

THE VOYAGEUR



www.BlueRidgeVoyageurs.org

May 2006

THE PRESIDENT'S PUT-IN

This Presidents Put-In will be even more brief than usual due to the March drought and club inactivity. It has been a pretty slow spring. The March drought was fairly brutal and reminded me of the long drought we endured four years ago. I did much praying that this drought would be much shorter than the last one. Our combined prayers worked and the rain gods blessed us with an abundance of April showers.

Several weeks ago I spent a good weekend on Little Sandy Creek and the Laurel Fork. It is not often that these two classics are available to us. We had two excellent runs. See the trip report below.

I am now packing for a week-long trip combining our club with a group of New England boaters. I am looking forward to it. I hope to see many of you on the trip.

Ernie

Little Sandy into the Big Sandy & Laurel Fork of the Cheat, 8-9 April

by Bob Maxey, photos by Len Rice

Paddlers: Keith Merkel and Dick Pierce (Little Sandy only), Court Ogilvie (Laurel Fork only), Len Rice, Pete Dragon, Jon Hitchings, Karen Egbert, Ernie Katz

Gauge Level for Big Sandy: 6.9 feet.

What a lucky bunch of paddlers we were! It has been dry all spring, but the Morgantown forecast called for rain all day Friday and into the night. As we arrived at the church parking lot along the Little Sandy, the rains stopped. We did a visual check on the river and quickly determined that the river was runnable. At least two other groups agreed with us that this was the place to be. This is a beautiful



Keith Merkel on the Little Sandy

run with at least 3 ledges on the Little Sandy and one big one on the Big Sandy. All of the group ran this big ledge on the far right, which only has a rocky run-out to deal with. A run in the center could involve a tricky hydraulic. I know, Keith and I were stuck in it one warm June day. On the Little Sandy, the rapids are nearly continuous after a mile or so into the trip.

At this level the rivers are a little intimidating, but fun. There are now numerous trees in these rivers, so the wary paddler will be the live one! One final note on the Big Sandy: the last rapid just above the take-out bridge is now a relatively easy run on the right. Many years ago it was choked with logs, which, of course, can happen again.

(Continued on page 2)



The rapid just above the take-out on the Big Sandy.

Sandy/Laurel (Continued from page 1)

Gauge Level for the Laurel Fork: 6 inches on the painted gauge on the bridge; Parsons 6.44 ft.

The Laurel Fork is always a gem — at the right level. The 5-inch level for our run was about the minimum I would want to run it; a paddling fanatic might have a run at 3 inches, but watch out for the stony run-out and trees about 80% into the trip. As with the Little and Big Sandys noted above,

there are numerous recent tree falls into the river. For those who have not run this beauty before (and for those who have forgotten), once the rapids start on this river, they do not stop until the junction with the Dry Fork. There are several ledges, which should also be examined for logs. There is an unrunnable (for sane paddlers) waterfall about a third of the way into the trip (*see photo below*). You could play your way down this river, but you would make an already long day impossible! Anyway, there are numerous excellent surfing waves.

The scenery on both of these rivers is incredible: beautiful, continuous white water, endless rhododendron and wonderful rock cliffs. Along with the Kitzmiller section of the Potomac, the Middle Fork of the Tygart and the upper



section of the Meadow, the Laurel Fork is one of the most exciting and beautiful runs in West Virginia. There is also excellent shuttle news. What used to be an hour one way shuttle has been cut in half. (Thanks for the tip, Jon and Karen.) Just head north from the Alpine Lodge on WV 12 and the paved road will lead to the take-out. It appears that this road was paved at the same time that the new bridge over the Dry Fork was installed.

Group photo at the Laurel Fork put-in.

Memorial Day Weekend and Southern Rivers ***“Leave Your Watch Behind”***

May 26, 27, 28, and 29 we will gather at our base camp for a long weekend of camping, boating, hiking, biking, trout fishing (base camp is located on Big Laurel Creek), eating, or whatever your pleasure. Last year, we had a terrific time paddling the French Broad River one day and hiking Big Bald (the wildflowers and scenery were spectacular) another day. Some of our more adventuresome paddlers braved the Nolichucky while one person opted for golfing in Erwin, TN, just in time to run shuttle for the Nolichucky paddlers. Or if you just need a little R&R in the country, that's fine too. You can keep the hot tub primed.

