



*(Left) Front of the beautifully remodeled MBRA and UMATR building in East Berkshire, VT. Both floors have back decks overlooking the Missisquoi Wild and Scenic River. Photos: John Little*

## New Home For River Protectors

by John Little

Back in the early 90's, a group of concerned citizens banded together on the northern border of Vermont. We weren't too sure how to get organized, or where to find funding, but with help and encouragement from several sources, the Missisquoi River Basin Association (MRBA) came into being. We targeted tree planting on the riverbanks as our major push, as the banks had been denuded over the past decades in response to farming practices of the past. There were lots of sections of the river that were actively eroding and provided easy targets for planting when we got permission from the landowners. We eventually settled into a small office in an old brick building near the center of our watershed and happily went about planting trees and shrubs with our dozen or so board members and a part-time coordinator.

In 2004, two MRBA members attended RIVER RALLY in Evergreen Resort in Virginia. We soaked in the atmosphere and absorbed a lot of ideas. We had no idea that so much could be accomplished or how many options were available. We exist far away from any cultural or population centers in the very northwest of Vermont. It was an eye opener for sure. On the long drive home, the two of us mulled over and examined two big possibilities to attempt. Firstly, was to establish a water quality monitoring program. A couple local high schools had been teaching Environmental Science and teaching units on water chemistry, but nothing long term had been established. Our water testing program got initiated a year later and has been collecting data for 20 years now. Secondly, we met some folks from the National Park Service. They were at the conference to talk about their Partnership Wild and Scenic Program, and to encourage organizations to consider joining that program. *(continued p.12)*



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**Editorial Policy**

Articles are not edited for content and may not reflect the position, endorsement, or mission of RMS. The purpose of this policy is to encourage the free exchange of ideas concerning river management issues in an open forum of communication among the RMS membership. Unless indicated, points of view are solely those of the author.

## Executive Director's Eddy

Knowing our past can equip us as well as inform us.

You may have seen a shared year-end celebration of a successful 2023 in an email message, the *RMS News Digest*, or a social media post. There's one more in these pages, and I hope you share my pride in its references to our programs and continued growth. While we could not be more fortunate to know the skill and enthusiasm of our sharp, creative, and always forward-thinking staff - Angie Fuhrmann, James Major, and Bekah Price - you are a critical component of our growth and evolving competence. Whether you joined decades ago or signed up last month, you are reading this, which indicates an interest in this community and its programs and in sharing opportunities we represent and support. You may have jumped in by simply asking or responding to a listserv post; chipping in to help organize a trip; offering comments during a River Management Roundtable, or attending a webinar.

One aspect of the new year's programs will be offering informative 2024 training events celebrating new or ongoing initiatives whose foundations lean on significant past actions of pretty special individuals. We will be reminding or introducing you to river professionals who have initiated seminal legislation, created opportunities to influence regulatory oversight, or established new river management norms. The lessons will be largely about what they accomplished, informed by a few 'mad' methods. They may have honored policy, legislation, or administrative mandates, but they have also practiced what was necessary to "get 'er done" when imperfect processes called for innovation or a workaround. Your ability to do both is foundational, and we will appreciate your consideration of the application of policy, seasoned with your common sense and gut instincts to move forward vs. getting stuck by protocol or others' inertia of rest.

Speaking of individuals who have honored RMS' path (and as an extra reminder to tip your hat to colleagues for their dedication and accomplishments by submitting award nominations by Mar 1st



Risa Shimoda, RMS Executive Director

(see article on page 4), the folks below are Contribution to the River Management Society Award winners. They are listed in their role at the time of their award and may have retired or changed names since. Each of them has contributed much more than valuable time by filling an important administrative role, initiating an event, or providing extraordinary leadership.

**Outstanding Contribution to RMS**

- Jena Barringer, BLM
- Rod Bonacker
- Doug Carter, Consultant
- Mollie Chaudet
- Chet Crowser, MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks
- Judy Culver, BLM
- Michael Greco, Canadian RMS
- LuVerne Grussing, BLM
- Dan Haas, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- Linda Jalbert, National Park Service
- Steve Johnson, National Park Service
- Lisa Klinger, USDA Forest Service
- Caroline Kurz, RMS
- Lee Larson, BLM
- Stu Lewis, Ohio DNR
- Jim MacCartney, Trout Unlimited / NPS
- Gary Marsh, BLM
- Ken Ransford, Esq.
- Lynette Ripley, Bureau of Reclamation
- Kristina Rylands, Upper Merced River Watershed Council (twice!)
- Bunny Sterin, BLM
- Ryan Turner, BLM
- Ken Vines, USDA Forest Service
- Doug Whittaker, Consultant
- James Vonesh, VA Commonwealth Univ.

## President's Corner

Each time I attend a River Management Society event, whether hosting the Rio Chama Wild and Scenic River management collaborative meeting with tribes, nations, pueblos as well as the US Forest Service and Corps of Engineers, attending an RMS roundtable or national board meeting, I always come away with knowledge and a sense of kinship with like-minded folks. The energy, excitement, and willingness to bring ideas to the table during the October board meeting in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, was not different.

Who knew this portion of Oklahoma has Class III whitewater as well as a newly completed whitewater park? For some reason, due to my unconscious bias, I thought about Oklahoma as being flat and not known for whitewater. While driving southeast of Oklahoma City, I approached the foothills of the Ozark Mountains, traveling through lush valleys and rolling hills reminiscent of the Blue Ridge Mountains and portions of Maine. Ironically, this assumption persisted in the back of my mind until I arrived at War Eagle Resort — even though Ed Fite, our Midwest Chapter President and host of the board meeting, insisted that there is whitewater in Oklahoma.

After spending a lovely evening with the Sequoyah Outing Club and learning of their efforts, in conjunction with Save the Illinois River (STIR), to protect Illinois River from pollution, it was time to dig in our heels and hold a productive board meeting.

*(Executive Director, continued)*

They have gone beyond the expectations of a job description or a set of project goals by offering and executing the 'extra' that has allowed us to evolve with and respond to the changing role of river management. I hope you'll get a chance to meet one or many of these awesome individuals who 'are' RMS and what we represent. ❖

Risa Shimoda  
Executive Director

Our motto for the meeting was "Strategy is important — planning makes it happen." With this in mind, we broke out into three working groups:

1. Recruiting and engaging members; moving towards leadership participation, providing growth and mentorship opportunities.
2. Stirring workplace initiatives that precipitate change from being 'welcoming' to designing inclusivity and equity into workspace systems.
3. Building capacity to plan and develop programs including the development of the 2025 Symposium, increasing sponsorships, and expanding funding of RMS programs.

I will focus on inclusivity and equity in the workplace action items. We must be intentional, create connections and build solid relationships to establish and maintain long-term change to see positive effects on river management and the enjoyment of our rivers, the nation's waterways. One might ask, "Why is the River Management Society focused on inclusivity and equity, when in truth these issues have always been a part of our community?" RMS is simply striving to be clearer about our strategy, policy, and action. The intentional focus on inclusivity and equity aligns with our vision to be the national and international leader in river management education, collaboration, and training — whose members,



Judy Culver, RMS President

volunteers, and partners represent the nation's thought leaders, change agents, and resources for all things related to the holistic management of rivers and river environments.

One might ask, "Is this important?" My answer is a resounding, "YES." As a female raft guide in the 1980's, I endured harassment, sexualization of my muscular body, attempts at intimidation, statements such as *Women can't be raft guides*, *Women don't belong here*, and *I won't risk my life with a woman guide*. Although my fellow guides watched out for each other, this behavior was constant, and many non-traditional guides were not so lucky. While my employer attempted to accommodate individuals with physical or mental disabilities, most were turned away. In the 1980's, only those with financial means or who were willing to barter or live a pauper's life were able to become a boatperson.

I would love to say that these challenges have disappeared during the 40 years between then and now, but inappropriate behavior, inaccessible boat launches and docks, difficulty reaching non-traditional communities, and language barriers persist. Disparity between those who can afford to purchase quality rafting and boating equipment and those who cannot has expanded as more people paddle for the first time. *(continued, p. 34)*

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Founded in 1910, the Sequoyah Outing Club was incorporated "for mental and physical recreation, to study and read together, literary, educational and scientific works of all kinds, to study, practice and promulgate physical science, to up-build the health and physical man, to maintain ponds for the study and propagation of fish."

## Annual RMS Awards – Nominations Due March 1, 2024

Please help us honor some of our amazing colleagues by nominating them for one of our awards!

The RMS recognizes outstanding individuals and achievements in four categories:

- River Manager of the Year (RMS Members only)
- Outstanding Contribution to River Management (open to all)
- Outstanding Contribution to RMS (RMS Members only)
- Frank Church Wild and Scenic Rivers (open to all)

We invite you to give careful consideration to those persons who deserve to be recognized for their work and contributions to managing our rivers and developing our organization. If you submitted a nomination in the past and your nominee was not selected that year, you are encouraged to update and resubmit the nomination.

**Nominations may be submitted online or emailed to:  
RMS Secretary, Helen Clough, [hcloughak@gmail.com](mailto:hcloughak@gmail.com)**

Each award (and the criteria by which nominations are evaluated) is described below.

### River Manager of the Year (RMS Members)

This award recognizes contributions that are field-oriented and location-specific, with a focus on recent accomplishments. If a nomination is submitted for someone with a longer tenure, only more recent accomplishments will be considered (within past three years). An individual with a longer history or broader scope of accomplishments might be more appropriate for the Contribution to River Management Award. The committee will consider contributions “on the river” (field-oriented, technician level) and at the managerial or supervisory level (involving policy, planning, and program development). Please consider contributions in areas such as those listed below; nominees are expected to contribute in at least two of these areas.

- Provided leadership in promoting and protecting natural, cultural, or recreational resources;
- Worked effectively and cooperatively with other agencies, user groups, private landowners, and/or general public;
- Established or re-established key partnerships to protect and manage the river corridor;
- Created an effective, professional, and enjoyable working environment;
- Worked to protect one or more rivers within the context of their watershed and beyond designated lines on a map;
- Created and established new and innovative approaches to river management, advancing the field and creating new enthusiasm; and/or
- Shows strong dedication and commitment towards advancing and improving river management into the future.

### Outstanding Contribution to River Management (open to all)

This award recognizes a longer history of contributions to the greater field of river management (as opposed to more recent or project/location-specific accomplishments). Please consider longer-term and broader impacts in areas such as those listed below; nominees are expected to contribute in at least two of these areas.

- Advanced the field of river management through contributions in areas such as science, education, interpretation, research, and/or law enforcement;
- Developed innovative (or creatively adapted) river management techniques;
- Organized conferences/meetings that advanced river management as a science and as a profession;
- Developed or implemented new communication techniques to coordinate and connect managers;
- Provided opportunities for increased awareness by citizens and river visitors regarding their role in caring for rivers and watersheds; and/or
- Was an outstanding advocate for professional river management.

### Outstanding Contribution to the River Management Society (RMS Members)

This award recognizes contributions to the success of the River Management Society itself. This award recognizes contributions at the national or regional level that result in greater organizational effectiveness, efficiency, growth, positive change, or enthusiasm. The award focuses on impact on the organization as a whole, rather than a particular length of service. Please consider contributions in areas such as those listed below; nominees are expected to contribute in at least two of these areas.

- Exceptional contribution to national policy, planning, and program development that brings recognition to RMS as a leader among river and/or professional organizations;
- Demonstrated leadership within RMS that has created sustainable positive change;
- Donated considerable time, money, or effort that has resulted in advancement of RMS as a unique and robust institution;
- Brought new and positive private and public awareness of RMS;
- Increased membership substantially;
- Developed or located new sources of funding or resources for RMS; and/or
- Provided exemplary service to RMS through an elected office.

## Annual RMS Awards – Nominations Due March 1, 2024

Feel free to resubmit a past nomination for consideration!

### Frank Church Wild and Scenic Rivers (open to all)

This award recognizes contributions focused on the management, enhancement, or protection of designated Wild and Scenic Rivers. As with the Outstanding Contribution to River Management, this award recognizes a history of contributions with a broad geographic scope (as opposed to more recent or project/location-specific accomplishments). Please consider longer-term and broader impacts in areas such as those listed below; nominees are expected to contribute in at least two of these areas.

- Advanced awareness of WSRs through contributions in areas such as education, research, technology, training, public contact, interpretation, law enforcement;
- Worked effectively and cooperatively to build partnerships with other agencies, scientists, user groups, private landowners, and/or general public to promote, protect, enhance, or manage WSRs;
- Demonstrated, developed, or creatively adapted innovative WSR management techniques;
- Organized conferences, training, etc., which involved and advanced WSRs;
- Exhibited leadership in promoting and protecting WSRs within the context of the established corridors and beyond designated lines on a map; and/or
- Worked to improve managing agency process, budget, and/or support for Wild and Scenic River programs.

