

# THE VOYAGEUR



[www.BlueRidgeVoyageurs.org](http://www.BlueRidgeVoyageurs.org)

January 2012

## THE PRESIDENT'S PUT-IN

Happy New Year everyone, time for flexibility exercises for the upcoming paddling season (at least for this paddling couch potato). As with all New Year's resolutions, we'll see how much this ambition is actually acted upon.

The upcoming meeting will feature Keith Merkel's photos of Patagonia. He along with Ned Howenstine and Robert Maxey will give us an account of their experiences on their trip. This meeting is January 24<sup>th</sup>, Tuesday, at the Tyson's-Pimmit locale as usual.

The BRV Christmas party was a great time. Many thanks go to Mark Wray for arranging and organizing the party and thanks to all the members who brought the delicious dinner assortments that we shared.

Come out to the January meeting to plan future paddling schemes this coming spring. I will send out reminders for the meeting. The March meeting will be Tuesday the 13<sup>th</sup>.

Rick

## While You Were On the North River...

by Scott Gravatt



This past October Denise and Scott were sitting in their house in Connecticut, reading the BRV email chatter about running the North River. We were green with envy. We both love the North, but of course there was no way we could get down to Virginia to join the group. Fortunately, that very same weekend there was a draw-down of Horace Lake in New Hampshire, and that release lights up the tiny Piscataquog River. Nobody can remember or pronounce Piscataquog, so the whitewater community simply calls it the P-Cat. So on October 15, while the BRV was running the North, your northern

*(Continued on page 2)*

*One of the harder rapids on the P-Cat: Buzzell's.*

*P-CAT (Continued from page 1)*

satellite members, Denise and Scott, ran the P-Cat.

This is an annual draw-down of the lake, but it was only a few years ago that whitewater boaters were able to negotiate for the release to happen on a Saturday. The word has spread, and now about 50 boaters show up for the chance to run this zesty creek. This was our second year on the run. We joined up with an organized group of 15 AMC boaters. Since the creek is small, the group of 15 boats was split into two sub-groups. Denise and I were in the lead group. There were 8 boats in the group, three open boats and five kayaks.

Last year we used a shorter take-out and only ran about 5 miles. This year we ran the full 7 miles. The additional 1 to 2 miles was well worth it. There were about 5 notable rapids and many other little ones in the additional stretch.

This is a great run! It is fast and small, and VERY challenging. Besides the 3 rapids where we stop and scout, there are at least 10 more that are very difficult and tricky. They come up all of a sudden, and you have no choice but to read and go! The three rapids that are scouted are about Class III+ or IV-.

Denise aced the entire run! She paddled strong and made all the right moves. Overall, our group had about 3 swims, and a few flips with rolls.

The first big rapid is a big, steep flume-like drop with big holes and waves to bust as you go down. I got turned sideways by the last big wave/hole, and hit a barely-submerged rock, and flipped. I was able to roll up, in spite of spending the past year not paddling, and not having done a roll for over a year! I was happy, and very relieved.

The next rapid we scout is a river-wide ledge. This is an ugly, boney drop. Best line seems to be running close to a rooster tail that is out about 20+ feet from the right bank, left of what looks like a green tongue. As you go over the ledge, all you can see is whitewater, but the rocks are shallow and it's very bumpy for about 30 feet, then it gets deeper and most people went far right to avoid a grabby hole about 100 ft. below the ledge.

The third rapid we scout is called Buzzell's. [See photo previous page.] It's a boulder garden type of rapid. There are several routes through, but you must not be on the right side for the final drop, or the wave that angles in from the right side WILL flip you.

In addition to the three rapids we scout, there are many, many more rapids interspersed throughout the run. Most are class II or II+. However, there are several Class III and III+ rapids that deserve scouting, but nobody does. Many times I was dodging this way and that, catching narrow tongues and just getting by holes, hanging on by a thin margin. I had several very near flips.