This is a relaxing weekend and people can pick and choose what they want to do. There are no designated trip leaders or planned trips per se. People can select rivers to paddle depending on skill levels and interest or they may decide to do other activities. So leave your watches at home because we will be on Southern time.

We usually do group meals in the evening but the grill is always available. Last year, Whitey Hitchcock from the CHOTA paddling club in Knoxville, TN grilled bratwurst on the banks of the French Broad River. What a delight! I have never been paddling on such a full belly. Needless to say, it was definitely a float trip.

And if you are not a paddler and there is enough interest, I can check into getting a raft trip to coincide with our paddling trip. I would need to know in advance if this is the case and will definitely try to accommodate everyone.

Base camp is located between the French Broad and Nolichucky Rivers, about 4 miles off of Interstate 26, exit 3. It's a seven hour drive from the DC metro area if traffic cooperates. Nearby towns (and hotel accommodations) include Marshall and Mars Hill, NC. But if you love the country, we have access to a four acre pasture, complete with barn and a full kitchen. Sun showers and other bathing facilities are available.

Hope to see you for the weekend. It's a fun time and a great way to kick off the summer. For more details, please call Jennifer Plyler at (301) 445-4815 before 8 PM.

Raft, Kayak, Canoe Race and Harpers Ferry Outdoor Festival

Raft Race: May 29th, 2006

Kayak Race, Rodeo & 8th Annual Harpers Ferry Outdoor Festival: June 17, 2006

For eight years now, the paddling community of the greater Harpers Ferry area has hosted a kayak race/festival in memory of Tim Gavin. Tim was a resident, friend, and avid paddler who lost his life in a kayaking accident in March of 1998 on the Upper Blackwater River. He was an outdoor recreation enthusiast and supporter of preserving our local natural resources for future generations. Since whitewater was such a large part of his life, we have selected three organizations that he would be proud to support. These include Friends of the Blackwater Canyon, Friends of the Cheat, and Friends of the Shenandoah River, each of which play instrumental roles in conservation, preservation, and monitoring resource quality. This year we plan to hold the 8th annual Tim Gavin Downriver Race and Harpers Ferry Outdoor Festival on June 17th, 2006 at the KOA Campground in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. The Tim Gavin Downriver Race will be held on the Shenandoah River. The race course traverses Class I, II, and III rapids. This is a fun race for all skill levels of boating, so bring your canoe, kayak, ducky, or raft. Join us after the race for an awards ceremony, silent auction, great food, and live music. There is plenty of camping space available so bring a tent or stay in one of the cabins on site.

For more information check out our website at www.harpersferryoutdoorfestival.org or email us at harpersferryfestival@hotmail.com. Additional questions or interest in helping to sponsor this fundraiser can be answered by Mike Moore at (304)676-6853. Hope to see you on the river.

51st Running of the CCA Potomac Downriver Race

Sunday, May 21, 2006

by V. Star Mitchell, Downriver Co-Race Chair

The 51st running of the CCA Potomac Downriver Race will be Sunday, May 21st. **COME AND BE A PART OF A HALF-CENTURY OF LIVING HISTORY AND PADDLE THE RACE! JOIN THE FUN!**

The pre-registration fee is only \$15! Obtain a registration form from the CCA website at www.canoecruisers.org and follow the instructions for mailing. At registration, the fee is \$20. Tandem teams pay as individuals UNLESS they are a parent and child. A parent and child (under age 18) go for \$15 a boat pre-registered and \$20 a boat at the sign-in. Liability forms **must** be signed on race day.

The race begins at Rocky Island on the Potomac River just above Wet Bottom Rapid and goes for 7.5 miles to Sycamore Island. At the end of the race, a free T-shirt, cap, logo, and a free lunch will be given to all racers, and there will be a ceremony with awards and prizes for the winners. (If you do not attend the ceremony, **do not** expect to receive the above!). This is the 50th Anniversary of the CCA and, thus, there will be a few extra perks.

