

THE VOYAGEUR



www.BlueRidgeVoyageurs.org

March 2008

THE PRESIDENT'S PUT-IN

Here we are in the middle of winter. I hope some of you took advantage of the recent rains and unseasonably warm weather to get a little time in your boats. If not, I hope you have gotten out skiing, hiking or to some of the local roll sessions.

Thanks to Bob Maxey for putting together his presentation on the Utah Desert which was well received at the January Meeting. It was a special treat to see some old pics and hear the stories of your younger exploits!

Looking forward to the March meeting, we will have Rick Koller, Ed Grove and others presenting their summer '07 trip on the Selway River. Please mark your calendars for the 11th and come on out. If anyone has a trip or other presentation they would like to present to the group in 2008, please let me know.

As we head into the '08 season, things are looking a little wetter than last year. I'm holding my breath for a better year and of course improving my ability to go for that second or third roll attempt.

Jim

Issue: The Use of Club Funds to Purchase Equipment by Jim Pruitt

At the January board meeting there was a question raised about the club supporting equipment purchases for member use. The current budget will not cover such purchases, but there was discussion that perhaps a "Special Assessment" could be levied for those members who wanted to participate. The equipment discussed was:

- a shredder [*the watercraft, not the office accessory! — Ed.*]
- a raft for Western trip support/taking non paddling family and friends on trips
- a trailer for boat transport

The management of any equipment the club decides to purchase is to be determined. Specifically, how to reserve, use fees to support maintenance, waivers/liability issues, storage, etc. At this point it was decided that we should poll the membership to gauge any interest in such a venture. Only if enough people are interested in the same things would it become feasible. Remember participation is voluntary — but if you are not in on the special assessment to make the purchase, your ability to use the equipment would be on a standby basis if at all. So to put out a poll:

YES — I would be interested in further discussions

NO — I have no interest in such a purchase

To keep things simple, I only need to hear from those who are interested in pursuing this further; no response will be considered a NO vote. To cast your votes you can e-mail me at jim.pruitt@gmail.com. Those who are Internet challenged may call me and leave a message at 703-728-0816.

[The following article is from the August 24, 2007 edition of the Crested Butte (Colorado) News, submitted by Bob Youker]

Improvements Set for Whitewater Park on Gunnison River **by Bryan Miller**

With the confluence of three beautiful rivers in the lower Gunnison Valley, the Gunnison area has long been known as a sweet spot for boaters. And this fall the Gunnison River just might get a little sweeter, especially for kayakers.

Marlene Crosby, the director of Gunnison County Public Works, says help is on the way to make needed improvements to the Gunnison County Whitewater Park, just south of the Gunnison-Crested Butte Regional Airport. "We're going to raise the wings to make them more retentive," says Crosby.

The wings, explains Crosby, are rock structures that were built out of boulders to create play areas within the river for boaters. By enlarging the wings, Crosby says, the boaters will have an easier time staying within the park. "They'll be able to play the rapids longer," she says.

Shane Sigle, who works for the firm that designed the park, Recreation Engineering and Planning Inc., in Boulder, says with just a little work the water park can be exceptional. "It's about 95% done," he says. "With a couple of modifications, it's going to be really sweet."

Sigle estimates about two to three days' worth of work with heavy machinery to do the needed improvements. "The drops have a great amount of potential," says Sigle. "We just want to beef up the waves."

Greg Osgood, a whitewater enthusiast from Gunnison, is excited about the prospect of improvements to the five-year-old park. "For the first three years, the waves were great," he says.

But Osgood notes scouring over the last couple of years has degraded the park's quality for kayakers. "For intermediate boaters, it's still okay," he says, "but the last couple of competitions we've had out there have been kind of a bust."

The challenge, says Osgood, is designing a park that works with huge variances in water volume. "The Gunnison can run anywhere from 250 cfs in the fall to 3,000 cfs in the spring," he says. "It's hard to design a park that works well at all the different rates."

Like Sigle, however, Osgood thinks the park can be vastly improved with just a little work. "All it's going to take is to build up the banks, and clean up the channel a little," he says.

County commissioner Hap Channell says you don't have to be a boater to appreciate the water park. As a result of a recent court ruling, Channell says, the water park helps protect the river's in-stream flows.

"Because the court ruled that water for recreation is a legitimate water use, it helps us keep our water on the Western Slope," he says.

