were not drowned. They would instantly latch onto any solid object and crawl up it. Evidently they were not equipped to swim, but were able to survive indefinitely in the water. If they were going to reach the other shore, it was going to be a toss of the dice. They were at the mercy of the river currents.

Not that survival of the individual mattered here. The mass of creatures was acting as a single organism, like a swarm of bees or an ant colony. The objective was to move north. This river was an obstacle that would require a sacrifice of a certain percentage of the whole, but the goal of the northward migration would be attained. Those individuals that we had encountered at the put-in had lucked into a bridge. The rest were forced to take their chances in the water.

By the time we passed the last ranch, I began to realize the enormity of the situation. Mile after mile the left shore continued to crawl with crickets. Huge masses of them filled every eddy, and more and more of them were floating in the current. I got the camera out and took a picture of an eddy with a solid carpet of crickets. I had to move quickly to replace my spray skirt so I wouldn't take on any passengers.

Actually, we were taking on passengers constantly. They would latch onto the bottom of the boats and crawl above the waterline. There they would catch their breath for a minute before continuing up. Their objective was the summit, and if they avoided being washed off by a wave or brushed off by the paddler, they would perch triumphantly atop a helmet. If ever you need to choose a big clinging insect to surround yourself with, crickets are not a bad option. At least they don't bite, smell, or carry disease.

We were keeping very busy. I could watch the bow of my boat, but had to depend on Kitty and Ambrose to watch my stem. With a drytop on, the crickets could be on your head before you felt them. Kitty had quite a few that ascended her tresses to reach their goal undetected.

The mass of crickets continued to grow. Now the eddies were full, and they were spilling out into the current. By the time we were through the flat-water section, the surface of the river was covered with one solid floating mat of crickets. We just kept plowing through, shaking and brushing them off as best as we could. I kept wondering what the rapids would be like.

As soon as the water picked up speed and encountered some obstacles, the blanket of crickets broke up. The waves and holes acted like a blender to homogenize the cream back into the milk. The white water was speckled with brown dots. Needless to say, we didn't do any surfing or hole riding. A wave that broke over you was going to leave a dozen insects clinging to you and your boat. The next wave would wash those off and deposit a new set. It added a new dimension to whitewater paddling, requiring a lot of one-handed moves. We also tried to pick routes that would keep our faces dry and cricket free. We were fortunate that there weren't any drops that required shore scouting. We especially didn't consider swimming or rolling. We wouldn't even pull the spray skirt to get a drink.

The South Fork Boise river canyon normally would have been spectacular. It is cut through volcanic walls with sheer cliffs and steep scree slopes. But it was hard to appreciate it with the droves of crickets that covered virtually everything. We'd have been covered too, if we had let down our guard for more than a minute. We passed a commercial fishing raft. The guide was making a valiant effort to find some open water for his lone customer to drop his fly into. The customer must have had more money than brains. It was obvious that the fish weren't going to bite anything. He'd have been better off if he sat down and drank some beer, while experiencing this amazing natural event.

After sixteen miles we'd seen enough crickets to last a lifetime. We were happy to see Megan with the van waiting. Although we crunched some under foot while walking off the river, the crickets no longer seemed interested in climbing our bodies. They had reached their goal of crossing the river and could travel on to their next major obstacle...which would be the Middle Fork of the Boise.



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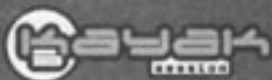
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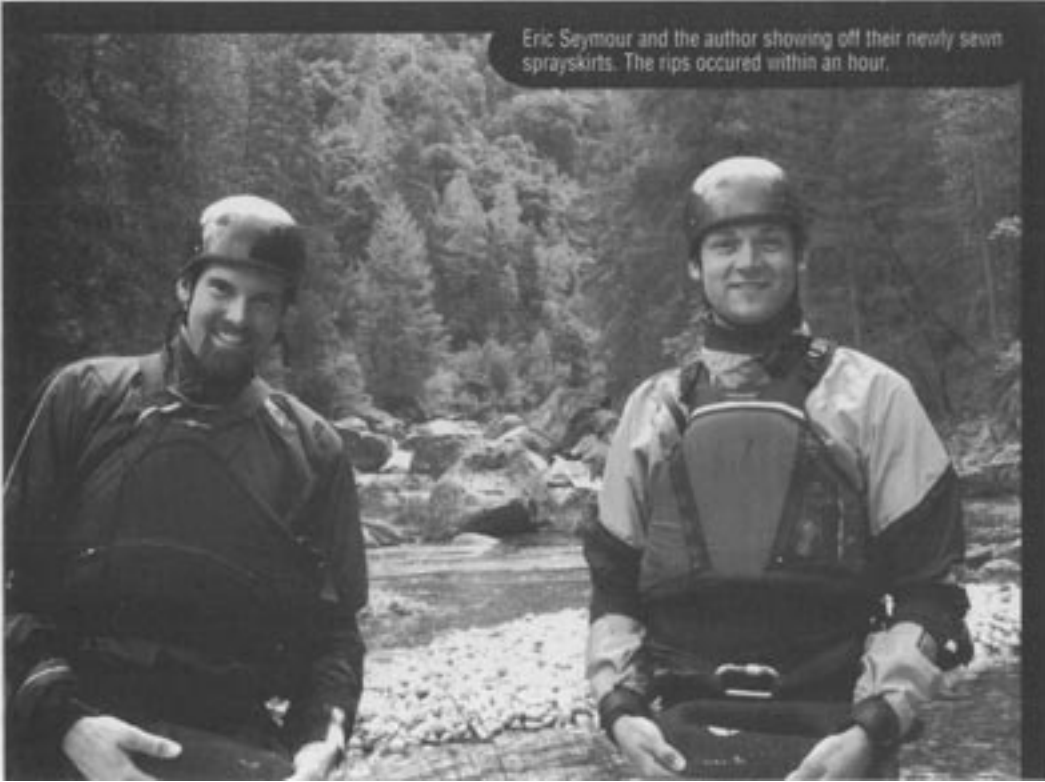
## The Scene of the Crime

The South Merced flows from snowcapped headwaters deep within Yosemite National Park. The river makes a brief appearance in civilization, crossing the road in Wawona, California. Here it appears as mild and civilized as its manicured surroundings. In fact, this whole area of the park seems oddly out of touch with Yosemite's postcard ruggedness. Visitors to Wawona can stay in a nineteenth-century lodge, eat at a five-star restaurant and play a round of golf—all within National Park boundaries. Meanwhile, just down the road from the Wawona Lodge the South Merced passes demurely through a campground, rounds an innocent bend and

Eric Seymore upside down in a typical (nameless) South Merced rapid.

