



FOUNDED 1989  
ACA PADDLE AMERICA CLUB

SUMMER, 2010  
VOL. 18 No.2b

# The MOUNTAIN PADDLER

ARTICLES OF INTEREST  
FOR OUR PADDLING COMMUNITY

## EDITOR'S NOTE by Sue Hughes

What a surprise, I was thinking we didn't have enough to start working on a new *Mountain Paddler* and then this issue turned out to be almost twenty pages!

Maybe that's not really so surprising. As Brian Hunter says in his thoughts about the Club on page 8, there's lots going on, and people are writing about it.

Check out the latest Club schedule with its new classes on the RMSKC website, and keep paddling, learning skills, taking pictures and submitting articles. See you at PaddleFest if not before.

## IN THIS ISSUE

### Paddle and Class Reports . . . . . p. 2 - 5

- Annual Spring at Union Res
- Gross Reservoir Opening
- Advanced Strokes Clinic
- Union Chutes Moving Water

### Towing for Safety . . . . . p. 6 - 8

By Brian Hunter

### Thoughts about RMSKC . . . . . p. 8

By Brian Hunter

### Scouting Navajo Lake . . . . . p. 9 - 13

By Jud Hurd

### First Timer on the Green River . . . . . p. 14 - 16

By Ralph Kline

### Changes on the Green . . . . . p. 17 - 18

By Larry Kline

### Our Supporters . . . . . p. 24



Gary Cage, Brian Hunter and Marsha Dougherty  
returning from a day on Frances Canyon at Navajo Lake

## EARLY SUMMER REPORTS



### Annual Union Reservoir Spring Picnic; May 8, 2010

Photo: Anne Fiore

A dozen Club paddlers—Mike Anson, Rich Bacon, Brian Curtiss, Kathleen Ellis, Anne Fiore, Brian Hunter, Jud Hurd, Larry Kline, Matt Lutkus, Gary McIntosh, and Kristy and Rich Webber—paddled around Union Reservoir in Longmont on the second Saturday in May and then enjoyed a picnic lunch, even though the weather was still not spring-like.

Anne Fiore reports that the easy-to-identify yellow-headed blackbirds were back from their winter homes. She says they have a distinct call which reminds her of a haunted house.



Back row: Jud Hurd, Larry Kline, Rich Bacon  
Middle: Anne Fiore, Gary McIntosh, Mike Anson, Kathleen Ellis, Kristy Webber, Rich Webber  
Foreground: Brian Curtiss with his back to Brian Hunter's camera





## Gross Reservoir Annual Opening Day Tour; May 29, 2010

As in the past several years, David Hustvedt led the Opening Day Tour around Gross Reservoir above Boulder. Marsha Dougherty, Brian Hunter, Eric Niles, George Ottenhoff, Rich and Kristy Webber and Stan White arrived

for a 10:00 am launch at Osprey Point and paddled to the inlet for some fun with moving water before heading to the other side for a lunch break.



The water temperature at the put-in was 55° F but was only 40° F where Boulder Creek spills into the Reservoir. The weather was excellent and the scenery was spectacular as always. Lunch was filled small talk about paddling and life in the sticks with

cows and chickens. Most of the trip back to the put-in was accompanied by a 5-8 knot tail wind, which is always a good thing. The day's total was 7.1 miles.

Paddle report and photos by Brian Hunter



Kristy and Rich Webber, Dave Hustvedt,  
Brian Hunter, Stan White, Marsha Dougherty



# SUMMER CLASSES

## MANEUVERS AND RESCUE TRAINING MAY 30, 2010

Our four instructors came back from their ACA training with Roger Schumann in Santa Cruz, California, excited about everything:

- Roger's teaching
- Paddling under the Golden Gate Bridge and in rough seas
- Skills they had learned and
- Methods they'd studied for effective instruction



Matt Lutkus, in the RMSKC t-shirt, with Brian Curtiss, Gary McIntosh and Dan Bell



Matt Lutkus

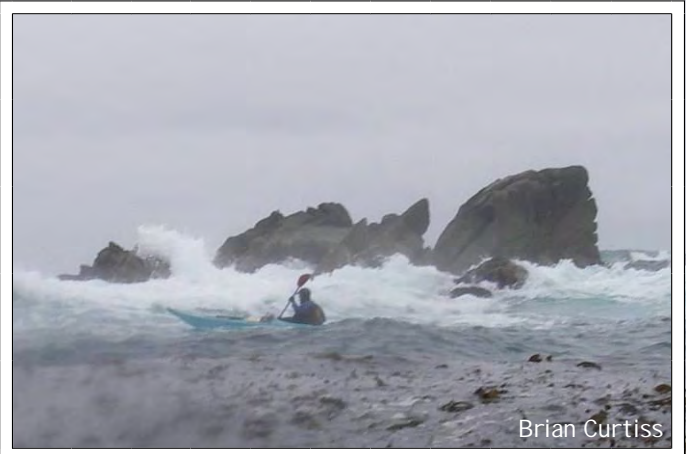
A quick email went out asking for students so they could practice their new teaching techniques. Marsha Dougherty, Kathleen Ellis, Anne Fiore, Sue Hughes, Brian Hunter, Larry Kline, Eric Niles, Kristy Webber and Stan White showed up at Big Soda Lake on the Sunday of Memorial Weekend for an Advanced Strokes and Rescues Training class.

In the morning the instructors taught the three maneuvers recently added to the Level 3 ACA Coastal Kayaking curriculum: *bow rudder*, *side slip* and *low brace turn*. After lunch they taught *Cowboy Reentries* and helped with whatever else the participants wanted to learn.

They were practicing the "iDeAs" instructional model—a brief verbal **I**ntroduction, a longer **D**emonstration, a short **E**xplanation of the demo, the most time spent practicing the **A**ctivity (with lots of individual, positive feed-back) and then a quick **S**ummary of the main points to remember.

Another new technique they incorporated was to give the students' boats a good push so they could get the feel for a new stroke when the boat was moving.

Everyone was delighted: Our instructors are better than ever, all the participants felt successful and the instructors said they were pleased to get to practice their teaching on such short notice.



