

# THE VOYAGEUR



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

September 2005

## THE PRESIDENT'S PUT-IN

I do not know what to write about at this time. This year is the least kayaking I have done since I first set foot in a kayak. What is happening this year? Why are so few people paddling this spring and summer? Why are there so few trips? There have been a few trips to the Lower Yough that I was unable to attend. Otherwise it has been a mostly barren year. I propose that we make up for it in the fall. A heavy paddling schedule will look fine for all of us.

The summer picnic was another big success. The weather was excellent. The picnic was well attended. Everyone had a good time. Our thanks to Beth Koller who did a wonderful job in her first function as vice-president. We can look forward to an excellent Christmas party.

The next meeting is Tuesday, September 20. Mike Wevrick will give us a tour of another special place in the Canadian wilderness. I hope to see you all there.

Ernie

## **Yampa and Green Rivers, Dinosaur National Monument (CO-UT), 1-6 July 2005** by Frank Fico

Yampa at Deerlodge: 5000-3200 cfs

Green at Jensen: 7500-5500 cfs

Bridget, Jamie (age 10), Kerry (age 8) and I have run a string of excellent Western rivers in the last three years: the Rio Grande at Big Bend National Park, the Smith in Montana, and the San Juan in southern Utah. For this year's summer vacation, we joined with others expressing interest in a Western trip at the end of June in sending applications for permits to run the Middle Fork and Main Salmon, Desolation and Grays Canyon on the Green, and the Yampa through Dinosaur National Monument. All of these are highly sought-after river trips, and the competition for permits is very intense. We knew we wanted to return to Yellowstone, so Bridget made reservations at the Old Faithful Inn for the end of our three week vacation window. The rest of our vacation plans awaited the results of our permit lotteries. By late February, we had heard nothing from any of the agencies administering the permit lotteries, which was bad news. But then Wes Mills, one of those participating in the permit application blitz, called to let us know he had scored a permit for the Yampa with a 1 July put-on date. It ended up being the only permit obtained from the 10-odd applications submitted by our group.

The Yampa trip would be a first for us: each of our previous Western trips was made in our two canoes, hauling all our gear. The National Park Service (which administers the river through Dinosaur National Monument) allows canoes on the river only with flotation. We didn't think we'd be able to carry all our gear for 5 or 6 days on the river and have room for flotation as well. Plus there was the reason the flotation is required in the first place: Warm Springs rapid on the Yampa, rated class IV, and numerous class IIIs in Split Mountain Canyon on the Green, which must be run to reach the take-out at the western edge of the monument. Our previous Western experience included just a single rapid rated II+, Government Rapid on

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*YAMPA (Continued from page 1)*

the San Juan. However, although Government certainly merited the rating due to the severe pinning possibilities, last summer's low flow on the San Juan did not afford us the opportunity of running big water Western-style rapids. We didn't want to risk swamping our laden canoes in big, wavy rapids, so we opted for raft support.

Gus Anderson was part of our group, and believed that at least one of his two commercial-grade rafts would be in good-enough condition to carry passengers down the river. But with 11 in our core group, we would most likely need an oar raft to carry gear. Gus queried rafting friends from California to see if any would be interested in joining the group, and Wes researched options and costs for renting rafts, and other gear we would need (like a river toilet system). As the permit allowed up to 25 people on the trip, invitations were extended to paddling friends who had access to rafts or were otherwise self-supported. After 3+ months of planning, the list of participants and the logistics finally gelled by early June. Wes had applied for and was granted a sixth day on the river (which is not guaranteed), our campsites were assigned, and the trip plans of the 15 final participants were finalized. A planning meeting was held that resolved issues of food group membership, and availability of group gear such as water containers and filters, extra paddles and pfd's. Personal and group boats and gear

were distributed between the two vehicles driving from VA: we loaded one of Gus's rafts and our Twister sit-on-top kayak atop our minivan, and Wes carried his brand new Mohawk Probe 14 (bought especially for the trip), his Dagger Redline and Rusty Dowling's inflatable kayak on his 4Runner. A 14-foot oar raft for the group and a tandem canoe would be rented in Colorado to complete our flotilla of craft. We departed right after school let out on June 24<sup>th</sup>, and Wes (with son Ryan and girlfriend Sharon) headed out the next morning.