# Crime & Punishment on the South Merced

By Arnbrose Tuscano • Photos by Rok Sribar

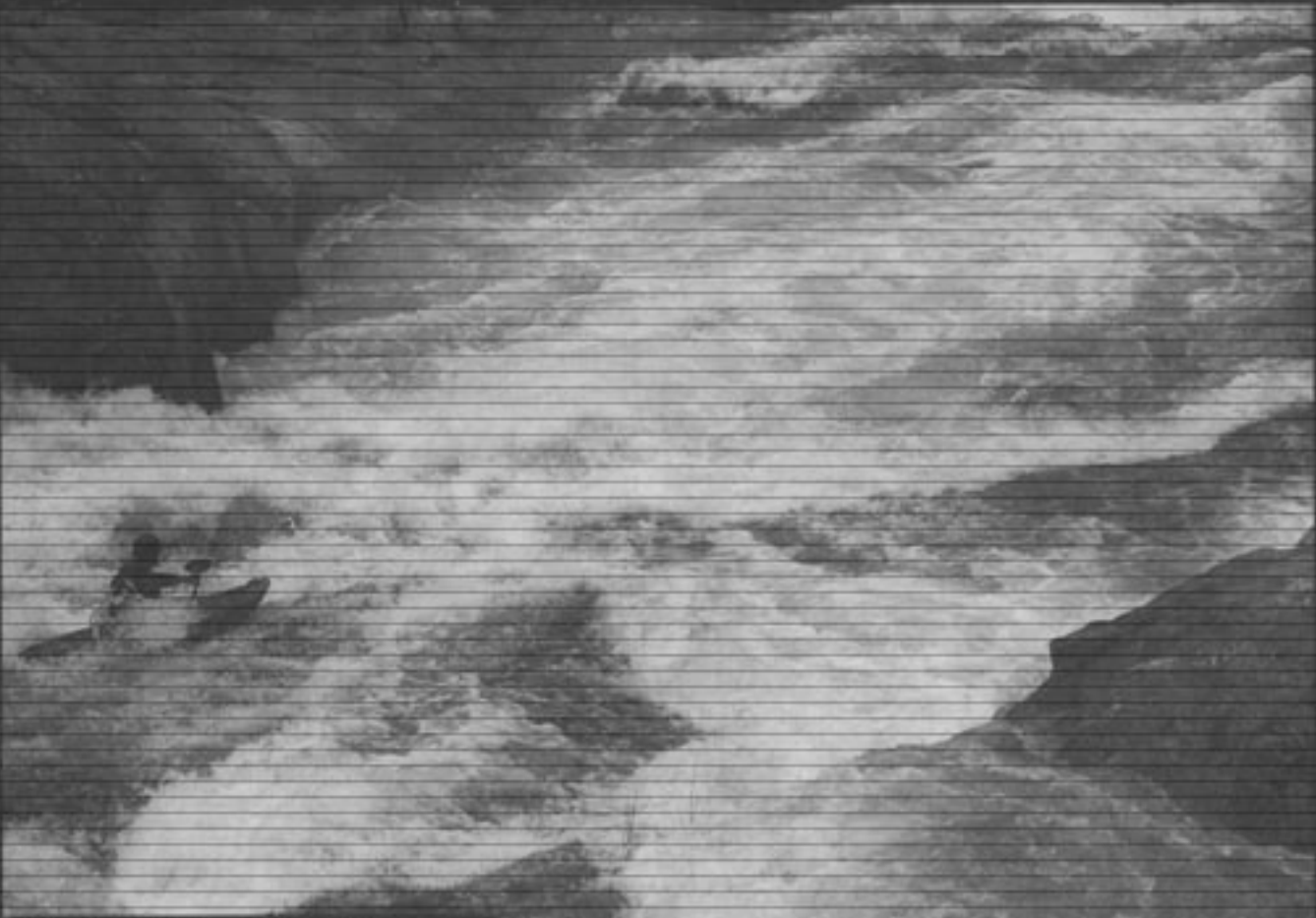


Eric Seymore and the author showing off their newly sewn sprayskirts. The rips occurred within an hour.

disappears from the eyes of men for twenty-three miles.

Our story begins here in Wawona on an unseasonably cold, late April evening. Four tired boaters rolled into the area in a single vehicle. One of the crew, after hearing the weekend weather report, already had doubts about our expedition. He came to the conclusion that driving shuttle might be a good deal less painful than paddling the river. As the put-in hour approached, the rest of us were becoming slightly jealous of his decision.

That night we dined in high fashion (jeans and soiled t-shirts) at the five-star restaurant ("Uh, how much would that meal be without the steak?"), and went to bed in the only free camping we could find (the deck of an historic covered bridge). The next morning Rok



The author on the third drop of Superslide.

Sribar, the eldest and most respectable member of our group, roused us early. He was more than a little concerned that we might get into some hot water with the rangers ("What, for sleeping on a bridge?"). Frankly, that morning I would have welcomed any kind of hot water; I was particularly concerned that I had neglected to bring along poggies to keep my hands working on the river.

We went back to the vehicle and loaded all of our gear into drybags. Then there was nothing left to do except eat and start paddling. This meant one last trip to the Wawona restaurant. I'm sure we turned more than a few heads at the breakfast buffet that morning. I imagine that we looked like a family of black bears, on a pre-hibernation binge.

With the gorging out of the way we huddled briefly on the porch of the Victorian-era lodge. Rok (with one prior trip down the South Merced, the most experienced and, therefore, the leader) instructed us in the importance of a quick, efficient put-in. It is widely known that boating within the National Park is illegal. Unfortunately the first three miles of our journey would take us through Yosemite. Our plan was to unload boats and change into our gear along the side of the road, then sneak down through a campground and onto the water. Once we paddled away we thought we would be beyond the power of the law.

Minutes later we were strategically parked alongside the

road ("Pay no attention to the kayaks and gear strewn about, just a standard terrorist exercise.") Then the moment of stealth was upon us. We picked up boats and paddles in perfect synchrony and headed for the river. Meanwhile our shuttle driver pulled away, driving as though he was leaving the scene of a crime. In reality, he was escaping the most eventful episode of our entire adventure.

## Breaking and Entering

Our collective hope at this point was that, because it was 10 a.m. on a dimly overcast day, we would encounter no one at all. But just as I threw my boat down on the banks of the South Merced, I glanced over my shoulder to see a curious little vehicle starting towards us. It looked like a glorified golf cart (the type of vehicle I imagine clogging the highways of south Florida) but what really drew my attention was the flashing orange light on its roof.

I muttered a warning to Rok, hopped in my boat, and shoved off from shore. Rok was already floating downstream of me. He had clearly prioritized "escape" over "sanity" because I noticed that his cockpit was uncovered. It didn't seem like such a bad idea at the time though, so I, too, neglected to put on my spray skirt before entering the first set of Class II rapids. Immediately I came to regret this deci-





The author buried in the third drop of Superslide.

sion. In moments, I was sitting in 30+ gallons of snowmelt. Ahead I noticed Rok's boat beginning to sink out from under him.

We had to make an emergency pit stop less than a half-mile into our trip. As Rok and I stood shivering in the gray morning air, draining our boats, Eric Seymour, our less hasty companion paddled up with a confused look on his face. He had seen nothing of the Ranger Go-cart, and so had taken the extra three seconds to secure his spray skirt. Because Rok and I both had more experience with self-con-

tained kayak trips than Eric; we had warned him that the most important concern was dry gear. At this point he must have wondered if there was some secret advantage to wet gear that we had neglected to mention.

As soon as our boats drained, we jumped back in and continued downstream in a rush. After paddling about thirty seconds it dawned on me that I had left my drain plug out. I could only grit my teeth as frigid water began, albeit more slowly this time, to fill my boat. By this point we should have been relaxed (and presumably returning to our senses). However, rounding the next corner we discovered that the campground continued to parallel the river. Worse yet, the Go-cart had followed us. We all saw the little orange light this time and so we rushed to get ahead of the devilish little car.

If you can't tell already, our fear of being caught had made us about as unsafe as boaters can be. I should probably be glad that the South Merced contains no serious drops in its first mile. Even so, our unnatural haste produced one of the spookiest events I have ever heard of on a river.

We were stroking as hard as we could downstream through some continuous Class II water. Ahead the flow was interrupted by a few boulders, which forced the river around them into two indistinct slots. Most of the water appeared to be flowing through a slot between two rocks in the middle of the riverbed. But in reality, only a couple of inches were flowing through this chute, so when Rok tried to paddle between these boulders, his boat stalled. Eric, who was behind Rok, had to slow down when Rok stopped, causing him to drift broadside toward the shallow slot. At this point I don't think that any of us were really paying much attention to the river. Our sole purpose was to get beyond the apparently long arm of the law.

As Rok's boat slid free and Eric took a quick stroke to di-



Eric crashing through the hole at the bottom of Superslide.

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The author heading for safety above the fourth drop of Superslide.

rect his bow through the slot, I noticed Eric's stern begin to sink a bit. Then I watched helplessly as his full-sized creek boat went into a slow motion tail-stand. Before I could so much as offer my bow to stabilize Eric, creek boat and all disappeared. For a second I was frozen in horror. Then, amazingly, I saw his bright red boat wash out from under the rocks fifteen feet downstream. Even more incredible, Eric rolled up unscathed. Now I was fast approaching the sieve that had just swallowed my companion, so I frantically scrambled to find another route, then charged downstream to check on Eric.

He was a bit shaken, but probably less so than I. Recounting the event, Eric said that he tucked when he felt his boat being pulled beneath the rocks. Fortunately, the passage was wide enough to accommodate a kayak and a paddler compressed against its deck. I asked Eric if he had considered swimming and he said that he might have, but he didn't want to get his gear wet.

## The Getaway

Eric and I had to paddle pretty hard to catch up with Rok, who had missed the entire episode. By the time we flagged him down our situation had changed dramatically: First we had finally passed the campground, and thus the eyes of the law. Second, it dawned on us all how stupid we had just been. Third, Eric was now taking on water through a pair of three-inch gashes in his spray skirt. Evidently when his boat had squeezed through the sieve there had been enough pressure on his cockpit to shear the Kevlar-enforced neoprene.

When we reunited with Rok on shore and told him about Eric's caving experience, we all began to feel more than a

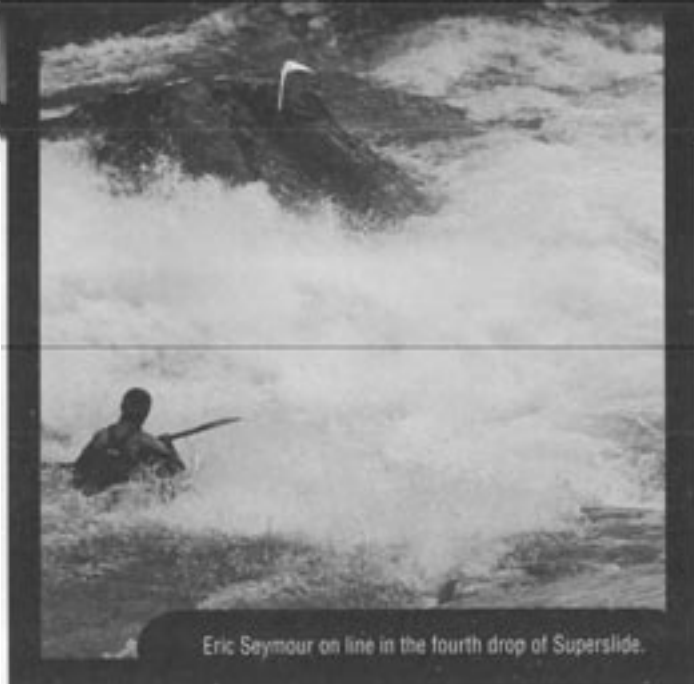


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Eric Seymour on line in the fourth drop of Superslide.

little sheepish. We were still above all the Class V drops and already we had been through enough misadventure to fill a normal two-day trip. Eric, for his part, had already come to the conclusion that his only option was to carry his boat off the run and try to somehow find our shuttle driver. I suggested that he hitch a ride with the Go-cart Ranger. Rok, however, had other ideas... and not for the last time on the trip!