Brian Curtiss

## SUMMER CLASSES, CONT.

### *A MOVING EXPERIENCE: WHITE WATER TRAINING AT UNION CHUTES* JUNE 8, 2010

Larry Kline taught Moving Water Class at Union Chutes on the South Platte River again this year. Sue Hughes, Bernie Dahlen, Annette Mascia and Brian Hunter were the students in attendance. The water was 48°F and the flow was about 450 CFS, it was overcast at 65° F air temperature—perfect for wearing a dry or wet suit and paddling on moving water.



Annette and Bernie practicing their braces

The class started with Larry explaining basic strokes and bracing turns used on moving water. Next each student drew maps of how the water was moving through the chutes and around the obstructions to learn how to read the water. On the shore, before launching their boats, the class practiced the “knee hangs” and reverse sweep brace strokes used to turn a kayak down stream.

After the observations of water movement and onshore practice the class launched their kayaks, did a few live low braces and paddled into on-coming water at the low head

dam to see how moving water affected the boats. The students found that water pouring over the dam would actually pull the kayaks into the foot of the dam.

Next Larry demonstrated how to cross an eddy and use a low brace turn to combine with hydraulics to turn the kayak downstream. Annette commented that “mooning the current” was the correct move to accomplish the down river turn while avoiding a sudden capsized. Each student practiced a couple of crossings and turns. Then the class practiced by following a course (sort of) that Larry suggested in and out of the fastest water.

Several wanted to actually run the chutes so the class looked at the water and decided to give it a try. Larry went first to demonstrate, followed by Bernie, Sue and Annette. Brian is still not confident on moving water and stood by with a throw line because he had capsized in this very spot on (all) other attempts. All three students made the run successfully and the rescue line was not needed. Brian did not take pictures of the runs because he was manning the rope or watching the others laughing and smiling having made a triumphant run. Everyone helped get the boats back to the parking lot where we had lunch before leaving.



Sue, Annette, Larry and Bernie looking at the first chute

Paddle report and pictures by Brian Hunter

# KAYAK TOWING 101

By Brian Hunter

Towing a kayak is an essential rescue skill. It should be accepted that receiving a tow is not demeaning or embarrassing. It is, in fact, sometimes vital for the safety of the group. There are four tows listed in *Kayak Towing 101*, but many other tows are possible. The purpose of this short article is to get all of us thinking of these important rescue techniques, which must be practiced, like all rescues, first in calm conditions but also in bad conditions.

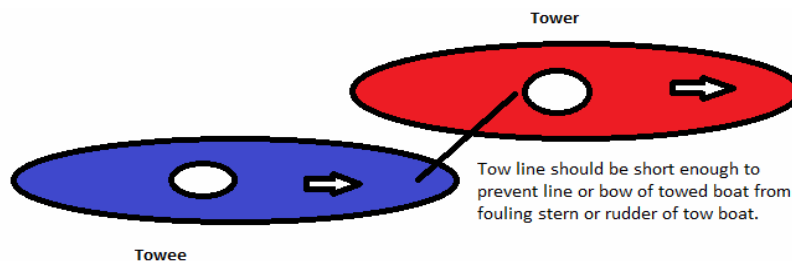
THERE ARE SEVERAL REASONS TO TOW ANOTHER KAYAK:

- A paddler is becoming exhausted and needs a little extra help; it's like putting the person in a double
- A paddler has become ill or is injured
- The wind and waves have risen beyond a paddler's skill level

TWO MAIN TYPES OF TOWS AND WHEN TO USE THEM: The first main type of tows are CLOSE TOWS: the *Short Line* and *Contact* tows. These are used to move a kayak a short distance very quickly. They are the easiest tows to set up and to learn. Some reasons to conduct these tows include getting a paddler out of a dangerous area such as a shipping channel or other hazard quickly, or retrieving a lost paddle or other piece of gear.

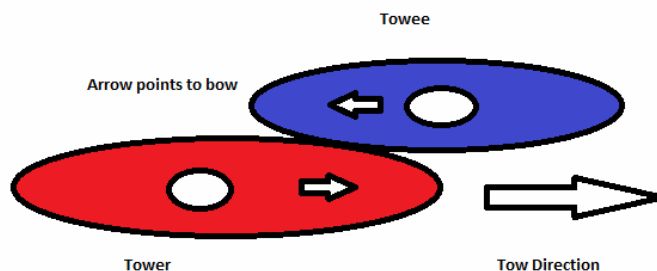
In a *Short Line* tow a line short enough to keep the bow of the towed boat in front of the tow boat's stern generally keeps the line from running afoul of the tow boat's rudder or deck rigging, but the two boats will rub. If the tow line is just long enough to allow some separation between the boats rubbing is not an issue but the boats can collide. Short line towing should never be employed when landing or in the surf zone.

## SHORT LINE TOW



A *Contact* tow is the quickest to set up and has the benefit of allowing communication between the person towing and the kayaker being towed. The boats are oriented with the bow of the towing boat next to the cockpit of the towed boat. The person needing the tow hugs the bow of the towing boat and edges towards the tow boat. This edging is very important to prevent the boats from separating. In contact towing the towee has the option to release the tow boat at any time.

