



# TOP 10 RIVER STEWARDSHIP ISSUES FOR 2019



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### 1. North Carolina Wild and Scenic

Protecting the Nolichucky River and Other Southeast Whitewater Classics

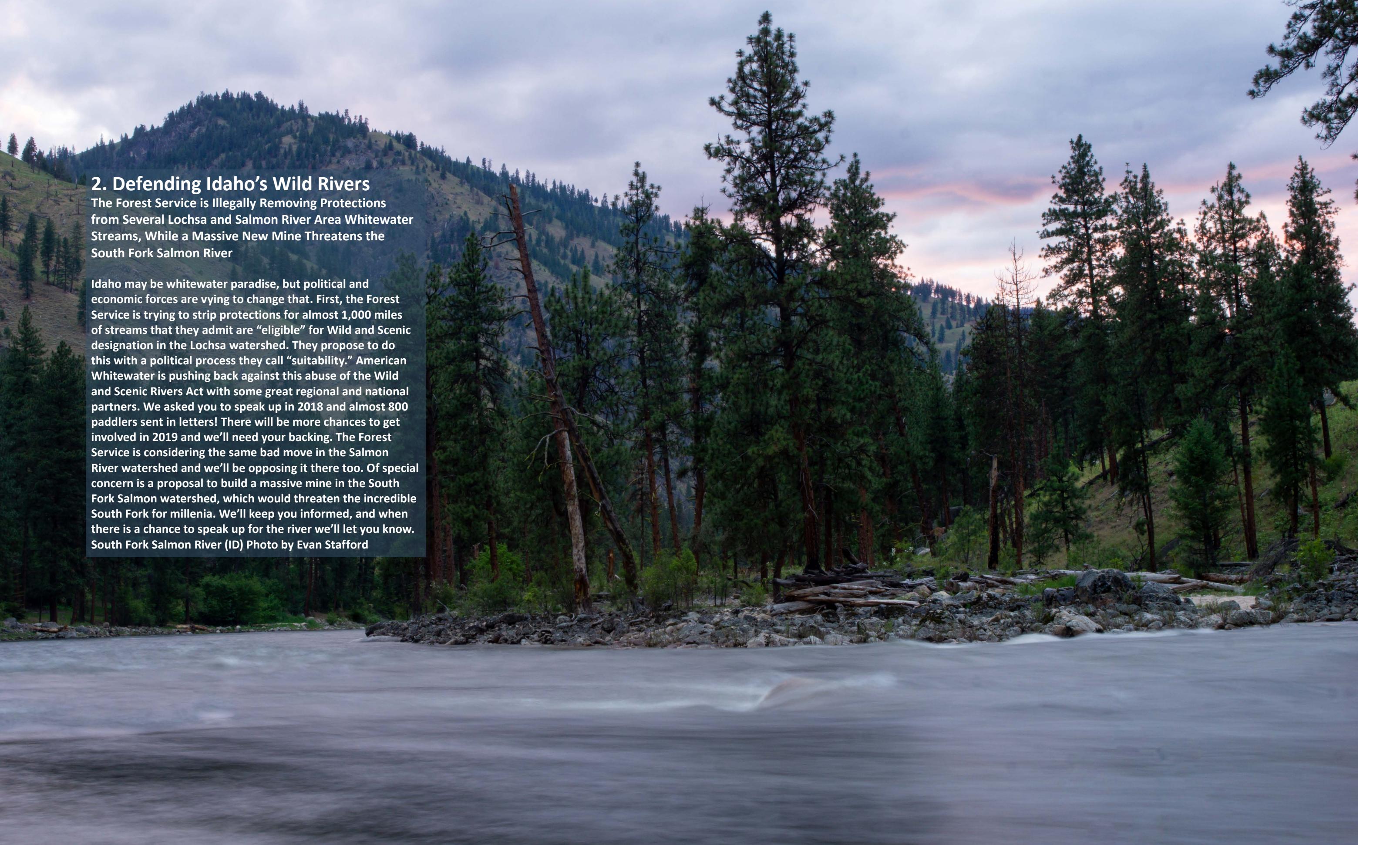
This year will be big for some of the Southeast's wildest streams! The Nantahala-Pisgah National Forest will be releasing a new draft forest plan that will propose protection for at least 20 outstanding whitewater rivers.