We were the first to arrive at

and in addition to the raft, frame and oars, it also held the Dagger canoe he had rented from the Boulder Outdoor Center that he and Laura were going to paddle. After we had all gone to bed, Gus Anderson and his friend Mary Selkirk arrived from Salt Lake City's airport, and Gus's wife Debby Crouse and daughter Ashley drove in from Yellowstone, where they had spent the previous few days. Wes, Sharon and Ryan pulled in the next morning to complete our group of 15. It took us several hours to inflate, rig, then load the rafts, so we lunched before getting underway to our first river camp

10 miles downstream.

With the wide variety of paddling experience present, many of us took turns over the course of the trip paddling the various types of craft present in our little flotilla. Gus, Mary and Debby were the most experienced rafters in the group, each having rowed the Grand Canyon. They took charge of loading the rafts each



*Our group launching from Deerlodge Park.*

the put-in at Deerlodge Park late in the afternoon of June 30<sup>th</sup>, and we picked a riverside site at the deserted campground. A few hours later, four more members of our group arrived who had flown to Denver and shared a rental vehicle: David ("Cotton") Cottingham and daughter Laura (a student at Colorado College), Rusty Dowling and Ginny DeSeau. Cotton had graciously agreed to pick up our rental raft in Steamboat Springs. His rental's customized roof rack consisted of a couple 2x4s purchased at a local Home Depot,

day, and took the rafts through the hardest rapids. Most of the rest of us took our turns in one of the rafts. I really enjoyed my first experience rowing a raft, and got to take it through Whirlpool Canyon on day 5. I also got to paddle Wes's Mohawk three of our five paddling days – twice with Bridget and once with Ashley on the final day's trip through Split Mountain Canyon. Wes (with Ginny and Sharon) got to use it the other two days. Jamie and Ashley shared the Twister, at least until day 5 when they both swam in Whirlpool Can-

yon. (We wisely lashed it to the back of the oar raft through the big rapids of Split Mountain Canyon.) The Redline was shared amongst Wes, Gus, Mary and Bridget. The only paddlers who maintained a monogamous relationship with their boats were Cotton in his canoe, Rusty in her kayak (except for

tents and wait it out for about 20 minutes. A number of us hiked up Bull Canyon on the morning of our layover day, just upstream of camp. To our surprise, we found an NPS-maintained trail all the way up to the canyon rim and a dirt road. Cotton, Laura and I followed the road to Wagon Wheel Point,

tiger [page 4, top right, with Jamie]. We saw mountain goats with kids and an apparently wild horse along the riverbanks. But always in the back of our minds was the thought of Warm Springs rapid, which we reached after 16 miles of paddling. Our scout from river right revealed a rapid that was cer-



Gus in Warm Springs) and Kerry and Ryan, who were always in one of the rafts.

The first two days on the river passed relatively uneventfully. We camped at Teepee Hole the first night, which had a sand beach large enough to hold most of our tents and a kitchen area [above left]. On day 2 we paddled 16 miles through two class II+ rapids, Teepee and Big Joe, with no problems (except for Cotton and Laura's submarine act at the base of Teepee, to be repeated multiple times in Split Mountain Canyon). We spent a layover day at our next camp, Harding Hole #1. Our first evening there, we were treated to a beautiful pre-Independence Day fireworks display in the form of thunderstorms passing over the canyon walls to our west. Our only rain came the next afternoon, and we were able to retreat to our

ending up 800 feet right above our camp with commanding views in all directions [above right, view upstream]. The rest of the day was spent reading, playing cards, swimming/bathing, playing in the (difficult to catch) surfing waves, or just lounging around. We also practiced using the commercial-grade water filter Mary had rented for the group. Two other groups arrived at Harding Hole during our layover day. Unfortunately for those camped on the downstream end of our site, the large group in Harding Hole #2 partied long into the night (ask Wes just how long).