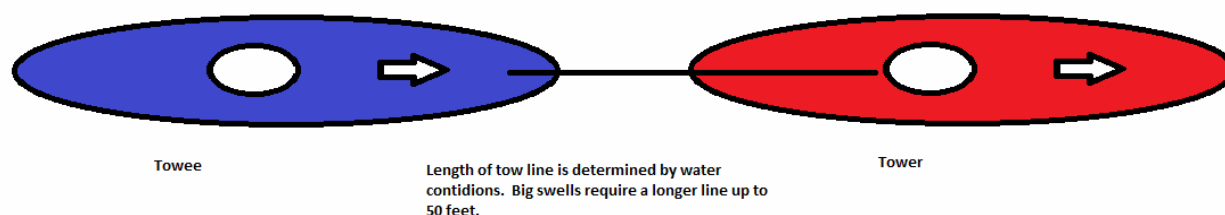
## CONTACT TOW



The second main type of tows are the LONG LINE TOWS. Longer lines are employed when the sea state does not allow a shorter line. For example when towing on swells or big surf and there is the possibility of the towed boat surfing into the tow boat, lines up to 50 feet may be used. Lines of 20-30 feet are commonly used in moderate sea states. Following are some common long line tow configurations with their advantages and disadvantages:

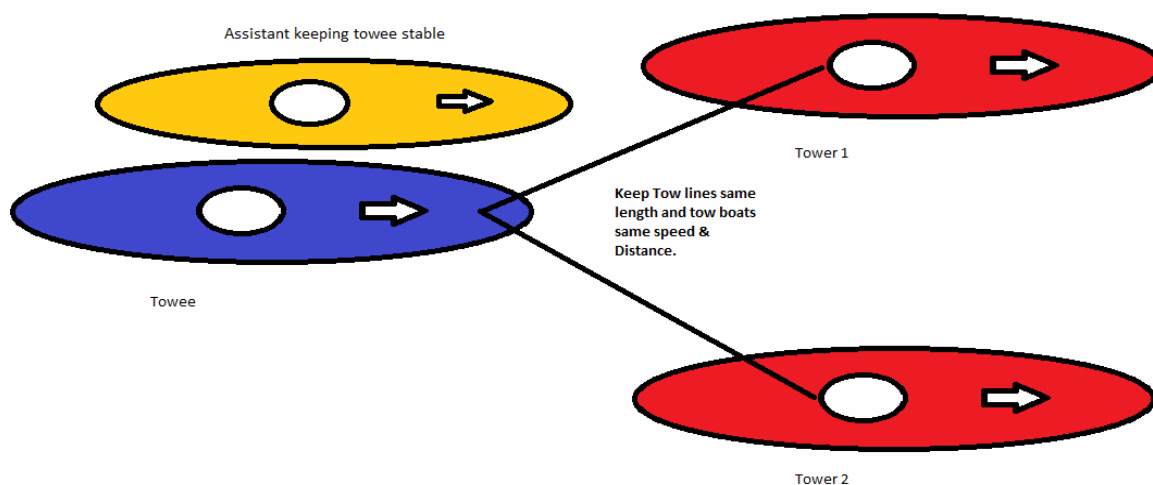
The *Inline* or "*I*" Tow is the simplest and least problematic long line tow. One end of the tow line is attached to bow perimeter line of the towed boat and the other end is attached to the paddler or rigging of the tow boat. One disadvantage of long line towing is that the tow paddler cannot usually see or even hear the towee. Because of this, always be sure the towee has a whistle or noise maker before towing. When conducting any line tow have a 3rd paddler paddle along side the towed boat if possible.

#### INLINE OR I Tow



The "*Y*" Tow is more complex and requires more practice to learn, and any time there are more lines and boats, the chances of things running afoul are greatly increased. Lines of equal length are best and both tow boats must paddle at the same speed and maintain the distance between them. One advantage of this tow is that tow paddlers can be relieved to rest without interrupting progress. Changing tow paddlers is tricky and requires practice. The main disadvantage is the inside tow paddler must paddle slower and the outside paddle must paddle faster to accomplish a turn. The Y tow also provides the extra power needed when the towee is unable to sit upright and requires stabilization by a fourth boat. When you tow with a person stabilizing the towee, the tow line goes under a single deck line of their boat before hooking onto the towee's boat. This keeps the two boats under tow together for a much more efficient tow. [This is not shown in the illustration.] Also, the stabilizer person can always pull themselves to the bow of the towee's boat and unhook the tow line, which then pulls through their deck line, releasing both boats if it is necessary.

#### ASSISTED Y Tow





(Continued from page 7)

**LANDING WHILE TOWING IN ROUGH CONDITIONS:** When towing is used because conditions are rough, landings are a problem. It is best to find a beach where conditions are more favorable because, as Brian Curtiss says, "Landing through surf while towing is a really, really bad idea. Unless the waves are less than two feet, the best approach is to swim the victim in and allow the boats to wash up." If waves are crashing on the beach and you must land, always exit the boat on the ocean side; never get in between the boat and the shore.

**SOME BASIC RULES FOR ANY TOW SITUATION:**

- Everyone must have a whistle
- Everyone must have a knife in case of entanglement in the tow rope, preferably a "hook" style without a sharp point
- If things go wrong, the tower must release the tow line and try a different rescue
- All tows must be practiced until everyone is comfortable and everyone instinctively knows what to do next

After taking the classes at Soda Lake and Union Chutes Brian Hunter sent his thoughts about RMSKC's instructors and the Club's strengths:

## RMSKC: A HEALTHY CLUB WITH A WEALTH OF OPPORTUNITIES

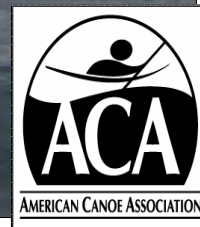
Rocky Mountain Sea Kayak Club is a vibrant organization which provides opportunities for members to learn paddling skills and safety requirements, and to practice with other paddlers near home or farther away. The Club's vitality is due, in a very large part, to our ACA instructors.

They practiced at the pool this winter and took lessons in the spring, almost completely at their own expense, to improve their skills and to recertify as ACA Level 4 Open Water Coastal Kayaking Paddlers and Level 3 Coastal Kayaking Instructors.

This summer they are teaching formal classes and providing stroke-refinement get-togethers for our members, whose paddling skills are developing and improving. Check the RMSKC website for an up-to-the minute listing of the wealth of classes now being offered. As well as teaching classes, our instructors can also administer ACA Paddler Certificates up to Level 3, which will be scheduled for later in the season.

In addition to improved paddling abilities, there's another aspect of the Club's strength that's due to our ACA instruction. Did you know RMSKC receives a large portion of its budget from the fees for ACA classes? Since our instructors accept no payment to teach these classes, the monies go directly to the Club to keep our dues low and our finances healthy for everyone.

RMSKC members are maturing as paddlers, with more exciting Club opportunities on the horizon and we are all excited to see them unfold.