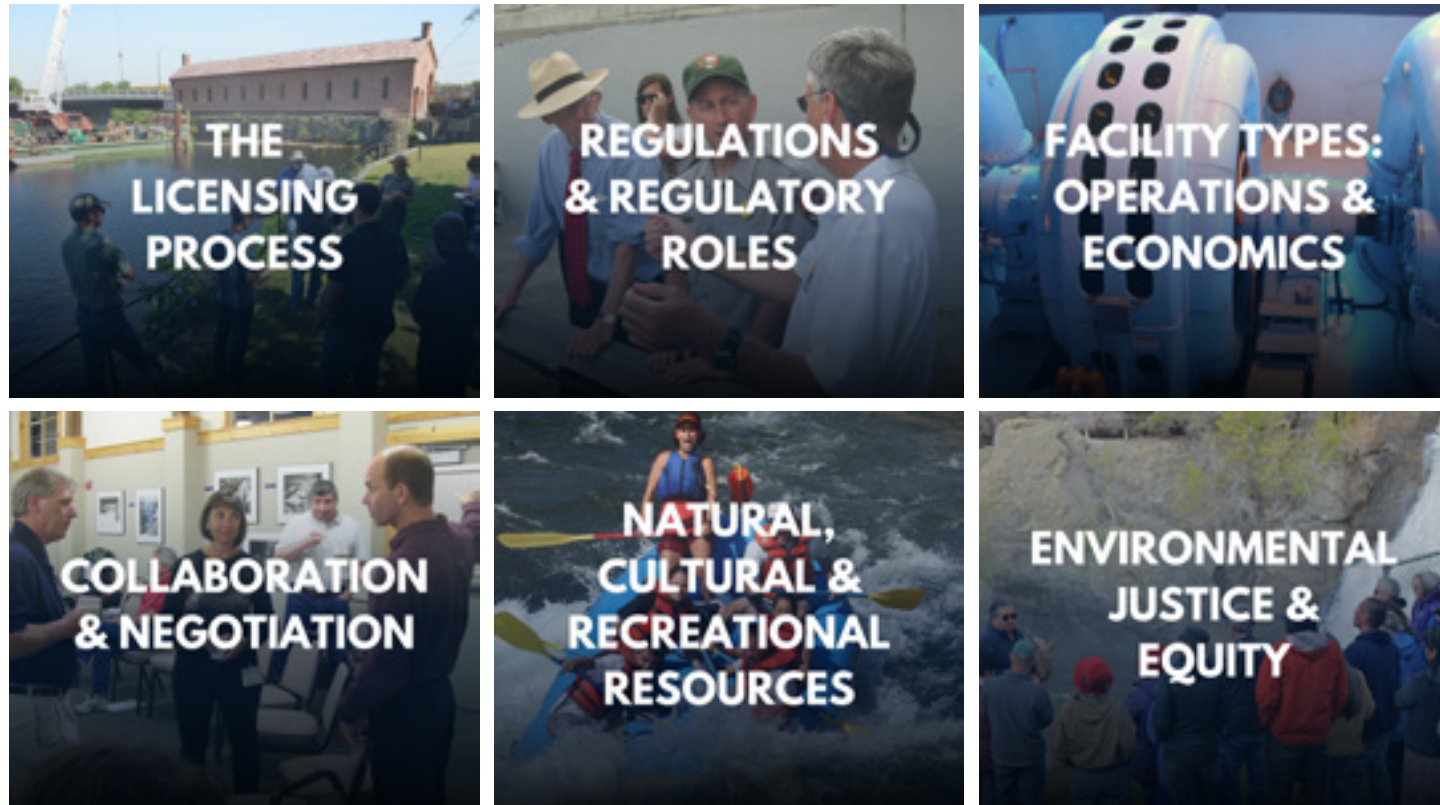


## Dan Haas Receives 2023 Jackie Diedrich Award

The Interagency Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinating Council’s Jackie Diedrich Wild and Scenic Rivers Leadership Award recognizes river-administering federal agency staff who have shown outstanding leadership to help manage Wild and Scenic Rivers, build capacity for river stewardship, and/or develop exemplary training programs for river management professionals.

On December 7, 2023, this year’s award was presented to Dan Haas, Visitor Services Manager with the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service in Washington state. Dan is a longtime Interagency Council member and has been the steward of *rivers.gov*, the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System website, since its inception over 25 years ago. *Rivers.gov* provides detailed information about each river within the National System and showcases a wealth of Wild and Scenic Rivers Act-related historical content, stunning river photos, geospatial data, and Interagency Council products.

For many years, Dan has worked to manually aggregate all the website content, respond to agency requests for updates, and answer a nearly endless stream of questions submitted by website visitors. Throughout the life of *rivers.gov*, Dan has been stalwart in managing the site day-to-day and shepherding several significant revamps — earlier this year, the most recent and most dramatic update went live! While Dan would be the first to say he didn’t do this alone, his dedication to *rivers.gov* and his institutional knowledge of the National System is unwavering and unmatched! ❖



## Developing and Sharing Tools for Hydropower Practitioners

by Risa Shimoda

River Management Society staff (Angie Fuhrmann, Bekah Price, and Risa Shimoda) and National Park Service personnel (Susan Rosebrough, Krista Sherwood, Angel Valenzuela, and Kevin Lewis) have collaborated, with invaluable input from experts in the river management community, to identify core competencies necessary for hydropower practitioners, participants, and others to participate in the hydropower licensing process and develop training materials and events to help reach those core competencies. Some of the competencies are critical to (re) licensing proceedings; others are important at certain phases in the process.

We conducted a research initiative with the impressively able assistance of hydropower process veterans who agreed to serve as project advisors and subject matter experts — these volunteers included RMS members and folks we met thanks to our colleagues at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, the Hydropower Reform Coalition, and agencies. We suggest that hydro practitioners consider six core areas of competency:

### Specific to hydropower:

- The Licensing Process
- Regulations and Regulatory Roles
- Facility Types: Operations & Economics

### Critical for public processes and fundamental to hydro work:

- Collaboration & Negotiation
- Natural, Cultural & Recreational Resources
- Environmental Justice & Equity

After compiling discoverable resources suggested by the advisors and subject matter experts, we developed a [website](https://river-management.org/hydropower-licensing-101) ([river-management.org/hydropower-licensing-101](https://river-management.org/hydropower-licensing-101)) that links the core competencies to relevant training, resources, and best practices. We presented our process and findings and offered a tour of the new website on September 26, 2023, during the Hydropower Licensing 101 Toolkit [Launch Party](#). Over sixty people attended!

Looking back at the year of development, Susan Rosebrough (National Park Service project lead) offered, “The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Licensing process is complex. This resource provides a good entry pathway for hydropower practitioners to dive into six essential aspects of the work. It also links to additional information for those who want to dive deeper into a topic. While assisting on the project I learned new things from our core team, advisory committee, and subject matter experts, and it is exciting to share this tool with everyone.”

New to hydro and the architect of the Hydropower 101 website pages, Communications Coordinator Bekah Price was pleased to have been part of the development of the resource that “gives river managers and stewards a launch point into that world, without throwing them into the deep end.”

### Identifying and Filling Gaps

We are very proud to have developed a solid resource for hydropower practitioners and view it as a work in process. Here are elements from a gap analysis Angie Fuhrmann, RMS Training

Center Coordinator, developed to articulate where we would like to increase its value and utility:

*Licensing Process* - Competency is well-covered with a comprehensive collection of 49 resources, including informative guides by FERC and HRC.

*Regulations & Regulatory Roles* - While these core competency resources cover many subcategories, there are notable gaps in resources related to treaty rights, rights of way, special use permits, specific EPA legislation, and agency-specific policy and management plans.

*Facility Types: Operations & Economics* - This core competency resource can be improved by adding coverage of feasibility considerations, water rights implications, renewable energy credits, transmission lines, and the impacts of climate change.

*Collaboration & Negotiation* - Resources focused on roles, tribal consultation, and diversity relative to project management and leadership engagement deserve attention.

*Natural, Cultural, and Recreational Resources* - There is ample opportunity to showcase illustrative guidance regarding recreational accessibility, visitor use, aquatic resources, cultural resource monitoring, aesthetics, and soundscapes.

*Environmental Justice and Equity* - We will seek agency-specific guidance and suggested resources, specific policies, and protocols that encourage input from marginalized communities and integrate it into relicensing processes.

### The Project Continues: Filling Resource Gaps and Offering Unique Training

Susan shares an element of flexibility and sustained growth for the project by expressing, “We hope this becomes a living tool to which we can continue to contribute. In 2024, we are working on expanding the accessibility resources and also conducting training.” When programs have been developed, Bekah will be sharing news of future workshops to stakeholders who can benefit from the toolkit. ❖

*The project team extends special thanks to our advisors and subject matter experts (with apologies for omitting any important and appreciated contributors):*

*National Oceanic and Atmospheric Admin.* - Melanie Harris  
*Bureau of Indian Affairs* - Kevin Carey, Mary Manydeeds  
*Federal Energy Regulatory Commission* - Emily Carter  
*National Park Service* - Jeremy Buzzell, Sean Egan, Jonathan Moore, Lisa Yager, Kevin Mendik, Mark Meyers, Bob Meadows, Barbara Rice, Alyssa Walker, Jeremy White  
*Hydropower Reform Coalition and American Whitewater* - Jan Konigsberg, Colleen McNally Murphy, Tom O’Keefe, Dave Steindorf  
*USDA Forest Service* - Dawn Alvarez, Kellie Whitton, Amy Lind (before and after retirement!)  
*US Fish and Wildlife Service* - Frankie Green

## What you should know as a FERC hydropower licensing participant

by Kevin Lewis

**Establish your role.** Be prepared to articulate and advocate for what you would like to see in a final license for this project, and do so in a positive manner. Addressing licensing issues can be stressful at times, and it is important to avoid making things personal to be positive in your approach and interactions.

**Build relationships.** You will be working with this group for years and developing positive relationships is important. There will likely be people around the table with positions opposite to yours and being able to communicate and move forward to resolution depends on the trust that comes from taking the time to build relationships with licensing participants including the project applicant.

**Find a mentor.** Everyone around the table was once new to this process and faced the same challenges that you may be facing. As you get to know the other people involved in your licensing process and begin building relationships, seek counsel with those who you “connect” with and benefit from their knowledge and experience.

**Prepare to negotiate.** If the goal of your relicensing group is a settlement agreement, you must be willing to compromise. Be flexible and entertain different concepts yet do not be afraid to articulate issues that are a must for you.

**Apply your project management skills.** Familiarity with organizing and planning is fundamental and critical. Encourage your fellow practitioners to apply their knowledge and skills to the processes and project objectives.

**Hone your writing, verbal, and communication skills.** Articulate thoughts and express ideas effectively using oral, written, and non-verbal communication skills (to inform, instruct, and persuade), to multiple audiences, as well as to listen for meaning and understanding. Utilize social media and informal networks that will reach, inform, and engage your audience and constituents most effectively.

**Pace yourself.** Hydropower licensing takes years to complete. Five years is an ambitious timeframe for completing the process – it often takes much longer. Utilize available time to familiarize yourself with the process, the nature of the project, and the issues involved with this particular licensing process. ❖

*Kevin Lewis is the past Executive Director and Conservation Director for Idaho Rivers United and Board President for American Whitewater.*

# How White Clay Creek is Mitigating Stormwater in an EJ Community

by Olivia Wilson

White Clay Creek (WCC) officially became part of the Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers (PWSR) system in 2000. The river flows through southeastern Chester County, Pennsylvania, and northwestern New Castle County, Delaware. The watershed is a bi-state resource and is a source of drinking water. WCC is managed by the White Clay Creek Wild and Scenic Committee (WCWSC) and being a PWSR means the council or committee is locally led and many projects are done in partnership with local organizations within the watershed, state and federal stakeholders.

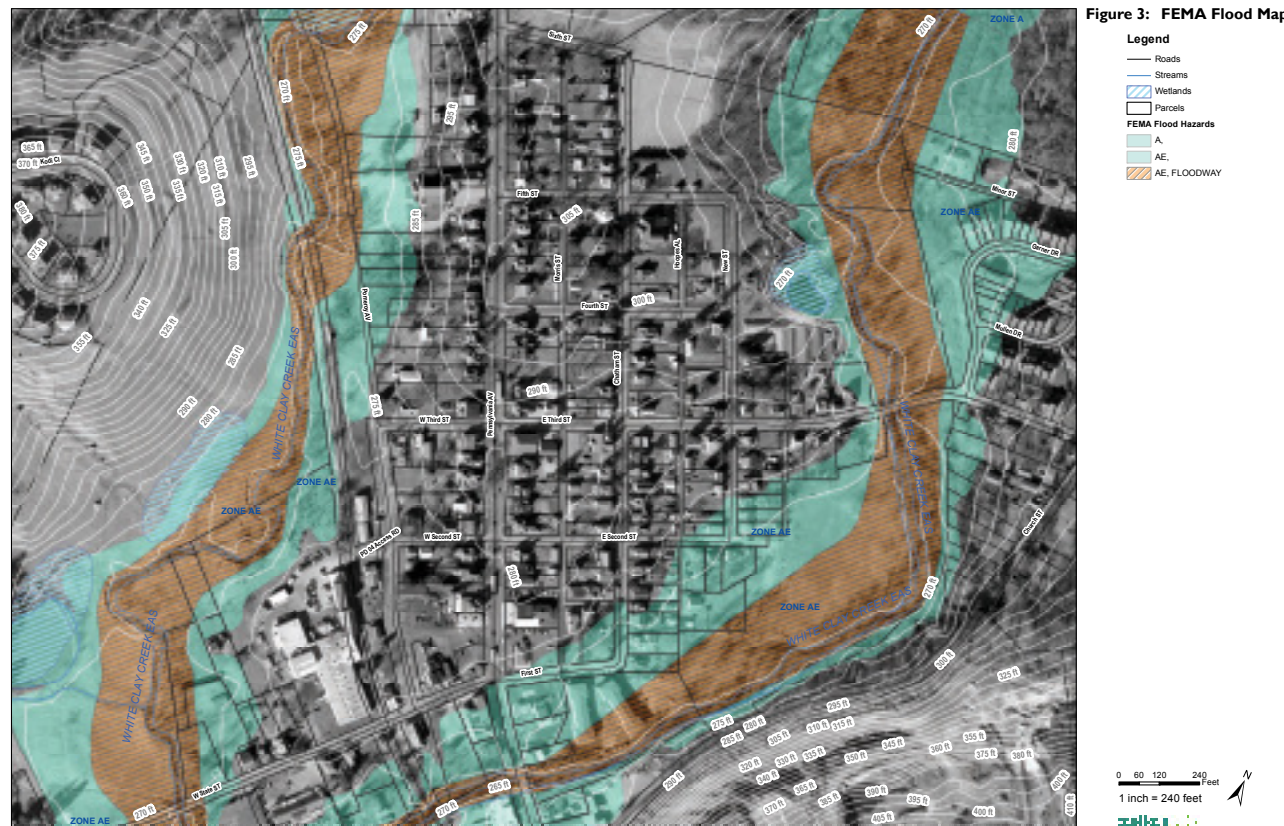
Recently, the WCWSC has been working on a multi-part Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) project for Avondale borough, PA. Avondale is defined as an Environmental Justice (EJ) community by the Pennsylvania Department of Environment (PADEP) with a 73% Latino population and 14% of the community living below poverty. The borough is located at the confluence of the east and west forks of the Upper East Branch of WCC and often experiences intense flooding. Many residents are displaced during major flood events and the displacement can last for months. In 2021, the WCWSC, with assistance from River Network and local community members, conducted community-led research to better understand the impacts of flooding on the local community. What they learned from the local community informed the *Greening Plan* — a plan summarizing the results from the research and recommending solutions — for the borough, completed in May 2023 and funded by a National Park Foundation (NPF) grant.