To end my day, I was scrambling through the very last rapid, and lost it about halfway through. I stayed in my boat to roll up, but each time I thought I could make my move, I got dragged over a rock or dowsed into a hole. I was getting beat up pretty badly, but I finally caught a break and rolled the boat up, finding myself in the run-out of the rapid, with the take out just around the bend. Not the stellar, paddle-twirling ending I was hoping for!

Regardless of my personal ending, it was a beautiful day on a narrow creek, framed in fall colors. There was excellent action that did not let up all the way to the take out. We still miss the North River, but hey, the P-Cat kicks ass too!

*NEW FEE (Continued from page 5)*

Update:

In addition to the Maury, the Bullpasture gorge is in the middle of a WMA. The normal takeout is outside the WMA. The west bank (roadside) of the Bullpasture inside the WMA boundary is designated WMA including the put-in parking area. To get around this, one has to go approx. 1-1/2 mile upstream of the parking area and put-in outside the WMA boundary.

— Bev Bryant



## 2011 Retrospective

photos and captions by Mike Martin



Counterclockwise from left:

*Ernie Katz, Ginny DeSeau, Ed Evangelidi and Pat Holobaugh, in an eddy dwellers' anonymous meeting, Casselman River, Sunday, May 29. We may have had 25+ boats on that trip, as we were joined by various Coastals, MCC folks, and a bunch of Ohio and TRPC boaters.*

*MCC boaters Tom Reems, Bob Whiting, and Tom McCloud, preparing for a downstream traffic jam on the Casselman, May 29. We flushed down pretty fast, and many of us reset a shuttle to continue the run down to near Confluence.*



*Ginny DeSeau and Alan Dickerson, cruising a lazy upstream stretch on the North Fork Casselman as part of the crew battling clean up.*

*Daryl Hall on Great Trough Creek*



## Water Level-Gauge Correlations for Local Streams by Ron Knipling

The last few years have been among my best paddling years. I've also kept somewhat better records of my river adventures than I did in past years. Here are observations of local stream water levels and corresponding USGS gauge readings. Maybe this data will help you decide when to best catch one of these magnificent streams. My water level estimates are based on the Randy Carter definition of zero: zero is the lowest level you can paddle a stream without getting out of your boat due to low water. On some streams there are accurate bridge abutment RC gauges, but in most cases the estimates are my subjective ones based on flow in the rapids. I've stated all the water level estimates in inches, though estimates become even more subjective as you get farther from zero. The USGS gauge readings are provided in CFS and/or feet. Most of the readings are for the exact time that I was paddling.

Cabin John Creek. Level  $\approx$  zero with Rock Creek = 290cfs, Sligo Creek = 70cfs.

Cacapon River, main section. Level  $\approx$  +8" with Great Cacapon = 3.4', 1,000cfs.

Cacapon River, Rt. 127 to the Crossings. Level  $\approx$  +10" with Great Cacapon = 2.8', 650cfs.

Catoctin Creek MD below Myersville, Bittle Rd to Station Rd. Level  $\approx$  +3" with Middletown = 260cfs.

Catoctin Creek MD below Myersville, Rt. 17 to Middletown (downstream but overlapping with above section). Level  $\approx$  zero with Middletown = 120cfs.

Clear Shade Creek PA. Level  $\approx$  zero with Stonycreek Ferndale = 4,500cfs & falling.

Covington River. Level = Minus 1" with Battle Run = 85cfs, Remington = 2,500cfs, and Hazel = 1,300cfs.

Fifteen Mile Creek. Level  $\approx$  +3" at put-in, much more downstream. Town Creek = 800cfs, Sideling Hill Creek = 600cfs, Tonoloway = 450cfs.

Lost River. Level  $\approx$  +12" with Great Cacapon = 2,300cfs, Cootes Store = 460cfs, Brandywine = 775cfs, Moorefield = 1,900cfs.

Marsh Creek.

Level  $\approx$  +4" with Bridgeport = 500cfs.

Level  $\approx$  +6" with Bridgeport = 1,200cfs.