# FLEXIBILITY'S THE WORD AT NAVAJO LAKE

by Jud Hurd

Marsha Dougherty, Anne Fiore, Brian Hunter, Gary Cage, and I got together for a Club trip to Navajo Lake, about 40 miles southeast of Durango on the Colorado-New Mexico border.

As you can see from the map, most of the lake is in New Mexico. It covers about 15,600 surface acres and is about 35 miles long. On the Colorado side you have to camp in designated campgrounds but you can camp anywhere on the New Mexico side, although we were told you still have to pay a New Mexico camp fee. The primary water source is the San Juan River but it is also fed by the Piedra River in Colorado and the Pine River in New Mexico. The San Juan River below the dam is world-renowned for excellent trout fishing.



Flexibility turned out to be the unintended theme for this trip. Originally it was planned to be a multi-day camping excursion starting out on the Colorado side, paddling down the lake into New Mexico, camping out along the shore and returning to Colorado, from May 12 to 16, but all of this would change.

CHANGE #1: Our Navajo Lake adventure quickly switched from a "paddle-and-make-camp-each-night" trip to a "camp-in-campgrounds-with-day-paddles" trip. Club member Eric Niles had paddled Navajo Lake last year and offered some excellent insights, among which were that the unimproved shore camping is somewhat challenging and the winds can be mighty challenging. We met for a pre-trip planning session and, considering Eric's advice and since none of us had been there before, decided to turn this trip into a scouting expedition. We decided we wanted to explore as much of the lake as reasonable and get information for planning a future paddle-and-camp outing. We first thought moving camp sites to cover the north and south end of the lake, and the large arms on the south end, would let us do this, so we planned to spend one night camping in Colorado State Park [A], the next night we would move to the Pine River [B] campsite in New Mexico by the dam, and the last two nights we'd be at the Sims Mesa [C] campsite across the lake.

CHANGE #2: We moved the trip from May 12-16 to May 15-19. As we got closer to the original dates the weather forecast fell apart and predicted rain and cold temperatures. But the forecast for after those days showed sunny, partly cloudy, no rain and warmer temperatures, so Anne suggested we consider moving the trip forward. Everybody was able to change their schedule to accommodate this, and it turned out to be a great decision. We had no rain (well maybe a sprinkle), mostly sunny weather with some nice white puffy clouds, and warmer temperatures. Tuesday was overcast and cooler but we still had no rain. You couldn't ask for better paddling weather.

We left on Saturday and we all got to Colorado's Navajo State Park with no problems. Brian, Marsha and I rode together while Anne and Gary went down on their own. It is about a five to six hour drive from Denver going down highway 285; the drive was beautiful. As we approached the park I saw something brown moving in a field to our left. It turned out to be an elk, which Brian thought was running parallel to us trying to cross ahead of our vehicle. We saw its tail running away from us as it disappeared into the woods, so we figured we had lost it. But as we continued along, suddenly the elk came bursting through the trees at a full run, crossed the road in front of us, stepped over the fence on the other side and disappeared in the trees. It was quite a sight to say the least. We arrived at the campground [A] and found Anne and Gary already there. After setting up our tents we discussed our plans for the next day.

CHANGE #3 AND #4: We changed our minds again (#3) and decided that we would spend two nights in Colorado paddling north one day and then south the next day. We would then break camp and move down to Sims Mesa to paddle the south end of the lake. And then...it occurred to us (#4) we didn't need to move camp at all. It is only an hour's drive to the south end so we could drive down, paddle and drive back to Colorado, not much different than a regular day's outing in Colorado. Everybody liked the idea of not moving camp.

It was getting time for dinner so Gary and Anne cooked up a gourmet camp meal while the rest of us went to the Lone Wolf Bar & Grill. We had a great dinner and found out they are closed Monday and Tuesday. Back at camp we sat around and visited. Gary had looked up the flight schedule of the space station and the space shuttle, and about 9:30 the space station appeared in the sky as a bright light moving very quickly and we got to watch it. Shortly behind that the space shuttle popped into view and we got to watch that also—amazing sights.



Sunday we got up to a clear, sunny sky and cool temperatures. After breakfast we stopped at the visitors' center to pay for three more nights of Colorado camping. The very nice young lady who was helping us said that we could get the camping for half-price if anybody in our group was an Aspen Leaf pass holder—age 64 and above. We all said we didn't have one and she asked Brian if he was sure he didn't have an Aspen Leaf pass. He assured her he wasn't old enough and, no, he didn't have one. I'm not sure she was convinced but she accepted it.



We launched around 10:30 and headed north up the San Juan River arm. It was a beautiful day for paddling: the sun was out and warmed up the day, the wind died down and the water was great. We were told the water temperatures were in the high 40's but our high-end thermometers (mine's from King Soopers) showed about 55 degrees. Still, it was cold enough that people wore dry suits or other cold water

gear. We paddled until we could feel the river current pushing against us and then stopped for lunch on a gravel bar at about 12:30. After a nice lunch we started back to camp. Anne and Gary broke off to paddle a little ways up the Piedra River branch while the rest of us headed for the marina. Shortly after landing Anne and Gary joined us, having decided they'd had enough. We paddled about ten miles that day. So, it was back to camp where Anne and Gary had another gourmet camp meal while the rest of us went back to the Lone Wolf.



The evening was passed in the usual campground way—good people, good conversation and good times. The space shuttle had hooked up with the space station so that night's show was just the single sighting of the two, although we couldn't make out the difference from where we were watching.



Smooth water on Sambrito Arm

After lunch we headed back out to cross the main lake looking for Eui or Eul (depending on which map you are looking at) Canyon [E]. We saw a canyon but thought it was too shallow so we kept paddling. Finally we had to admit we had passed Eul Canyon so we headed back to the launch ramp. Sure enough, the buoy marker said Eul on it. It had been just too far away on our first crossing to go over and check. As we were returning to camp I looked around and realized I was all by myself. I stopped and looked back to see Brian, Marsha and Gary rafted up and bent over their GPSs. I just hope owning a GPS does not become a membership requirement. About a mile from our launch ramp Brian put Marsha on a short tow rope to practice that maneuver. It worked really well and Brian was able to keep up with the group easily. We made it back just fine and their GPSs showed we paddled about 14 miles. Well, I guess there is some good use for those things. At camp we had the usual evening except since the Lone Wolf was closed we all had to cook dinner—bummer. There was no sighting of the space station.

