

Quarterly Whitewater Commission Meeting Minutes

September 18, 2012

Location: River Expeditions, Oak Hill, WV

Chaired: DNR Lt. Colonel Jerry Jenkins, in absence of Director Frank Jezioro

In Attendance: Doug Cooper (private boater); Chris Ellis (private boater); Jerry Cook (ACE); Bobby Bower (WVPRO); Rick Johnson (River Expeditions); Don Beyer (private boater); Tim Barton (Alpine Ministries); Brian Campbell (Adventures on the Gorge); Matt Knott, River Riders (teleconference); Kelly Crago (recording secretary).

Approval of June 12, 2012, Minutes

Rick Johnson motioned to approve the minutes recorded from the June 12, 2012, quarterly Whitewater Commission meeting. Brian Campbell seconded the motion, and the Commission accepted.

Naming of River Sections

Currently, the New River is broken down into three sections for reporting- Upper New 1, Upper New 2, and Lower New. In order to make the reporting match the law, namely §58-12.3.1.3, the Commission discussed listing the sections as Upper New 1, 2, and 3 and Lower New. In order to forgo future problems reporting numbers, Brian Campbell suggested defining those sections by where the trips take out. Brian Campbell motioned that the sections on the New River be changed on reporting materials to match the outline provided in §58-12.3.1.3. Chris Ellis seconded the motion, and the Commission approved.

The Commission also discussed the appearance of the license certificates for whitewater outfitters and guides. Brian motioned that allocations for each section of each river be listed on the license certificates. Chris Ellis seconded the motion, and the Commission approved.

Budget

Matt Knott will e-mail the budget as soon as he finishes it.

Re-Licensing for Hawks Nest Dam

Brian Campbell wanted to simply inform the Commission and others present that re-licensing for Hawks Nest Dam is in process. He and others hope that some scheduled releases on the New River Dries can be arranged between Memorial Day and Labor Day, which should create some Class III whitewater during that time. The re-licensing is due in 2017.

WVPRO is heading the venture and has hired Larry George as representation. Studies regarding the best flow, aesthetics, and etc. will need to be done to support the case for scheduled releases.

Brian said that they are looking for a different type of product to offer in the industry and to the consumers. He said the scheduled releases may create a much better kayaking and fishing section, for example.

U.S. Coast Guard Approved PFDs

Lt. Colonel Jenkins advised the Commission and others present that the U.S. Coast Guard is renaming the PFDs it approves. The PFDs will no longer be numbered I, II, III, and etc. The DNR will need to change its boating regulations to reflect the Coast Guard's change. However, the DNR will write the change in a way that encompasses the old system for a period of time so boaters can still use existing PFDs.

Age/Weight/Height Restrictions

Tim Barton would like the Commission to consider minimum age, weight, and/or height restrictions for commercial whitewater rafters on the Lower New River. Currently, outfitters follow different protocols regarding minimum age, weight, and/or height requirements. Tim believes that the differences could affect the whitewater industry.

Brian said that Adventures on the Gorge tried lowering its age limit for 2012, and its guides did not like it. Many times, its employees ended up arguing with parents about their child's age. It is raising the limit back up for next year. However, Brian believes that such minimum requirements should be left to each individual outfitter because it can be difficult to know what to set restrictions at. Restrictions are more easily changed if not written in law.

Jerry Cook countered that, in this situation, pure Capitalism may not protect the public the best.

Since the issue was not on the agenda for this meeting, the discussion was tabled until it was a formal item on the agenda for December 11, 2012.

Website Update

Kelly Crago updated the Commission regarding the website work being done by the WV Office of Technology. She believes the product is looking good, and it closely mimics her original PowerPoint presentation. She and Blaise, the main programmer on the project, have been e-mailing and continue to exchange much information. Blaise informed Kelly that no one outside of OT will be able to test the product until it is finished. Originally, testing was going to be possible throughout the process. Blaise said his department cited security issues as the reason the testing would not be offered prior to completion.

Kelly had forwarded a couple of e-mails to the Commission-delegated committee members regarding the website. She said she welcomes any input. Brian said more contribution from the industry will most likely occur after the Gauley season.

Next Quarterly Meeting

The next quarterly Whitewater Commission meeting locale is TBA. The meeting will commence on Tuesday, December 11, 2012, at 1:00 pm.

Adjournment

Brian Campbell motioned to adjourn the 2012 3rd quarterly Whitewater Commission meeting. Tim Barton seconded the motion, and the Commission accepted.