Middle Creek MD of the Monocacy.

Level  $\approx$  +2" with Bridgeport = 850cfs & falling.

Level  $\approx$  +6" with Bridgeport = 2,000cfs & falling

Moorefield Gorge. Level  $\approx$  +5" with Brandywine = 280cfs, Moorefield = 950cfs.

Moormans River. Level  $\approx$  +1" at put-in below reservoir and much more downstream, with Free Union = 600cfs, 5.7' on gauge.

North Fork Shenandoah, Brock's Gap. Level  $\approx$  +2" at Blue Hole put-in, more downstream with Cootes Store = 1,300cfs, 4.7'.

NF Shen, Cootes Store to Timberville. Level  $\approx$  +10" with Cootes Store = 900cfs, 4.3'.

NF Shen, Mt. Jackson to Edinburg. Level  $\approx$  +6" with Mt. Jackson = 420cfs.

Passage Creek Gorge, multiple trips.

Level  $\approx$  +5" with Buckton = 250cfs.

Level  $\approx$  +12" with Buckton = 380cfs.

Level  $\approx$  +18" with Buckton = 500cfs.

Minimum  $\approx$  175cfs.

Passage Creek, upper, above Detrick.

Level  $\approx$  +1" with Buckton = 120cfs.

Level  $\approx$  +5" with Buckton = 220cfs.

Note: Upper Passage requires less water than the gorge because it is flatter.

Piney River (observation, did not run). Level  $\approx$  zero with Piney River = 175cfs.

Pohick Creek. Level  $\approx$  +2" at put-in, more downstream, with Accotink Annandale = 300cfs (2 trips with this

level and reading).

Robinson River. Level  $\approx$  +1" with Locust Dale = 360cfs, 3.8'.

Sideling Hill Creek, 4/11.

Level  $\approx$  +9" with Sideling Hill Bellegrove = 450cfs.

Level  $\approx$  +15" with Sideling Hill Bellegrove = 800cfs.

South Branch Potomac, Smokehole, low water bridge to Petersburg (camper). Level  $\approx$  +3" at put-in with Franklin = 200cfs., Petersburg = 900cfs.

South Fork Shenandoah, Newport to Luray. Level  $\approx$  +5" with Luray = 750cfs.

Stony Creek VA.

Level  $\approx$  +3" with Cootes Store = 350cfs & Passage = 175cfs.

Level also  $\approx$  +3" with Cootes Store = 330cfs & Passage = 230cfs.

Rock Creek DC. Level  $\approx$  +6" with Sherrill Drive = 350cfs.

Rush River. Level  $\approx$  +2" with Battle Run = 120cfs, Hazel = 2,000cfs, Remington = 4,500cfs.

Thornton River.

Level  $\approx$  +1" with Battle Run = 100cfs, Hazel = 1,600cfs

Level  $\approx$  +3" with Remington = 2,200cfs.

Level  $\approx$  +12" with Battle Run = 120cfs, Hazel = 2,000cfs, Remington = 4,500cfs.

Tye River, Nash to Massies Mill. Level  $\approx$  zero with Tye River Lovington = 400cfs. 4.3'.

Here's a New Year's resolution for myself and for you: Collect more level/gauge correlation data and let's expand the above list. Maybe next winter we'll put it in a spreadsheet.

### **A New River Access Fee for Virginia WMA's by Charlie Walbridge**

*[posted to the American Whitewater website 29 December 2011]*

Paddlers at the swinging footbridge put-in for Goshen Pass on Virginia's Maury River were recently confronted with a new sign. Starting January 1, 2012, the VA State Department of Game and Inland Fisheries will require a permit to launch there. According to the DGIF web site says that anyone who wants to access a Wildlife Management Area or public fishing lake must purchase an access permit; the cost is \$4 daily, \$23 annually for both residents and non-residents. Anyone possessing a valid Virginia hunting, freshwater fishing, or trapping license, or a current Virginia boat registration do not need an Access Permit (in fact, the new permit's cost is the same as a basic hunting or fishing license). You can purchase permits on-line, though DGIF Customer Service at 1-866-721-6911, or at any license agent located in sporting goods stores and bait shops statewide.