Monday we awoke to another clear, sunny day. Anne was feeling a little under the weather and decided to stay in camp. The rest of us headed out and paddled south down the west shore of the lake to the Sambrito Arm [D] fed by Sambrito Creek. It was a perfect day for paddling: warm, sunny weather with almost no wind. The water was almost like glass with barely a ripple. At the back of the arm we found a great place to stop for lunch on top of a little knoll. This had been used for camping and fires before. People even left a bunch of 2" x 4" lumber we could put across a couple rocks for makeshift seats.



Lunch on Sambrito Arm

Tuesday we woke up to an overcast and cold morning. We had had three days of nice weather so one day of less than perfect conditions wasn't too bad. We got down to the south end of the lake about 9:30.

CHANGE #5: We had planned to drive around to the Sims Mesa marina because we wanted to paddle the Frances Canyon Arm on the east side and we didn't want to have to cross the lake in case there were bad afternoon winds. As we approached the area we could see that it was a short crossing from Pine River Marina to the other side so we all agreed to launch at Pine River Marina and save the drive time. As I've said, flexibility became the theme for this trip.

Anne and I paddled north up the Los Pinos Arm [B] while Marsha, Brian and Gary headed across the lake to the Frances Canyon Arm [F]. We had more wind this morning and people were concerned about it. It was coming out of the west so those headed across lake would have almost a direct headwind paddling back, but they all felt up to it. Anne and I had been paddling for a couple of hours when the wind really picked up. We turned around and headed back to the launch ramp and had some pretty strong gusts of head wind. There were times we were



really digging in and not making a lot of progress, but we made it with no problems. So, we relaxed and waited for the rest of the group to return, which they did later in the afternoon. They said the Frances Canyon Arm is beautiful. They paddled the whole length and they did have strong head winds on the return, gusting to 20 knots per Brian, but all three are excellent paddlers with good, common sense judgment so everybody returned without incident. They paddled 10 miles that day.



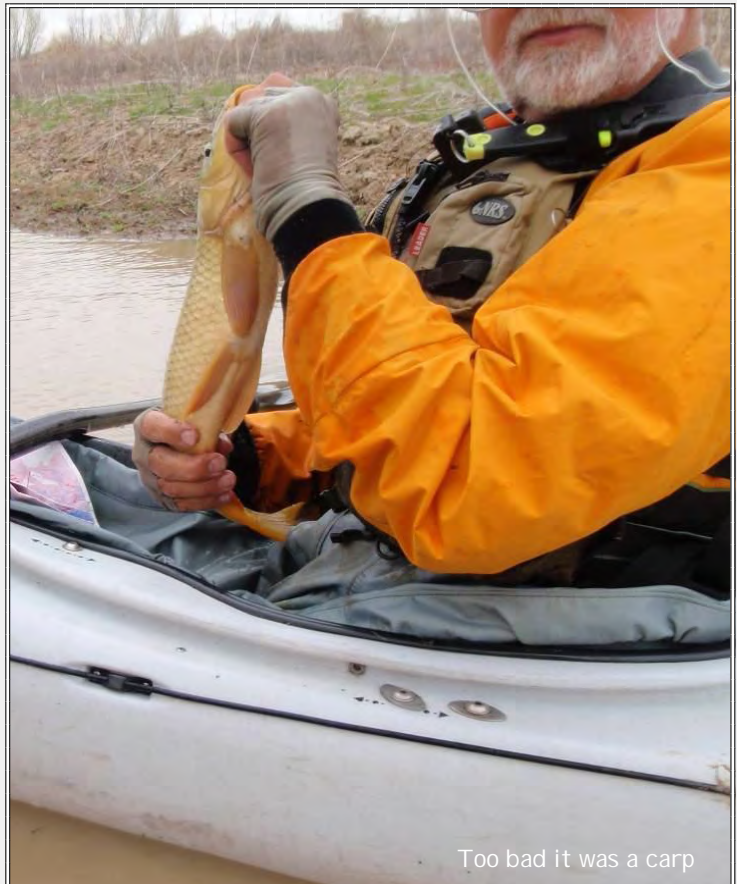
Gary Cage

Now we all know Brian is a great story teller but when he told me that a carp had jumped into his

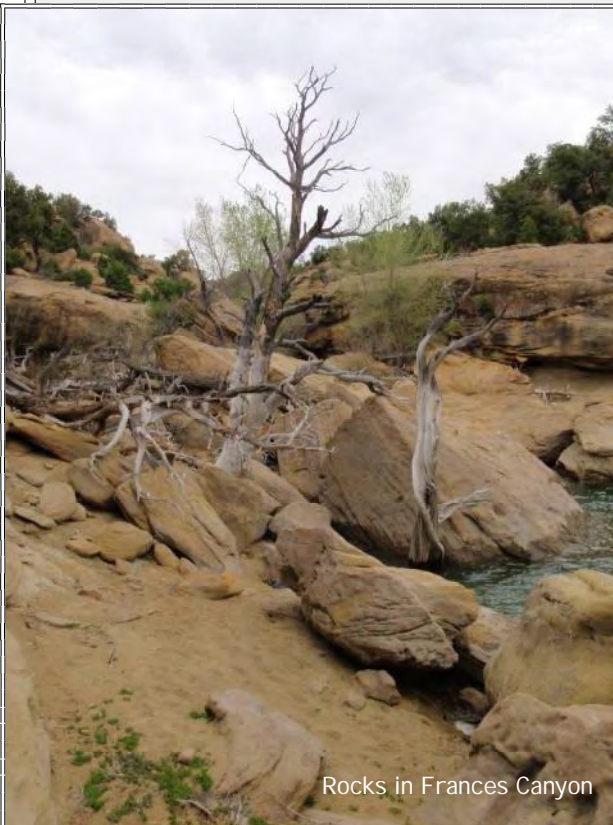
kayak I had a hard time swallowing that fish tale. Gary came clean and told us that they had herded the carp into the back of the arm and one was next to Brian's kayak on the surface, so he reached down and flipped it into his boat. I wonder, does that constitute fishing in New Mexico without a New Mexico out-of-state fishing license?