The community-led research indicated that the Hispanic population faces the brunt of flooding effects, including housing displacements, vehicular damage, and increased financial burdens. It also identified the top two desired stormwater mitigation strategies as more green spaces that absorb rainwater and better street drainage. Since the borough has limited areas outside of the floodplain for large scale greening projects and rain gardens, tree trenches and porous pavement retrofits were recommended as the main vehicle to improve street drainage in the *Greening Plan*. Tree trenches will also provide additional benefit of tree cover along Avondale’s streetscapes. Furthermore, since much of the area available to implement rain gardens is private property, the WCWSC is looking into the feasibility of a rain garden campaign within the borough.

Finally, with funding support from both the NPF and PADEP, the WCWSC is designing and constructing one demonstration project identified in the *Greening Plan*, to be completed in 2026. The demonstration project is a permeable basketball court on the property of the community’s youth center. The youth center runs after school and summer programs and is a red cross certified shelter that can house 100 people during a flood event. This demonstration project will reduce the stormwater coming from the roof of the youth center while also providing an additional community asset. The overall goal of the *Greening Plan* is to assist Avondale in becoming a more climate resilient and livable place for its residents while also improving water quality and habitat in the WCC watershed. ❖

Important resources:

1. [White Clay Creek Wild & Scenic River](#)
2. [Avondale Greening Plan](#)
3. [Upper East Branch White Clay Creek Restoration Plan](#)



Map of 100-year floodplain from FEMA.

# Building your Partnership Wild and Scenic River with the PWSR Toolkit

by Hannah Volk

In the [Partnership Wild and Scenic River](#) (PWSR) program, we have a saying: “it depends.” When someone asks, “how do PWSRs go about river protection?” the answer is, it depends. “How do I conduct community outreach?” It depends. “What does land protection look like along a PWSR?” It depends. This is because the PWSR program is wholly dependent on individual communities along the rivers tailoring management strategies to their needs, which can look different all over the country, so, it depends!

Most [Wild and Scenic Rivers](#) (WSR) have simpler management structures because they flow through federally owned land and are managed primarily by a federal agency. A small subset of these rivers do not run through federal land, and because of this, are managed in “partnership” through locally-driven, collaborative planning between local, state and regional stakeholders, and the National Park Service (NPS). This model works well in places where there is more mixed land ownership, and the communities can develop a Management Plan suitable for their river values. Although they have a different management model, PWSRs share the same goals as WSRs – they are free flowing rivers with outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values.

Because this model depends on community-led river management, it can be difficult to know where to start when learning about the overall PWSR program. For this reason, RMS and NPS have created a [PWSR toolkit](#) with information about each step of the PWSR designation process: **Explore, Study, Designate.**

1. [Explore](#): The Explore page takes groups from an introduction to the program through the process of getting a Wild and Scenic River Study bill introduced to Congress, and includes resources for planning, assessment, outreach, and community engagement.

2. [Study](#): The Study page follows the passage of the study authorization legislation and continues through the completion of the River Management Plan to the potential introduction of designation legislation. Resources include sample timelines, links to management plans and Congressional reports, information on identifying the outstanding values of the river, and the public engagement necessary to complete the study process.

3. [Designate](#): The Designate page is geared towards those that are managing PWSRs and includes information on the benefits of designation, such as forming a post-designation committee, innovative approaches to management, success stories, monitoring initiatives, and more.

Recently, the Explore page has been updated with new resources and graphics. A big thank you to Shana Stewart Deeds and Bekah Price for their hard work! Additionally, a PWSR Handbook will be released in 2024 that covers the basics of the program.

The PWSR program can be complicated to understand. This toolkit covers the basics of each step to designation, but for any additional questions, reach out to a regional [PWSR office](#), because, oftentimes, it depends! ❖

*Paddlers on the Sudbury, Assabet, and Concord PWSR. Photo: Ellie Sablak*



# Exploring River Access on the Nashua and Nissitissit Wild and Scenic Rivers

by Emma Lord

River managers, planners, and recreational enthusiasts from far and wide gathered on the Nashua and Nissitissit Wild and Scenic Rivers in September to fully immerse themselves in the world of River Access Planning. The River Management Society partnered with the National Park Service, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers Wild and Scenic Stewardship Council, Nashua River Watershed Association, Nashoba Paddler, and the Massachusetts Office of Fishing and Boating Access to host the 2.5-day workshop focused on using the River Access Planning Guide to assess existing site conditions, define desired conditions, and develop recommendations for two access sites on the rivers. The workshop included a mix of interactive lectures, design charrettes, site visits, and firsthand access experience.

Participants braved the humid 90+ degree weather and embarked in canoes from one of the launches, gaining a full appreciation and understanding of some of the site constraints and challenges. Knowledgeable guides from Nashoba Paddler and Nashua River Watershed Association talked about the river's wildlife, recreational use, and changes that they've observed over the years of leading student groups out on the water. Participants completed River Access Site Analysis Worksheets for each of the two access sites, then brought back their observations to the design charrette table where they worked in small groups to assess current site functionality and develop recommendations for site improvements. The local Wild and Scenic River Stewardship Council hopes to work with municipalities and conservation organizations to implement some of the recommendations developed in the workshop.

The workshop was a great success, with participants gaining practical insights and hands-on experience that they will take back to their home rivers to help improve river access across the Northeast.

## Some participant thoughts on the workshop:

"I found the site visits really useful as it allowed us to apply the river access guide to a real-life example and showed us how we can use it on our own projects."

"I loved working on charrettes with people who had expertise in many areas, including locals. The different priorities of people helped nuance every decision we made."

"It was an incredible mix of people and ideas from all walks of life and professions. I found the site visits and charrette process to be an incredibly beneficial process and was great fun. I thought the paddle and actual river experience was essential to the process and so good for the group."

"Great and inspirational design thinking!"

"Great event and so thought provoking. The River Access Guide is invaluable." ❖

**Right, top:** Workshop participants review aerial site photos, denote problem areas, and draw recommended site improvements. (All photos, except where noted: Ben Fowler)

**Right, middle:** The local outfitter, Nashoba Paddler, provided canoes and offered the opportunity for workshop participants to utilize a launch site and explore the Nashua River. (Photo: Emma Lord)

**Right, bottom:** The group braved the hot humid weather to visit two access sites in need of improvement.

Doug Cameron from MA Office of Fishing and Boating Access describes the engineering and regulations for state-managed access sites, like this site on the Nashua River.



(New Home, from page 1)

It took us 10 years to complete the process, and at the end of 2014, the Upper Missisquoi and Trout Rivers were added to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. During this process we hired a Wild and Scenic Study Coordinator, but it created a space crunch for our little office space. We now had two people working on our watershed. Our tiny office had two desks and no walking space, let alone space for records, literature, and tools. We needed more space. We'd looked in the area, but the cost of rent was exorbitant, and no place included space for tool storage or water testing equipment in the off season. What to do? The existing office building had "seen better days." The roof was leaky, heating could only happen when contained to small spaces, and some bricks had begun to fall from the edge of the roof. The only benefit was our monthly rent. Yippee!

In the spring of 2021, the owner of the building approached us about buying the building. We had never owned anything or even dreamed of it and were really in no position to start the long process of trying to find grants and assemble a team of folks to do the work. And for those of you who remember buying construction materials during COVID and the resulting sticker shock, it wasn't a good time. Which doesn't even address getting tradesmen to do the work. At this point our President started doing some research. He began asking some of his former students and friends in the trades for advice and thoughts. He then bought the building in May 2022, having assembled a team of folks who were committed to making his dream come to fruition.

And so now at the end of 2023, after over a year of total remodeling and uncovering some interesting early 20th century building techniques, we have a new home. Both organizations (the MRBA and Upper Missisquoi and Trout Rivers Wild and Scenic Committee) share the main floor and there's lots of storage in the basement. The main floor provides an office space for each organization, and a shared conference space in front. Our signature structure is our canoe chandelier over the conference table! There are decks on both floors overlooking the Missisquoi River, just downstream of where the Trout River joins it. And upstairs are two spaces. One is a small apartment and the other an office space of equal size. These spaces help pay the rent and defray the mortgage. Most importantly, this will be our home for the unforeseeable future!

This is something we've never enjoyed over the past 28 years. Let's go protect more rivers! Please come visit us to see this great old building and our river. Bald Eagle? River Otter? Mink? Hooded Mergansers in the late fall while they stop for migration? They're all here. But the message I wish to extend to everyone is twofold. #1. Stay alive and things happen. #2. Keep your dreams in front of you. Sacrifice is worth it. ❖



The signature canoe chandelier in the conference room.

#1. Stay alive and things happen.

#2. Keep your dreams in front of you. Sacrifice is worth it.

## Paddling for the Edge in the Great Egg Harbor Estuary

by Brooke Handley

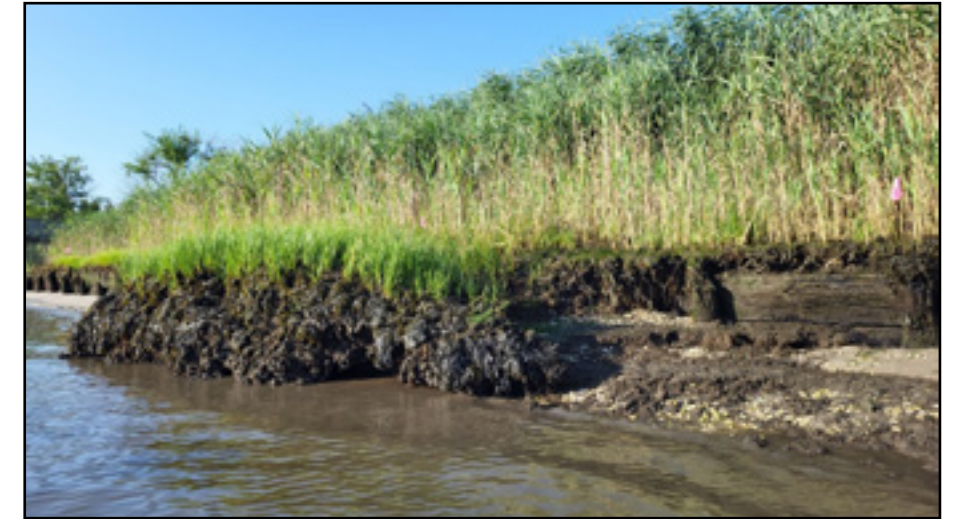
Given the evolving concerns for coastal marsh erosion and sea level rise for the Great Egg Harbor National Scenic and Recreational River in New Jersey, the Great Egg Harbor Watershed Association (GEHWA) joined a survey program this past summer called *Paddle for the Edge*.

The Paddle for the Edge program was started by the [Barnegat Bay Partnership](#) here in New Jersey in 2015 to help to protect Barnegat Bay, which is a part of the EPA's National Estuary Program.

Paddle for the Edge is a data collection event driven by volunteer kayakers, canoeists, and stand-up paddle boarders. The citizen scientists can get out on the water and survey the edges of the marsh at low tide from July 1-30, after taking a necessary knowledge check to ensure the accuracy of the data as well as the safety of the volunteers.

Through satellite imagery, we can track the marsh receding. However, we cannot track *how* the marsh is receding. Barnegat Bay Partnership has used the Paddle for the Edge program to collect photos and data from volunteers that describe how the marsh edge may be receding. Since 2015, volunteers in the Barnegat Bay have paddled a total of 182 miles of shoreline and collected more than 9,144 data points with their smartphones, while enjoying a great time out on the water!

Here in New Jersey, our coastal marsh edges are dynamic habitats that are affected not only by physical forces such as storm waves and boat wakes, but also by the presence of living species such as plants, mussels, and resident crabs. In the summer months, the marsh vegetation is at its peak, therefore that is why it is crucial to do this work during the month of July to get the best data possible. The Paddle for the Edge survey includes various shoreline features and key biotic indicators, which help to assess conditions and identify what processes are impacting the bay's shorelines. The indicators cover a range of processes, such as recreational use, shellfish growth, water quality, erosion,



Above: This photo taken by GEHWA staff exhibits a marsh edge that is perpendicular with many fiddler crab burrows and short grass. Below: Volunteers paddle the edge with a buddy or in a group for safety and comradery. Photos: Great Egg Harbor Watershed Association



accretion, built structures, and plant and animal composition.

The process of completing a Paddle for the Edge survey is both fun and simple. Once volunteers complete their knowledge checks, they are instructed to download the ArcGIS Field Maps app where they will be given an account for Paddle for the Edge. Once they are logged on, they can hit the water and the app will know where they are in the estuary.