The scope of the rules are not yet clear, but here are some more facts from the DGIF web site: If a boat landing serves public waters such as public rivers or the Chesapeake Bay and it is not on a Wildlife Management Area you do not need an Access Permit. If a public boat landing or launch site is in a WMA or DGIF-owned public fishing lake you will need an Access Permit. Anyone under 17 or who possesses a valid Virginia hunting, freshwater fishing, or trapping license, or a current Virginia boat registration is exempt; in fact, the permit's cost is the same as a basic hunting or fishing license. If you are paddling through a wildlife management area, you won't need a permit as long as you remain on the water. If you land, you are accessing the property and need an Access Permit

It's not clear which Virginia rivers are affected, so we'll need help from paddlers on the ground to learn more. Please notify Charlie Walbridge at [ccwalbridge@cs.com](mailto:ccwalbridge@cs.com) if you encounter this sign so we can update our nationwide river database. For more information, here's a link: <http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/access-permit/>.

*(Continued on page 2)*

## Early Season Trip Schedule by Mike Martin

Jan. 8. (Sun. 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.)	2nd annual "Fun With Ropes" safety/rescue clinic. Kinder Farm Park in Anne Arundel County	Open to all	Charlie Duffy (with Tony Allred and Ron Ray) 703- 938-3949 (home) 703-407-0909 (cell)
Jan. 24 (Tues.)	BRV Meeting		Rick Koller
TBA	Winter thaw trips	Dealer's choice	Use email list.
<b>FEBRUARY</b>			
TBA early Feb	Ice Breaker Trips TBA	Dealer's choice	Use email list.
Late Feb TBA	Lillydippers' Cabin Fever Float	Dealer's choice (PN-LI)	Mike Martin
<b>MARCH</b>			
Early March TBA	3rd Annual Couch Potatoes' Spring Shakedown Cruise (All hands on deck!)	PN-I/TBA	Jenny Thomas
March 11 (Sun.)	Daylight Savings Time begins		
March 13 (Tues.)	BRV Meeting		Rick Koller
March TBA	Annual Rapp Trib trip	LI	Hendrik van Oss

## Blue Ridge Voyageurs Membership Form

*Whitewater paddling is a risky outdoor sport. BRV is not responsible for any individual's decision to participate in the sport, or for his or her decision to run any river or section of river.*

**Annual Dues:** \_\_\_\_\_ **\$15.00 (newsletter sent via postal mail)**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ **\$12.00 (newsletter emailed in .pdf format)**

### Optional Contribution to BRV River

**Conservation/Access Fund:** \$5.00 or \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Amount Enclosed:** \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to BRV. Mail to BRV Membership, c/o Frank Fico,  
 1609 Autumnwood Drive, Reston, VA 20194-1523.

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone w/area code: (h)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_ **(work or cell)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please check if interested in:**  **helping with moonlight picnic**  **providing a meeting program**  
 **helping with holiday party**  **leading trips**  **conservation/river maintenance**

## Final Holtwood Plan Ready For Federal Approval (PA)

**by Kevin Colburn**

*[posted to the American Whitewater website 29 December 2011]*

On December 15th, 2011, the owner of Holtwood Dam on the Susquehanna River submitted a whitewater boating plan to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) for approval. The plan was based on a 2009 settlement agreement between the power company and the paddling community that called for the creation of two new whitewater features to mitigate the loss of several natural rapids that are being destroyed or de-watered by modifications of the dam and hydropower facility. The modifications are aimed at increasing fish passage and power generation.

The new plan is informed by well over three years of detailed flow modeling and thoughtful discussions between the dam owner, the paddling community, and natural resource agencies. The plan was finalized at meetings throughout the fall of 2011.