American Whitewater has worked for five years with a collaborative group to build support for these streams'

"eligibility" for Wild and Scenic designation. Eligible streams receive special protections in the new 20-year forest plan. We hope we can count on you to comment on the draft plan in support of river protection. We aim to leverage the collaborative support we've built to secure new Congressional Wild and Scenic designations too in the coming years, and the Nolichucky is up first. You can check out our new Nolichucky Wild and Scenic website at

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

Nolichucky River (NC/TN) Photo by Thomas O'Keefe



## 2. Defending Idaho's Wild Rivers

The Forest Service is Illegally Removing Protections from Several Lochsa and Salmon River Area Whitewater Streams, While a Massive New Mine Threatens the South Fork Salmon River

Idaho may be whitewater paradise, but political and economic forces are vying to change that. First, the Forest Service is trying to strip protections for almost 1,000 miles of streams that they admit are “eligible” for Wild and Scenic designation in the Lochsa watershed. They propose to do this with a political process they call “suitability.” American Whitewater is pushing back against this abuse of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act with some great regional and national partners. We asked you to speak up in 2018 and almost 800 paddlers sent in letters! There will be more chances to get involved in 2019 and we’ll need your backing. The Forest Service is considering the same bad move in the Salmon River watershed and we’ll be opposing it there too. Of special concern is a proposal to build a massive mine in the South Fork Salmon watershed, which would threaten the incredible South Fork for millenia. We’ll keep you informed, and when there is a chance to speak up for the river we’ll let you know.

South Fork Salmon River (ID) Photo by Evan Stafford



### 3. Montana Headwaters

Ramping Up Our Efforts To Protect  
50 Wild Streams on the Heels  
of East Rosebud Creek's  
Wild and Scenic River Designation

Our nation's newest Wild and Scenic River, East Rosebud Creek, proves our goal of designating new Wild and Scenic Rivers in Montana is achievable! We are redoubling our efforts in 2019 to secure a bill that would designate up to 50 of Montana's most incredible headwater rivers and streams as Wild and Scenic Rivers. We've worked with great partners to build support for this initiative for the past 9 years, and 2019 marks the best chance that we've ever had to put together an amazing bill for some of Montana's – and our nation's – last best rivers. No matter where you live, you'll have a chance in 2019 to speak up for these great rivers that belong to all of us.

Blackfoot River (MT) Photo by Kevin Colburn



### 4. Upper Colorado

Taking a Lead Role in Protecting Wild and Scenic Values

As we move into 2019, efforts to finalize the Upper Colorado Wild and Scenic Alternative Management Plan (AMP) ramp up. American Whitewater has been elected to serve as Chair of the 80 member Stakeholder Group that is working to establish the AMP to preserve and enhance the paddling and angling experiences from Gore Canyon to Glenwood Springs, Colorado. These complex negotiations include stakeholder governance protocol, establishing an endowment to fund restoration and enhancement projects, and monitoring programs that measure the success of the Plan. By mid-2020, a suite of instream flow protections, and a menu of options that stakeholders can tap into to ensure recreation is not degraded in the future, will be complete. Among these protective measures are two Recreational In-Channel Diversions (RICD), or recreational water rights, that American Whitewater has helped secure for the river. As we welcome a new year, we can celebrate a new decree from the Colorado Water Courts for an RICD within the City of Glenwood Springs, closing a five-year long campaign to acquire water rights that will protect the river, and ensure the Upper Colorado's Wild and Scenic values can be enjoyed into the future.

