

Foggy Mountain Breakdown

RMSKC Paddle on Gross Reservoir

By Karen Bowers

Photos by Brian Curtiss & Barb Smith



Gross at its foggiest

Eleven intrepid paddlers met Monday, May 31 at what we hoped was the shore of Gross Reservoir above Boulder. For some paddlers there was a moment of doubt that we had reached the intended destination--the fog was so thick it was tough to spot the water, and it seemed as though the mountains had lifted their skirts and walked away.



Put in

Reassured by trip leader Brian Curtiss that we were indeed in the right place, we began unloading our boats. Though the weather remained cold and damp, the fog soon began to lift, allowing us to catch our first glimpse of what Brian describes as one of the premier flat-water paddling sites on the Front Range. Surrounded by pine forest and rock cliffs, the area seems as wild and remote as lakes in the Northwest. It would be a first for almost all of us; Gross Reservoir had been closed to paddlers until Saturday, which made us kayaking pioneers of sorts. (Brian, however, had scoped out the area the very day it opened.)

The water was frigid, but we came prepared for cold. And what an odd-looking bunch we must have seemed, outfitted in Neoprene and Polypro, boots and wool caps, Gore-Tex and fleece.

The water was calm--no 80 mph winds as noted in the warning signs. We began with a short, 3-mile paddle (I'm guessing here) along a southern arm of the reservoir to the South Boulder Creek inlet. It was so beautiful that we kept scanning the shoreline for future campsites. We took a brief break to drop off Marsha Dougherty at the put-in site, and then we headed north. There weren't many other people out braving the reservoir that day, although we passed a few fishermen who were trying their luck in the drizzle. It was almost like having our own private kayaking paradise.



Lunch

We stopped for lunch at the mouth of a rushing creek. Happily for us, Brian had brought his camping stove, so we were able to warm ourselves with hot tea and cocoa. After eating, we braved a short trek across the chilly creek to hike 50 yards to a gorgeous waterfall. There was good-natured joking that those of us with plastic boats

should shoot the waterfall, but no one took up the challenge.

As soon as lunch was over, the fog rolled in once again. We made a point of keeping everyone in sight, but it wasn't always easy--it was sometimes hard to see more than two boat lengths ahead of you. It eventually cleared a bit, and so we continued north to the dam site. And then--the fog rolled in again. Luckily, I had a compass and Terry Smith had a GPS system. We made our way carefully to the put-in. Altogether it was approximately a five-hour trip.



The fog is lifting

All of us agreed that it was a great trip and that we will have to paddle the res once again, this time when the weather is more ideal. Those who participated in the trip were: Brian and Nick Curtiss, Barb and Terry Smith, Karen Bowers and Mark Honhart, Sheryl and Dan Hunter, Matt Lutkus, Marsha Dougherty and Harv Mastalir.



Karen Bowers & Matt Lutkus