We departed Harding Hole on July 4<sup>th</sup> and entered the deepest part of Yampa Canyon. We passed beneath the Grand Overhang [page 4, top left], lunched at the mouth of Red Rock Canyon, then drifted by Tiger Wall, where the black desert varnish resembles the stripes of a

mainly formidable with some large holes, but at this level (about 3500 cfs at Deerlodge) also offered a viable sneak route for the hard boats next to the right bank. We decided to run the rafts through first, down the middle of the heavy waves, but avoiding the large hole at the bottom. Then with the rafts positioned below and with safety ropes along the right bank, the hard boats took the sneak route with no problems. Jamie decided to run it in the Twister after carrying the rapid's entry, which could have pushed her into the big stuff mid-stream. After the hard boats had all come through, Gus surprised everyone by paddling Rusty's inflatable down the same route, saving us a nasty portage. The only incident at Warm Springs occurred below the meat of the rapid in the shallow side channel serving the

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*YAMPA (Continued from page 3)*

campsite: Kerry fell out of the raft when it snagged momentarily on a rock, but she was able to climb back in with no problem. The camp there was the most dramatic of the trip, sited directly across from the soaring 1800-foot wall of Warm Springs Cliff, with the muted roar of the rapid throbbing in the background.

The next morning brought us to Echo Park at the confluence with the Green River about three miles downstream. I must admit I was a bit disappointed after having seen this spot so often in guidebooks, post cards and the video at park headquarters. I actually had a hard time identifying the Green –

it appeared more like a Yampa side channel than anything. I suppose it can't help that its inferior flow is artificially regulated by Flaming Gorge Reservoir. We landed at Echo Park to refill our water containers for the remainder of the trip. There is 4WD road access here and a drive-in only campground. There was also a horde of mosquitoes that kept our visit short. We did, however, take the time to walk to the campground to see the petroglyphs that the ranger back at Deerlodge Park had told us about. Back on the river, we soon entered Whirlpool Canyon and its numerous unnamed class II rapids. The canyon abruptly ends at Island Park, and we drifted the final couple miles of

another 16-mile day to Island Park, the final campsite on the river until the take-out. There were few redeeming features about this campsite, save the fact that it minimizes your final day's paddle. Except for many magnificent cottonwood trees, the camp was besieged by direct sun, being unshielded by high canyon walls. The mosquitoes were an order of magnitude worse than at any previous camp, and they forced all of us into our tents for dinner, not to re-emerge until the next morning.

Our final 13 miles on day 6 took us through the class II and III rapids of Split Mountain Canyon, after enduring the final 4 miles of Island Park. The run through Split Mountain Canyon is a popular day



*Group photo at Warm Springs camp.*



*Ryan, Mary, Kerry and Ashley near Echo Park.*

trip, and we shared it with two commercial raft/duckie parties. If you know what to look for, you can see that the river actually bisects the axis of an immense anticline as it makes its final cut through the Wasatch Mountains, hence the name Split Mountain. It's very impressive from the air as seen in the park's video.



*Cotton and Laura (barely) survive a Split Mountain Canyon rapid.*

Also impressive are the rapids, with the combined volume of the Yampa and Green creating powerful holes and large standing waves. Although there was no technical maneuvering involved, our heart rates and bailers got a good workout. Cotton and Laura deserve special recognition for repeatedly guiding their canoe safely to shore with the gunwales fully awash [see above]. The take-out at Split Mountain boat ramp appears right at the exit to the canyon. We dregged the rafts, loaded our boats and gear onto our vehicles (which

had all been shuttled for us by River Runners' Transport in Vernal), and went our separate ways. Ginny rode with us as the five of us plus Wes, Sharon and Ryan headed north for the second half of our vacation in Yellowstone.