As the paddlers paddle, they will periodically take up close pictures of the edge of the marsh and answer a series of questions. For example, we are interested in the slope of the marsh. Is it perpendicular, is there a gradual slope, or is there undercutting of the marsh? We are also interested in knowing the rough percentage of vegetation on the marsh. Is

the edge 50-75% vegetated or is it 75%+ vegetated? The most important aspect of the survey is for the volunteers to get good pictures. When you are in a kayak on your phone and the water is moving, it can be difficult to answer survey questions, but if you take good pictures, you can go back and answer the questions later based off your picture.

The data collected from this survey will help to monitor these critical bay shorelines and assist planners and resource managers in many ways — providing information about flooding and storm impacts, predicting how shorelines may react to sea-level rise, identifying potential restoration areas, and evaluating the recreational, habitat, and commercial value of our estuaries. ❖

Brooke Handley works for Great Egg Harbor Watershed Association.

# REQUIEM

## New England FLOW Dissolves Organization

by Tom Christopher

After thirty-five years of intervening on hydropower license applications filed by applicants in New England, on November 13, 2023, the remaining Directors of New England FLOW gathered together and voted to dissolve the organization. The remaining funds held in the FLOW bank account were divided equally, and both American Whitewater and the Appalachian Mountain Club, being organizations that FLOW Directors felt well represented the values and commitment of FLOW, were presented checks of \$2,400 each.

I think a lot of folks who paddle and enjoy our rivers, especially young boaters today who enjoy the benefits of scheduled whitewater releases from hydro facilities, might ask who FLOW was and why were they important? Taking a walk down memory lane tells a story that should not be forgotten because of the impact a small group of volunteers who were chasing whitewater had on the way hydropower dams would be granted licenses in the future, and how they would be required to share important benefits to other river users.

The move to relicense hydropower dams in New England became known as “the Class of 93” and began with eight dams on the Deerfield River which has its headwaters in southern Vermont and flows through northwestern Massachusetts to its confluence with the Connecticut River. As early as 1987, kayakers and other whitewater enthusiasts became aware of the relicensing procedure because Bruce Lessels, a well-known member of the U. S. Whitewater Team, founded a commercial rafting company called Zoar Outdoor and used limited flows of the Deerfield. His goal was to secure regularly scheduled releases for the benefit of his rafting operation, and other whitewater paddlers quickly recognized the importance of the relicensing process.

In 1988, a group of boaters approached the owners of the dams, at that time the New England Power Co. (NEP) and their project manager, Hugh Sullivan, and politely requested eight or ten releases annually as part of the new operating license. Mr. Sullivan informed the boaters in no uncertain terms that NEP considered these resources as “our dams, our land, and our water” — and the boaters were shown the door.

When NEP and FERC scheduled the first public hearing in the tiny, obscure Town of Readsboro, VT, they did not expect any significant attendance by stakeholders. They mistakenly held the meeting on the Friday night before the well-known releases of the West River in Jamaica, VT, which draws boaters from all over New England and New York. Since the hearing was on the way to the West River, approximately 100 whitewater boaters showed up and burned the ears of FERC staff for over three hours. NEP knew then that they were in for a fight, and FERC staff knew they couldn't ignore the issues.

Shortly thereafter New England FLOW was born and became the first coalition of boating interests in the U.S., collectively representing thousands of whitewater boaters from New York to Maine. FLOW took the lead on the Deerfield relicensing and immediately began to aggressively challenge NEP on every issue. In 1990, NEP remained steadfast in its opposition



*FLOW Director Bruce Lessels (right) presents check to Bob Nasdor, American Whitewater Northeast Stewardship Director.  
All photos: Tom Christopher*

to boating flows, increased minimum flows for fisheries, land protection, or economic balance, and did everything possible to distance themselves from any substantive dialogue.

FLOW was able to acquire the services of a pro-bono lawyer, Charlie Harris, who researched the intervention process and helped FLOW to become formal interveners with standing. American Whitewater (AW) was one of the first to join the FLOW coalition and through its secretary, Phyllis Horowitz, provided a grant of \$1,000 to help with the expenses of the intervention. Other paddling and river organizations followed including the Appalachian Mountain Club, American Rivers, the American Canoe Association, and the U.S. Whitewater Team.

Fed up with the stonewalling from NEP staff, FLOW wrote a complaining letter to Mr. John Rowe, Chairman of the Board of NEP, citing the obstructionist behavior of his staff and lack of “good-faith” negotiations. Mr. Rowe responded to FLOW's concern and indicated he would direct his staff to address our concerns with the process. To their credit NEP placed John Ragonese in charge of relicensing, and progress on a settlement agreement began.

In 1992, NEP staff met with FLOW and agreed to perform a “boating usability study” on six weekend days to determine if there was enough interest to actually provide a schedule of guaranteed releases. NEP agreed to do this *if* FLOW would agree to not send any more letters to John Rowe. They did not have a clue what they were in for when they agreed to the study.

Much to the surprise and chagrin of NEP, between 500-600 boaters showed up for every release day over the six weekends of study. NEP knew then, they would ultimately be challenged

in front of FERC, based on the independently collected data generated as part of the study. At this point in time NEP agreed to develop an agreement only if and when FLOW could collectively bring other interest groups to the table. FLOW agreed and over the next two years brought in thirteen other stakeholder groups, including Conservation Law Foundation, Trout Unlimited, National Park Service, U.S. Fish & Wildlife, the Deerfield Compact, and various Vermont and Massachusetts state agencies, to develop a comprehensive plan to balance the use of the Deerfield River resources.

In 1994, the *Deerfield Settlement Agreement* was signed and became the first settlement agreement ever developed in New England and only the second agreement ever signed in the U.S. This agreement incorporated significant land protective measures, fishery and recreational benefits, and financial enhancements never before available in FERC relicensings, including:

- 32 releases on the class IV Monroe Bridge section of the Deerfield at varying flows between 900 cfs and 1,100 cfs. Essentially every weekend and holiday throughout the summer and included six Friday releases;
- 50 releases on weekends and 55 releases on weekdays on the class II-III Fife Brook section of the Deerfield at varying flows between 700 cfs and 900 cfs. Essentially this reach of the river is now available almost every day throughout the summer;
- In the event of low water years, representatives of New England FLOW, AW, and other boating organizations will meet with NEP staff to work out reduced schedules. Any canceled releases will be made up over a 2-year period;
- A 24 hour-a-day informational FLOWPHONE that would provide data on river levels and release schedules during the boating season;
- Improvement of existing recreational facilities and installation of rails. Canoe portage trails throughout the Deerfield River system extending from its reservoirs in Vermont into Massachusetts;
- Guaranteed minimum flows in dryways to establish fisheries and improve habitat;
- Conservation restrictions on over 18,000 acres of land extending from Vermont through Massachusetts. This will permanently restrict development and ensure that boaters and fishermen will have clean water and less pollution;
- The establishment of a \$100,000 Enhancement Fund to finance watershed conservation, development of low-impact recreational projects, and educational projects within the watershed. These funds would not be used for other various NEPCO obligations set forth in the settlement provisions of the agreement.

Over the years I have been asked how FLOW was able to achieve this historic Settlement agreement when the FERC



*FLOW Directors, Norm Sims and Rick Hudson, preparing for study test flows.*

Traditional Licensing Process had been industry friendly since the inception of the “Federal Water Power Act” in 1920. I have often said, “It was because no one knew what we were doing” but the reality of the success was the result of selfish stakeholder groups recognizing the benefits of working together, and the good fortune of having an “enlightened” public utility willing to recognize the overall societal and economic value of settlement. Plus, it was discovered that water spilled for recreation had more economic value in tourism to

the community at large rather than the revenue it created for the power company during normal generational periods. Even at increased “peak power” calls from the grid, water used for generation could also be used for whitewater recreation.

### Other Ongoing Activities with the Class of 93 Relicensings:

Good news travels fast — FLOW's reputation was growing in the boating community in New England and in 1990 it was asked by the Penobscot Paddle and Chowder Club to help with the relicensing of dams on the Kennebec & Penobscot Rivers. On the Kennebec River, the dam owner, Central Maine Power (CMP), was now charging a \$1.00 access fee to private boaters to walk across their property to reach the put-in. CMP was an “old school” public utility with a reputation for heavy-handed company policies and taking no prisoners; so when an out-of-state bunch of “do-gooders” came to their state, war was declared. CMP was also the owner of the Union Water Power Company who had control of dams on the Rapid and Magalloway Rivers in western Maine (known as the Upper Androscoggin Project). Unsurprisingly, bitter conflict quickly developed between CMP and FLOW, recreational boaters, commercial outfitters, and to some extent fishermen.

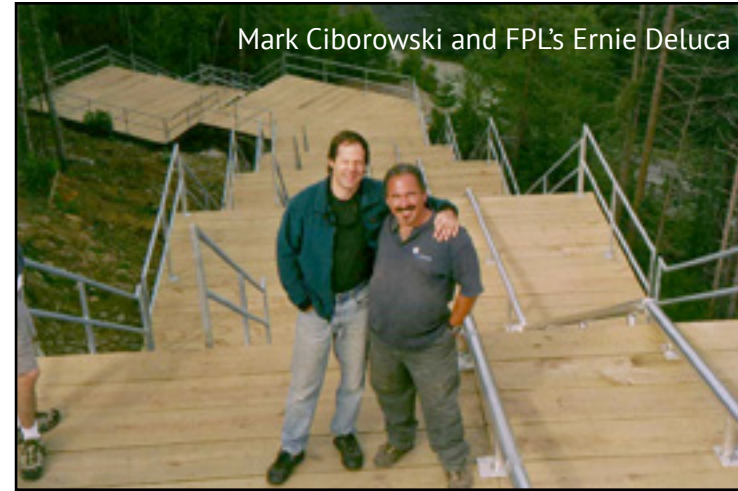
By 1997, after the signing of the Deerfield Settlement Agreement, CMP saw the writing on the wall when public utilities became deregulated, and CMP sold their generating facilities to Florida Power and Light (FPL). FLOW found FPL much more amenable to reaching settlement agreements and after three years came to agreements on the Kennebec in 1999 and the Rapid & Magalloway Rivers in 2002.

FLOW continued its work in Maine and, with other stakeholders, began negotiations with Great Lakes Hydro America (GLHA) on the Canada Falls & Seboomook sections of the South Branch of the Penobscot. These dams, and others in the watershed that were used for storage to ensure power to the Great Northern Paper Mill operations in Millinocket, had been ruled jurisdictional by FERC, even though no generation was produced at these dam sites. GLHA as an applicant worked well with stakeholders in completing important studies and analysis to find solutions rather than create conflict and reached a settlement agreement in 2007. Later that year Dave Preble (GLHA) and Tom Christopher (FLOW), representing the settlement stakeholders,





Remote paddling on the Rapid River.



New access stairway on the Kennebec River.

were presented awards by Governor John Baldacci for their work in relicensing those projects.

### The Post-Deerfield Relicensing World

In 1991, the National Wildlife Federation led by a young David Conrad, who is now their Senior Water Resources Director, hosted a 2-day summit conference in Washington, D.C. and invited river groups from across the U.S. to join in the effort to use the “Class of 93” relicensings as an opportunity to improve environmental protection and develop mitigation on FERC-licensed hydropower projects. This brought together a nationwide diversity of groups interested in protecting fisheries, water-based recreation, wildlife habitat, land protection, water quality, and other damage caused by hydropower operations in this country.

Collectively the attendees immediately recognized the opportunities before them and in spite of many divergent viewpoints and well-known historic user conflicts in regard to how these projects should be managed, attendees knew the best chance for success was to work together within the framework of settlement agreements with project owners.

Even though FLOW was the smallest nonprofit group in attendance, they were already well on their way to accomplishing this, and it was noted by larger groups as “quite remarkable for a tiny coalition with no money.” What made FLOW successful was access to resource economic expertise with experience in contingent valuation, presenting aggressive challenges to all

information presented by applicants, and skilled negotiating with political experience. It was also the result of thousands of volunteer hours and the dogged determination of the individuals in leadership positions.

Later that summer — in a meeting on the Black River organized by Pete Skinner with river groups and state agencies in Watertown, New York — representatives from FLOW described how it successfully intervened on the Deerfield River. Shortly thereafter, New York Rivers United was formed by Pete Skinner and by 1992 the Hydropower Reform Coalition in Washington, D.C. came into existence on the national scene. It was clear that it would take the work of organized coalitions on a national and regional scale if any real gains would be realized in the “Class of 93” relicensings.

On a historical basis FERC was just as much an adversary as project owners under the traditional licensing process, and quite frankly, were overly prone to accepting data from licensees without adequate analysis, had limited knowledge of the resource issues involved, demonstrated a clear industry bias, and were quick to dismiss or deny interventions without any explanation.

Prior to the development of settlement agreements FERC’s only consistency in their decision-making record was clearly in favor of applicants, and when the Deerfield Settlement Agreement became incorporated into license articles, it opened the door to another process that became defined as the “Alternative Licensing Process” (ALP) during the negotiations of the Kennebec and Upper Androscoggin Projects.

The “Class of 93” relicensings were a war that had to be fought by interveners on two fronts — with project owners and with FERC.

### How Have Things Changed?

Perhaps the most notable change in the relicensing climate is the continual change in project ownership. For example, the Deerfield Project was first sold to Pacific Gas & Electric, next to US Generation-NE, and then broken up with some of the facilities sold to Brookfield Power and others sold to Great River Hydro, a hedge fund. Central Maine Power’s dams were sold first to Florida Power & Light (FPL) during relicensing and subsequently FPL sold their Maine facilities to Brookfield Power. On the Connecticut River in Massachusetts the dam at Turners Falls and 1,100 mega-watt pump storage project known as Northfield Mountain was owned by First Light Power Resources, a subsidiary of GDF SUEZ, and then acquired by Canada’s Quebec Pension Fund.