Eric and I were lucky to have him along. From inside his tiny first aid kit Rok produced a container of dental floss and a needle. Oddly enough, Rok had only just started carrying this handy sewing kit a couple of weeks earlier when he had seen another boater had used dental floss to sew a tear in his spray skirt.

We sat on the shores of the South Merced as Rok sewed, hoping for just a glimpse of the sun. I probably should have been terrified. Here I was, doing my first Class V+ overnighter, and already I had seen a companion sucked through a sieve. On top of it all, my hands hurt like crazy every time I took a stroke in the ice water. I had visions of the paddle slipping from wooden fingers in the crux of a Class V drop. But the thing that really worried me was the way my boat was paddling with all the gear in it. I didn't really feel ready to push my personal limits with my boat handling like a pig.

At this juncture, though, I felt that our luck couldn't really sour any further. So after Eric tried on his newly patched skirt, we all took a deep breath, got back in our boats and paddled off. Of course, not an hour later, I flipped in a Class IV drop and tore a hole in my own spray skirt. After everything that had happened already, I took it in stride- though I was truly grateful for Rok's miracle sewing kit.

The day was wearing on by the time we pulled over for our second skirt repair. We needed a collective slap in the face to get our heads together. With all of the distractions, we had nearly lost sight of why we were there. The South Merced legitimately earns its reputation as one of the most beautiful, remote and difficult runs in California. I can't vouch for the others' thoughts as we sat there at the river's edge, but I began to give myself something of a talking to. I thought back to some high-school basketball games where we were getting so whipped that the coach spent the entire halftime intermission verbally whacking us in the noggin. But this time I was the coach, as well as the player.

## The Real Prize

Whatever I said to myself on that gravel bar must have hit a nerve, because when we got back in our boats and prepared to face the South Merced in all its glory, I started to focus. The others seemed to be paddling with more intensity as well. And just in time! The river, seeming to sense our mood, began to drop precipitously. Each time we emerged from a drop,

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The slide at Superslide.

another horizon line seemed to be within spitting distance.

Before long we were in a rhythm. Rok invariably took the lead. Eric and I followed interchangeably through boulder garden after sieve-filled boulder garden. Once, in a hairy stretch of obstructed drops, I caught what seemed to me to be the last visible eddy. Glancing downstream I was horrified to find Rok balancing with one hand on a rock at the brink of a severe horizon line. He balanced there for nearly twenty seconds, his boat bobbing up and down in the surging water, before he made a frantic gesture to the left and disappeared. Moments later Eric joined me in the eddy. I didn't really have the heart to tell him what I'd seen, so I just peeled out, following Rok's dubious line over the blind plunge. After bouncing off a boulder at the bottom of the 6-foot drop, I flushed into the eddy where Rok was waiting. I shook my head at him and he just grinned, watching Eric careen off the same boulder upstream. I knew Eric, at least, was in his element.

In addition to numerous nearly blind drops that we boat scouted, we were forced to scout close to a dozen rapids from shore that day. Not infrequently these turned out to be more straightforward than the Class V+ drops that we eddy scouted. But some were legitimately daunting. The first day of whitewater saw Eric and I portage two rapids. One portage was due to our inability to scout adequately. The other was inspired by Rok's run of a particularly tricky drop... he rolled three times.

Photographically speaking, the highlight of the first day was the sole named rapid: Superslide. This was a four-part rapid connected by swift-moving, eddyless water. The total



Timmy: "Dad, will I ever get to be on LVM?"

Dad: "Timmy, when you quit being such a wuss, and start running some \$%#@, then we'll talk."

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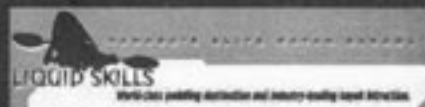
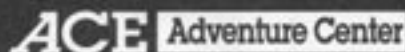
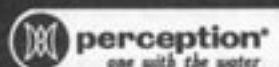
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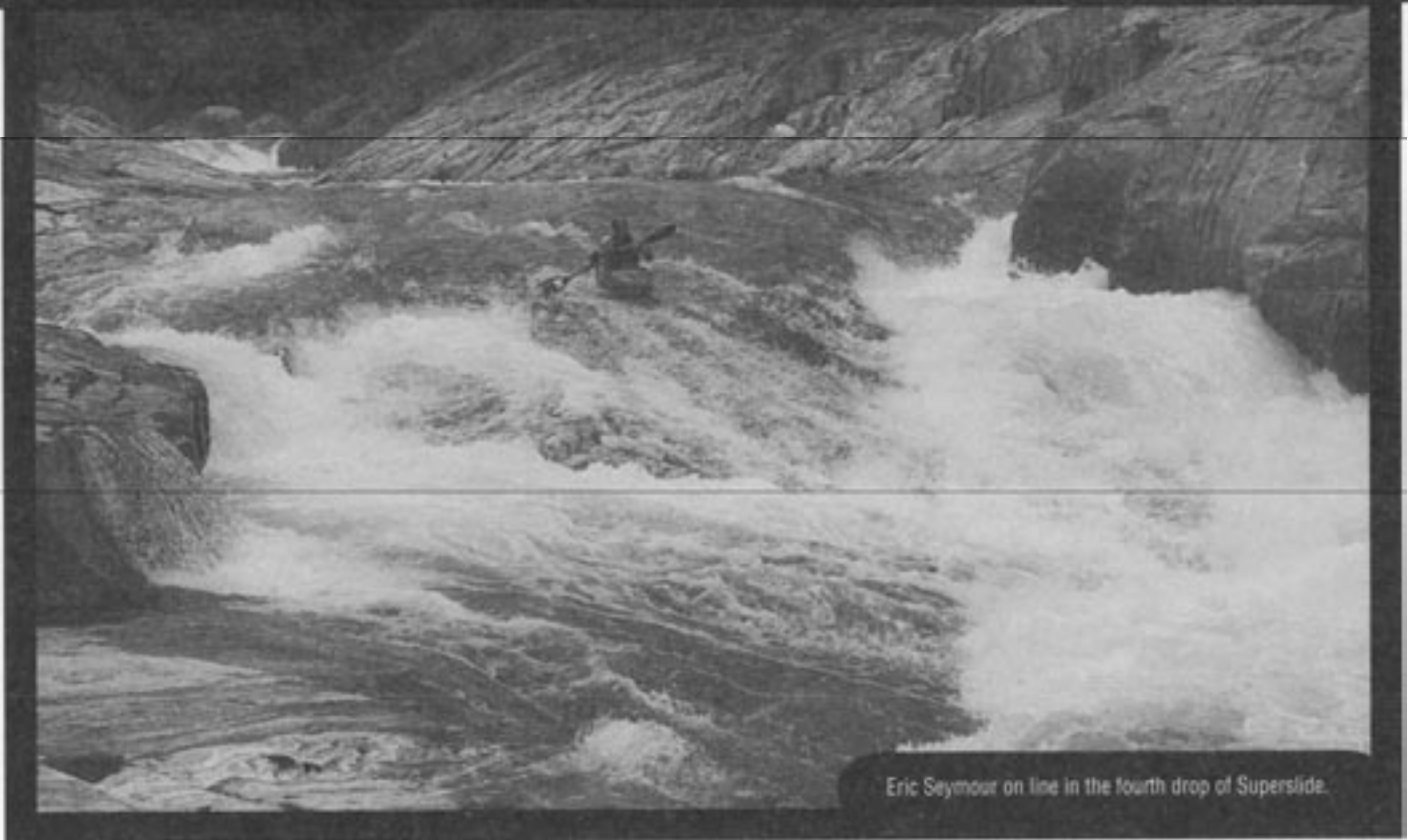
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Eric Seymour on line in the fourth drop of Superslide.

vertical drop easily exceeded one hundred feet. The culminating component of Superslide was a bedrock slide that plunged about 40 feet at a 30-degree angle. The daunting feature of the Superslide, however, was the garage-sized boulder sitting directly in the middle of the slide at its base. Easily one-third of the water dropped over the lip of this last drop and slammed into the boulder with alarming force. The strategy was simple: stay upright and in control through the first three parts of the rapid, so you could chum towards the right shore in the twenty feet of calmer water above the fourth slide.

We all managed to stick to our game plan on Superslide and came out smiling. Of course we knew that despite its fame, we had paddled at least a dozen drops of equal or greater difficulty than Superslide that day, and would negotiate dozens more before the South Merced was through with us. This impression reinforced the truth that had been forming in my mind ever since I started boating Class V: the



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## What Are You Doing This Winter?

hardest drops don't always look impressive on film.