Marsha in Frances Canyon



Too bad it was a carp



Rocks in Frances Canyon



Brian, Marsha and I stopped for dinner at the Sportsman's Bar and Grill in the town of Navajo Dam just south of the dam while Gary and Anne headed back to camp for their final gourmet dinner. We had our last night at camp. We got up and headed home on Wednesday morning.

All-in-all it was a wonderful trip; everybody loved the lake and wants to go back. It is long and narrow with a prevailing south to north wind. It seemed almost full to us but we were told it was about 15 to 20 feet down, although this is the highest it has been in a long time. I believe Navajo does get drawn down throughout the summer as the Pine River Marina people said they wished they would set a level and keep it there so they don't have to keep moving the marina up and down.



The lake is surrounded by small trees and brush with the look of a combination of Horsetooth and Pueblo Reservoirs. There are a lot of stretches where the shoreline is steep or rock walls straight up to about 20 to 40 feet high.



Possible camping spot at the end of a small cove

However, we did find plenty of spots where you could land and pitch a camp. In some of the smaller coves this was usually at the back of the cove with a slot between where the two walls would meet.

The water was cold this time of year and nobody was reporting any great fishing. We would recommend going a little later, May to mid-June or perhaps in September. This is a very popular lake and campground sites are hard to get in the height of the summer season, so if you go make sure you have a campground reservation. Our campground was almost empty but that wouldn't

be the case a little later or on a weekend. In fact, they get so busy they have a program whereby you can get a free annual pass to the lake if you volunteer to drive shuttle for 48 hours from the overflow parking lots down to the marina.

We think this would make a good multi-day trip by putting in at the south end, paddling north for three or four days and taking out at the north end. Perhaps someone will propose that trip for next year. If you do take the time to go down to this part of the state, consider adding days to also paddle Vallecito Reservoir just north of Navajo. Then you can continue west to play in Durango, go to Mesa Verde or go up to McPhee Reservoir just north of Cortez. And as long as you are there you might as well swing through Gunnison and hit the Blue Mesa Reservoir, and on, and on, and on. . . But remember, stay flexible in case you have to make on-the-spot changes.



Ralph Kline

## PADDLING THE GREEN RIVER FROM MINERAL BOTTOM TO THE CONFLUENCE

by Ralph Kline

This being my first experience kayak camping, I was in good hands with my most experienced companions, Frank Bering, Dick Dieckman, and my brother, Larry Kline. I had done my best to prepare for the trip with a kayaking class and several outings near my home in the San Francisco Bay Area. Nothing, however, could prepare me for the splendor and majesty of the Labyrinth and Stillwater Canyons along the Green River.

Our outfitter, Tex's Riverways, did an excellent job delivering us and our gear to the put-in at Mineral Bottom and picking us



Dick Dieckman, Larry Kline, and Frank Bering



Loading up for the shuttle

up five days later at the confluence of the Green and Colorado Rivers, about fifty-two miles downstream, for a jet boat ride back to Moab.

At the put-in, I learned how small the cargo space really is in a sea kayak, and also how much it can actually hold if packed properly. This was all new territory for me. Much to my relief, our original plan for dealing with "solid waste" by wrapping it in newspaper burritos was replaced with a rented, washable, reusable toilet system, a concept and "posture" I was more able to wrap my mind around, as this was also new territory for me.

Much time was spent the first day loading and unloading, being transported (1.5 hours to the put-in), and just getting organized. Starting at 8:00am in Moab, we began our journey in the water at

about 1:00pm, but the wait was worth it. The adventure truly began when we descended Horsethief Road as it dropped down to Mineral Bottom, and the scenery continued nonstop to the end. With names like Deadhorse, Jasper and Shot Canyons, not to mention Hardscrabble, Queen Anne, and Saddle Horse Bottoms, you know the history is rich despite the seemingly barren and hostile environment for settlers.

We spent four nights out in the wilderness paddling anywhere from two to four hours each day. Our first day out took us almost 16 miles downriver to Potato Bottom where our camp was the most open of our trip with unobstructed views in all directions. The Butte of the Cross was visible down river to the south and Big Horn Mesa to the north. Paddling the first day was mellow and the water was smooth. The only challenge was to



The author with Butte of the Cross in the background



paddle past several decomposing cattle carcasses floating down river this year. We met up with canoers and rafters along the way and speculated with them about the source and fate of these bloated beasts.



Bonita Bend

The second day was a short six miles to a prime "destination camp" at Bonita Bend. This spot is also called Anderson Bottom and features an "abandoned me-ander" in which the Green River now bypasses about two miles of its original course. The result is a flat dry valley with interesting flora surrounded by steep rock formations. We hiked this area in the afternoon before dinner taking in the whites, reds, pinks, and greens of the landscape contrasting with the blue sky.

The third day we began to hit challenging water conditions as we passed the Sphinx and Turk's Head, two distinct landmarks along the river.



The Sphinx



Dick at Turk's Head

A stop at Deadhorse Canyon where Larry and Frank had camped last year provided a much needed respite and an excellent photo opportunity with its panoramic views. In the afternoon strong headwinds would come and go at times generating one foot waves, something I had not experienced in any of my outings back home near the ocean! Larry got the group to travel more closely together for safety, a move I very much appreciated as a kayaking novice.

We paddled over 17 miles that day to Horse Canyon, a spot we chose for its shelter against the bad weather forecast before we left civilization. Our campsite was surrounded by high cliffs on all sides, and the skies were overcast much of the night as predicted, but we felt we had beaten the odds when there was no rain.