Channell explained that because the so-called "recreational flow rate" is a brand-new designation by the court, the water rights perfected for the park are junior to most of the other rights in the valley. Still, says Channell, every bit helps. "It's all part of the puzzle," he says.

Retired Western State College professor Bruce Bartleson says he enjoys the man-made riffles without a boat. "I like to just put a life jacket on and body surf the rapids," he says. "The park is a great community asset for everyone."

Crosby says the work has been budgeted and the improvements to the park are set to go in this fall. "It's just a matter of scheduling the engineering and the staff time for the equipment operation," she says.

Osgood is grateful that Crosby and the county commissioners have prioritized the needed water park improvements, and looks forward to surfing the bigger rapids. "The Gunnison Valley boating community will be ecstatic," he says.

Cross Country Skiing at Canaan Valley, 25-28 January 2008

by Frank Fico

For a number of years now, we have been renting a house in Canaan Valley the last weekend in January. This is the four-day weekend that Fairfax County provides to its students, courtesy of two well-placed teacher workdays at the end of the second grading period. The best thing about this weekend is that you get an extra day beyond the two holiday weekends, but you don't pay the premium holiday weekend prices.

The house is actually in Canaan Heights, the high point along Rt. 32 between Canaan Valley and Davis. It sits on the crest of Canaan Mountain adjacent to Monongahela National Forest, Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge, and Canaan Valley Institute public lands, and is thus ideally situated for ski-in/ski-out nordic access. And as I have recounted before, it is also just across the road from a vacation house owned by fellow paddler Eric Erbe, who has developed and maintained quite an extensive network of trails for skiing and biking over the years. The problem is that they are purposely not well-marked (so as to not invite over-use by the general public), and it takes a long time to get to know all the trails. Going out just once or twice a year in the winter, I have struggled at times to locate the excellent trails Eric had led me down previously.

We have been lucky over the years to find snow the last weekend of January at Canaan. Unlike downhill skiers, we cannot rely on man-made snow — it has to be the real stuff. During this very dismal,

warm, La Nina winter, we were particularly lucky to find a base of 6-12" in the area.

Joining us at "Dromore" this year were Wes and Ryan Mills, and our neighbors, a family of four who are avid cross country skiers and mountain bikers. In addition, Gus Anderson, Debby Crouse and daughter Ashley stayed at their pedestal home in Black Bear Woods, which is just down the road from Canaan Heights.

The two days off were a Friday and Monday this year. We loaded up and were on the road by mid-morning Friday, and experienced no travel delays because (as is fairly typical) there was no snow to be seen on the ground along the way until we entered Canaan Valley. We decided to go out the "southern route," taking advantage of the completed sections of Corridor H to cut about 30 minutes off our trip. That would also have us enter the Valley from the south, and allow a convenient 2-hour ski at Canaan Valley State Park before being able to check in at the realtor's at 4:00. We met Wes and Ryan at the Balsam Swamp Overlook, just down the hill past the turn-off for the lodge, about 1:30 as we dressed for the trip. Our dog Abbie was with us, and she really wanted to come along after being cooped up in the car for three and a half hours, but there are too many deer that frequent the park for her to be romping through the woods off the leash.

We encountered near-perfect con-

ditions with a good base and dry, powdery snow as we headed down the trailhead from the overlook. We skied along the Middle Ridge Trail, a 2.5 mile loop that has some nice elevation changes, but nothing too steep for the kids to handle. From past experience, I knew to ski in a clockwise direction in order to get the steep uphill out of the way early, and leave us with a fairly gradual descent to the marshy area at Club Run. That would leave easy rolling terrain for the return leg of the loop, with two steeper downhills. Everyone had great runs. The conditions were so good, some of us went out just before dark from the house, up behind Eric's place on his network of trails to an old quarry.

I purposely had not planned the skiing itinerary for the next two days, waiting to see what the group decided to do. Our neighbors' kids are very young, and one of the parents would need to babysit while the other skied. So there was an opportunity for a potential one way trip with a shuttle, depending where cars would be ending up. There was another complicating factor as well: I had been discharged from the hospital only three days before the trip, and I had to self-administer IV antibiotics every six hours. I had tried to push for oral antibiotics, but the doctors wanted to be sure they knocked the particularly nasty bug I had contracted out of my system for good, which called for four weeks of IV antibiotics four times a day. This would mean I would have to plan

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West Virginia Rivers Coalition Update by Beth Koller

Raffle tickets still available

WVRC raffle tickets are still on sale: 1 for \$6, 2 for \$10, 6 for \$25, 12 for \$50, or the BIG KAHUNA: 30 for \$100. Folks will be calling from River and Trail near Cindy Dee's Restaurant in the Harper's Ferry area during the evenings of March 3-6. Contact Joe Peabody at jpeabody@wvriver.org, or 304-637-7201.