But then again, some of them do. As we reached camp that afternoon, we heard the river dropping away thunderously just below us. After we had unpacked our drybags and strung throw-ropes to hang gear on in the sunless afternoon, we headed downstream to look at one of the most impressive drops I've ever seen. It was the kind of rapid that was intimidating, yet inviting at the same time. Unlike so many of the free falls you see in videos these days, there was nothing absolutely suicidal about it, but this nameless monster virtually guaranteed a violent beating to anyone brave enough to attempt it. We slept like babes that night with its roar sweeping us away to sweet dreams.

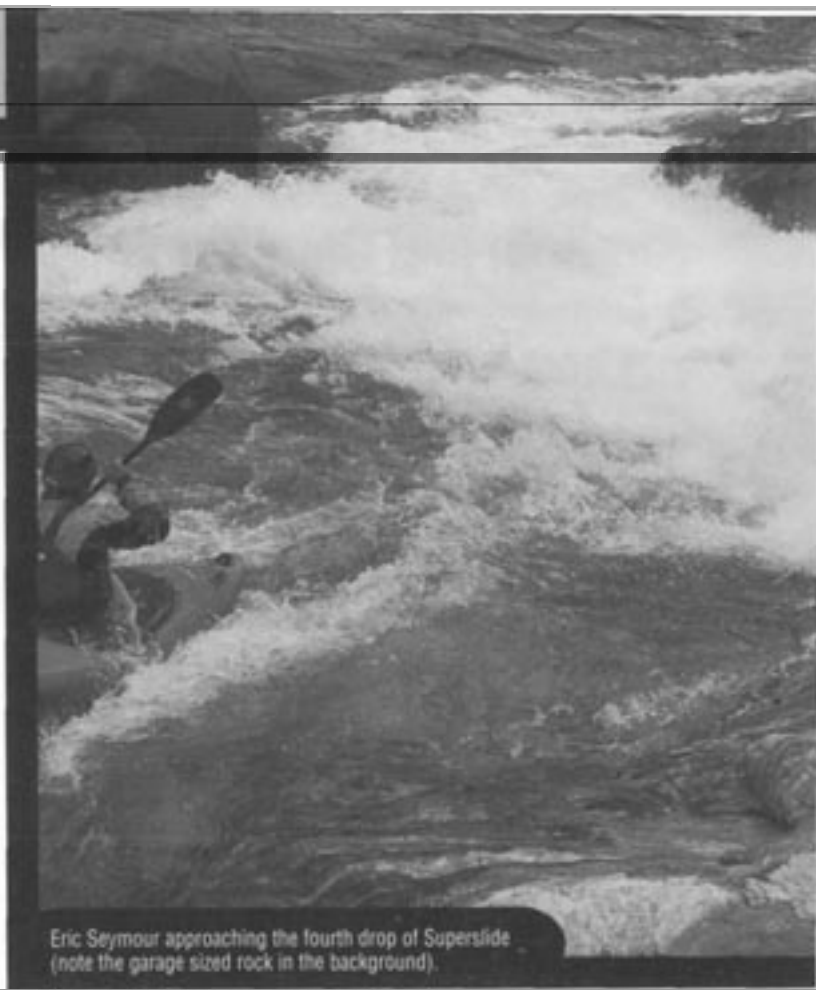
We woke early the next morning, to find the sun pecking out from behind its veil for the first time all weekend. We all felt its energy rubbing off on us as we industriously packed our gear. Of course, by the time we had cooked a simple breakfast and reloaded our boats, the clouds were back. And so ended our dreams of running the monster rapid just below our campsite. We hadn't really discussed it the night before, but as we carried our boats around the rapid that morning, we all admitted that we had been thinking of running it-until the sun disappeared.

Any regret we had was quickly washed away in the rapids that followed. The second day was, if anything, more intense than the first. There were so many impressive drops that I can't recall a single one to my mind. I can say that together, the rapids we paddled that day took more focus, endurance and skill than any set of drops I'd ever seen. A highlight of the day was rounding a bend in the river to the great surprise of a young black bear. I thought about breakfast at Wawona the day before and tried to imagine this bear browsing through the buffet line. I thought, "He wouldn't have looked out of place-next to us, at least."

Finally, the South Merced eased up. One minute we were on edge, treating each horizon line as though it could be a Class VI drop. Then quite suddenly we had literally run out of horizon lines. There were still rapids, but compared with what we had seen, they seemed tame. Now we could relax. We paddled the final seven miles in relative isolation, spaced hundreds of feet apart. Soon we spotted a bridge ahead and the confluence of the South Merced and the Merced proper. We had made it.

Our shuttle driver was happy to see us dragging our battle-scarred boats up the banks of the river. Our storytelling was more than sufficient to fill the drive to the nearest restaurant... a greasy spoon instead of a five-star lodge... but no one was complaining. After we rehashed our tales, our mood became somewhat somber. I think we were reflecting upon how foolish we had been at the put-in. And, at the same time, we were starting to allow our brains to process the sensory overload that had accumulated during our days on the river.

Even then my intense memories of the South Merced were fading. And I knew the only way to get them back would be to return—and the sooner the better! ■



Eric Seymour approaching the fourth drop of Superslide (note the garage sized rock in the background).



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# Strength and Conditioning for the Whitewater Enthusiast

By: John Amtmann, Ed.D

Whitewater and overall river recreation has become increasingly popular in the past 15 years. Part of the reason for this may be our culture's focus on "extreme" sports, as well as the excitement and reckless fun portrayed in these activities. However, fatalities are commonplace on a year-to-year basis. In 1995, a record setting 41 deaths were reported to American Whitewater.

A large number of deaths on rivers include long swims in cold, fast moving water, while others are due to head and neck trauma. Some of these types of fatalities might be preventable with proper physical conditioning. This article outlines basic strategies of improving overall musculoskeletal fitness for the whitewater enthusiast.

Most authorities on whitewater safety recommend being physically fit to enhance river safety. In fact, Bechdel and Ray recommend that novices and experts alike swim a "safe" rapid at least once each year so that whitewater enthusiasts are reminded of the power of rivers. If a person's level of physical fitness prevents them from attempting to swim a safe section of river, then they probably should not expect to do so when exhausted from attempted rolls or other self-rescue techniques — in other words, when it counts. So, cardiovascular and musculoskeletal fitness combined with solid swimming and self-rescue skills are important — important enough to practice on a regular basis in rivers.

The American Canoe Association has documented that head and neck trauma have been the cause of a number of kayaking and rafting fatalities. Therefore, I believe that whitewater activities are contact sports.


While there are legitimate concerns over appropriate protective wear for the skull and face, another area people should consider is strength training for overall structural integrity including the cervical area of the spine. Athletes in other contact sports find that strength and conditioning not only improves performance, but also decreases the odds of injury. Improving the strength of muscles surrounding a joint improves structural integrity of that joint. That extra muscle also helps to pad delicate areas in the back and neck, which would otherwise be vulnerable during swims.

Most strength and conditioning specialists recommend that neck training be a top priority for athletes in contact or combat sports. Since kayaking and rafting are contact sports, neck training, as well as appropriate safety wear is important in preventing cervical injury in whitewater activities.

Cardiorespiratory fitness is also important for whitewater enthusiasts. For participants in cardiorespiratory-intense activities the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) recommends exercises that can be sustained for prolonged period of time. This includes walking, jogging, stationary cycling, jumping rope, or swimming, 3-5 days per week for 20-60 minutes per session. Exercise intensity should be anywhere between 60% and 90% of maximum heart rate. To estimate maximum heart rate, subtract your age from 220. Multiply your predicted maximum heart rate, by 55% and 90% to calculate the lower and upper limits of target heart rate. See Table 1, Calculating Target Heart Rate Range, for an example of how to calculate target heart rate range for a 50-year-old individual.

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Table 1: Calculating Target Heart Rate Range

220-50 = 170  
170 x .60 = 102  
170 x .90 = 153

For musculoskeletal fitness, the ACSM recommends performing 8-10 separate exercises that train the major muscle groups. I recommend including the neck as a major muscle group. The goal of such exercise should be to develop the body in a balanced manner, rather than just working a few select muscle groups. Performing 1 set of 8-12 repetitions to the point of volitional fatigue, 2-3 days per week is effective in developing musculoskeletal fitness. See Table 2, Sample Strength Training Routine, for an example.

Table 2: Sample Strength Training Routine\*

Leg Press	Hips/Thighs
4-Way Neck	Neck
Abdominal Curls	Abdominals
Hyperextensions	Lower Back
Lat Pull Down	Upper Back
Bench Press	Chest
Curls	Biceps
Tricep Extension	Triceps
Wrist Curls	Forearms
*1 set of 8-15 repetitions, to volitional fatigue	

Athletes often ignore musculoskeletal flexibility during training. Lack of flexibility in the lower back and posterior thigh regions may be associated with an increased risk of the development of chronic low back pain, and may hinder performance of basic whitewater and

self-rescue skills. Therefore, whitewater enthusiasts should practice exercises that promote flexibility in these regions. The ACSM recommends participation in a general stretching routine that focuses the major muscle groups a minimum of 2-3 days per week. Each stretch should be held for 10-30 seconds, and should be repeated 3-4 times.