Sign-in begins at 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. at Great Falls Inn (Maryland) followed by a mandatory meeting for all racers. If the river is over 5 feet, the race will start at Old Anglers Inn. This is a race for **anyone** from the pros to parent/child tandem teams, but this is **NOT A NOVICE** race. All participants should have experience in and be comfortable with up to **Class III rapids**. Any kind of a boat can enter provided it is **properly outfitted** with adequate flotation (air bags) and the paddlers (and all occupants of the boat) are **wearing** a helmet and a PFD (life jacket).

If you plan to paddle the race, **PLEASE PRE-REGISTER** to help with our head-count for how many T-shirts and lunches we need to order.

Volunteer helpers are needed for safety boats and for land gofers ("land engineers", however, no degrees needed). You will receive all of the perks the racers receive and be a part of an historical event. Please call or e-mail Star Mitchell @ 301-530-3252 or starmitchell@verizon.net.

Antietam Creek Misadventure

[The following is an e-mail from Bob Youker, following up on the events of March 11th. The "two strong men" Bob refers to were myself and Doug White (thanks for the ego boost, Bob!), who, along with the rest of our trip members arrived from leaving a vehicle at the take-out to find Bob sitting in a rather curious location next to the road.]

On Saturday March 11, I was at the put-in for canoeing lower Antietam Creek when, while walking across a limestone face with loose pebbles on top, my feet went flying out from under me and I fell down very hard on my left hip. When I regained my senses I could see my left foot sticking out at a 90 degree angle. I waited a half an hour on the ground until the shuttle crew arrived and two strong men lifted me up into the passenger seat of my Chevy Blazer. My partner, John Lentz, drove me back to Bethesda and Sibley Hospital emergency room where they did the x-rays and prepared me for surgery Sunday morning. I had broken the bone clean off just below the ball joint, so they put in a new ball and fastened it to the existing leg bone. This is called a "half hip replacement." My leg bone is now connected to my hip bone! I have had no pain and moved quickly to the rehab unit of the hospital and physical therapy. They let me come home this morning *[March 19]* with a walker. I will have some home care nursing and PT. The therapy people are wonderful. They say it is six to eight weeks to feel normal and that I can ski next winter again. The hospital staff comes from all over the world and was wonderful. I like the cards or comments from people who tell me how well their friends did with this operation. I did not enjoy the comments about a friend who dislocated the ball joint in bed and has had four operations! I guess that is a good warning to follow their rules. — Bob

Cedar Creek, 23 April photos by Len Rice

Eleven kids(!), four adults and one dog ran Cedar Creek on a beautiful spring Sunday afternoon following soaking rains all day Saturday and Sunday morning. The participants included Ginny Deseau, the Fico family plus one friend, Len Rice and four of his kids, and Len's friend with four of his kids. The weather and water level (3.3 on the USGS gauge at US 11) were perfect, and there were no swims until the take-out was in sight!



Clockwise from upper left: The entire group at the lunch stop, Bridget and Jamie Fico run the broken-out low-water bridge, Lauren Rice and friend run it in the ducky, exploring Panther Cave.

Better Roads, Cleaner Streams

[from Nature Conservancy, Spring 2006, submitted by Bob Youker]

The creeks and streams in Maryland's upper Potomac River system look like a chocolatey brew after a major rainstorm. Large plumes of brown sediment from dirt and gravel roads threaten Sideling Hill, Town and Fifteen Mile Creeks — home to more than 40 species of fish, three species of globally rare mussels and a globally rare flower called harperella.

“These wooded watersheds have no significant development and minimal logging and agriculture,” says

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Act Now to Protect the Shenandoah River!

[The following is taken from the website of American Rivers, which recently included the Shenandoah as #5 on its list of the top ten endangered American rivers.]