Benefit gala planned at Old Ebbitt Grill

Sally Davidson continues to carry on the tradition of her late husband Stuart, who was a major benefactor to the boating community and a BRV paddler. The Old Ebbitt Grill in downtown DC will be the site of a WVRC party Thursday, June 19. Some major surprises are planned. Please mark the date.

Chili Feast/Film Fest a success

The West Virginia Rivers Coalition would like to thank all of the BRV'ers who turned out for the chili feast and boat'n film fest at Barb Brown's house Saturday, February 9. The paddle of LOST PADDLE fame made its appearance. We watched over 5 hours worth of film footage. Highlights included Bob Belton's "Give Me a River" and Bluegrass Paddling Club's "Women in Rubber." The former featured boating on the Potomac and in West Virginia in the mid 1960s. Many of the boats were canoes — often aluminum with cloth spray covers. A few fiberglass boats were present. Often helmets and lifejackets were AWOL. To top it off, the narration was done in the typical Jack Webb monotone style. Truly another era, BUT it was amazing what kind of water was run in those days. The latter film featured women in neoprene — tops, neoprene spray-skirts, and fishnet stockings performing live at the Gauley Fest in the 1980s. They had paddle moves and choreography to "Who You Gonna Call: Hole Busters." The story line follows their river exploits and the activities of an intrepid reporter from "BowLines" searching for their training site and learning about their unusual training regimen, which included moonlight runs on the Gauley, whirlpool whitewater sessions, and poolside champagne served by studmuffins. David Cottingham was the winner of a drybox (Photography Center, Wisconsin Avenue, Bethesda, MD) in the silent auction.

Wild Monongahela Act introduced

The WVRC is part of the Wilderness Coalition, which has worked to protect wilderness areas in the Monongahela National Forest area. Some success has been achieved with the introduction of the Wild Monongahela Act into Congress by the WV Congressional delegation. This bill will reduce/eliminate the encroachment of superhighways on ridgelines, clear-cutting, dams on free flowing streams, gas-coal exploration, and easements for high voltage power transmission lines (that do not even serve citizens of WV). Please write your Congressional representatives to support this bill, but also recommend inclusion of Seneca Creek, the East Fork of the Greenbrier, and all of the Roaring Plains. Forward a copy to members of the WV delegation, such as Representatives Nick Rahall (2307 Rayburn Building, Wash, DC, 20515) and Alan Mollohan (2302 Rayburn Building, Wash, DC 20515).

Tears for Tiers

The Federal government has identified three levels of protection, Tiers 1, 2, and 3, with 3 being reserved for the highest quality water. West Virginia established a fourth tier, 2.5, for high quality streams that they wanted protected, but did not want to receive the irreversible protective status conferred by the Federal Tier 3 status. This system has been in effect for over a decade, but is now being revisited. The list to be considered by the WV legislature initially included 444 streams; this was reduced to 309 streams, and later under Governor Manchin via the Department of Environmental Protection when the legislature failed to act, to 159 streams. Now the Governor wants the entire system to be abolished-with no Tier 2.5 protection. Unless you want to paddle in filth, contact Governor Manchin in Charleston, WV. Tell him why you come to West Vir-

ginia and how much money you bring into the State with your paddling/hiking/camping activities.

New River Gorge activity

Do you want to see stream-side condos on your way down the New River Gorge? WVRC didn't think so. It has submitted comments to the National Park Service regarding management of the Gorge for the next 15-20 years. Among their recommendations are those for inclusion of Backus Mountain, Glade Creek, and Dowdy Creek into the wilderness sections and for controlled rim development with scenic trails connecting historic sites. Contact WVRC for more information about the amended Alternative #5 comments: www.wvrivers.org.

SKIING (Continued from page 3)

my skiing around my IV schedule, but I was just happy to be allowed to go on the trip at all.