It is best to complete the flexibility program after the body is completely warmed-up. For optimal results, perform stretches after the cardiovascular strength training program.

The general guidelines outlined above should help anyone who is lacking in musculoskeletal or cardiovascular fitness to make improvements. There are a variety of strength and conditioning programs that will help your physical fitness, and different methods may be more or less appropriate for you. See Table 3, Sample Program, for an example of a comprehensive program. The key to developing fitness is a safe and logical progression of training.

Table 3: Sample Program

Monday	Strength Training	Flexibility Training
Tuesday	Cardiovascular Training	Flexibility Training
Wednesday	Flexibility Training	
Thursday	Strength Training	Flexibility Training
Friday	Cardiovascular Training	Flexibility Training
Saturday	Cardiovascular Training	Flexibility Training

Improvements in overall physical fitness and in overall structural integrity are not complete answers to river safety. There are many other components to safety on the river, including, knowledge, experience, equipment, and other intangible factors. strength and conditioning are not intended to take the place of any of these elements.

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Many strength and conditioning specialists believe that the most effective method for enhancing performance is to improve overall body strength while developing skill efficiency. This means, developing strength in addition to practicing the specific skills involved with

the sport. I believe this approach will help whitewater enthusiasts become safer in all aspects of their sport. So, improve your strength and conditioning, and practice your self-rescue skills because your life may depend on it!



## A Pain in the Neck

At some point in their career most kayakers have made contact with rock while upside down in their boat. One day, while paddling on the Lochsa River in Idaho, I went over a drop, and lost my balance. I could have braced, but I quickly scanned the water and saw no rocks. Instead, I decided to roll. I tucked forward and allowed my boat to flip over. I must not have tucked far enough because the next thing I felt was fireworks going off inside of my head. I thought my head was going to be ripped off my shoulders. Instead, I discovered later, my neck was forced into hyperextension.

I've been involved in contact sports since I was 11 years old. I played football in college, boxed in amateur tournaments and I've competed at the national level in judo. The hit I took on the Lochsa was by far the hardest I'd ever experienced. The effects of the blow were immediate. I missed my first roll attempt, and realized that I had better get up before I passed out. As soon as I rolled up I could feel the warm blood flowing down my face. We drove to Missoula to get my cut fixed up—it took 26 stitches.

I still exercise my neck regularly for safety. I believe I would have sustained permanent neck injury if my neck muscles weren't properly conditioned. Because of this experience, I will continue to exercise my body as one functional unit, including the neck, to prevent injury even after I retire from competitive judo.



Davey Crockett's brother Buck getting hammered—see March/April 02



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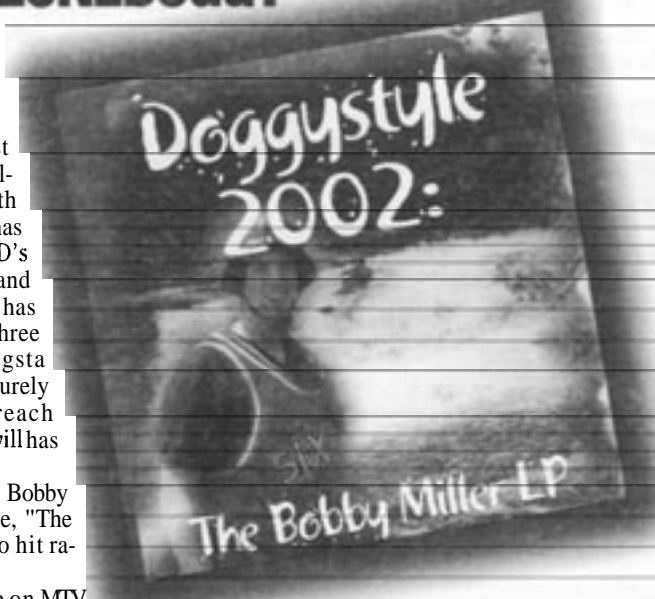
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Doggystyle 2002: The Bobby Miller LP. The first single, "The Real ZoneDogg" is due to hit radio frequencies soon.

Expect the video to be on MTV not long after. Other singles include: "Gin, Juice, and a bag of Cheesy Puffs," "Still DO Double G," "What's My F'n Name Homey?," and "40 Ounce in a Brown Paper Bag." Whether you're robbing

your grandmother at knifepoint or busting a cap in your neighbor's cat, you're sure to enjoy this straight up, gansta mack, word-up G collection of jams that'll be rockin' the hoods everywhere!



## They Call Us "Kayaker Trash"... and Maybe for Good Reason.

by David Norell

There is something that must be confronted and addressed. Something that makes all of us, as kayakers, look bad. I speak out now in hopes that we can make a change by taking notice and altering our behavior.

I don't know if it is because I was born and raised on the farmlands of Idaho. Or maybe it is because of my extreme right wing upbringing. Or my more recent fascination with things that are "peaceful," good for the body, and "organic." Perhaps I just like being an ass%\*le and enjoy a little confrontation now and then... especially when I see someone throw a piece of trash out their window onto this precious earth.

Right now you are probably thinking, "Where the hell is this kid going with this?" Or, "What is this piece doing in a kayaking magazine?" But this comes from the heart. The heart of a kayaker.

It is almost understandable to see a person flick their cigarette or drop their trash on the ground in the city. Possibly they don't care, weren't taught that it is wrong, or maybe they just don't think it matters. The city is a nasty place anyway. Okay, I'll let it slide once in a while in the city. But when I get to my favorite mountain destination, at my favorite

river, and my favorite playspot- the most pristine of all places to my mind- only to look down and see just as much if not more trash than the fast food strip back home, I flip! I just can't take it!

This is *my*...sorry... ours sanctuary! Trash at the river just reflects badly on all of us.

At first I assumed that it had to be the locals who threw the trash, most likely teens out partying on the weekends. This is their city. They have to disrespect it, right? Okay, problem identified. Solution- simple. Out came the trash bags at all my favorite spots. Everything from micro trash to old used condoms, picked up and forever gone.

"Great, now my spot is clean for the future. Maybe just a few beer bottles from weekend parties every so often," I thought.

But it only took a couple of return visits to these same "pristine" places to realize the problem wasn't just the locals. I had never thought it possible, but it was true. I saw it with my own eyes! Much of the new trash was clearly generated by kayakers. Duct tape scraps, foam, water bottles, energy bar wrappers, broken beer bottles (good beer), and the worst- cigarette butts.



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Then I traveled to the East Coast and discovered nationally renowned put-ins, take-outs, and even whole rivers littered with trash from kayakers. And I saw the most trash of all after rodeos!

I must say I was horrified. I mean my own brethren, almost my own blood. We all would save each other's lives given the opportunity. But then, at the end of the day, leave our trash on the ground. It saddens me, to say the least. At least with the city folk I can generate a good confrontation out of the situation, but I can't do that with my own brethren!

I talk to boaters about the problem and many say they know about it, too. All say that something needs to be done, and all have the same response. "Maybe it's the new boaters coming from the cities. Maybe they just don't understand." That is probably only part of the problem. Whether we know it or not, all of us have been guilty of this evil sin.

Perhaps the wind maybe lifted a piece of foam out of a boat. Maybe somebody forgot the water bottle on top of the car, or set something down and overlooked it later, etc. etc. Litter comes in many different forms. But it is happening. There is no point in placing blame.

It is simple to solve the problem. All we have to do is take action. Actions speak louder than words.

There is a simple way to remind yourself of the problem and the solution: TAKE Action.

#### T- Talk

Talk to one another about litter. This creates awareness among those who do not know about the litter problem it and reminds those that already do. Talk about how it isn't right, and remind others that our rivers and mountains are our sanctuaries, our strongholds. They must be kept clean. Talk about it with non-boaters too. Talk about what we can all do to solve the problem.

#### A- Act.

Act out those talks in real life. Make an effort not to leave anything behind when you leave a put-in or take-out. Make a clean sweep with your eyes before you drive away. Then...

#### K- Klean.

Clean the place up before you leave. It doesn't take that long and with a group of boaters a little effort goes a long way.

#### E- Every time.

Every time you are at the river pick up some litter. If we all help we can have cleaner, happier rivers- sanctuaries we can proudly call home.

Action- now... go to it!

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*Written by Sabine Altieri*

Fellow kayaker, friend, son, husband, and father, **Joe Michael Altieri, Jr.** passed away June 15, 2002 while paddling Summit Creek near Creston, British Columbia. Better known as H2O Joe in his community of Whitefish,

Montana, he was well loved, and is deeply missed by many.

Although just 29 years old, Joe lived life the way we all aspire to: Enjoying every day for what it is, making dreams real, laughing

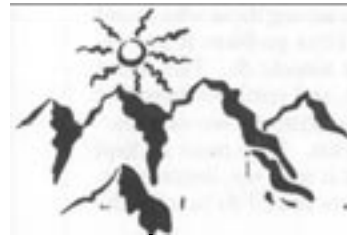
the loudest, and making others feel good. Of course he didn't want to die that day, but he passed on from this world doing what he loved most in life... kayaking a beautiful, wild river.

