

THE VOYAGEUR



www.BlueRidgeVoyageurs.org

July 2005

THE PRESIDENT'S PUT-IN

I just got home from paddling Little Falls. While this may not seem like a big deal to you, I see it much differently. I had not paddled Little Falls in at least three years. The rainfall has been so good the last two and one half years that something else was always available. We have not needed Little Falls for a long time. Now we are back in a period of more normal summertime rainfall. With variable thunderstorms now the norm many rivers are now too low. Hopefully they will rise up again in the fall.

I have not done much paddling this spring. Based upon what I have seen and heard this has pretty much been everyone's experience. There have not been very many weekend trips and there are numerous people I have not seen on the river this year. Hopefully this will end in the near future. The BRV picnic is coming up next month. Hopefully we can all get together then. In the meantime Little Falls beckons. I hope to see you there.

Ernie

Left Fork of Buckhannon River by Ed Evangelidi

Geoff Fisher (former voice of BRV) used to rave often about the Buckhannon River. I listened many times but the Tygart was always quite a haul for me and the Buckhannon just that much further than a bit of a haul. So it is only recently that I have sampled a couple sections of the Buckhannon basin, and the standard run lower Buckhannon still remains a mystery to me. But I am sure that if Geoff had ever paddled the

(Continued on next page)

2005 BRV Moonlight Picnic

LOCATION: The usual **Violette's Lock/Virginia Canal Loop**, off River Road, north of Potomac, MD.

DATE: **Saturday, August 20, 2005**

TIME: Meet at Violette's Lock parking lot at **5:00 PM**. Canoe/kayak departure at approximately 5:30 PM; return to Violette's Lock approximately 10:30 PM (or whenever you like).

BRING: Food (see below), blanket/chairs as desired, water, bug repellent, flashlight(s).

FOOD: Bring a dish to feed at least eight people, as follows:

A-G: salads, uncooked veggies, fruit dish

H-N: desserts, snacks

O-Z: pasta, casserole, cooked veggies, rice, etc.

Be sure to bring serving utensils for your dish, if needed. BRV will provide chicken, drinks (soda, wine and beer — approximately two per person).

COST: **\$5** for adults, **\$3** for children 2-12 years old, **free** for those under 2.

RSVP: BRV Board members will be contacting all DC -area members. RSVP to your caller or to Beth Koller at 240-506-0417 by **Thursday, August 18th**.

CAMPING: It is permissible to camp at the picnic site, so if you would like to do so, bring your gear. There are usually some who camp, so you won't be alone.

PARKING: Parking at Violette's Lock is unrestricted, but there is little police surveillance. This has not been a high theft location in the past, but please do not leave valuables in your vehicles!

LEFT FORK (Continued from page 1)

Left Fork, he would have had something else to rave about. This little gem is about 60 fpm and is also about 60 fpm for a solid 8 miles. While being steep, it is also fairly consistent in difficulty and rarely exceeding Cl. 2-3 except for the last good rapid. Kinda like an easier but longer Savage River. The shuttle takes more “mystery moves” to navigate than does the river, but it is worth it driving around in the middle of nowhere to find this gem. The WV guidebook is kind of sparse on info on this piece of water but is generally accurate. It takes about 10' on the Buckhannon gauge to get this puppy up and there are two railroad culverts of concern. What the guide doesn't stress is that the culverts are a problem and the second culvert is fairly serious and not as easy to spot — especially if you are sitting down on the bottom of your boat rather than kneeling high up looking for clues to its whereabouts. Look for a bit of a concrete wall on the right side of the river and a fast flume on the right side necking down into what is clearly a channel without a safety eddy visible. Carry easily on the left side here.

Anything this small will have strainers and we had about 5 that were not negotiable in a boat and others that required some skill to run. Most were

fresh blowdowns from a recent wind storm, so it probably was much easier a week or so prior to when we ran it. The strainers are well spaced and the rapids are well spaced — with little use for flat water in between them. The only concern in running them is the consistency in their characteristic until the end, which gets some boaters complacent. When you get to a great set of shallow surfing waves, be ready for a next set of deeper, steeper and grabbier waves, reminiscent of entrance rapid on the Cheat Canyon but a bit stickier. Could be a serious problem if you paddle here at higher water.