Transfer of ownership and industry consolidation on a global scale continues to make relicensing since the Deerfield River contentious on various levels, depending on who is the current applicant. The one exception has been the post-Deerfield relicensing of the “Fifteen Mile Falls” Project on the Connecticut River in Vermont and New Hampshire. This project was also originally owned by NEP, and based on the success of the Deerfield negotiations, it was recognized that settlement would be preferable and less expensive than dragging all parties through the traditional FERC process.

Following the “Class of 93,” settlement groups and state and federal agencies who had not been invited to the table are now asked to participate. Fortunately most groups, by now, were intervening on their own issues and gathering around the table anyway, but now larger project owners began inviting known stakeholders to participate in an effort to save time and money for the applicant. But today, small dam owners on the many rivers undergoing relicensing still have incomplete studies, poor data gathering, and operational plans with little or no resource mitigation. Stakeholders’ requests for studies are still often ignored, and material presented to FERC is often factually incorrect or limited in scope. It is only through the efforts of the stakeholder groups that projects will see any meaningful mitigation. In this respect FERC has been more responsive to interveners’ requests for additional studies

in recent years. FERC has also been more diligent in clearing the docket of projects held in limbo because of conflicts with state 401 issues.

In New England it is usually the same people with the same issues that would participate in relicensing at every new project — over time most have learned to work together more effectively and have built respect for each other’s position and a level of trust. FERC staff has become an integral part of this positive change. In some projects FERC has offered staff skilled in mediation to settle difficult issues between project owners and stakeholders, or sometimes between stakeholders themselves.

Truthfully it was the interveners who over time reached out to each other, shared information, and educated themselves — as well as project owners and FERC staff — in the art of developing settlement agreements. It was the interveners that

pushed FERC into a framework of “equal” consideration, reform, and balanced use of resources over the past 35 years.

Today we can view FLOW’s success in New England as an unintended educational process that has benefitted every stakeholder now sitting at the table. FERC staff now has a more thorough understanding of what issues may arise out of any relicensing project, be it fisheries issues, whitewater flows, land protection, or other project specific needs. FERC and others now work diligently to reach out to both stakeholders and project owners in an effort to be more creative, develop alternatives to the traditional process, and be consistent in their interpretation of regulations and policies.

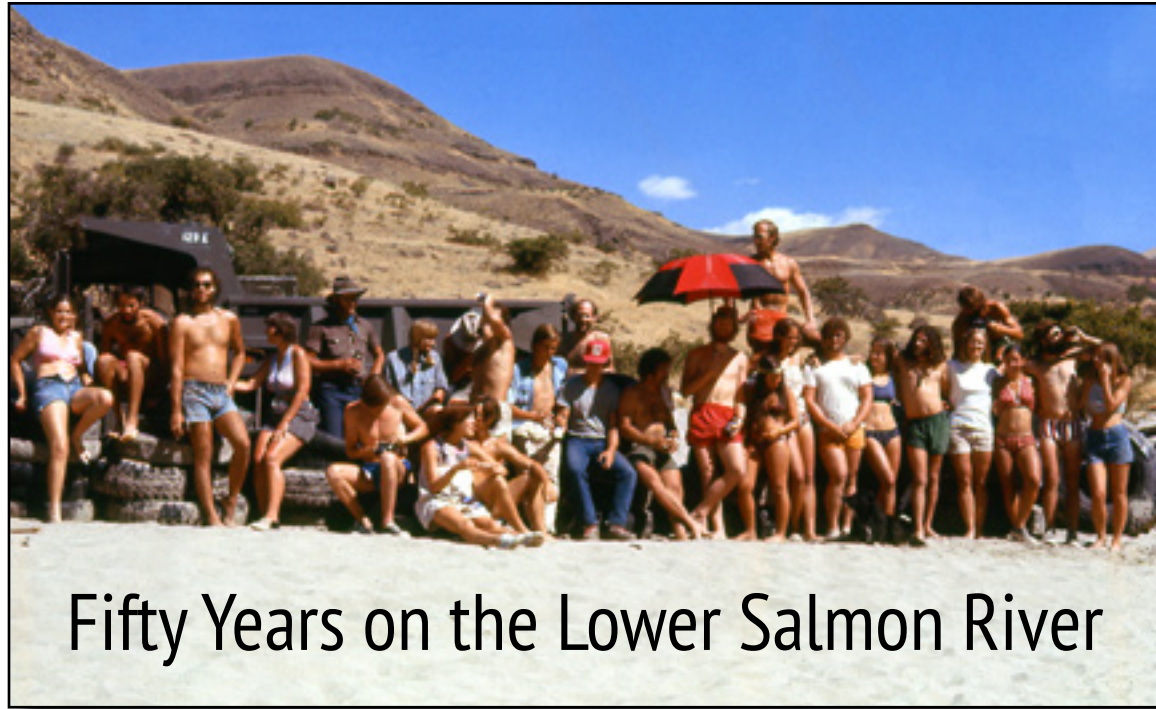
The “Alternative Licensing Process” has now morphed into the “Integrated Licensing Process” and by offering these alternatives, both stakeholders and project owners have greater opportunities for developing settlements that provide better opportunities for resource mitigation and economic stability for applicants.

In writing this final chapter for FLOW it would be proper and important to note how a dedicated small group of kayakers chasing whitewater changed history and rewrote how hydropower dams would be relicensed through FERC. In 35 years of existence, FLOW has either initiated or participated in settlement agreements on seven different rivers in New England and has helped to develop a relicensing template (from the Deerfield Settlement Agreement) for other stakeholders across the U.S. to follow. FLOW has helped to protect over 30,000 acres of land, miles of riparian and lake shoreline, acquired millions of dollars in resource and recreational mitigation, opened up over 60 river miles to multiple types of recreation, and negotiated over 675 days of boatable flows in New England.

This requiem is not so much an attempt to allow New England FLOW to “rest in peace” but more a remembrance of good deeds and good people who made a difference that would be shared by many others. Their work is now left to others because the work will never end, and it is with the belief the success of FLOW will be continued and measured in the future by the success of others that follow in their footsteps. ❖

*Photo: Stakeholders view conditions at Rawson’s Island at Connecticut River’s Turners Fall Dam Project in 2013.*





## Fifty Years on the Lower Salmon River

by Terry Kincaid

*Volunteers of the 1974 Salmon River tire cleanup.  
(Photos courtesy of Terry Kincaid)*

This year, 2023, marks the 50th season the Bureau of Land Management has conducted boat patrols on the Lower Salmon River. I came to work as an Outdoor Recreation Planner for the BLM in 1974 and conducted the first river patrols for the agency. My hiring was prompted by passage of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968. It established a designated system of free-flowing rivers exhibiting outstanding natural, cultural, and recreation values worthy of protection. Under the Act the Salmon River from North Fork downstream to its confluence with the Snake River was identified for study and potential inclusion to this new system. The required study was ultimately completed in 1972/73 and the entire river from North Fork to its confluence with the Snake River was recommended for protection and inclusion. I was tasked with establishing a recreation management program for the lower 112 river miles within the BLM's jurisdiction.

I wanted to return for a patrol to observe what had changed, and maybe more importantly what hadn't changed, over the last fifty years. Ryan Turner, the current river program manager, graciously allowed me to tag along on a September patrol. I loaded my boat and on the allotted day drove with my wife, Simone, from Coeur d'Alene to Hammer Creek. The drive took 4.5 hours. In 1974 it would have taken closer to six hours. Highway 95 was a winding 2-lane road with precious few passing lanes and was unlovingly referred to as a goat trail. The Lewiston and White Bird grades were excruciatingly slow especially when stuck following a chip truck in low gear through the numerous and seemingly never-ending switchbacks. For my first season the BLM did not have an office located in Cottonwood. I worked out of Coeur d'Alene and made this slow drive many times. At Hammer Creek we met up with Ryan and his BLM cohorts, Rebecca and Sam, and also Bob and Barb Michels who were joining us for this trip. Bob was one of the original seasonal river rangers I hired to help conduct river patrols. The river was not exceptionally high but was a

dirty brown color from a recent blowout somewhere upstream. Its color reminded me of the first time I saw it. The river reached an all-time record high flow of 128,000 cfs on June 17, 1974. I arrived in Idaho on July 4 and traveled south from Coeur d'Alene in mid-July to see the river for the first time. The water level had dropped quite a bit by then but was still fast, dark, and ominous. Flood debris and detritus was piled high up the river banks and stood witness to the volume and power of the turbulent water. I wondered if I had bitten off more than I could chew.

At the Hammer Creek launch site I immediately observe two things that stand out in contrast with the past. First, the BLM has excellent Maravia rafts and top quality equipment and river running gear. When I started, the BLM did not have any river running gear at all. I was able to make two rafting trips in my first season only by joining others. Rafts and river gear in the early days were often military surplus: assault rafts, bridge pontoons, black rubber dry bags, delousing bags, ammo cans and rocket boxes. Some of the first gear I acquired was from surplus stores. Rafts were not self-bailing. Rowing frames and gear boxes were homemade from lumber and plywood. Fortunately, Bill Parks had recently started Northwest River Supplies, a small business in Moscow, Idaho, catering to the equipment needs of floaters. After I convinced a skeptical procurement officer that I needed to buy a rubber boat she completed a purchase order agreement with NRS and the BLM bought their first boat. It was an inflatable Udisco raft which was a lower end inexpensive brand of boat but the BLM got several years of use out of it. When I needed an item of gear quickly, I remember driving to Bill's home to pick it up. He had gear spread out on his basement ping pong table to sort, label, and package. The availability and quality of rafts and rafting equipment rapidly advanced and improved each year allowing the BLM to upgrade equipment over time.

My second contrasting observation is the launch site itself. In the early days the boat launch did not exist. We launched trips from the White Bird gravel pit or simply drove off-road over the rocks and cobbles at the White Bird Bridge. It was obvious that a primary developed launch site serving the scenic segment of the river was needed, so I evaluated potential sites from Skookumchuck downstream to Hammer Creek. Hammer Creek stood out as the largest and best site for a boat launch but had one big drawback — a trespass double wide trailer and cattle feedlot operation encumbered it. We worked to remove the trespass and simultaneously planned and pursued funding for development of the Hammer Creek Recreation Site. At the time, the BLM had a landscape architect, Dave Kissel, in the BLM State Office. We developed a concept and he made professional drawings that were submitted with a construction funding request. Construction funding is a big deal because it is line-itemed in the federal budget. I moved on to another job at the end of 1979 but our funding request was successful and construction occurred in two phases in the early 1980's. I also designed a small campground and boat launch at Pine Bar. In fact, this was the first site I designed for the BLM. While I completed the campground, the launch ramp did not get built during my tenure. When it was ultimately constructed it was moved downstream from its original planned location immediately below the rapids because this location was a cultural site. I have always thought it ironic that while I worked for an agency that managed primarily arid grasslands, many of the facilities I planned and designed were for boating.

The trespass at Hammer Creek was not a unique situation. Nearly a dozen trespass structures were identified at various locations within the river corridor. Some were simply abandoned shacks but more often they were actively occupied under the guise of mining. The most egregious was an outfitter camp perched on the rocks in Blue Canyon at Buzzards Roost. One winter we hired Everett Spaulding to jet boat us into the canyon to burn this and other cabins. The first Area Manager in Cottonwood, Dick Harms, worked diligently to resolve and clear all the trespass cases. Cattle were also ubiquitous in the canyon — they could be encountered almost anywhere and at any time. Bob even once found some trapped in a dilapidated shack at Whitehouse Bar. On this trip we saw no cattle at all. In fact, we instead saw many bighorn sheep. They were in Snowhole Canyon, Blue Canyon, and on both sides of the Snake River. Bighorn sheep were not present at all when I worked here. I remember taking the BLM State Office wildlife biologist, Lanny Wilson, on a float trip to evaluate the lower canyon as a potential site for sheep reintroduction. Lanny later became Area Manager at Cottonwood and always remembered the wild ride I gave him through Slide Rapids. Eventually, the Idaho Department of Fish and Game reintroduced bighorn sheep to the Craig Mountains in 1984. They appear to be doing exceptionally well.

After launching the trip we began floating past the many large, gorgeous white sand beaches for which the Lower Salmon River is known. They are in excellent condition with only footprints and a few out of place rocks and pieces of driftwood displaced by the most recent campers. This was not always the case. During my time, discarded automotive tires by the hundreds blemished the shoreline. I did not realize how bad it was until I made my

first float trip. I had not even been on the job one month when a college student from the University of Oregon, Art Pope, proposed conducting a volunteer tire cleanup project. He came in person to the Coeur d'Alene District Office and pitched his idea directly to the District Manager. He planned to inflate inner tubes in the tires, tie them into small rafts, and float them out to road access points. He had already recruited a workforce of other student volunteers from several western universities, obtained corporate donors, and received commitments from local Goodyear tire dealers to provide inner tubes and trucks to haul away the tires and trash. In addition he was involving the Idaho National Guard to provide more trucks and drivers. From the BLM he was asking only for logistical support by hauling debris from the more remote locations and providing rudimentary tools and equipment such as shovels, bicycle tire pumps, and parachute cord. We readily agreed to participate and I was assigned to coordinate with Art. In August I met him for a six-day reconnaissance trip from White Bird to Asotin. This was a one boat, two person trip and was the only time I floated all the way to Asotin. It was also my first float trip. I showed him the best locations to drop off tires where we could drive to. He made notes about tire concentrations and potential camping locations. The recent flood had left tires tangled and embedded in large piles of driftwood, wedged into canyon crevices, and buried in gravel and sand beaches. I returned in September for the actual cleanup trip. A large workforce of 37 volunteers showed up with an assortment of small rafts, kayaks, and drift boats for the 10-day trip. They successfully removed 30 tons of debris including several hundred tires and set a standard for the BLM to emulate. Throughout the years tire removal was a routine part of our boat patrols. On this trip we found none. We even camped at "tire eddy" which was tire free. Ryan tells me they still occasionally find tires and continue to pack them out. I am a bit surprised he didn't stage a tire or two for me (and Bob) to find.