The fourth day out turned out to be our last day of actual paddling mostly by happenstance. We had intended to have two short days before our pickup by the jet boat, but lack of suitable camping areas and safe landing sites

at the river's edge pushed us further down the Green River and then about a mile past the confluence with the Colorado for a seventeen mile day. The wind had come up early in the day and was strong, blowing sometimes at our backs but more often in our faces. The water was choppy much of the time. When we reached the confluence, the wind picked up and the waves grew to a foot and a half, though they seemed more like three feet to me. Time to pay attention!

I felt fortunate to have had conditions change gradually over the previous few days giving me time to adapt and learn. The most treacherous part for me was the ferry across the Colorado to reach a camp for the night on the other side. We also had to paddle upstream almost a half mile on the far side. The wind now at our backs helped us move along, but paddling and even surfing with the waves was yet another first time experience. This was quite enough novelty for me in one day! After much searching, our party settled on a narrow landing with room for just two boats at a time. This was a two foot wide shelf dropping off to deep water and a ten foot high sandy slope up to safe ground. Dick and Larry off-loaded their cargo first bag-by-bag and carried their kayaks up the slope while Frank and I waited just upstream telling stories and awaiting our turn. It took a good 45 minutes to get all four of us safely off the water.

Our last night out was stormy with strong winds and rain. I, of course, chose to set up camp on the nice but exposed spot overlooking the river and, consequently, a prime location to experience the full force of nature. I don't know how strong the wind gusts were that night, but they were indeed a test of endurance and equipment. About 2:30am the storm finally died down, and I fell asleep dreaming of home and a soft, comfortable and safe bed.

I didn't realize that the jet boat ride to Moab which I still had to endure would be very cold and, at times, wet. Following the suggestion of Tex's jetboat team to wear pretty much all the clothes in my possession helped considerably, but it was still cold! This made the last leg back to Moab in a heated bus very pleasant and another memorable experience.



Loading up for the jet boat ride back to Moab



The Kline brothers, Larry and Ralph

Summing it all up, it was a trip I will not soon forget. Whether I take up kayak camping as an

avocation is still undecided, but kayaking is something I will continue to enjoy at every opportunity.

This Green River trip is one of splendid scenery at every turn. It is also a trip through a remote area without any access along the fifty plus mile route and weather challenges that can change unpredictably. I was very lucky to have serious and experienced companions to make it as safe as possible. It made enjoying the journey that much more pleasurable.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Read the next article, written by Ralph's brother, Larry, for more about this trip on the Green River, specifically the surprising and challenging difference in availability of campsites.



# YOU JUST NEVER KNOW

By Larry Kline

Sometimes a river never changes but sometimes it does. The Missouri Breaks in Montana is a case where it seldom

changes. In the case of the Green River in late April 2010 this was NOT the case.

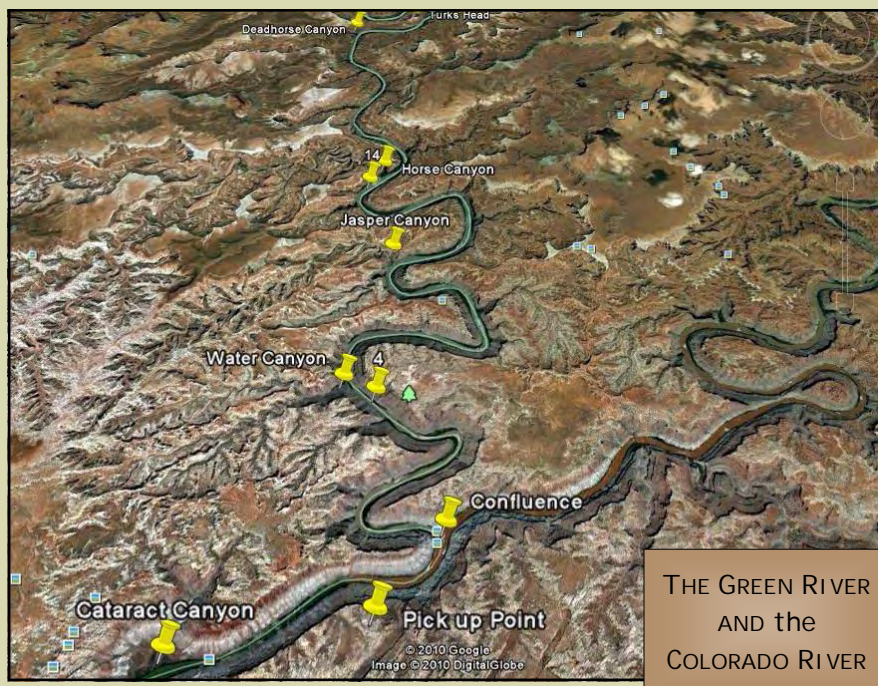
The previous year (April 2009) Frank Bering and I had noted our campsites, and many more potential sites, on the river flip chart, and were expecting them to be the same. Why not? The Green has a reputation as a gentle river much used by first-time canoeists and this section is named Stillwater Canyon. Yet, here is how it panned out this year:

On Day One we paddled right by our first camp of last year seeing nary a trace of it, although the river was flowing much lower. The entrance had been a narrow passage thru the tamarisk with a large sandbar in front of it.

This year we did find a spot just 0.3 miles downstream but its landing was evident only upon close review. The lesson begins: Things are changing.

Day Two and Day Three went as last year's experience and the river's reputation suggested, but Day Four was not even close!

Our plan for the fourth day was to camp at the mouth of Water Canyon just four miles upstream of the Confluence with the Colorado. We would use last year's campsite some 0.3 miles downstream on a sandbar backed by a long cliff face as our backup campsite. What we found this year was that Water Canyon was totally unsuitable for a kayak landing due to fast sweeping currents, nasty swirling 20 mph winds off the canyon walls, and high banks.



Dick Dieckman in the Confluence

So we headed downriver for our backup sandbar, only to find it was completely gone. Only the sheer rock wall was left. Some 100 to 200 yards of sand and tamarisk had been carried away in the prior 12 months. We continued on down past two lousy sites, one with the aroma from a dead cow carcass wafting in the stiff breeze. So now it was on to the Confluence itself and the really tumultuous waves and wind we weren't expecting. In fact, I had remembered it as a huge calm lake from the year before.