Besides the seemingly never-ending rapids, the scenery is excellent with only the flat top of the railroad to intrude and little evidence of the heavy coal mining that takes place in the area. The locals are generally friendly here too and may come out to see how you manage the rapids. So if you manage to see the gauge get up to a reliable 10', come on out and enjoy this little gem. In spite of running such lovely rivers as the Kitzmiller section of the Potomac and the Middle Fork of the Buckhannon, Dick Pierce commented that this was the only run that he would drop everything and paddle a second time on our late April trip to this area.



Laurel Fork and Kitzmiller, May 21-22

by Frank Fico; photos by Bob Kimmel

Frank Fico and Bob Kimmel had trouble finding a third boater to join them on a last-minute pick-up trip, until Bob finally coerced MCCer and Coastal Tom McCloud to come along late Friday evening. But after finding Laurel Fork at a good 8" level on Saturday, then capping the weekend off with a Kitzmiller run just above zero on Sunday, Tom was glad to have put off his house work. At left, Frank runs one of the numerous ledges on the pristine Laurel Fork. At right, Tom on the slightly more tainted waters of Kitzmiller.



Smokehole Camper, May 29-30

by Frank Fico; photos by Len Rice

Once again, the South Branch Potomac through lower Smokehole Canyon was at a good level for the traditional camper trip over Memorial Day weekend. Due to a last-minute conflict, Frank Fico postponed his scheduled trip to Sunday-Monday, while co-leader Gus Anderson went out all three days. Frank, Bridget, Jamie, Kerry and newest family member Abbie the dog were joined by Len Rice and four of his kids on Sunday. At left, Daniel (bow) and Lauren (stern) Rice in the tandem duckie. At right, Frank runs his loaded ME through Chimney Rock Slide rapid. The group met up with Gus and daughter Ashley at the traditional campsite on the sand bar opposite Blue Rock and the spring gushing into the river.

SAVE THE MON

contributed by the West Virginia Wilderness Coalition

The Monongahela National Forest is within a day's drive of 1/3 of the country. It has become a weekend Mecca for hikers, climbers, paddlers, and anglers, from all over the Mid-Atlantic. Straddling 5 counties in eastern West Virginia, the Monongahela's, or Mon's (as it is referred to locally) scenic beauty and recreational opportunities are second to none.

Unfortunately, some of the wildest beautiful places in the Monongahela are threatened. The Monongahela is a National Forest not a National Park, which means that some areas are open to logging and mineral extraction. The only way to permanently protect the Monongahela is through Wilderness designation.

Wilderness designation is the highest protection given to public lands. No roads, logging, mining, or off-road vehicle use are allowed in Wilderness areas. In addition to providing traditional and primitive outdoor recreation opportunities such as canoeing, kayaking, hiking, hunting, fishing, and cross country skiing, Wilderness serves as a filter for pollutants in our environment. The 5 Wilderness areas on the Monongahela: Cranberry, Otter Creek, Dolly Sods, and Laurel Forks North and South, cover less than 9% of the forest's total area. At the West Virginia Wilderness Coalition we are fighting hard to increase the amount of wilderness to reflect the values of the outdoor recreation community.

The Forest Service is writing a new management proposal which will guide the administration of the forest for the next 10-15 years. The Forest Service is required to accept public comment on their proposal, due out some time this summer. This is a tremendous opportunity to protect Wilderness on the Mon. You have a right to influence the forest planning process and a chance to broaden the context in which you enjoy the Monongahela. Go to our website www.wvwild.org and sign up for e-mail updates so we can keep you informed on the planning process. Together we can ensure that there will always be wilderness quality paddling close to home.

Algal Blooms Already Turning Up in Potomac and Patuxent Rivers

by Colleen Kelleher and Mark Segraves, WTOP Radio (June 13, 2005)

GREAT FALLS, Md. -- Kayakers and rafters know the Potomac River as a place to ride the rapids. Fly fishermen know it as a place to cast their reels for shad and small-mouthed bass.

Scientists, though, know the second largest tributary of the Chesapeake Bay as a breeding ground for naturally occurring phytoplankton that feeds on nitrogen and phosphorus -- the two ingredients needed to create algal blooms that suffocate fish and other Bay life.