Discarded tires were not the only thing marring the beaches at the time. Early on, visitor use levels were quite low. More trips now probably launch per week than launched for an entire year in 1974. Even so, common camping practices of the day left fire pits often ringed with rocks blackening the white sand beaches. We encouraged floaters to adopt the use of firepans to contain and collect ashes. Still, BLM crews spent a lot of time sifting sand to remove charcoal especially in areas accessible by road such as Eagle Creek. Human waste disposal also grew as an issue as visitor use levels increased. At the time we recommended the high and far method for locating latrines and "cat holes." Unfortunately not everyone went high enough nor far enough and toilet paper fields bloomed on some of the more popular beaches. Some advocated that people burn their toilet paper. Toilet paper, especially used paper, doesn't burn very well. The practice was short-lived and strongly discouraged after a few range fires were started elsewhere. Cleaning and picking up the toilet paper fields was a very distasteful and disgusting part of a river ranger's job. Each year high water would cleanse the beaches putting them back into pristine condition. And, each summer the BLM would try to keep them that way by picking up after people. I moved on to a new job leaving the human waste disposal problem for others to ultimately resolve. Eventually, more heavily used river areas started requiring boaters to pack out their own waste. Outfitters and others became equipped and accustomed to doing so and the



*Method of floating tires down the river to a pick-up spot. Salmon River 1974.*

*Pile of debris collected during the cleanup effort.*



*Loading up boats with tires and debris.*

*Idaho National Guard responds with trucks to haul off tires and debris.*



practice spread. My replacement, LuVerne Grussing, required waste carryout and firepan use through permit requirements. Now the beaches are cleaner and it is obvious that most boaters are well versed in and readily practice low impact camping.

Today the scenery appears much as I remember it fifty years ago. The trespass cabins we removed helped in this regard. However, later the BLM received substantial Land and Water Conservation funding to purchase lands and conservation easements. This had the greatest impact in preserving the landscape. New structures are apparent at Spaulding's Camp, Deer Creek, and most recently at Flynn Creek, but on par the rural and semi-primitive landscapes are well preserved. Dick Todd was largely responsible for the land acquisition program and should be proud of all he accomplished. The cultural resources also seem well preserved. We did not stop at the Shorts Bar pictographs but on previous recent floats I have. The paintings are as bright and vibrant as they were in 1974. In my opinion these pictographs are the best of any on the entire river and it is good to know they remain undisturbed. The next day near Rice Creek we observed archaeologists excavating test trenches on the hillside and bench above the road. Simone reminisced about attending a University of Idaho archaeology field school in 1976. She lived in a tent at Pine Bar for the summer and participated in excavations at Pine Bar and Cooper's Ferry. More recently excavations at Cooper's Ferry were continued by Loren Davis. Evidence uncovered rewrites prehistory and indicates humans occupied the site at least 16,000 years ago. This is thousands of years earlier than humans were thought to have arrived in the Americas and shows how significant the cultural resources are in the canyon.

The BLM has now actively managed recreational use in the river corridor for fifty years. The most important accomplishment, from a private boater perspective, is preservation of public access through on-demand self-issue permits. This makes the Lower Salmon River unique. In the early days as annual visitor use was increasing exponentially I did not think this would be possible. Use continued to increase but the rate eventually slowed. The river proved to have a remarkable camping capacity because of the proliferation of sandy beaches. The new river guide book that Ryan produced clearly shows this. Flip through the guide book and you will notice page after page filled with photographs of all the beach camp spots. The Selway River, Middle Fork of the Salmon River, main Salmon River, and Hells Canyon all limit the number of permits issued via a competitive lottery system. Granted, these rivers are designated Wilderness and or Wild Rivers and are explicitly managed for high degrees of solitude. They also have more campsite limitations, especially Hells Canyon. However, permit limitations are extremely frustrating. The Lower Salmon River serves as an outlet for disappointed lottery participants. Eight years ago I decided I wanted to float the permitted rivers one last time before I got too old. We annually put in lottery applications for each. To date we've drawn only one Hells Canyon permit and one Rogue River permit. I'm now giving up on the Selway River because this permit is virtually impossible to get and I think I'm now too old to safely float it. I probably have two or three more years to try for the Middle Fork and then it too will be beyond my abilities. In the meantime I hope the Lower Salmon River will still be accessible via a self-issue permit system. I understand there are 32 commercial

outfitters operating via special use permit on the Lower Salmon River. Perhaps it's time to limit growth in the commercial sector to preserve the self-issue permit system for the private boating groups.

The white sandy beaches on the Lower Salmon River are unequalled. They are of course here, and are perpetually replenished, because the river is free flowing without dams to block and trap sediment. One dam in the Stanley area, the Sunbeam Dam, was built in 1909/10 to provide electricity to gold mines. However, it was short-lived and was breached in 1934 leaving the Salmon River again flowing freely. The Snake River into which the Salmon flows did not fare as well. A few years back I floated Hells Canyon after a several decade hiatus. I was shocked at the paucity of sand. Most remnant sandbars have completely disappeared. Those that remain are severely diminished. When I arrived in Idaho in 1974 the hydroelectric dam building era in the west was coming to a close. It had run head on into the environmental movement and changing national priorities. Hells Canyon Dam was completed in 1967, one year before the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act passed. Also in 1967 the High Mountain Sheep Dam was set back by court action and was later abandoned. The Nez Perce Dam proposal never advanced. Dworshak Dam on the North Fork of the Clearwater River was completed in 1972. The last of the lower Snake River dams to be built, Lower Granite, was started in 1965 but after delays was only then nearing completion. The Lewiston/Clarkston levee system was still under construction. Power was first generated in 1975 and the reservoir filled for the first time in 1976. The lower Snake River dams especially have had a profoundly negative impact on the Salmon Rivers' anadromous fish populations. I saw a recent article announcing that the first sockeye salmon of 2023 returned to the Stanley area on July 26. At the same time, 1,295 sockeye had been counted crossing Lower Granite Dam to date for the year. While this is a paltry number, it exceeds the most recent ten year average and is substantially better than the 23 fish average from 1991 thru 1999. Even so, sockeye salmon are still imperiled. Even before Lower Granite Dam was complete there were calls from fisheries advocates to breach the lower Snake River dams to save the fish. Dam breaching remained a contentious issue for all of the last fifty years and will continue to be hotly debated until the fish are recovered. Another impact of dam building was ironically beneficial for Lower Salmon River boaters. Public lands in the river corridor were withdrawn from all forms of entry as power site reserves. This was done to retain the lands and not allow them to be homesteaded or otherwise leave federal ownership. They would then be available to be flooded by dam projects. Dams were never built and the withdrawals preserved the canyonlands in federal ownership so they are available for public use today.

I am very pleased to see the river remains largely as it did when I first saw it fifty years ago. It still flows freely and the outstanding natural, cultural, and recreation values are preserved as intended by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Changes that have occurred are positive, proving the BLM to be a good steward. I won't be around to see what the next fifty years will bring. But, if the first fifty years are any indication I can rest assured that the river is in good hands. I predict that the Salmon River will still be flowing free, outstanding scenery will still abound, natural and cultural

values will still be preserved, and floaters will still be enjoying the unequalled clean, white, sandy beaches. Maybe even the lower Snake River dams will be breached and the fish populations recovered. ❖

*Crew celebrating 50 years of BLM managing the Lower Salmon River (L to R): Barb Michels, Simone Kincaid, Rebecca Urbanczyk, Ryan Turner, Bob Michels, Terry Kincaid, and Sam Manifold. Photo: Curt Otto*



*Recent tire clean-up on the Lower Salmon River. Photo: Ryan Turner*



# Rivers & Givers



by Gary G. Marsh

I appreciate River Management Society (RMS) members because they are Givers — just like our favorite Rivers which fuel and enrich our passions and volunteer spirit, enhance stewardship, and create fragrant memories. I can still remember the time someone invited me to join the RMS. Since that day, I (like many of you) have developed a great camaraderie of friends who I consider a part of my family. Over the years these co-workers, friends, and mentors not only gave me opportunities to enjoy our nation's rivers but opened all of our hearts and souls around campfire stories and fellowship. They taught me how to paddle, row, respect hydraulics, practice Leave No Trace ethics, use best management practices, appreciate and enhance rivers, and most of all – leave a legacy for those who follow.

The opportunity to give is often greater than the gift. Some of us are not able to donate financially, but... give of yourself, your time, talents/expertise, creativity, and mentorship. Just a smile, a hug, a kind word, a compliment, a listening ear can be priceless. For this partnership we are blessed and grateful.

The other day I walked into our local senior citizen community center and told the Director how much I appreciated her efforts even though I haven't taken advantage of many of the Center's programs. I confessed I actually avoid the place because I am in 'age-denial.' Although my body is 75, my mind thinks I am 40. After all, I can still beat my grandson (age 12) at pickle ball and every now and then I shoot below my age in golf. My wife (along with David Cernicek, Wyoming river guru) tells me I am just an old man. But I always retort, "I will let you know when I am old." Surely some of my fellow 'chronologically mature' RMS members can identify with this? (David, I am not using my 7 iron as a cane, yet.)

Once upon a time when I was employed, I took advantage (and encourage you younger members to do so also) of a traditional Individual Retirement Account (IRA) as both an investment and tax deduction. As you will discover, under the IRS rules (death and taxes may kill us all), you must take a required minimum distribution (RMD) on any traditional IRA (which is counted as taxable income at the ordinary tax rate) when you turn age 73. For those who turn 73 in years 2023 through 2032, the first RMD must be taken no later than April 1 of the year following the year you turn 73. This is non-negotiable because you haven't paid income taxes yet and the IRS wants its cut. This distribution could also boost your annual income into a higher tax bracket.

## Letter to the Editor

However, by using what is called a qualified charitable distribution (QCD) rule, you can both reduce your tax burden and lower your adjusted gross income (AGI). This rule allows traditional IRA owners to deduct (exclude from their AGI) some or all of their RMDs on their tax returns if they donate the money to a qualified charitable organization (like RMS). You must use your IRA custodian to process any checks or payments on your behalf.

Since many of you already donate to organizations of your choice each year as a part of charitable giving, this becomes a great way to reduce your tax burden and support the RMS. This coming year I plan to take advantage of this opportunity.

Although there are many websites that provide QCD information, here is one I found useful:

<https://www.investopedia.com/articles/financial-advisors/032116/how-use-qcd-rule-reduce-your-taxes.asp>

I also encourage you to explore other options in the RMS' Planned Giving Guide which is located at:

<https://www.river-management.org/donate>

This link provides general information to assist you in your tax, estate, and charitable planning. This Guide is not intended to provide legal or tax advice. As always, consult with your own IRA Custodian, Certified Financial Planner, Certified Public Accountant, tax, legal, and/or financial advisors prior to making any decisions.

Thanks to each one of you for your contributions to RMS! ❖

"For to whom much is given, of him shall be much required."  
– Luke 12.48

*Gary G. Marsh, Retired, BLM National River Lead, served as RMS Ex-Officio Board Advisor for 27 years (1989 to 2016).*

## Welcome New RMS Members

### Individual

F Thomas Biglione, Volunteer  
Friends of the River, Sacramento, CA

Nathan Denke, Wild & Scenic Rivers Resource Assistant  
USDA Forest Service, Seattle, WA

Chris Freistadt, Recreation Ranger (Lead River Ranger)  
Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks, Great Falls, MT

Seth Harden, Upper Wabash River Project Director  
The Nature Conservancy, Indianapolis, IN

Harry Liam, Outdoor Recreation Planner  
Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, Helena, MT

James March, Associate Professor of Biology  
Washington & Jefferson College, Washington, PA

Rebecca Miller, Verde WSR/Fossil Creek Work Coordinator/Supervisor  
USDA Forest Service, Red Rocks Ranger District, Sedona, AZ

Chad Richards, Managing Partner  
WET River Trips, Lotus, CA

### Organization

Low Impact Hydropower Institute, Arlington MA  
Shannon Ames, Executive Director

The Nature Conservancy, Dublin, OH  
Dana Ohman  
Devin Schenk  
Jennifer McDonald  
Katerina Crowley

### Student

Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, AZ  
Katie Seals, Graduate Teaching Assistant  
Dwayne Canfield  
Mason Moore

University of Maine, Orono, ME  
Mason Moore

University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK  
Cheyenne Morgan

University of Tennessee Chattanooga, Chattanooga, TN  
Crystal Allen  
Heather Qualls

Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA  
Kaylynn Breland  
Isabelle Pillow

## RMS surpasses year-end giving goal thanks to your generosity!

by Bekah Price

The RMS Board and staff are filled with gratitude for each person who contributed generously at the year's end. Your support didn't just help us meet our \$3,000 goal, it helped us soar past it — raising nearly \$5,000! Your invaluable contributions fuel our mission of supporting the professionals who study, protect and manage North America's rivers.