Colorado River (CO) Photo by Evan Stafford



## 5. California Access

### Securing River Access on the South Fork American River

In 2007, American Whitewater and stakeholders signed the Upper American River Project Settlement Agreement with Sacramento Municipal Utility District that laid the ground rules for a new hydropower license issued in 2014. This agreement prescribed improved instream flows, including for recreation, and comprehensive access to the sought-after Slab Creek run on the South Fork American River. During the last four years American Whitewater has worked on an interim access for scheduled recreational flows, reviewed long term access plans for the put-in, secured permanent long term access at the midpoint of this run with El Dorado County, and advocated for appropriate solutions for a take-out access point. In 2019, we will continue to work with our colleagues to ensure take-out access plans are developed and implemented true to the tenets of the Settlement Agreement. Our goals include suitable road access, safe river egress, and the preservation of access to the lower Class II-III section of the run on the South Fork American River below Slab Creek. South Fork American River (CA)

Photo by Trevor Croft



## 6. Colorado State Water Plan

### Making a Big Impact in Multiple Colorado River Drainages Through Statewide Effort

As Colorado moves towards achieving its goal of putting 80% of its streams and watersheds under Management Plans, American Whitewater is working with several planning groups to ensure that recreation is fairly and fully represented through these efforts. In 2019, we will be working with local paddlers and recreational interests on the Rio Grande and Conejos Rivers, Eagle River and Gore Creek, and the Saint Vrain where paddlers and outfitters will help define the full range of flows that support recreation, and identify projects that can improve river health, access, and public safety. American Whitewater will also be working with a team of policy-makers in the state to create a mechanism to fund projects that benefit the environment and recreation. Once projects are identified by plans, our goal is to secure \$100 million per year to assist the State in paying for those projects and improve our communities and economies.