Already this month, areas in the lower Potomac River, lower Patuxent River and into the main Bay are seeing harmful algal blooms -- namely Mahogany Tide, according to a Maryland Department of Natural Resources Web site that tracks water quality conditions.

Mahogany Tide is caused by unusually high concentrations of *Prorocentrum minimum*, an algae that turns the water a murky red-brown. *Prorocentrum minimum* is a dinoflagellate, a phytoplankton with whip-like appendages that can move.

Thanks to lots of spring rain that's washed excess nitrogen and phosphorus into rivers and streams, this summer could be among the five worst for nutrient problems in 20 years in the Chesapeake Bay. Warm temperatures and winds help fuel the growth of algal blooms, which can kill fish.

No fish kills or health problems have been reported from the Mahogany Tide.

Scientists forecast that this summer the low oxygen conditions

for Bay waterways will likely be moderate to severe.

"The forecast indicates that recent weather conditions and heavy pollutant loads could lead to a bad summer for the Bay," said scientist William Dennison of the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science who helped develop the forecast.

"Weather is not the only driving factor behind poor summer water quality conditions, but it plays a significant role in transporting pollution into the rivers that feed the Bay."

That forecast calls for a high likelihood of harmful algal blooms in the tidal Potomac River this summer. Scientists are out on the river this month watching the conditions as part of a new effort to forecast water quality conditions. They'll try to predict how the blooms will behave.

Scientists say there is a relationship between annual and seasonal Potomac River flow and the likelihood of blue-green algae blooms. It's expected that this year's blooms of cyanobacteria and microcystis will last all summer and will take over 10 miles of the river. These blue-green algae blooms can make people sick and can cause minor skin irritations. They can kill livestock and pets.

"The majority of fish kills are related to low dissolved oxygen. That low dissolved oxygen is in response to algal blooms. Fish get trapped in these areas," says Bruce Michael, director of the Tidewater Ecosystem Assessment Division for Maryland's Department of Natural Resources.

For the 383-mile long Potomac River, the greatest source of pollution comes from non-point sources -- sources over which everyday people have some control.

Non-point source pollution includes lawn fertilizers, pesticides, dirt plowed from farm fields, waste from farm animals and trash just dumped into the river. Land development and exhaust from cars also are non-point sources.

"It comes from everywhere. It's incredibly difficult to target and incredibly difficult to control," says Matthew Logan, president of Potomac Conservancy, a group devoted to land protection.

"We need to get the fertilizer out of the river -- that contributes nutrients. We have to keep the dirt in place on farms and construction sites -- that contributes sediment," Logan says.

Non-point source pollution contributes about 80 percent of the excess nutrient load that's in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, according to the U.S. Geological Survey.

Point sources of pollution are discharged or emitted from a specific location, such as a sewage treatment pipe or a smokestack. They come from the millions of gallons of wastewater discharged from municipal treatment plants and industries. Point source pollutants, which contribute the other roughly 20 percent of the dissolved nutrients in the Bay, are regulated by states and by the federal government through the Clean Water and Clean Air Acts.

Matthew Logan of Potomac

Conservancy says the region's growth isn't going to stop, so the area needs to "build smart." His group works to improve water quality; enhance forest, wetland, and aquatic habitats; restore threatened and endangered species; reduce erosion; and educate residents.

Logan says more needs to be done to clean up the Potomac Watershed. It spans 14,679 square miles in Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, Pennsylvania and D.C. and is home to more than 5 million people.

"Everyone in this region needs to be very concerned," Logan says. "Eighty percent of the Washington, D.C. area gets their drinking water from the Potomac River. Our bodies are 60 percent water, so you

can do the math. We are literally linked to the Potomac River. We all need to be concerned about what's in that water."

Of course, there's isn't one simple solution to reducing non-point pollution in the nation's 21st largest river.

"The Potomac River is suffering a death from a thousand cuts. What we are dealing with is development in all its different aspects from new roads, new houses, new shopping malls. It doesn't happen in one place. It's happening throughout the watershed."

Logan's group is working with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service, the Virginia Department of Forestry, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources Forest Service and Ducks

Unlimited to encourage farmers to plant riparian buffers or "green corridors." This vegetation would serve as a natural filter by trapping pollutants before they get to waterways.

"The trees are the best way to protect our drinking water," Logan says. "The more trees we can get in the ground, the better off we're going to be."