The Yampa is the last undammed river in the entire Colorado Basin. A large dam had been proposed over 40 years ago on the Green just downstream of Echo Park that would have backed up the Yampa for many miles. Supposedly, environmentalists defeated this dam proposal, but were

forced to concede the fate of Glen Canyon in return. Don't count on the Yampa remaining unsullied forever – it sits in the middle of a region containing large reserves of oil shale and uranium deposits, very vulnerable to exploitation with continued escalation of oil prices. We were very lucky to not only get the permit, but also to fi-

nally get a year with near normal snowpack that afforded us good flows after a number of drought years. The flow was a good compromise for the mix of boats we had: just low enough to get the fully-loaded canoe down without swamping, but high enough to keep the heavily-laden rafts afloat without strenuous maneuvering. It was a great trip that will be hard to beat next year. (Hmm...I wonder if our luck will hold out long enough to get us a Middle Fork of the Salmon permit...)

## Passage Creek Strainers Cleared by Ron Knipling

Late summer is a great time to clear creek strainers. When the water is really low, you can hike right down the middle of the creek to get to them. And it's a good excuse to spend some time sloshing in the creek. On August 27 I hiked downstream on Passage Creek from the Fish Hatchery and cleared four strainers, all within a mile or so of the bridge. The first was a medium-sized tree about 80 yards below the bridge. It probably was avoidable for most paddlers but I went ahead and cut it to leave a wide clear path on river left. The second strainer was also a medium-sized tree trunk, located at the first left turn into the braided section of the creek about a half-mile below the bridge. The third strainer was a shrub that blocked most of a fast, narrow chute. Finally, the fourth and most dangerous one was located about a mile below the bridge at a place where the creek turns left and then bends to the right beneath a shale cliff. A large tree trunk resting at a 45° angle to the left bank blocked about half of the channel, and had a large branch that blocked most of the rest. I was able to remove the branch and move some rocks to create a route on the inside of the bend. This bend is now runnable by most boaters but should still be scouted.

## Gauley River Access Restored for 2005 Season (submitted by the West Virginia Rivers Coalition)

In the spirit of convenient access, WVRC welcomes the opportunity to continue the boat shuttle arrangement at Mason's Branch! Once again, boaters paddling the Upper Gauley can load their boats on the shuttle truck and walk to the field on the canyon rim.

The National Park Service (NPS) and Lost Paddle landowners have agreed to renew negotiations for a land transfer at Woods Ferry. In the long-term, transfer of Lost Paddle's land to NPS will allow for proper management and protection within this valuable river corridor.

In the short-term, open negotiations means Lost Paddle and Imre and Janet Szilagyi will allow canoeists and kayakers to use access points at Mason's Branch and Buck Lick in the same fashion as past years. Additionally, Lost Paddle is allowing American Whitewater to lease a small portion of their Woods Ferry holdings in order to simplify the access being developed for use by non-commercial rafters and other boaters.

WVRC is thrilled that Lost Paddle has been true to their promise to restore access for 2005 because of the progress on the land transfer negotiations. Convenient access is important to many of our members and NPS management is important to the Gauley River.

Here are access details, from Summersville Dam's tailwaters to the slack water at Swiss:

**Tailwaters put-in:** Use this put-in for the Upper Gauley (or a marathon run launch, that's all 26 miles!). Parking is limited at the river's edge, so be prepared to quickly unload and then drive your vehicle to the top of the hill on busy days. Park Service personnel will be available to direct traffic.

**Mason's Branch access:** A few small rapids downstream of Sweet's Falls, in recent years this has been the take-out of choice for the Upper. The access has been made available by Lost Paddle landowners. A boat shuttle is available to get your hard boats (not you!) to the canyon rim's parking field for a \$5 donation, used by WVRC for our work protecting all of WV's rivers. Boaters get to hike the scenic trail to the parking field thanks to Imre and Janet Szilagyi. WVRC and American Whitewater lease the parking field.

**Woods Ferry access:** This is one recommended mid-point access for non-commercial rafters because non-commercial rafts are not allowed to use the shuttle service at Mason's Branch. Through the cooperation of the National Park Service and Lost Paddle, for the first year, boaters may use this access point. It is through the efforts of many (WVRC, National Park Service, American Whitewater, WV Wildwater Association, Passages to Adventures, WV Department of Commerce and others), and with donations from many WVRC members, that volunteer Friends of the Gauley will make access feasible.