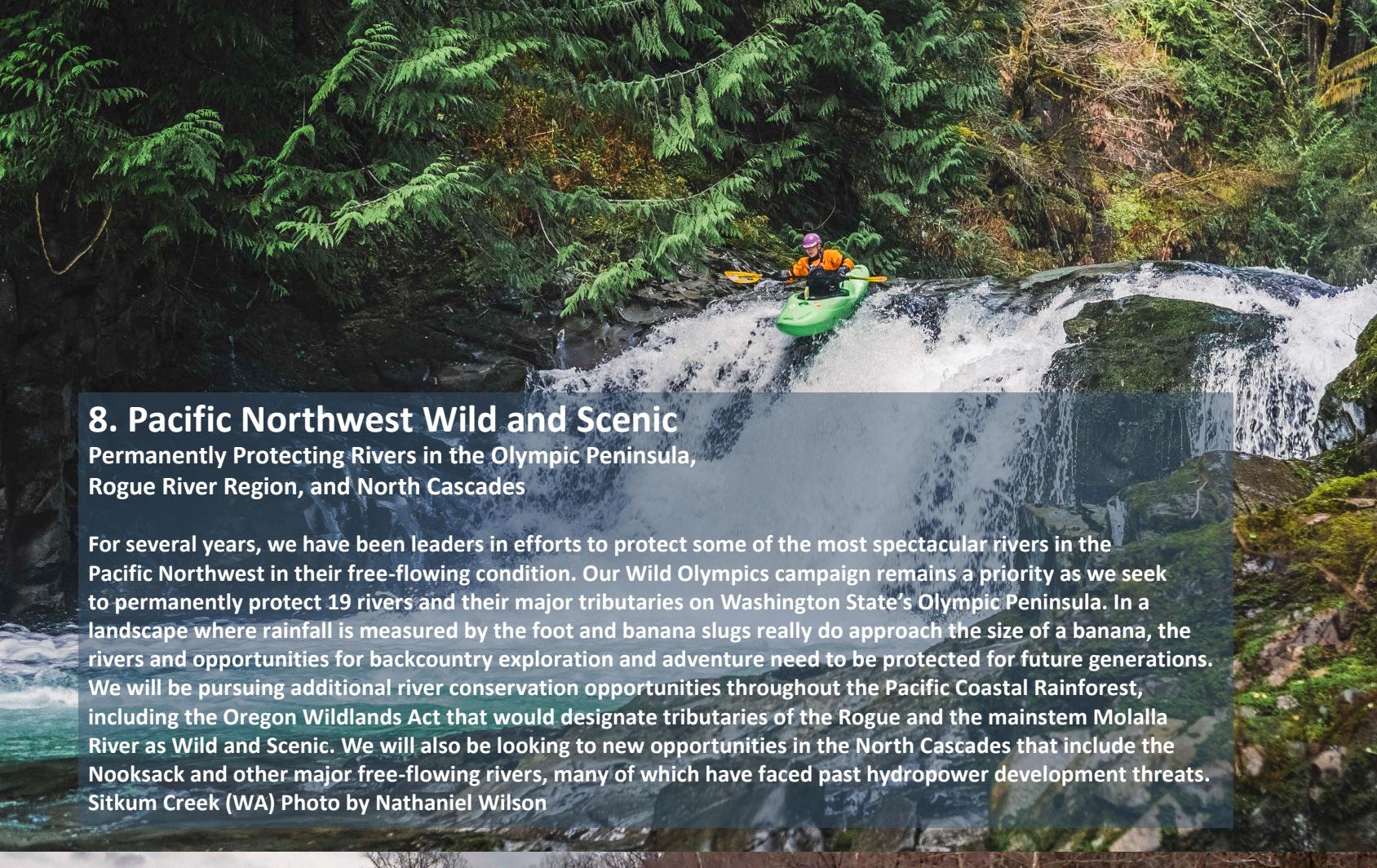


## 7. Protecting Rivers on Public Lands

Improving and Safeguarding Access to Whitewater Rivers Across the Country

Ensuring public access to rivers so paddlers can enjoy them remains a cornerstone of our work and in the coming year we will focus our efforts on protection of public lands that provide access to rivers and enhancement of the user experience. Over the past several years a few members of Congress have initiated efforts to sell off public lands. Among the lands that are always first on the list are small parcels found within a patchwork ownership of private lands. When they are within river corridors, these public parcels can be among the most important in providing legal access to rivers. Over the coming year we will support efforts to keep public lands public, seek opportunities to acquire key parcels that provide public access through the Land and Water Conservation Fund and other conservation tools, and work to develop guidance that can be used by river managers to improve the user experience at sites that provide access to waterways.

Snoqualmie River (WA) Photo by Thomas O'Keefe



## 8. Pacific Northwest Wild and Scenic

Permanently Protecting Rivers in the Olympic Peninsula, Rogue River Region, and North Cascades

For several years, we have been leaders in efforts to protect some of the most spectacular rivers in the Pacific Northwest in their free-flowing condition. Our Wild Olympics campaign remains a priority as we seek to permanently protect 19 rivers and their major tributaries on Washington State's Olympic Peninsula. In a landscape where rainfall is measured by the foot and banana slugs really do approach the size of a banana, the rivers and opportunities for backcountry exploration and adventure need to be protected for future generations. We will be pursuing additional river conservation opportunities throughout the Pacific Coastal Rainforest, including the Oregon Wildlands Act that would designate tributaries of the Rogue and the mainstem Molalla River as Wild and Scenic. We will also be looking to new opportunities in the North Cascades that include the Nooksack and other major free-flowing rivers, many of which have faced past hydropower development threats.