Anne Arundel County waterman John Vanalstine fishes for rockfish on the Potomac River. He says the slur on the river bottom from sediment is sometimes so thick, it affects his business.

"We spent more time actually replacing and repairing nets than we did harvesting the fish out of the nets," Vanalstine says.

A Paddling Tip from Wayne Dickert, Head of Instruction at NOC and '96 Whitewater Slalom Olympian

(from American Whitewater's July e-mail newsletter)

For this month's paddling tip, we're going all the way back to the paddling basics. All levels of paddlers, including advanced level boaters, have been able to increase their efficiency and confidence on the water through a good PREP: Posture-Rotation-Eyesight-Positive Mental Attitude. In all aspects of paddling whether you're playboating, creeking or just enjoying a class II run, these basic key points will help insure your success. Let's look closer.

To enjoy the benefits of proper Posture, make sure you're sitting upright with your chest out and chin up. If you tuck your chin down it often rolls your hips under your torso and putting more weight on the stern of the boat. Back in the day of 13 foot boats, posture was important. Now that we're using 6-8 foot boats regularly, good posture is critical to success...I know this of course not because I'm old! Let's just say I'm very experienced. To have good posture you'll need loose hamstrings too; spending some time working on flexibility helps a lot. Stay stretched.

With Rotation comes power. If you can harness the power of your torso, you'll have much more power than by using your arms only...unless you have massive guns like me that are much bigger than my waist. When that happens, you can arm paddle too. Until then, think about paddling with your entire upper body.

Use your Eyesight to look where you're going. This will help insure you get there. However, be sure not to "lock" on one thing only. Remember to look around and use your peripheral vision to notice what's going on around you as you travel to your destination.

Keeping a Positive Mental Attitude can be more elusive for some paddlers but is also a key component part of all aspects of paddling from learning your roll on flatwater to paddling the class V gnar. Remember to see it, believe it and then do it.

Now get out there and enjoy one of those wonderful rivers that American Whitewater has helped make a better place to paddle.

Land use blamed in recent fish kill
Runoff likely culprit for smallmouth bass losses in North River
by the Associated Press (June 25, 2005)

WEYERS CAVE -- State wildlife biologists say a rapid runoff of sediment and fertilizers in April most likely caused a massive fish kill in the Shenandoah Valley's North River.

The biologists say the river's smallmouth-bass population may not fully recover for another five years.

"It's not a classic fish kill that you can trace to a pipe," said Paul Bugas, a wildlife biologist with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. "It's almost certainly a land-use issue. It brings everybody in the watershed under the gun."

Bugas reviewed a stretch of the North River near Weyers Cave that is normally alive with fish this time of year.

The few remaining adult smallmouth bass in a nearly 100-mile stretch of the Shenandoah River and its tributaries have lesions. Those fish, and many others of the sunfish species, are either dead or dying of bacterial and fungal infections, Bugas said.

To test the river's fish population, the department used generator shocking gear set to stun fish within an 8-foot radius. Of the few adult fish they caught, only the carp, suckers and catfish were healthy.

One of the two adult smallmouth bass had an abscess and a lesion on its side. It was described by

fisheries technician Jason Hallacher as "looking like someone had put a cigar out on it."

Bugas said it appeared most of the dead fish had washed downstream into the Shenandoah and Potomac rivers, but he said the damage had already been done because the water remained fouled. He said it may be 2010 before 12-inch smallmouth bass are seen again in the North River.

Brian Trow, a Harrisonburg fishing guide, said he was fishing near the Grove Hill area during the fish kill's early stages.

"There were hundreds of dead fish in the water, and the ospreys were feeding like crazy. It was an annihilation," he said. "When you go from catching 80 smallmouth in a half-day to one or two in 10 hours of fishing, you know the river's done for."

Gary Collins, a fishing guide from McGaheysville, said the river appeared "devoid of life."

Trow and Collins say they plan to move their guided fishing trips to the James River.

Both guides said river-related tourism in the Shenandoah Valley will suffer because of the fish kill.

"It's one thing to talk about numbers of fish in the water," Collins said. "It's another thing when you start seeing dead fish. People are going to see that we have a bigger problem than we thought."