Joe and four of his friends, Mike Dezzani, Jamie Maxwell, Lizzie English, and Seth Trefont, all experienced kayakers, drove up to Summit Creek that Saturday morning. They scoped the creek out before launching around 1 pm., anticipating a six mile Class IV-V run on high water due to the spring flooding. The sun was beaming down and the river sparkled, the water was solid white, and everyone was smiling and laughing. It was the best last day Joe could have had.

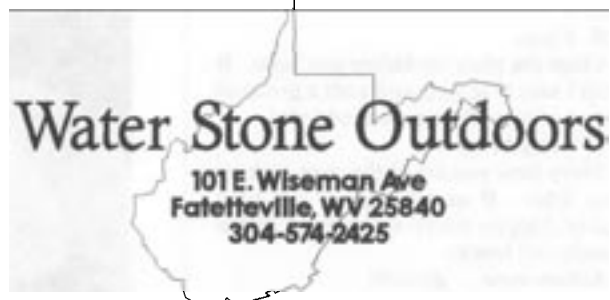
They ran into trouble about two miles from the put in, when Seth Trefont's skirt snagged on tree roots and he was forced to swim. Joe and Mike went to help him, and Seth was able to grab hold of a wedged log. This put Joe and Mike in a direct line for a huge recirculating wave, which pulled both of them in. Mike was able to roll and get out of it within a minute, but Joe remained caught and unable to roll. After about two minutes, Joe pulled out of his kayak, and began swimming. Both Mike and Jamie threw lines to him, but he was unable to reach



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them. They last saw him swimming as the current carried him away.

Search and rescue was employed very quickly, but a helicopter did not find Joe's body until 8 pm that night. They retrieved his body the next morning approximately eight miles downstream from where he came out of his boat.

His ashes were scattered on the Summer Solstice into the Swan River at the Big Drop in Bigfork, Montana, his favorite river. He has truly become one with the river and the water, as was always his desire. As his ashes were scattered, twenty-one kayakers ran the river with Joe for one last time. It was a parade of honor for a man we loved so much.

Joe is survived by his wife, Sabine, and their 19 month-old daughter, Naya Montagne. Also by his best friends Mike and Niki Dezzani, Tim Seward, Jake Hall, Matt Bannerman, Dave D Amore, and so many others that he would call his brothers.

Let Joe's life teach us to desire more passionately, love more unconditionally, laugh louder, dream bigger, grab hold of every minute, believe in magic, trust our intuitions, and most of all follow our hearts through life.



“There is a man with the grace of a cascade  
the strength of a canyon cataract  
and the beauty of a mountain stream.  
This man is a great friend to the river  
He would play with the river like it was his brother  
And protect it like it was his child.  
One day he was playing with the river,  
While he was playing his movements and thoughts mirrored  
The movements and thoughts of the river so closely  
That he became the river.  
Now he flows with the river and all its strength,  
Grace, and beauty for all eternity.”

— Author Unknown (quoted by Jamie Maxwell at Joe's service)

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# FATAL WHITEWATER

## J a n u a r y - J u n e 2 0 0 2

# ACCIDENT SUMMARY

*By Charlie Walbridge*

There's both good news and bad news in the accident summary for the first half of 2002. The bad news is that a drought in many parts of the U.S. has greatly reduced whitewater paddling opportunities. The good news is that it also helped to lower the death toll compared to last year. Due at least in part to a dry eastern winter, no fatalities were reported in the U.S. until March 15<sup>th</sup>. Several heads-up rescues also helped to keep the count down. The half-year total of 19 deaths (9 Kayak, 4 Canoe, and 7 Rafting fatalities) is one-third lower than last year. Four of these deaths occurred outside the U.S. But this past June saw eight fatalities, a rather high number. Let's hope that it's not the start of a new trend!

These accounts come from a variety of sources, including newspaper clippings and personal narratives. One of the best ways to cut down on gossip and speculation after a serious accident is to describe what happened on line. Many of these accounts were posted on boatertalk.com and other paddler bulletin boards. AW Safety correspondents like Kathy Streletzky, Slim Ray, Aida Parkinson, Bud Chavez, Rich Kulawiec, Tim Bromelkamp, and the board and staff of American Whitewater check these forums regularly and forward useful material to the AW Safety Committee. I'd like to thank these people and encourage other readers to do the same. It's also helpful to post accident reports on American Whitewater's Forum. Found on AW's web site ([www.americanwhitewater.org](http://www.americanwhitewater.org)), this bulletin board focuses on our conservation, access, and safety programs. While still a part of Boatertalk, it contains very little casual chat.

This winter there were two fatalities in South and Central American destinations popular with American paddlers. The first occurred on January 20<sup>th</sup>, on the Class IV Oyacacachi River in Ecuador. A mile below the put-in a long rapid ends with a 4 foot boof over a mushroom-shaped rock. According to an account posted on the AW forum, Paul Horner was running second in a short creek boat. He ran a bit too far left, slammed head-on into a hidden rock, and ended forward into a hidden sieve. When he bailed out he was shoved into the sieve head-first. Then his boat washed down into the sieve on top of him! His two companions set up a line across the river



and attempted to wade out to him. After 30 minutes of futile effort they returned to the put-in to get help.

Phil Meyer reported that Costa Rica's famous Paucare River was the scene of a commercial rafting accident on February 16<sup>th</sup>. The trip consisted of a raft with two paying clients, a guide, and two guide trainees. The raft got too far left in Class IV Lower Guacas Rapid and washed up on some rocks above the ledge. The guide and his crew bounced the boat free, but then they dropped into a large hole and flipped. Everyone was taken down deep, then the boat and the people washed into an undercut rock wall. The victim, a 21 year-old trainee, was unconscious when he surfaced. Guides from several companies pulled him ashore and began CPR, but could not revive him. An autopsy showed that the victim, who had a history of shoulder problems, had dislocated his shoulder during the accident.

Mike McDonnell, the whitewater paddling coordinator for the St. Lawrence University Outdoor Program in upstate New York, re-

ported a drowning on the Oswegachie River. It happened on March 15<sup>th</sup> below Goveneur. Three young men flipped a canoe while attempting to run this Class I-II stretch. Water levels were high, but well below flood stage. The boat was loaded at near to capacity, making it less stable. No one was wearing a life vest or cold water protection when they hit the icy water. One man made it ashore and called 911. Another was stranded on a small island. The third person, Robert Versailles, 19, disappeared. After several unsuccessful attempts to rescue the man on the island with a rowboat, rescue squads called in a military helicopter! The two survivors were treated for hypothermia at a local hospital and released. Dive rescue teams, working from a motorized inflatable, found the body early the following morning.

The Trinity River near Fort Worth, Texas was running high and fast on March 24<sup>th</sup>. At 9:30 a.m. Gregg Wilson, 33, and a friend put in at Quannah Parker Park. Both were paddling keowee-style recreational kayaks without sprayskirts, life vests, or helmets. Articles forwarded to AW by Jeff Peters and



Wiley Sullivan describe what happened next. The pair encountered a low-head dam ten minutes below the put-in. They elected to run it. The first man succeeded, and Wilson ran next. He flipped and became caught in the hydraulic. His friend got ashore and attempted to reach Wilson with a rope. Wilson recirculated for some time, then disappeared. His friend walked out to a road and flagged down a patrol car. Firefighters spent the rest of the day in an unsuccessful search for the body.

On April 14th Joseph Moore, 25, fell out of his raft near "Papa Bear," a rapid on Oregon's Molalla River. This Class IV run is about 30 miles south of Portland. That day the river crested at 6500 cfs, three times the maximum flow recommended in the "Soggy Sneakers" guide. The rapids were huge and pushy. One paddler who saw the group said that their rafts looked pretty small for water that big. Another person saw them scouting a rapid while drinking beer. Their raft was last seen floating upright some distance down river. The cooler was open and beer could be seen inside. Rescuers searched the area for the rest of the day without finding the man.

William Peace, 34, was canoeing with a fellow turkey hunter on New York's Hoosic River on April 16<sup>th</sup>. Neither man was wearing a PFD when the pair "unexpectedly" encountered rapids near the Vermont state line and flipped. Peace's partner, who was able to grab a floating life vest, made it ashore in time to see his friend and the canoe being carried around a bend. A motorist witnessed the accident and called police. Rescuers found the boat stuck in riverside brush near the site of the capsizing and the body a mile-and-a-half downriver.

Mill Creek is a very small, continuous, Class IV run located just outside Missoula, Montana. Ryan Palmer, 19, attempted the run on April 29<sup>th</sup> with Cody Howard, his regular paddling partner. Howard provided these facts in a write-up posted to Boatertalk. The pair, paddling creek boats, made good time, stopping to portage several logjams. But when Palmer broke his paddle towards the end of the run, the pair decided to call it a day. But Palmer, using Howard's intact paddle, flipped in the next drop. He lost his grip on the paddle and missed several hand rolls. Howard positioned himself for an Eskimo rescue (T-rescue), but Palmer did not take advantage of it. Then Palmer pinned on a rock above an 8-foot drop. Howard landed, worked his way back upstream, and released the boat. Palmer fell out unconscious and washed onto a mid-stream boulder. Howard got out to Palmer and swam him ashore. There was no pulse or other sign of life. He attempted to perform CPR, but Palmer's jaw was clamped shut hard

against his tongue. So Howard ran up to the road and notified authorities.