Not this time. We soon encountered 30 mph winds coming upstream against a 3 mph stream flow which generated 1.5 foot waves across the river. It was

sometimes a struggle to just hold onto our paddles! Just a few yards on each side the waves did cease but the wind continued unabated. On our right was a canoe tied to an exposed root on a 15 foot eroded bank. No occupants were in sight but we later learned they were a young couple who had put in with us at Mineral Bottom. They rode the jet-boat out with us the next day.

Thus began our **SERIOUS** efforts to find a landing and campsite for the night since we were running out of river before the Class III - IV rapids of Cataract Canyon just two miles downstream. And once again our expectations were dashed. The year before we had used a gently sloped sandbar backed by a wide opening in the tamarisk as our pickup point for the jet boat ride back to Moab, some 50 miles upstream on the Colorado. This pickup point was about one mile downstream of the Confluence and across the river on our left. As we searched for it we did finally see what remained—a highly eroded sand bar (two to three feet) with no chance of serving as a landing zone much less a camp site.

As we looked for a camp site down from our prior pickup point, for one brief moment my fully loaded kayak surfed going *upstream* over smaller one-foot waves; it was the 30 mph tailwind that pushed the boat up onto the backs of the waves and then caused my boat and me to surf down the fronts.

One member of our group capsized trying to exit his boat on a slippery bank at waist height with a 10-foot drop off into the water on the other side of the boat. Being grouped together at that moment let us easily pull him from the water. No doubt his upper body fitness from weight lifting helped get him back in his boat.



Final campsite: a narrow ledge, ten feet up, but that's all there was

Yes, we did find a campsite, and later that night the wind really came in with a vengeance. The winds increased to, we estimated, about 50 mph from midnight to exactly, as my brother vividly remembers, 2:35 am. My tent was nestled deep in the tamarisk yet one gust jerked it up and pulled one of its stakes out of the ground. Ralph had wanted to camp on an open spot above the "tammies" for a "view of the river". That night he put into effect an emergency evacuation plan: his dry bags were packed in case the tent blew to shreds. It did blow in a foot or two as the gusts hit, but it held up. And then came a calm before a series of gentle showers in the pre-dawn morning. At 9 am or so the sun came out to dry us off but was then followed by a gentle shower of graupel, also called soft hail. We learned later it had actually snowed in Moab that night. You folks in Denver may remember this Thursday night as well. It blew like stink across the West and over the mountains and then rained mud carried from the windswept desert shrub-lands of eastern Arizona and Utah. Most of that mud came from erosion due to off-road vehicles, mountain bikes, oil and gas drilling, and overgrazing, but not over-kayaking!

**OTHER NOTES:** For many years now, my brother and I have spoken of getting together for an outdoor adventure. Finally we put it together on the Green River. Since it was on my "turf", I felt a great deal of responsibility for his safety. I was thankful he had taken kayaking classes at home in California before the trip. We squeezed in two hours of paddling in rain and high winds at Bear Creek Lake the day before we drove to Utah. In retrospect that was a good experience considering what we encountered at the Confluence. I am also thankful my brother is a quick learner—it must be his youth; he is four years younger than I. In addition, we were fortunate the weather deteriorated in a series of steps that got progressively worse. Had it occurred in reverse, anyone new to river kayaking might well have been overwhelmed. In our case, Ralph got his "boots wet" in a gradual process, kept his cool and did very well in what became extreme conditions.

Speaking of extreme, one item we did **NOT** discuss was how to swim ashore after a capsize, let alone in high winds with up to two foot waves and with miles of gigantic rapids not too far away. Such a scenario on the "gentle" Green never entered our minds. The folks now experiencing the Gulf oil spill probably wish someone had made plans for that most unlikely of events...something to consider as we go about our lives.



## MERCHANTS WHO OFFER DISCOUNTS FOR CLUB MEMBERS:

- Alpenglow Mountain Sports  
393-A Washington Avenue, Golden  
303-279-1398
- Alpine Sports (15%)  
2510 - 47th Street, Boulder  
303-325-3231
- Columbia River Kayaking/Sea Kayak Baja  
Puget Island, WA, an hour from Astoria, OR  
[www.columbiariverkayaking.com/baja](http://www.columbiariverkayaking.com/baja)
- Confluence Kayaks  
1615 Platte Street, Denver  
303-433-3676
- Golden River Sports  
806 Washington Avenue, Golden  
303-215-9386
- Outdoor Divas (15%)  
1133 Pearl Street, Boulder  
303-449-3482
- River Mouse Kayaks (Club member Ray Van Dusen)  
[ray@rivermousekayaks.com](mailto:ray@rivermousekayaks.com)  
10% on gear; 5% on your 2<sup>nd</sup> (or more) kayak

# RMSKC SUPPORTERS

Take your ACA card  
and mention RMSKC  
when asking for your  
member discount.

**Alpine Sports**

[www.AlpineSportsColorado.com](http://www.AlpineSportsColorado.com)

15% DISCOUNT  
FOR  
RMSKC MEMBERS

2510 47TH STREET  
BOULDER, CO  
303-325-3231

## River Mouse Kayaks

*Sales of Fine Touring Kayaks  
Camping and Paddling Equipment*

Current Designs

Seda

Chota Boots

Valley Kayaks



Northwest Kayaks

Nimbus

Epic

Snap Dragon

*Representative for Canoe Colorado*

10% DISCOUNT ON ACCESSORIES  
TO ALL MEMBERS

Raymond Van Dusen  
[ray@rivermousekayaks.com](mailto:ray@rivermousekayaks.com)



- ♦ Fine British boats ♦ Werner paddles ♦ BCU Level 4 coaching ♦

COLUMBIA RIVER KAYAKING and  
SEA KAYAK BAJA

10% DISCOUNT FOR RMSKC MEMBERS  
[www.columbiariverkayaking.com/baja](http://www.columbiariverkayaking.com/baja)

- ♦ 11 years experience in Mexico ♦ Safety-conscious fun ♦