Some of the group wanted to head out on a brief ski first thing in the morning, so I led them back behind the Erbe place again for just over an hour. After eating an early lunch and getting an IV treatment, I headed out for the day's "feature presentation:" a trip across Rt. 32 into the national forest and up to Canaan Loop Road, then down the Allegheny Trail to Blackwater Falls State Park, where we would be picked up by part of the group that decided to visit the sledding hill and the adjacent ski trails there. I was a little concerned about the steepness of the descent down to the state park along the Allegheny Trail, as I had only skied up from the park previously. Only Wes, Ryan and Kerry joined me on this trip.

We started out with good conditions as we made our way along the Erbe trails that crossed Rt. 32 and paralleled Canaan Loop Road. We eventually had to ski along the road for a mile or two, which was somewhat boring, but a nice break from the bushwhacking we were doing. Once on the Allegheny Trail, we found the cover to be less than satisfactory, frequently encountering

rocks and wet spots. The trail is heavily entrenched here, which is the primary reason for those problems. The steep section I was concerned about consisted of one relatively short switchback descent that I was able to ski down (by heading off trail at the end of the downhill pitches, runaway truck ramp-style), but the others walked. The remainder of the trail included a more gradual descent to the park boundary.

I had called ahead to Bridget to pick Kerry up from the first trailhead we would come to (at the riding stables), so she would have time to use the sledding hill before the tow rope closed for the day. Kerry and I skied ahead to make the rendezvous, then I skied back to rejoin Wes and Ryan. The three of us skied along the park trails towards the sledding hill. At one point, I took a wrong turn, and we ended up at the lodge. I left them there to be picked up by one car of our group, while I pushed on to the sledding hill and caught a ride home with Bridget.

On Sunday, I decided to ski my favorite trip, from the house down to Canaan Valley State Park. As no one was planning to go there that day, we ran a car shuttle before heading out, leaving Wes's vehicle at the same Balsam Swamp Over-

look we had used on Friday. This day, I was joined by Wes, Bridget and my neighbor Janna. We started out across Rt. 32, then took a slightly different route up to Canaan Loop Road, which had us removing our skis and walking up a particularly steep section of fire road (at which point I realized why Eric Erbe had never taken me that way). Once on the road, we skied about a mile past our trailhead from the day before, and turned onto the Allegheny Trail headed south. We quickly found ourselves breaking trail, which aided in slowing our descent of the beautiful downhill pitches into the park. (I remembered from previous experience how exciting they could be with hard-pack or icy conditions.) We skied out to the car along the same back side of the Middle Ridge loop we had skied on Friday.

Monday was getaway day, but I was able to ski up to Bald Knob and the backcountry trails beyond for a couple hours while the kids went tubing at the downhill ski area. There is a long downhill pitch that is one of my favorites, heading from the top down to the Cabin Mountain Trail on the back side. On it and close to the bottom, I had my only fall of the weekend. But it didn't spoil what was another great weekend of skiing up at Canaan Valley.

RC Gauge Calibration & Painting

by Ron Knipling

RC gauges may be low-tech, but they are still useful, and also add to the shared lore of local paddling. Many local and regional RC gauges need to be repainted and, in some cases, recalibrated. Summer and early fall are the best times for painting, but the best times for calibrating are spring and early summer. I've volunteered to compile information on needed repainting — if you have relevant information, please share it with me (rknipling@aol.com). The simplest information is that an existing gauge needs to be repainted. If it is accurate, within a few inches of accurate, then we'll simply repaint it. Sometime this summer we'll organize a BRV gauge painting day or weekend, if there is sufficient interest and information.

What about new gauges or recalibrations? Remember that *zero* in the Randy Carter system is operationally defined as the lowest level you can paddle the stream without getting out of your boat due to low water. Of course that will vary somewhat by boat and boater, but not by more than a couple of inches. There has to be a physical vertical measurement from a fixed object at the observation point. For example, "Zero is 45" below the bottom of the take-out bridge on the downstream, river-right side." If an existing gauge is way off, we'll consider painting a new one, leaving the old one for comparison. You might say, "The existing faint gauge reads 8" too high." Anyway, if you are interested in RC gauges and want to record and send this information, I'll compile it and we'll see what we have this summer.

The Anacostia River and Urban Impacts: A Brief Account on Litter

by Kamweti Mutu, Project Coordinator, AWS

The Anacostia River Watershed spans 176 square miles and encompasses over one million residents in a very urbanized and built-out landscape. While it is unfortunate, it comes as little surprise that this natural resource has sustained a barrage of impacts. The more serious negative effects include historic deposition of PCB's, heavy metals and pesticides in its clay sediments; annihilation of over 90 percent of its tidal marshes through "swamp reclamation"; channelizing of the main-stem; stream degradation and main channel sedimentation; and to an increasing extent, litter or floating trash.