We want to thank Judy Culver, John Field, Helen Clough, Jackie Diedrich, Alan Pilgrim, Judy Morrison, Dan Haas, Randy Welsh, Jann Dorman, Rick Waldrup, Kristina Rylands, Fred Akers, Shannon Bassista, Emma Lord, Rob White, Bob Ratcliffe, Ed Fite, Tom Christopher, Linda Jalbert, Duncan Hay, Martin Hudson, Ben Fowler, Darrell Bowman, Lelia Mellen, Joel Barnes, Stuart Schneider, Larry Freilich, and numerous anonymous donors. (As a token of appreciation, Koozie Tumblers were gifted to donors who gave \$100 or more!)



We've received overwhelmingly positive feedback about the impact of our programs and the direction we're headed, and your membership and financial support makes it possible!

In 2024, we plan to enhance member services, develop new workshops, expand opportunities for students interested in river professions, and support the development and maintenance of river management resources. And we're still celebrating our record high membership and collective achievements from 2023:

- **Training and collaboration:** 1,200+ in attendance for River Training Center workshops and River Management Roundtables (technical and workplace culture topics), 200+ in attendance at Reimagine River Access Symposium, numerous chapter trips, 60% more videos on River Training Channel
- **Support for the next generation:** 17 River Studies and Leadership Recipient graduates, 2 new RSLC schools, 2 inaugural RSLC river trips, 4-part River Careers Discussion Series
- **River management and recreation resources:** 44,000 visitors to the National Rivers Project website, launch of the new Hydropower Licensing 101 Toolkit

Celebrate the past year with us by watching our 2023 Highlight Reel on YouTube: <https://bit.ly/48IHOS7>. You might see yourself! ❖

# National Rivers Project's latest addition showcases rivers in Washington State

by Bekah Price

The National Rivers Project (NRP) has unveiled its latest expansion, offering outdoors enthusiasts a gateway to Washington State's pristine river landscapes managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The NRP website [www.nationalriversproject.com](http://www.nationalriversproject.com) now features over 700 miles of Washington's rivers and coastal water trails, providing essential information about these aquatic gems for naturalists and adventurers alike.

"Seeing the rivers managed by the BLM in the National Rivers Project helps people understand the variety of recreation opportunities available to them on public lands," said Curtis Bryan, BLM Wenatchee Field Office Manager. "As river managers, working with the River Management Society helps us introduce people to Washington's hidden treasures while providing vital information people need to plan activities and river trips."



Bryan recommends checking out the [Yakima River Canyon](#) for its diverse recreation opportunities that include fishing, kayaking, rafting, camping, and hiking. The Klickitat and Similkameen Rivers offer similar opportunities with less traffic for those looking for something a little more secluded, willing to expect few amenities and ready to pack out all trash.

The River Management Society launched the NRP in 2015 to increase visibility for water trails, whitewater rivers and Wild and Scenic Rivers. Website visitors can easily search for rivers by location, difficulty, managing agency and related activities. "Each year, dozens of federal, state and local watershed partners provide us with authoritative river data, making this the most comprehensive and reliable river map on the web," said NRP Coordinator James Major. "We want to give special thanks to BLM Washington staff for their assistance on this project." ❖

*The River Management Society is a 501c3 nonprofit organization that supports professionals who study, protect and manage North America's rivers by providing resources, training and networking opportunities to its members. Powered by its National River Recreation Database, RMS' National Rivers Project online map and search engine enables tens of thousands of recreationists to discover new river sections nationwide each year. For more information, contact Bekah Price, [bekah@river-management.org](mailto:bekah@river-management.org).*

*Coyote Falls on the Similkameen River.  
(Photo courtesy of Bureau of Land Management)*

# Great American Outdoors Act River Access Project: Lochsa and Salmon Rivers, Idaho Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests

by Galen Sparks

This GAOA funded project will improve river access sites along the Lochsa and Salmon Rivers within Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests. The Lochsa and Salmon are designated Wild and Scenic Rivers. This project will be completed in two phases under an interagency agreement with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Site visits were completed fall of 2023 and the Corps is currently working on the design with implementation to occur in the next few years.

The Lochsa River, flowing adjacent to the northern boundary of the 1.3 million-acre Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, is best known for its concentration of high quality, big water class III-IV+ rapids and crystal-clear water. Paddlers from around the country are drawn to the river during spring runoff. On the Lochsa, Knife Edge river access will benefit from a double-lane concrete boat ramp, reducing streambank erosion and alleviating congestion at this popular takeout. Fish Creek, the busiest launch site on the Lochsa, will benefit from durable metal stairs and a new raft slide. Boulder Flat, located two miles upstream, will receive a hardened launch area designed to blend in with the surrounding environment and reduce congestion at Fish Creek river access.

Major improvements to river access on the Salmon River include greatly expanded parking at Carey Creek, the primary float boat takeout for the multi-day Main Salmon River. Currently there is very limited parking, forcing vehicles to park along both shoulders of the narrow Salmon River Road creating extreme traffic congestion along this popular recreational corridor. Spring Bar recreation site, located 13 miles downstream and the launch site for Riggins area day trips, will receive new concrete ramp surfacing and an extension to better serve river users throughout the season and particularly during low flows. ❖



*Lochsa River viewed from Fish Creek launch site. Photos: Galen Sparks*

*The USACE team takes measurements at Knife Edge, on the Lochsa, for the new boat ramp.*



# RMS Chapter News

## Northwest

Let's hear it for our new Chapter officers!

It is with pride and pleasure that RMS welcomes a stellar slate of individuals elected by Northwest members to serve the Chapter. Please make an effort to meet and get to know them for their talent, varied work experience, and passion for the wise management of our rivers.

### President ~ Cannon Colegrove

Growing up in Montana, I spent my childhood fly fishing on the Missouri River and backpacking to high mountain lakes. My first overnight river trip when I was in middle school was a 4-day canoe trip down the Smith River in Central Montana, which really sparked my interest in rivers. Soon after graduating from the University of Montana in Missoula with a degree in Natural Resource Management, I was fortunate enough to work on the Smith River as a River Ranger for two seasons. During my time working on this incredible river, I found a new appreciation for managing the river resources and preserving the recreation experience. Following my time working as a Smith River Ranger, I moved back to Missoula to work full time as a River Ranger for Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) on the Blackfoot River, Alberton Gorge, and Missoula area rivers. I worked in this position for 5 years and was able to build great connections with the landowners who have preserved these rivers for decades, the businesses that work on the river, and the public who enjoy these resources within a few minutes' drive from Missoula. Watching grizzly bears walk the shoreline of the river, sunsets over the Bob Marshall Wilderness, bull trout working their way up the tributaries to spawn, and elk grazing on the hillsides is what made the Blackfoot River such a special place to work.

In 2022, my wife Holly and I moved to Great Falls, Montana, where I now work as a Recreation Manager for FWP, managing rivers and FWP property in some of the most remarkable places on earth. Great Falls divides the steep mountains of the Rocky Mountain Front to the west and the rolling grass plains of Eastern Montana to the east, which makes this diverse landscape an incredible place to work with an abundance of cultural and historical resources, fish and wildlife, and recreational opportunities. Outside of work and rivers, I volunteer as an EMT with Cascade County Search and Rescue and my interests include fishing, photography, bird hunting with my yellow lab, and traveling to new places.

During my time as a member of RMS, I've been able to meet so many people who are devoted to river management. River management often involves collaboration and communication with other agencies, academic institutions, businesses, private landowners, and organizations, and RMS provides a great avenue



for sharing knowledge and discussing a variety of river-related topics amongst river professionals, which I have found especially valuable during my time as a member. RMS creates a great network of river professionals from a variety of skill sets and talents to collaborate and learn from each other to expand our knowledge and understanding of rivers and river management issues that we are dealing with. As President of the Northwest Chapter, I would look to actively communicate and connect RMS chapter members with the resources that are available through RMS, as well as promote networking opportunities through chapter trips, online training opportunities, and other professional development opportunities that are offered through membership with RMS.

I've thoroughly enjoyed participating in the Lower Salmon River chapter trip in 2019 and leading the Blackfoot River Chapter trip in 2022, as well as participating in many of the online training opportunities offered through RMS. I would encourage those who enjoy rivers or are involved with rivers in a professional capacity to join RMS to connect with other like-minded people to learn and grow as river professionals. As President of the Northwest Chapter, I look forward to working with the Northwest Chapter Board and serving at the National Board level to help advance the River Management Society's mission, vision, and goals to offer RMS members with the best value and opportunities through their membership. I am passionate about rivers and river management, and I welcome the opportunity to serve RMS members as the President of the Northwest Chapter.

### Vice President ~ Chris Elder

Chris grew up on the Blanco River of Central Texas and now lives on the South Fork of the Nooksack River in NW Washington, just outside of Bellingham. He works as a watershed management planner for a County trying to balance the high flows and low flows of the Nooksack in an agricultural and developing landscape. Floodwatch makes him giddy and he finds peace rafting in the middle of winter when nobody else is out there. He went through guide training on the Nooksack about 10 years ago, bought a raft, and started taking family and friends out as much as possible. He also runs a conservation planning company called Rivershed SPC and is currently working on a conservation project on the White Salmon River. He is dedicated to letting rivers run and trying to balance human and environmental demands in an increasingly challenging climate.

Chris is always working to improve access to and understanding of rivers and river ecosystems. He has grand ambitions of restoring riversheds and restoring the human connection to river systems. He is excited to bring his experience and motivation to the NW Chapter and contribute as best he can.



### Secretary ~ Echo Miller-Barnes

I developed a passion for the natural world at a young age growing up in Colorado and spending weekends and breaks on rivers and public lands around the Four Corners area. That passion grew as I left Colorado for Portland, OR, where I earned a Bachelor of Arts in Chemistry. Throughout college, I guided professionally on both the Deschutes River (OR) and Clear Creek (CO) and spent many weekends leading student outdoor trips around Oregon. A trip down the Rogue River introduced me to Wild and Scenic Rivers and sparked an interest in river work outside of guiding. I currently work for the US Forest Service as the lead river ranger on the Three Forks of the Flathead in NW Montana.

After being introduced to RMS a few years ago, I've found it to be a fantastic resource for professional and personal development, learning, and relationship building. It's great to be connected on a national level with people who are also passionate about rivers while also working to create more community among RMS members in the Northwest!



### Events Coordinator ~ Lelia Mellen

I have worked for the National Park Service Rivers & Trails Program for 30 years, focused on projects in northern New England before moving to Montana in 2023 to re-open an RTCA office. I work with river- and trail-oriented groups, community groups, local, state, and federal agencies, and nonprofits to help with their outdoor recreation and conservation initiatives. I share water trail management, organizational, fundraising, and land protection expertise, tailoring each approach to enhance outdoor recreation and conservation. I was involved with the founding of (and continue to work with) the National Water Trail System in 2012 and the RTCA Rivers & Watersheds Community of Practice (COP). I received a Master of Environmental Management degree from Duke University and Bachelor of Arts in Geography from Dartmouth College. My river-running has mostly been canoeing, having learned whitewater alongside my father in the 1970s with our Grumman canoe. I still love river trips, even multiple-day flatwater trips.

I was introduced to RMS in 1993 when we worked together to start North American Water Trails, an inspiring group that sought to spread information about the new concept of water trails. Since then, I have worked with RMS on several projects, including organizing the 2008 Symposium in Portland, Maine; supporting the Economics of Water Trails project, the Public Access Guide for Landowners and Water Trails and River Managers (with a young intern named Jack Henderson!) and the River Access Planning and Design Guide; and launching the River Management Roundtables. At various points, I have been the Events Coordinator and Vice-President for the Northeast Chapter. Can you tell that I love RMS?! ❖



## Southeast



### Familiar Face, New Role!

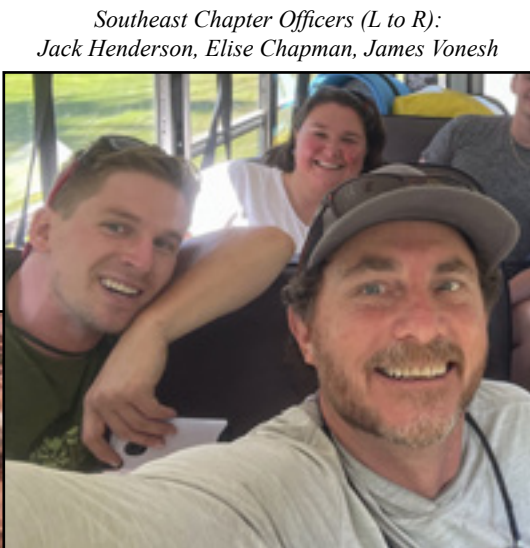
Members of the RMS Southeast Chapter, you have a new President! James Vonesh, who has served Southeast Chapter members as the Vice President, has stepped into the presidential role.

James has shown his enthusiasm for rivers, students, and RMS in many ways. His day job is as a freshwater ecologist, professor, and Assistant Director of Virginia Commonwealth University's Center for Environmental Studies in Richmond, Virginia. During his 15 years at VCU, he has built bridges across university programs, national professional societies, state government, and international partners to develop innovative educational programming in environmental STEM fields.

As RMS SE Chapter VP, James has led a strengthened connection between students, academics, and river managers in the Southeast. His accomplishments include establishing an MOU between the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation and VCU Environmental Studies to use a graduate course in scenic natural resource management to support the state scenic river program; bringing the RMS River Studies and Leadership Program to VCU as its program coordinator; serving as co-chair for the Richmond RMS Symposium in Spring 2021; and initiating and leading the National Science Foundation-funded project "The River Field Studies Network: Connecting rivers, people, & science through immersive field-based education." The River Field Study Network is a community of practice in river-based field education with >100 members across 30 states whose participants share expertise and impart specialized skills to cultivate the next generation of leaders.

This move leaves a vacancy in the Southeast Chapter Vice President's office. James and his fellow officers (Elise Chapman and Jack Henderson) will review options for filling that position. If you'd like to help lead the chapter through this mid-term point, please contact [rms@river-management.org](mailto:rms@river-management.org)! ❖

Photos courtesy of James Vonesh.