The plan calls for two new whitewater features to be built immediately downstream of Holtwood Dam along the York County side of the Susquehanna River at the base of a defunct fish ladder. These features (wave/holes) will be optimized by 264-hours of scheduled releases between 800 and 1000 cfs annually. They will be designed to provide high quality freestyle paddling opportunities similar to the kinds of natural opportunities impacted by the hydropower facility modifications. It is anticipated that the construction of the features will occur in 2012, and will be fully operational in 2013.

American Whitewater has worked closely with a great group of local and regional paddlers on this project. We will continue to work together as the feature designs are finalized, throughout construction, and on flow scheduling.

## About the Blue Ridge Voyageurs (BRV)

The **BRV** is a voluntary association of experienced paddlers from the Washington, DC area. Club benefits include: trips for all skill levels (most at intermediate and advanced levels); BRV website and hotline for information and pick-up trips; *The Voyageur*, published 6 times a year; club roster, published yearly in March; holiday party; conservation projects; moonlight paddles & picnics; big trips to the Smokies, Canada, Europe, and Western rivers.

**Meetings:** BRV will hold meetings from 7-9 pm on the following dates in 2012: January 24, March 13, May TBD, Summer TBD (Moonlight Picnic), September TBD, November TBD, December TBD (Holiday Party). Meetings are followed by beer and pizza at a nearby pub. Location: Tysons-Pimmit Regional Library on Leesburg Pike (Rt. 7) in Falls Church, VA. The library is on the east side of Rt. 7 about 0.6 miles south of I-495. Or, from I-66, take the Rt. 7 West exit and go about 0.6 miles west on Rt. 7. It's on the right.

**BRV Website:** The BRV website (<http://www.BlueRidgeVoyageurs.org>) provides information on trips, meetings, and other club events.

**2012 BRV Officers:** Rick Koller, President; Mark Wray, VP; Mike Martin & Daryl Hall, Trip Coordinators; Clark Childers, Treasurer; Frank Fico, Newsletter Editor; Kathleen Sengstock, Conservation.

**2012 Board of Directors:** Gus Anderson, Bill Collier, Ed Grove, Ron Knipling, Rick Koller, Wes Mills

### ***The Voyageur: Newsletter of the Blue Ridge Voyageurs***

*The Voyageur* publishes information on club events, conservation and safety news, the club trip schedule, and other news of interest to BRVers. Publishing **trip reports** is a particularly important newsletter function. Trip Coordinators are requested to write up all club trips - particularly trips to unusual or especially interesting rivers. Trip reports and other articles are accepted in any form: via electronic mail (preferred; send to [fico1@netzero.net](mailto:fico1@netzero.net)), on disk, typed, handwritten, faxed or over the phone. For trip reports, try to include the following information (if applicable): names of participants, relevant NWS gauge readings of nearby rivers, description of the water level on the river (e.g., minimum, moderate, maximum, or number of inches above or below "zero"), weather conditions, hazards, difficult rapids, info on put-ins or takeouts, distinctive scenery, and overall difficulty in relation to rivers well known to BRVers. New information about the river (e.g., new hazards) is particularly important. **Photos** are also published. Send prints to the webmaster or e-mail digital photos to the newsletter editor.

Address changes: contact Frank Fico, 1609 Autumnwood Dr., Reston, VA 20194-1523, (703) 318-7998, [fico1@netzero.net](mailto:fico1@netzero.net). The annual roster will be kept current via updates published in each issue of *The Voyageur*.

Membership applications/renewals: submit to Frank Fico. Must renew by February 15 each year to be listed on club roster and continue receiving *The Voyageur*.



### ***The Voyageur***

c/o Frank Fico  
1609 Autumnwood Drive  
Reston, VA 20194-1523

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**Deadline for March *Voyageur*:**  
Friday, March 2nd

**NEXT MEETING**  
**Tuesday, January 24th**

**LAST CHANCE TO RENEW!** If your mailing label says 2011, use the membership form included on page 7.