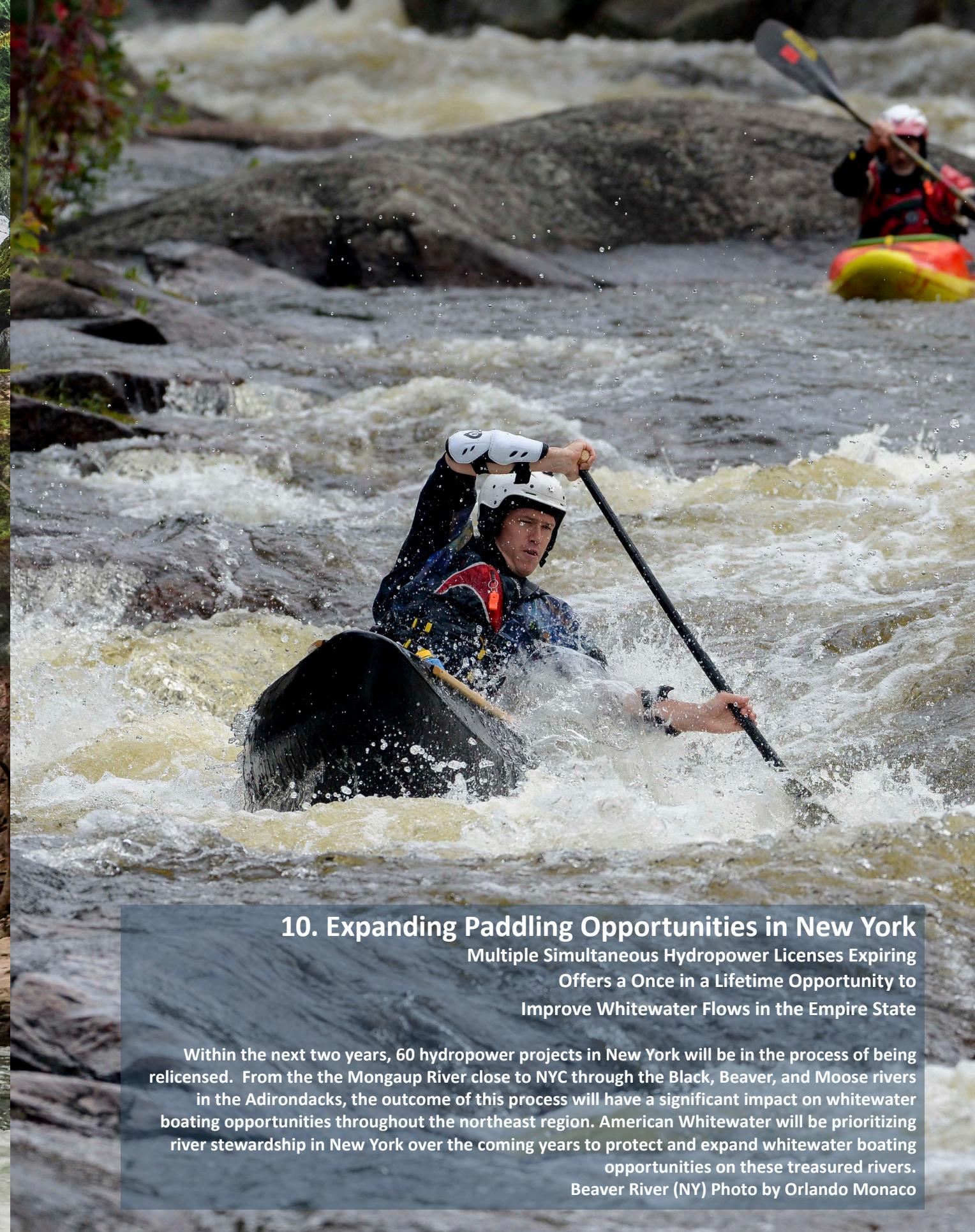
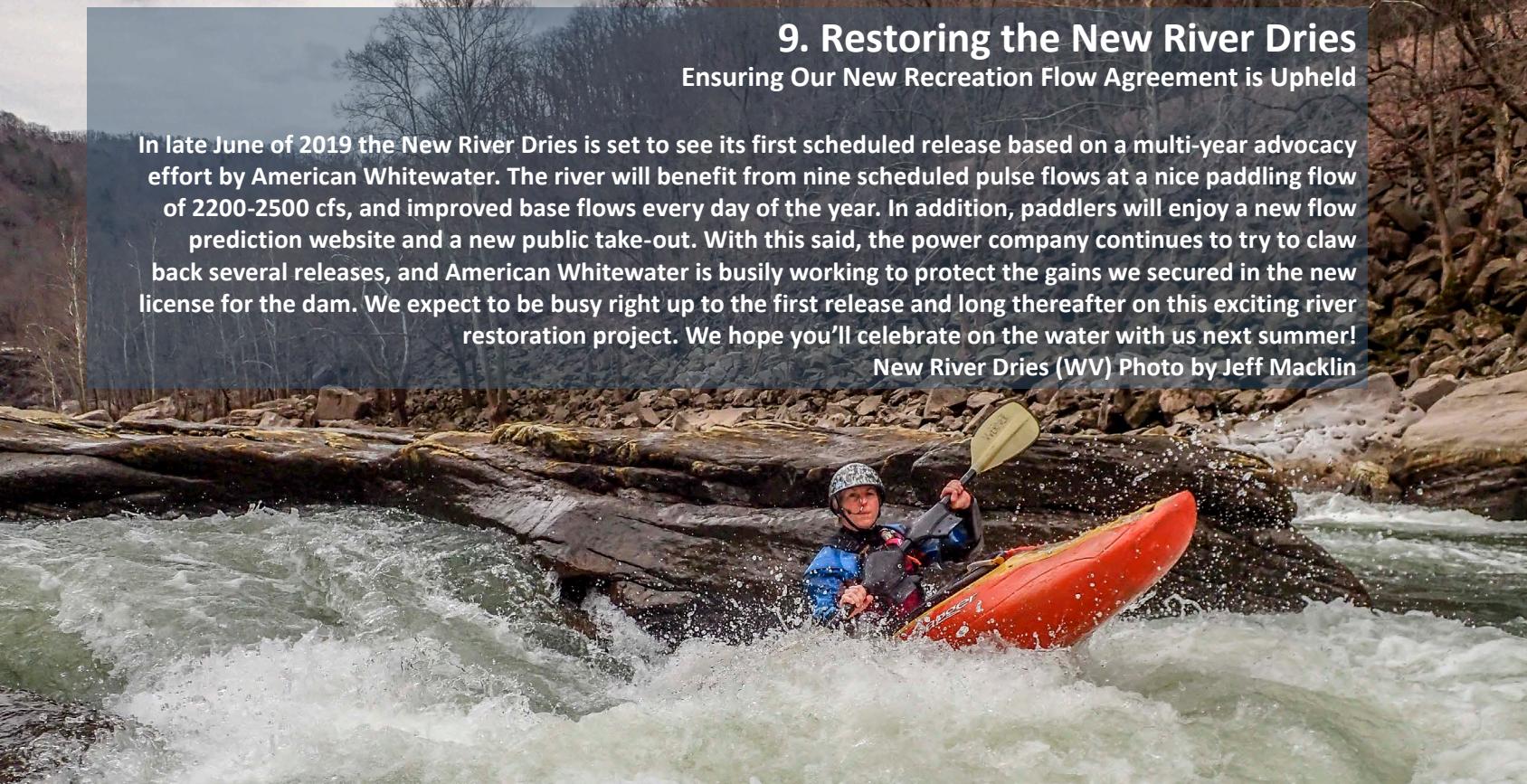
Sitkum Creek (WA) Photo by Nathaniel Wilson