Palmer was only under water for about four minutes total, and his partner made a good, aggressive rescue attempt. It's unclear why his jaw became so tightly clenched; anyone with ideas of what might have caused this is and how to deal with it is urged to write AW. There aren't too many times when bailing out is a good idea, but sometimes it's a reasonable alternative to floating upside down in a rocky river and getting beaten up.

On April 28<sup>th</sup> a strong group of local paddlers attempted the Bemis to Bowden section of Shaver's Fork of the Cheat River in West Virginia. They knew the river well, but on that day water levels rose rapidly from an early-morning reading of 500 cfs (low but runnable) to a crest of over 12,000 cfs! This translated into a six foot rise at the Bowden gauge! According to a report in "Whitewater Splashes," the newsletter of the West Virginia Wildwater Association, the river was rising sharply when they put on. The "Class III" rapids they expected were huge! Thirty year-old Joe Steffl flipped, missed his roll, and washed downstream. A friend quickly reached him and tried pulling him towards shore, but was forced to back off above a big drop. Steffl was not responsive when they reached him at the base of the rapid. A member of his group bailed out of his own boat, and with support from his group, swam the man to shore. They performed CPR for over an hour without success.

May 4<sup>th</sup> was a highwater weekend through most of the Southeast. The popular Ocoee River in Tennessee was running at 6500 cfs that morning (the normal flow is 900-1200 cfs), forcing the cancellation of all commercial rafting. A group of four Florida firefighters, including a former Ocoee guide, decided to run the river in a borrowed raft. A second guide joined the group in the raft while a third guide, Jeremy Perry, paddled safety kayak. Perry wrote an excellent account for Boatertalk.com that served the basis for this write-up.

While the group was on the water the river surged to 10,000 cfs. Logs and debris were floating all around. Their raft, a "bucket boat," swamped in "Moon Shoot". As they tried to paddle it ashore they washed into "Broken Nose". They hit a meaty ledge hole about 30 feet from the bank and surfed for several minutes. Suddenly the raft tilted on its side. The two guides held on, but the three other men fell into the river. The hole recirculated two of them, and one man was recircled three or four times. Perry sat in an eddy, waiting for them to float free. The pair

was unresponsive initially, but then began begging to get onto his kayak. Perry resisted, but after floating through "Hells Half Mile" he relented and allowed one of the men to grab hold. That man washed off the deck in some big wave holes in "Double Trouble." He was carried into some shoreline trees on river left where he body-pinned.

Perry turned into an eddy and grabbed his throw bag. There was so much brush that it was difficult to get a clean throw, but he finally hit his target and pulled him ashore. As he did, his kayak was pulled out into the current and carried downstream. Hours later, after being ferried back to the river right shore by rafters, Perry learned that another man had been killed. The body of Edgar Mauss, 42, was spotted near Goforth Creek, some miles downstream, and brought ashore by a passing kayaker. Perry's kayak was last seen in the vicinity of "Hell Hole," headed for the lake.

That same day a group of paddlers arrived at the Tellico River in East Tennessee. It was running at 2000 cfs, too much for an easy run on the middle section. So the group headed upstream to try a Class I-II headwaters section above the North River confluence. Ed Mohn, 57, was making his first run since a rib injury the previous fall. Frank Bargatze, another member of the group, describes what happened next:

"We approached an island that offered a passage to river right and left. I worked my way down river left...and eddied out behind a rock where I waited for the others to appear...I saw Ed bounce over a small, submerged rock, then drop into a sieve formed by the rock and a fallen tree. Ed broached against the tree...(he had) a look of panic and was frantically trying to extricate himself. I could see Ed struggling to extricate his boat. The boat popped free and floated downstream...I could see Ed's blue paddle jacket submerged under water...I exited my boat and climbed onto the rock...I jumped on top of Ed and tried with all my strength to pull him out of his entrapment. Barnett Williams reached the rock as I jumped. I swam into an eddy and climbed onto the fallen tree. Barnett and I tried to secure a rope so we could get to Ed...(but) the current was strong and the position of the tree made it impossible....we both jumped to Ed and pulled without success."

"By now Ed had been in under the water for 15 minutes. We stopped and said a short prayer on the rock. Ed's body had shifted from all the pulling.... I swam to shore where people were waiting to help. Barnett stayed on the rock and eventually got a rope around





Ed's life vest. He threw the rope to us and we pulled. There was a snap of a branch and Ed's body floated free just as a rescue squad arrived...CPR was administered." Unfortunately, despite their efforts, Ed Mohn was dead.

On May 9<sup>th</sup> Denise Stone, 43, was found dead in Hinkson Creek, a small, urban stream in Columbia, Missouri. According to the Missouri Whitewater message board, she was a former lifeguard, an active triathlete, and very fit. She had recently taken basic kayak instruction through the club and was very excited about the sport. All the rivers in the area were running that day, but she couldn't find a paddling partner. She called an experienced friend who suggested that she work on eddy turns and ferries in the fast moving water at Capen Park. He did not expect her to run any real whitewater alone. Unfortunately, she put in there and continued downstream alone for some distance.

Two miles downstream Stone was seen above a flooded low water bridge. She seemed happy and confident, but was not wearing a helmet. AW board member Chris Kelly notes that at this level a "vicious bank-to-bank hole" develops here. She was later seen out of her boat, floating face down in the hole. She probably flipped while running the drop, hit her head, and lost consciousness. Firefighters were called to the scene and recovered her body a short distance downstream.

The low-head dam at Daniels Park on the Chagrin River in Willoughby, Ohio is a known danger spot. There was a drowning here in 1998. On May 12<sup>th</sup> of this year the river was high, creating a powerful hydraulic below the dam. Newspaper clippings sent by long-time AW member Hank Annable describe what happened: At 4:15 p.m. witnesses saw a small raft carrying two people approach the dam. Despite the presence of warning signs they attempted to run it. The raft became stuck in the hydraulic and both occupants spilled out. The pair was recycled many times, and drowned despite their life vests. The body of Chad Schriebman, 18, was found four miles downstream. The body of Charlie Trizza, 19, was located in Lake Erie two weeks later.

Upper South Boulder Creek is a difficult creek run in Colorado's Front Range. On June 8<sup>th</sup> a group of five kayakers found the river running at 400 cfs, a moderate flow. The second Class V rapid, "The Gash," is often portaged because it contains several nasty sieves and undercuts. According to a report written by Gary Edgeworth, Paul Zirkelbach headed into the rapid as some of his group got out to carry. Zirkelbach, 50, was a well-known expedition paddler with decades of experi-

ence. He was very familiar with the drop and chose, as good paddlers often do, to rely on memory rather than scouting. As the group made the portage, they spotted his kayak vertically pinned on an undercut rock at the bottom. The group quickly released the boat, but there was no sign of a paddler or his gear.

Now they began an all out search. One paddler went ahead to make sure Zirkelbach hadn't washed downstream while other boaters probed the rapid with a snag-line. After about an hour three fishermen who were helping with the search located his body. The evacuation from this steep-walled canyon required three hours of work by several rescue teams working from the railroad bed.

None of the boaters who accompanied Zirkelbach actually saw what happened to him in "The Gash". His friends theorize that he bailed out after being hammered somewhere, and then he was held up in a sieve or undercut rock for some time before being released. It's unclear exactly where his run went wrong, or whether pre-positioned safety would have made any difference. He was found with his life vest and full-coverage helmet still on.

California's Cache Creek is a Class II-III run similar to North Carolina's Nantahala River. A local company runs guide-assisted trips there using double ducks and 10' rafts. On June 15<sup>th</sup> Sandra Schoeps, 19, fell out of her raft upstream of the Bear Creek confluence. A story in *The Woodland County Democrat* states that she washed into a strainer and drowned. I received a clipping from the same newspaper covering an accident that occurred on September 9<sup>th</sup> of last year. In this case, Danielle Jue, 19, stood up while trying to dislodge her raft and caught a foot between some rocks. The current pushed her over, and she drowned.

Water has been high in the Northwest through most of this year. In mid-June there were two incidents on Montana's Middle Fork of the Flathead River, where the water was high, but below flood stage. According to the *Daily Inter Lake*, a Florida family flipped their 14 foot oar-rigged boat in Pinball Rapids on June 17<sup>th</sup>. One passenger, a woman, held onto the raft for over 20 minutes, during which time she washed downstream through several major rapids. Commercial outfitters eating lunch on shore spotted her and made the rescue. She was flown by helicopter to a hospital and treated for hypothermia. Two days later a 54-year-old man died after his commercial raft flipped, also in Pinball Rapids. Guides pulled everyone into other rafts quickly, but the man lost consciousness minutes later. Guides started CPR

and used radios to contact authorities. The Deputy Coroner thought that he might have succumbed to heart problems.