New Members & Address Updates

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New River State Park Bike Trail by Bob Youker

The weekend of May 20 to 22 I did most of the 57 miles bike trail along the old RR right-of-way on the New River in southwest Virginia. We stayed in the Super 8 motel right at the start of the trail in Galax, Virginia. The trail is a jewel, sheltered by trees most of the way. From Galax the trail runs along Chestnut Creek which looked like a lovely canoe run with one or two class 3s. Another branch of the trail starts in Fries and they join after about 6 miles at a long old RR trestle. The surface is fine gravel and no problem. There are picnic shelters every 6 miles or so. The New River is canoeable but very wide with infrequent river-wide ledges. Roger Corbett's book describes the New and several tributaries. The bike trail is described in the Rails-to-Trails Guidebooks. The State Park's web site is www.dcr.state.va.us. If you are down there the Virginia Creeper Trail in Damascus, Virginia is also excellent. The ride down on Interstate 81 takes about 6 hours.

American Whitewater Over the Falls Ohiopyle Festival (from the June 2005 issue of *The Paddler's Gauge*, newsletter of the Three Rivers Canoe Club)

The Ohiopyle Falls Event/Race will be held on August 27-28, 2005. There is something for everybody in and around Ohiopyle: hiking, biking, climbing, history, culture, dining and lodging to accommodate all tastes, and partying. We'll map it out. So, if you're the only family member inclined to run the falls, you'll have a lot of substance for a sales pitch that will get you on the water. Three Rivers Paddling Club (TRPC) is helping sponsor this event — visit www.fallsrace.com. We are also adding an upstream race at Entrance Rapid on the Lower Yough. Contact Barry Adams of TRPC for more info: bj2adams@juno.com or 412-242-4562.

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 2005: January 31, March 22, May 17, August 20 (Moonlight Picnic), September 20, November 15, December 3 (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 North exit and go about 0.6 miles north 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.

2005 BRV Officers: Ernie Katz, President; Beth Koller, VP; Bob Maxey, Trip Coordinator; Clark Childers, Treasurer; Frank Fico, Newsletter Editor; Kathleen Sengstock, Conservation Chairperson

2005 Board of Directors: Lou Campagna, Michael Dixon, Pete Dragon, Wes Mills, Court Ogilvie, Joe Sullivan

***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), 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 editors.

Address changes: contact Frank Fico, 1609 Autumnwood Dr., Reston, VA 20194-1523, (703) 318-7998,

fico1@netzero.net. The annual roster will be kept current via updates published on the back page of 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*.

Upcoming Trips

July 23	Lower Yough	Intermediate	Jennifer Plyler	301-445-4815*	Pls98@erols.com
July 24	Little Falls or Mather Gorge	Intermediate/ Advanced	Ed Grove	703-533-8334	eddyout@erols.com
July 30-31	Lower Yough	Intermediate	Len Rice	703-222-5121	Lrice3@aol.com
Aug 4-5	Cheat/Yough	Intermediate/ Advanced	Wes Mills	703-866-9815	Wesmills1@cox.net
Aug 6	Lower Yough	Intermediate	Jennifer Plyler	301-445-4815*	Pls98@erols.com
Aug 7	Lower Yough	Intermediate	Lou Campagna	301-929-0136	campagl@aol.com
Aug 13-14	Lower Yough	Intermediate	Pete Dragon	703-255-3447	dragon.va@att.net
Aug 14	Dealer's Choice	Novice	Jim Finucane	301-365-3485	(call before 9PM)
Aug 14	S. Fork Shenan.	Novice	Bob Maxey	703-823-1439	Maxey.bob@epa.gov
Aug 20	BRV Picnic	Novice	Beth Koller	240-506-0417	ekoller2@earthlink.net
Aug 20	Lower Yough	Intermediate	Jennifer Plyler	301-445-4815*	Pls98@erols.com
Aug 20	Potomac Needles	Intermediate	Katherine Mull	703-437-5484	katherine.mull@gmail.com
Sept. 3/5	New	Advanced	Ernie Katz	703-356-7105	erniekatz@webtv.net
Sept 10-11	Upper & Lower Gauley	Advanced	Court Ogilvie	703-528-5185	courtandsuzy@comcast.net

*please call before 8 PM



The Voyageur

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

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Deadline for September *Voyageur*:
Friday, September 2

MOONLIGHT PICNIC
Saturday, August 20