**Buck Lick access:** For many years now this has been the put-in of choice for paddlers of the Lower Gauley. This access is made available courtesy of Janet and Imre Szilagyi. The road to the river's edge is impassable by shuttle vehicles when commercial rafting busses and trailers are using the access. So, carefully choose one of the limited parking spots along the state road and walk the constructed trail down to the river's edge.

**Peters Creek:** This access is not recommended, but if it's been a couple decades since you visited the Gauley, you will remember Peters Creek as the end point of the long and scary carry out of the Upper, or the long carry to the Lower put-in. The road is now in disrepair and the land is, in part, privately owned.

**Swiss:** This small WV community welcomes boaters taking out from the Lower or the marathon. The first and preferred access, a sandy beach with a large field for parking is provided by local landowners. Please pay the (\$3) fee to use this field to the gentleman watching your car, or place money in the tin can attached to the tree at the field's entrance. The second access is another (flat) mile downstream. The field at river's edge is used by a commercial rafting business activity. Please give space to their operation as you pass through to the small parking lot on the road.

No matter where you take out, don't forget to buy a hotdog from the community church near the main road!!!

If you donated to the Gauley access fund, and are concerned or confused about how your funds are being used, please feel free to contact WVRC ([wvrivers@wvrivers.org](mailto:wvrivers@wvrivers.org), or 304 637-7201).

**WVRC Gauley Boat Shuttle Needs Volunteers:** Gauley Season is weekends starting September 9th and ending October 16th. Schedule release dates: Sept. 9-12, 16-19, 23-26, 30-Oct. 3, 7-10, 15-16). The shuttle and the river will be running. The work has begun on the new access point at Woods Ferry, but for the 2005 Gauley season WVRC will be running the boat shuttle at Mason's Branch. Please help WVRC by volunteering a few days for the boat shuttle. We are low on volunteers and could use your help to make this a successful fund-raiser. This might be your last chance to run shuttle so don't miss out on all the fun.

The dates we need your help are:

Sept. 10-11, 17-18, 23-25

Oct. 1-2, 8-9, 15-16

Please contact Joe if you have questions or would like to help: [jpeabody@wvdrivers.org](mailto:jpeabody@wvdrivers.org) or (304) 637-7201.

Thank you!

### New Members & Address Updates

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### 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 BRV's. 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 BRV's. 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](mailto: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

|             |                         |               |                                  |                              |                                   |
|-------------|-------------------------|---------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Sept 10-11  | Upper & Lower Gauley    | Advanced      | Court Ogilvie                    | 703-528-5185                 | courtandsuzy@comcast.net          |
| Sept 17     | Dealers Choice          | Intermediate  | Jennifer Plyler                  | 301-445-4815*                | Pls98@erols.com                   |
| October 1-2 | Upper & Lower Gauley    | Advanced      | Scott Zetterstrom & Lou Campagna | 304-728-8443<br>301-929-0136 | mezett@msn.com<br>campagl@aol.com |
| Oct 8       | Dealers Choice          | Intermediate  | Jennifer Plyler                  | 301-445-4815*                | Pls98@erols.com                   |
| Oct 8-10    | Eastern Shore Sampler   | Novice/Inter. | Ed Evangelidi                    | 304-262-8924                 | edevange@localnet.com             |
| Oct 15      | Dealers Choice          | Intermediate  | Jennifer Plyler                  | 301-445-4815*                | Pls98@erols.com                   |
| Nov 11-14   | New Jersey Pine Barrens | Novice/Inter. | Ed Evangelidi                    | 304-262-8924                 | edevange@localnet.com             |

\*please call before 8 PM

**North Branch Potomac — Jennings Randolph Dam Release:** 8 AM October 1 until 1 PM October 2. To be confirmed in late September.



### *The Voyageur*

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

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**Deadline for November Voyageur:**  
Friday, October 28

**SEPTEMBER MEETING**  
**Tuesday, September 20**