The regional metropolitan area of Washington, DC is faced with serious socio-economic challenges including urban blight and gentrification, and public or civic education shortfalls. Combined with lifestyle trends adopting convenience consumption over smart consumerism (if such a thing exists at all) in the past few decades, the Anacostia River has seen an exponential increase in polyethylene products dumped deliberately or, more commonly, neglectfully pitched in parks, parking lots, streets and highways only to be swept into the streams by wind and stormwater. While purposeful dumping in obscure locations ostensibly is on the decline, the alarming development is a general lack of public awareness about the tragedy of littering, and the results are plainly evident along our waterways.

That's a very basic, simplified, nutshell perspective of the problem. Trash simply doesn't belong in a dynamic natural system like a river for a variety of reasons such as ecological functions and recreational value, to mention a couple. That's what the Anacostia Watershed Society (AWS) and its members understand and act upon. Through cleanup events with grassroots groups, hands-on environmental education targeting children and advocacy with various authorities, the AWS strives to address the issue at all levels. Cleanup events are a method that galvanizes people's attitude towards the river as a natural heritage and against littering. For current information about our organization and our 14th Annual AWS Earth Day Cleanup & Rally, please visit www.anacostiaws.org

Thanks and please feel free to contact us with any other queries and happenings: 301-699-6204 -ext 108.

BRV Conservation Fund Recipients
As Approved by the Board of Directors, February 4, 2008

The Potomac Conservancy 8601 Georgia Ave. Suite 612 Silver Spring, MD 20910 (301) 608-1188 www.potomac.org	\$75	Friends of the Shenandoah River 1460 University Dr., Gregory Hall Winchester, VA 22601 (540) 636-4948 www.fosr.org	\$50
American Whitewater 1424 Fenwick Lane Silver Spring, MD 20910 (866) BOAT4AW www.americanwhitewater.org	\$75	The Cacapon Institute Route 1, Box 326 High View, WV 26808 (304) 856-1385 www.cacaponinstitute.org	\$50
Friends of the Rappahannock P.O. Box 7254 Fredericksburg, VA 22404 (540) 373-3448 www.riverfriends.org	\$50	Alice Ferguson Foundation 2001 Bryan Pointe Rd. Accokeek, MD 20607 (301) 292-5665 www.hardbargainfarm.org	\$50
West Virginia Rivers Coalition 801 N. Randolph Avenue Elkins, WV 26241 (304) 637-7201 www.wvivers.org	\$50	River Network 3814 Albemarle Street, NW Washington, DC 20016-1851 (202) 364-2550 www.rivernetnetwork.org	\$50
Friends of the Cheat 119 S. Price Street, Suite 206 Kingwood, WV 26537 (304) 329-3621 www.cheat.org	\$50		

7th Annual End of Winter Celebration

Cabin fever got you down? Ed Gertler (301-585-4381 or e_gertler@yahoo.com) will help you break out with a novice level boating trip to West Virginia on Saturday, March 1. Then he will conduct his own version of "Dancing with the Stars" by introducing you to contra dancing. The trip is open to members of the Canoe Cruisers, Blue Ridge Voyageurs, Coastal Canoeists, and Monocacy Canoe Club.

Preview of Upcoming Program

Roy Sewall is an engineer with a passion for photography and the Potomac River. The combination of these interests has resulted in the publication of coffee-table size photography books. The first of these was published 2 years ago. It presented views, activities, and flora/fauna in and along the Potomac River from Great Falls on down. His next book, due to arrive in the Fall, will concentrate on Mather Gorge. Learn more about OUR river. Learn to take better pictures. Share the location of some of your favorite river activities and locations. Maybe they'll be in the next book. Jim Pruitt and Beth Koller are working on a date. Maybe May. Stay tuned.

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 2008: January 23, March 11, May TBD, July 19 (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.

2008 BRV Officers: Jim Pruitt, President; Lou Campagna, VP; Jenny Thomas, Trip Coordinator; Clark Childers, Treasurer; Frank Fico, Newsletter Editor; Kathleen Sengstock, Conservation.

2008 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.com), 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.com. 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 May *Voyageur*:

Friday, May 2nd

NEXT MEETING
Tuesday, March 11th

2008 Trip Schedule and Membership Roster inside