## New Friends and an Old River – RSLC Students Float The French Broad Paddle Trail

by Jack Henderson

*By the time it came to the edge of the Forest, the stream had grown up, so that it was almost a river, and being grown-up, it did not run and jump and sparkle along as it used to do when it was younger, but moved more slowly. For it knew now where it was going, and it said to itself, "There is no hurry. We shall get there some day." – Winnie the Pooh*



The French Broad River in Henderson County, North Carolina.

I think Winnie the Pooh was on to something with that Zen-minded quote about patience. I believe it to be true while writing this comfortably at home, cozy on my couch on a cold winter night. However, I don't know if I felt the same way four months ago, leading fifteen newcomers into the French Broad's deep, slow currents, clearly aware that two of our canoes had leaks and my confidence in the integrity of the other boats beginning to dwindle. At the time, I was likely experiencing an odd mixture of stress and relaxation. Stress for the comfort and safety of our group and the uncertainty that we would make it to camp before dark, and relaxation because while we had found and partially-patched cracks in our boats, we were still on a river trip, where life is usually simple and good. Fortunately, our group had a contagious sense of optimism and camaraderie, what some might call "Expedition Behavior," and our downriver travel settled into a cautious but steady rhythm...

As the River Management Society's Southeast Chapter Events Coordinator, it's my responsibility to help plan river trips, partner gatherings, and other outings for members in Florida, Georgia,

Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, Tennessee, Kentucky, West Virginia, Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. Living in Western North Carolina, and working on the French Broad Paddle Trail, I thought that an autumn overnighter on the French Broad would be a good opportunity to enjoy a beginner-friendly river trip and bring visiting RMS members together with local partners. Given that the two other members of the RMS Southeast Chapter leadership team are both faculty at regional

colleges enrolled in RMS' River Studies & Leadership Certificate program, we collectively agreed it might be fun and productive to focus this trip on creating an opportunity for RSLC students to network amongst themselves and meet river managers working on the French Broad.

Following a couple months of planning, we had our final crew, which included Dr. James Vonesh – freshwater ecologist, professor, and Assistant Director of Virginia Commonwealth University's Center for Environmental Studies in Richmond, VA, along with nine RSLC-enrolled students to represent VCU, Elise Chapman –

scientist and associate lecturer in the department of Biology, Geology, and Environmental Science at the University of Tennessee Chattanooga along with four RSLC-enrolled students to represent UTC, and me – French Broad Paddle Trail Manager with the non-profit MountainTrue, based in Asheville, North Carolina.

So, there we were, a mixture of individuals in terms of our backgrounds, interests, academic studies, and hobbies, but unified by our involvement with RMS and interest in rivers. We met in Brevard one Friday evening in September to camp together, make some initial introductions, pack up gear, and get some rest before the river trip kicked off. On Saturday morning, we rendezvoused at Headwaters Outfitters in Rosman (near the French Broad River's headwaters), where we were joined by Brian Byrd – professor in the Environmental Health Sciences program, College of Health and Human Sciences at Western Carolina University in Cullowhee, North Carolina, and liaison for WCU's enrollment in RMS' RSLC program, Bekah Price – River Management Society's Communications Coordinator, David Whitmire – co-founder and owner of Headwaters Outfitters, and Danielle Ennis





Students from Virginia Commonwealth University and University of Tennessee Chattanooga, and staff from Headwaters Outfitters and MountainTrue's French Broad Paddle Trail program pre-trip in Rosman, North Carolina. (Photo: James Vonesh)

– Headwaters Outfitters' Head Paddling Guide and Paddling Program Director. Following some lengthier introductions, a history of Headwaters Outfitters, some background on the French Broad River, and a discussion about the role that river management plays throughout it all, we loaded canoes onto trailers and people into buses and took off for our put-in at Horse Shoe Boating Access Area.

Following a hearty lunch of wraps, fruit, chips, trail mix, cookies, etc., we set off for an 8.5-mile float down to our riverside campsite at the confluence of Mud Creek. Circling back to the beginning of this story, this is when we realized that two of our canoes had small but significant cracks leaking water into boats that were already heavy and sitting low from their loads of camping gear, coolers with food, and drinking water. Luckily, as mentioned, our crew was wonderfully-optimistic and hard-working and quickly scrambled into action – emptying the worst of the two canoes, distributing its contents into other boats (including forming a three-person canoe), then “patching” the largest of the cracks with duct tape, and deciding that James would paddle it solo to reduce weight and impact. The other boat's crack wasn't as bad, and its paddlers were able to occasionally bail water while moving downstream without repacking or repairing it.

We made it to the Mud Creek campsite right as golden hour was approaching, allowing everyone to change clothes, set up their tents, play yard games, and enjoy some tacos and s'mores by the fire as the daytime's warmth eased into the crisp, cool evening autumn air. Following a pancake breakfast – complete with coffee, fruit, yogurt, and granola – our crew pushed off and again

paddled downstream, traveling just 2.5-miles to our take-out at Westfeldt Park where we unpacked, ate snacks, exchanged high-fives, loaded into vans, and headed home.

Reflecting on this trip several months later, I am grateful to have shared this time with so many wonderful people on my home river. I learned so much about what the professors were teaching, what the students were learning, big-picture and local-detail perceptions and experiences related to river management, how RMS can and does tie it all together, and how to improve future chapter trips – whether on the French Broad or elsewhere. ❖

*RMS' Southeast Chapter leadership plans to host at least two river trips each year and are always open to new ideas in terms of location, hosting organization/agency, single-day versus overnight, connection with an event, project, or campaign, etc. Reach out to Jack Henderson (hendersonjc3@gmail.com) with questions or ideas.*

*Jack Henderson is MountainTrue's French Broad Paddle Trail Manager. The French Broad Paddle Trail is a 140-mile recreational watercraft trail between Rosman, North Carolina and Newport, Tennessee, managed in-partnership by government agencies, regional non-profit organizations, local businesses, and individual volunteers. Paddle Trail staff and partners create, maintain, and improve public river access points, campsites, signage, and information; remove garbage; clear blockages; and host events focused on celebrating and learning about the river. MountainTrue champions resilient forests, clean waters, and healthy communities in the Southern Blue Ridge.*



RMS board members and friends opening a box of Wild West Chocolate at the 2023 RMS board meeting in Tahlequah, Oklahoma.

## Save 20% through Valentine's Day on Wild West Chocolate, which supports RMS with every purchase!

Wild West Chocolate's indulgent sweetened-only-with-organic-fruit chocolate is now available online at [wildwestchocolate.com](http://wildwestchocolate.com) and will be available in stores soon. From now until Valentine's Day, you'll automatically save 20% at check-out on chocolate bars and bear claws when shopping online.

Because clean water is essential in the plant-based ingredients found in Wild West Chocolate, a portion of proceeds from every purchase supports the River Management Society and its work to train and empower river professionals.

Their recipes feature pure cacao and naturally sweet, whole, crushed fruit and are free from sugar alcohols, artificial sweeteners, syrups, and sugar substitutes. Wild West products are USDA Organic, Non-GMO Verified, Certified Vegan, Fair Trade Certified, Certified Gluten-Free, and Kosher, and are in the process becoming Regenerative Organic certified.

The Wild West website launched with six flavors of artisan chocolate bars, and three flavors of Bear Claws, in advance of retail launches Q1 of 2024.



2023 Wild West Chocolate trade show booth.

### Chocolate Bars:

- Dark Horse:** 70% Cacao dark chocolate
- Most Wanted:** 70% Cacao dark chocolate with almond & sea salt
- Cowboy Coffee:** 70% Cacao dark chocolate with ground espresso
- Grizzly:** 50% Cacao oatmilk chocolate with raspberry & hazelnut
- Snowcapped:** 50% Cacao oatmilk chocolate with coconut
- Prairie Oat:** 50% Cacao oatmilk chocolate with toasted oats

### Bear Claws:

- Dark chocolate nut clusters with almond & sea salt
- Oatmilk chocolate fruit and nut clusters with huckleberry & cashew
- Oatmilk chocolate fruit and nut clusters with raspberry & hazelnut

There IS hope, however, thanks to champions who are addressing the disparity in access to rivers and other waterways. St. Louis-based River City Outdoors connects with the YMCA, boys and girls clubs, schools, and the city to serve kids in underserved communities, and Wild West Paddle Club, a nonprofit in Cody, Wyoming, offers introductory instruction in whitewater kayaking for young, aspiring paddlers and provides boating equipment to young people who cannot afford it on their own.

RMS must continue to support individual differences, and economic and social challenges, while encouraging difficult conversations, innovative solutions, and the sharing of ideas within diverse and dynamic environments.

2023 RMS accomplishments in inclusivity and equity include the continued development and delivery of thirteen (13) training sessions and River Management Roundtable discussions that hosted over 250 people to address anti-discrimination and anti-sexual harassment, indigenous culture, adaptive padding and river accessibility, and engaging underserved communities including Latinos, Hispanics, African and Asian Americans, and inner-city community members.

I look forward to the strides we will make toward the many goals and objectives that the chapters and board have set forth for the entirety of the River Management Society as the national and international leader in river management education, collaboration, and training. We could not be more proud that our members, volunteers, and partners represent the nation's leaders of thought, agents of change, and resources for all things related to the holistic management of rivers and river environments.

Thank you all for practicing the challenging and important work of managing and protecting North America's river resources. ❖

Judy Culver, RMS President



### 2024 (and beyond) inclusivity and equity action items include:

1. Develop a board code of ethics.
2. Develop RMS Core Values, member principles of behavior and reporting processes.
3. Add an anti-discrimination clause to the RMS website.
4. Develop river and hydrological core competencies that can work successfully in urban, inner city as well as wild river environments. Create an on-boarding member toolkit to assist in building relationships and support of incoming board members.
5. Achieve goal of each chapter having a student champion who will assist in engaging students at symposia, assist in planning the symposia student event, represent student viewpoints at board meetings, and provide leadership opportunities.
6. Support the creation of bilingual signage.
7. Engage underserved community organizations.
8. Engage with fishing/angling communities.
9. Work towards goal that RMS members and leadership reflect all the communities that we serve.

Front row, L to R: James Major (RMS), Angie Fuhrmann (RMS), Teri Fite, Emma Lord (NW Chapter President), Lizz Warring (NEU), Kristina Rylands (PC Chapter President), Risa Shimoda (RMS).

Second row: Helen Clough (RMS Secretary), Ed Fite (MW Chapter President), Cheyenne Morgan (OU), Darrell Bowman (AR Game & Fish), Sabrina Bowman, Chris Geden (River City Outdoors), Morgan Keeling (IRWP), Bekah Price (RMS), Hailey Seago (OU).

Back row: Leif Kindberg (IRWP), Shannon Bassista (RMS Vice President), Jenny Burbidge (IRWP), Ed Sherman (MW Chapter Vice President), Steve Chesterton (RMS Liaison to USDA Forest Service), Chris Elder (NW Chapter Vice President), Jeri Fleming (GRDA). Photo: Mary Chang

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## Become a Member

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- Organizational (5-8 people) \$300/yr

Membership benefits are described online:  
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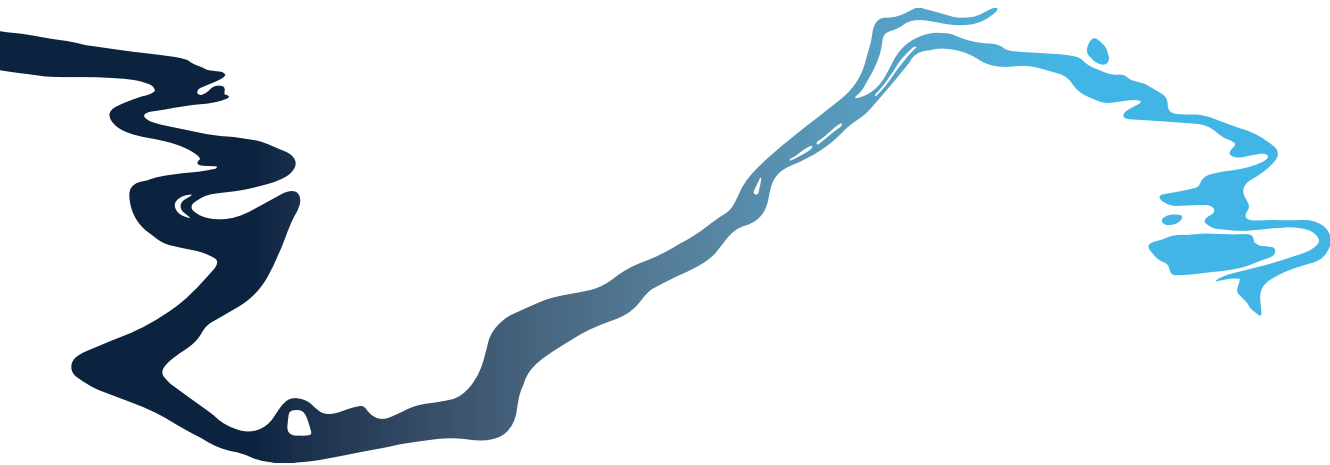


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## RMS Journal Submission Deadlines

Spring 2024	Vol. 37, No. 1	Pacific	Feb
Summer 2024	Vol. 37, No. 2	Alaska	May
Fall 2024	Vol. 37, No. 3	Southeast	Aug
Winter 2024	Vol. 37, No. 4	Midwest	Nov
Spring 2025	Vol. 38, No. 1	Southwest	Feb
Summer 2025	Vol. 38, No. 2	Northwest	May
Fall 2025	Vol. 38, No. 3	Northeast	Aug
Winter 2025	Vol. 38, No. 4	Pacific	Nov

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