The Shenandoah River is vital to the culture, economy, and health of the residents of Virginia and West Virginia, and an important local and regional drinking water source. (Nearly 90 percent of the Washington, D.C. metropolitan region depends on the Potomac and its major tributary, the Shenandoah, for clean drinking water.) A thriving agricultural area, the Shenandoah Valley is also home to a rich history, as a vital corridor for the pioneer movement and host to a number of significant Civil War battles. The Shenandoah's rich heritage, in addition to the river's excellent boating and fishing opportunities, draws hundreds of thousands of visitors annually.

The Shenandoah River is at a high risk of becoming a victim of its own popularity. As the population of the Shenandoah Valley soars and agricultural land is replaced by urban and suburban development, the river is under siege from increased polluted runoff.

More than 1,300 miles of rivers and streams in the Shenandoah watershed fail to meet federal clean water standards because of excess nutrients, sediment, and other pollutants. A major and growing cause of these problems is overdevelopment. Rapid growth leads to more roads, parking lots, and roofs. These hard surfaces prevent rain from soaking into the ground naturally and result in significant increases in runoff tainted by automobile oil, lawn fertilizer, pesticides, and other pollutants into nearby streams that feed into the river.

According to the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, 80 percent of the Shenandoah

South Fork's adult smallmouth bass and red breasted sunfish populations died in 2005, one year after a similar fish kill in the Shenandoah's North Fork. Just last month, another smaller fish kill occurred in both forks. Although the cause of these kills remains unclear, polluted water is the prime suspect, underscoring the degradation of this river.

What You Can Do: Send comments to the Frederick County Board of Supervisors urging them to adopt river friendly plans for the County. County Supervisors have the opportunity to adopt Rural Area and Urban Area plans that allow growth while also protecting the Shenandoah and the streams that flow into it. Urge the Frederick Supervisors to plan wisely to protect the Shenandoah.

For more information about the Shenandoah River, visit the following websites:

Potomac Conservancy: www.potomac.org/index.html

Valley Conservation Council: <http://www.valleyconservation.org/>

Friends of the Shenandoah: <http://www.fosr.org/>

Information about the Frederick County Planning

Process: [www.co.frederick.va.us/](http://www.co.frederick.va.us/PlanningAndDevelopment/PlanningAndDev.htm)

Learn more about the impact of development on clean

water: www.epa.gov/nps/urbanmm/, <http://www.urban-nature.org/landuse/landuse.htm>.

Information about fish kills on the Shenandoah:

www.dgif.virginia.gov/newsroom/news.asp?id=87

and www.deq.state.va.us/info/srfishkill.html.

BETTER, CLEANER (Continued from page 5)

Donnelle Keech, who directs The Nature Conservancy's Allegany Forests Project. "One of the biggest pollutants is poorly maintained dirt and gravel roads."

To address this, the Conservancy is collaborating on a project called Better Roads, Cleaner Streams with the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and the Center for Dirt and Gravel Road Studies at Pennsylvania State University. The partners are working to assess and address sediment pollution in three upper Potomac River tributaries and their watersheds. The work is part of the Conservancy's regionwide effort to conserve natural diversity in the greater Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Last fall, the project participants inventoried hundreds of miles of roads in western Maryland and southwestern Pennsylvania to identify problem areas and help prioritize them for local municipalities. Starting this year, the partners will provide grant money and technical assistance to enable municipalities to begin correcting the problems, which range from improper placement of drainage pipes to collapsed road banks.

FOR SALE

Dagger Ovation OC, red RoyaleX, outfitted with saddle and air bags, length 11', 5" rocker, excellent condition. New in 1997. \$450 OBO. Paddles, gear and clothing also available. Ed Pilchard, 301-434-4007, epilchard@peoplepc.com.

Impex Susquehanna sea kayak, 16'6", seaworthy and maneuverable. Very good condition, \$1000. Also, I can assist members wanting to run the Moormans River near Charlottesville (II-III). Konrad Zeller, 434-989-1025.