The rivers of British Columbia were also running high, and this contributed to two drownings on June 15<sup>th</sup>. Summit Creek is a six-mile stretch of fast, continuous Class IV-V running along a road down the east side of Kootenai Pass. The level that day was 2000 cfs, and there were very few eddies. Kayaker Joe Alteri, 29, bailed out after becoming stuck in a hole. His four companions tried to chase him down, first by boat and later by automobile. They threw him ropes, but he could not hold on. His body was spotted some hours later by a search helicopter. On that same day Kayaker Liva Stoyke, 32, drowned on the Class III-IV Mistaya River in Baniff National Park. Details are pretty sketchy, but it appears that she was with six other kayakers when she flipped and swam. It took some time to get her ashore, and one correspondent theorized that she might have gone over a waterfall.

House Rock is the biggest rapid on Montana's Gallatin River, a Class III-IV road-side run. It has caused many problems over the years. According to a story in the Bozeman Daily Chronicle, Robert Scholer, 55, was one of six people in a commercial raft that flipped here on June 27<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Scholer, who weighed 330 pounds, inhaled some water and lost consciousness. A woman guide was dragging him slowly to shore when two passing kayakers, Bob McDonough and Ed Hake, spotted them from the road. They ran down into the water, pulled Scholer ashore, and began CPR.

On June 27<sup>th</sup> a canoe carrying two boys washed into a downed tree on Floyd's Fork in Southeastern Kentucky. This little stream had "come up" following locally heavy rains and the current was pretty fast. One boy got free and ran for help, but the other, only 13 years old, was held under water. The youngster's father attempted a rescue, but lost his footing and was washed downstream. Firefighters had to cut the tree off to release the boy and the canoe.

A 76-year-old man drowned after falling out of a rented canoe on Ohio's Mad River on June 29<sup>th</sup>. Victor Cordell was paddling this Class I stream with a friend when an overhanging limb hit both of them hard. Cordell was knocked out of his boat. His life vest came off, and he disappeared underwater. A bystander saw him floating face-down in the river, pulled him ashore, and began CPR. Paramedics arrived soon afterwards and pronounced him dead at 6:30 p.m. His friend was not injured.



## Tubers and Swimmers

Tubers and swimmers died on several rivers popular with whitewater paddlers. On April 3 Ricky Lim disappeared while swimming below the Iowa Hill Road Bridge on California's North Fork of the American. Firefighter Mike Deacon, who reported the accident to AW, believes that he is pinned somewhere in "Pinball," on the Chamberlin Falls Run. On June 8<sup>th</sup> an inner tube carrying Carrie Fullerton, 17, burst. She was pinned in a boulder sieve on a Class III section of Colorado's Clear Creek. Then on June 10<sup>th</sup> Nicole Coppelino, 17, washed into a strainer on New York's Class II-III Esopus Creek. Two of her friends tried valiantly to rescue her, without success. Their shouts alerted nearby homeowners who called 911. On June 29<sup>th</sup> two graduate students from India drowned in Deckers Creek outside Morgantown, West Virginia. Andy Horton, who knows the creek extremely well, believes that accident occurred below Top Hat, at a popular summer swimming area. He thinks that the first student got carried into the recess located behind the waterfall and panicked. A friend went in to help. Neither one survived.

## Near Misses

The death toll this year would be higher were it not for some well-executed rescues. According to several extensive postings on Boatertalk, David McIntosh was running Spirit Falls on Washington's White Salmon River in early March when he penciled in hard and lost his grip on his paddle. He hand-rolled up behind a curtain of falling water and was able to break out through the falls after several tries. He was then pushed into the next rapid, Chaos, where he dropped into a powerful hole. After several hand rolls he lost consciousness but remained in his boat. Jesse Berman, who saw this happen, worked his way in his boat along the river right shore to a fixed rope. He was able to grab McIntosh's kayak during one of its recirculations, pop the sprayskirt, and pull the paddler free before the boat was sucked back into the hole.

Biermannow held McIntosh with his head above water. He wasn't breathing, but Bierman was barely holding on and worried about being pulled into the hole himself. Several of Bierman's friends jumped and swam across the river and pulled McIntosh up onto a narrow shelf. McIntosh coughed, sputtered, and then started breathing again. Soon he was able to walk out under his own power.

In mid-June a kayaker paddled to the left of the "boof slot" at Ender Waves on West Virginia's New River at minus one foot. He got jammed into a very narrow slot between a big slanted rock and a smaller rock to the left. According to a Boatertalk post he was pinned facing upstream, lying on his back deck to get air. Even though his knees were out of his thigh hooks, he was unable to exit the boat. Jimmy Blakeney managed to get out to the slot, where he ditched his boat and paddle and grabbed the paddler's PFD. After he examined the pin, he elected to release the boat by twisting it slightly and squirting it through. Although slightly painful, this strategy kept the man's head above water.

A month earlier on the New a kayaker assisted a commercial guide who found himself in the crack between Flint and Meat Grinder Rocks in Lower Keaney Rapid. The kayaker eddied out behind the rock and was able, with considerable gymnastic skill, to get out on the rock. Then he talked the man into jumping left over a log into the water, away from a deadly crack.

Waterfall runs unleash serious impact forces! There were four reported injuries among paddlers running big drops this past spring. On March 27<sup>th</sup> Bobby Miller hit his head on Eastern Pennsylvania's Hornbeck's Creek. He was making his second run of a 25 foot combination slide/falls when he slammed into a rock outcropping and was knocked unconscious. He was floating upside down in the pool below when his friends pulled him out. Rescue squads transported him to a hospital where he was treated for a concussion. On March 30<sup>th</sup> a man suffered a compressed vertebra on his second run of 14-foot high Baby Falls on Tennessee's Tellico River. This is supposed to be a pretty benign drop, but witnesses said that he landed pretty flat! On May 2<sup>nd</sup> John Kiffmeyer broke both his ankles after hitting a rock at the bottom of 40 foot-high Brownstone Falls in Wisconsin's Copper Falls State Park. Evacuating him up the steep cliffs that lined the river proved to be very challenging. Then on May 4<sup>th</sup> Jamison Clower compressed two vertebrae after making a first run over 60 foot-high Foster Falls near Fiery Gizzard. According to his friends, Clower's 45-degree angle landing was "a little flat."

But rivers can be forgiving, too. The river gods smiled on a couple in their 20s who blundered over Great Falls of the Potomac River on May 9<sup>th</sup>. They were paddling a sit-on-top kayak tandem, using only one paddle. They had no previous whitewater experience, but knew there was a falls "downstream somewhere." They flipped in the top drop and survived a swim through Great Falls at 4 feet

on the gauge, well above the cutoff used by expert falls runners. Alerted by rangers, kayakers participating in the "Great Falls Race" rescued the pair in Observation Deck Rapids. The two might not have lived without this timely help. The man had a broken rib; the woman was totally unscathed.

## Once again I'd like to thank everyone

who sent the e-mails, news clippings, and internet postings that make this twice-yearly summary possible.

American Whitewater depends on our members and friends to produce these articles. Don't worry, I don't mind getting duplicate submissions. Everything I get is read and appreciated! The information is also added to the AW Whitewater Safety Database, the largest in the world. Accessible at [www.americanwhitewater.org](http://www.americanwhitewater.org), it

provides the real-world basis for our safety programs. Be sure to let us know if your name or any other information in a report should be kept confidential. The address: Charlie Walbridge, AW Safety Editor, Rt. 1, Box A43B, Bruceton Mills, WV 26525; Phone 304-379-9002;

E-mail: [ccwalbridge@cs.com](mailto:ccwalbridge@cs.com).

## Closing Shot

The scenery on the upper Ganges is similar to that on the rivers in Nepal. The wildlife is fantastic, we spotted several different kinds of kingfishers, eagles, Bramani ducks and the migrating cormorant.

The Ganges. Photo by Inka Trollsås and Ram H. Silwal

To read about more of our adventures please have a look at our web-site [www.kayaknepal.com](http://www.kayaknepal.com)

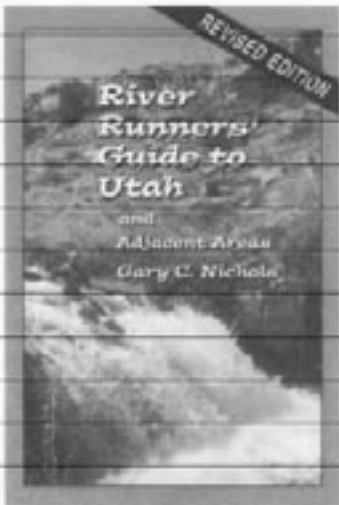




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The Man has opposable thumbs, titanium cojones  
and a Wave Sport kayak. Cheater.



wavesport.com



# Team D Pro 2002

B. Anderson • T. Berman • J. Bowerman • B. Bristow • K. Frieze  
Knapp Brothers • A. Levesque • Liles Family • B. Ludden • A. Miller  
D. Persolija • J. Selby • B. Seiznick • A. Spino-Smith • M. Wilson  
A. Holcome • B. Baldwin • R. Sturges • M. Rodriguez • B. Mark



**TmD**  
**PRO**



Id 6.8, 6.9, 7.0



Gforce 5.9, 6.1, 6.3

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Brandon Mark  
photo by: Lauren Gervais

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