## 9. Restoring the New River Dries

Ensuring Our New Recreation Flow Agreement is Upheld

In late June of 2019 the New River Dries is set to see its first scheduled release based on a multi-year advocacy effort by American Whitewater. The river will benefit from nine scheduled pulse flows at a nice paddling flow of 2200-2500 cfs, and improved base flows every day of the year. In addition, paddlers will enjoy a new flow prediction website and a new public take-out. With this said, the power company continues to try to claw back several releases, and American Whitewater is busily working to protect the gains we secured in the new license for the dam. We expect to be busy right up to the first release and long thereafter on this exciting river restoration project. We hope you'll celebrate on the water with us next summer!

New River Dries (WV) Photo by Jeff Macklin



## 10. Expanding Paddling Opportunities in New York

Multiple Simultaneous Hydropower Licenses Expiring  
Offers a Once in a Lifetime Opportunity to  
Improve Whitewater Flows in the Empire State

Within the next two years, 60 hydropower projects in New York will be in the process of being relicensed. From the Mongaup River close to NYC through the Black, Beaver, and Moose rivers in the Adirondacks, the outcome of this process will have a significant impact on whitewater boating opportunities throughout the northeast region. American Whitewater will be prioritizing river stewardship in New York over the coming years to protect and expand whitewater boating opportunities on these treasured rivers.

Beaver River (NY) Photo by Orlando Monaco



## REVISITING 2018'S TOP 10 RIVER STEWARDSHIP ISSUES

### 1. Forest Planning Suitability

This issue blew up in 2018, requiring American Whitewater staff to attend meetings, draft numerous rounds of comments, and leverage the support of our members and partners. So far the Forest Service is plowing ahead with their scheme to lift Wild and Scenic protection for worthy streams.