Costa Rica Outfitter: In case you might be interested, here's a link to an outfitter that has OC-1s in Costa Rica: <http://costaricarios.com/>. You can order their free DVD by phone -- it is quite good, I thought. Leslie and I had a fabulous trip to Costa Rica last month -- just one day of rafting, but it whet my appetite for another trip down there. I'm thinking about the February and March 2007 trips that this outfitter offers. No specific plans yet, though.

SYOR, Ron Knipling

BRV camp stove available for members' use

Frank Fico has recently become the custodian of the BRV-owned two-burner, expedition size Primus camp stove, with 4.5 lb. propane tank. It is suitable for preparing group meals on raft-supported trips. It is available for use by any BRV member — contact Frank.

New Member

West Virginia Rivers Coalition
Joe Peabody
801 N. Randolph Ave.
Elkins, WV 26241
304-668-9208 H
304-637-7201 W
jpeabody@wvivers.org

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 Voyager*, 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 2006: January 24, March 22, May 16, July 8 (Moonlight Picnic), September 12, November 14, December 9 (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.

2006 BRV Officers: Ernie Katz, President; [vacant], VP; Bob Maxey, Trip Coordinator; Clark Childers, Treasurer; Frank Fico, Newsletter Editor; Kathleen Sengstock, Conservation Chairman.

2006 Board of Directors: Lou Campagna, Ed Grove, Ron Knipling, Wes Mills, Court Ogilvie, Joe Sullivan

***The Voyager*: Newsletter of the Blue Ridge Voyageurs**

The Voyager 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 in each issue of *The Voyager*.

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

Upcoming Trips

May 6	Bloomington	I	Ginny DeSeau	301-251-2978	vd9t@nih.gov
May 6-7	Tygart	A	Keith Merkel	703-758-8523	
May 13	Lehigh	N/I	Beth Koller	240-506-0417	ekoller2@earthlink.net
May 13	Rappahannock	N/I	Doug White	540-347-7940	dowhite@fcps1.org
May 20	Dealer's Choice	I	Lou Campagna	301-929-0136	campagna.lou@dol.gov
May 20	Bloomington	I	Jennifer Plyler	301-445-4815(before 8pm)	pls98@verizon.net
May 20-21	Lower Yough	I	Pete Dragon	703-255-3447	dragon.pete@epa.gov
May 21	Potomac Downriver Race		Star Mitchell	301-530-3252	starmitchell@verizon.net
May 26-29	Southern Rivers	All	Jennifer Plyler	301-445-4815(before 8pm)	pls98@verizon.net
May 27-29	Smokehole Camper	I	Frank Fico	703-318-7998	fico1@netzero.net
			Gus Anderson	703-903-9738	boatngus@aol.com
May 27-29	Dealer's Choice	I/A	Mike Wevrick	202-249-1243	mwevrick@hotmail.com
June 3	Dealer's Choice	I	Clark Childers	703-821-1048	
June 3	Bloomington	I	Jennifer Plyler	301-445-4815(before 8pm)	pls98@verizon.net
June 10	Lower Yough	I	Jennifer Plyler	301-445-4815(before 8pm)	pls98@verizon.net
June 10	Cheat	A	Beth Koller	240-506-0417	ekoller2@earthlink.net
June 11	Violette's Lock	N	Kathleen Sengstock	301-617-2676	Kathleen.sengstock@mail.house.gov
June 17-18	Lower Yough	I	Pete Dragon	703-255-3447	dragon.pete@epa.gov
June 24	Dealer's Choice	I	Mike Wellman	703-362-2504	mwellman@usa.net
			Marilyn Jones	202-686-1531	
June 24	Dealer's Choice	I	Jennifer Plyler	301-445-4815(before 8pm)	pls98@verizon.net
June 25	Staircase	I	Kathleen Sengstock	301-617-2676	Kathleen.sengstock@mail.house.gov
July 1-9	Smokies with CCC	I	Ed Evangelidi	304-262-8924	edevange@localnet.com
Local paddling weekday evenings		N/I	Tom Prunier	703-527-3163	prunier@erols.com



The Voyageur

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

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Deadline for July Voyageur:
Friday, June 23, 2006

MAY MEETING
Tuesday, May 16