### 2. Wild Olympics

We continued to successfully build support for our Wild Olympics legislation over the past year and secured a successful hearing in the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. While the bill stalled in Committee and was not voted on, we remain optimistic that a window of opportunity will emerge when Congress decides to assemble the pieces of a public lands package.

### 3. Montana Headwaters

East Rosebud Creek was designated as Montana's first Wild and Scenic River since 1976 in August of 2018. East Rosebud is a thrilling bipartisan success, and hopefully a sign of more wins to come.

### 4. Ocoee River (TN)

The stars aligned on the Ocoee in 2018 and another 15 years of Upper and Middle Ocoee releases were agreed to and approved. American Whitewater helped secure this outcome and restore a much-loved week of fall releases to the agreement, thanks in part to the partnership we forged with the Southern Environmental Law Center.

### 5. National Monuments

Following an extensive "review" of National Monuments, the President ultimately reduced two: Bears Ears and Grand Staircase - Escalante in Utah. These National Monuments include whitewater resources on the San Juan, Colorado, and Escalante rivers that flow through a landscape known for its geologic wonders and rich cultural heritage. While we believe the President does not have the authority to reduce or rescind National Monuments, that case is now in federal court. Over the past year we worked with our colleagues at Outdoor Alliance to highlight the importance of outdoor recreation, including whitewater paddling, to experience the objects of scientific and cultural interest on these Utah Rivers and recently filed an amicus brief in the case.

San Juan River (UT) Photo by Evan Stafford

## 6. Colorado Water Plans

American Whitewater is moving ahead with studies designed to allow paddlers and river enthusiasts the opportunity to provide clear input into the Colorado Water Plan through individual Stream Management Plans. We continue to work in the Rio Grande Basin, while expanding our study efforts to other watersheds in the State - each of which will fairly represent the needs of recreation as Colorado seeks to balance declines in water supply and increased demands statewide.

## 7. Hydropower Legislation

This past fall, America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018 was signed into law and included the most significant changes to hydropower law enacted in more than a decade. The bipartisan legislation will encourage utilities to upgrade their dams and improve operations before licenses expire, promote the responsible electrification of federal dams that currently do not have hydropower, and make it easier to generate electricity from conduits, all without undermining fundamental environmental protections. Given some of the proposals we saw for hydropower legislation that would have severely undermined environmental protections and opportunities to restore flows downstream of dams—and the opportunities to paddle them!—we are pleased that Congress elected to work together on common sense proposals that were broadly supported.

## 8. Protecting Clean Water

The application of the Clean Water Act to our nation's headwaters remains as confusing as the chaotic currents of a wild mountain stream. American Whitewater actively supported the 2015 Clean Water Rule given the importance of clean water for the health of rivers and those who recreate in their waters. Following recent court action, this Rule is now in effect in 22 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. territories. The other 24 states are subject to two other court decisions staying the Rule. The issue will continue to play out in the courts and within the Administration over the coming year as the Environmental Protection Agency works to repeal the 2015 Rule and replace it with an alternative.

## 9. California Hydropower Relicensing

In 2018, whitewater study plans to evaluate the impacts of the hydropower projects on recreational whitewater boating were approved for the Eel River and Piru Creek. These studies will combine a robust hydrology assessment, stakeholder focus groups, thorough site visits, and potential on-water recreational flow studies. Currently these studies are engaging paddlers on both of these Wild and Scenic rivers in detailed focus groups. As these studies progress it is our hope to gather quality information that will help us to advocate for outcomes that are inline with the tenets of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

## 10. Connecticut River Dam Operations

Our efforts to restore the Connecticut River continued throughout 2018, as American Whitewater, along with state and federal resource agencies, has been working to restore flows, protect habitat, and provide recreation opportunities harmed by five hydropower projects impacting nearly 90 miles of the mainstem. Our efforts to reach settlement on recreation flows, access, and information will continue in 2019, and we will ultimately succeed in our efforts to provide new and improved whitewater boating opportunities at Sumner Falls, Bellows Falls, and Turners Falls.

New River Dries (WV) Photo by Jeff Macklin

