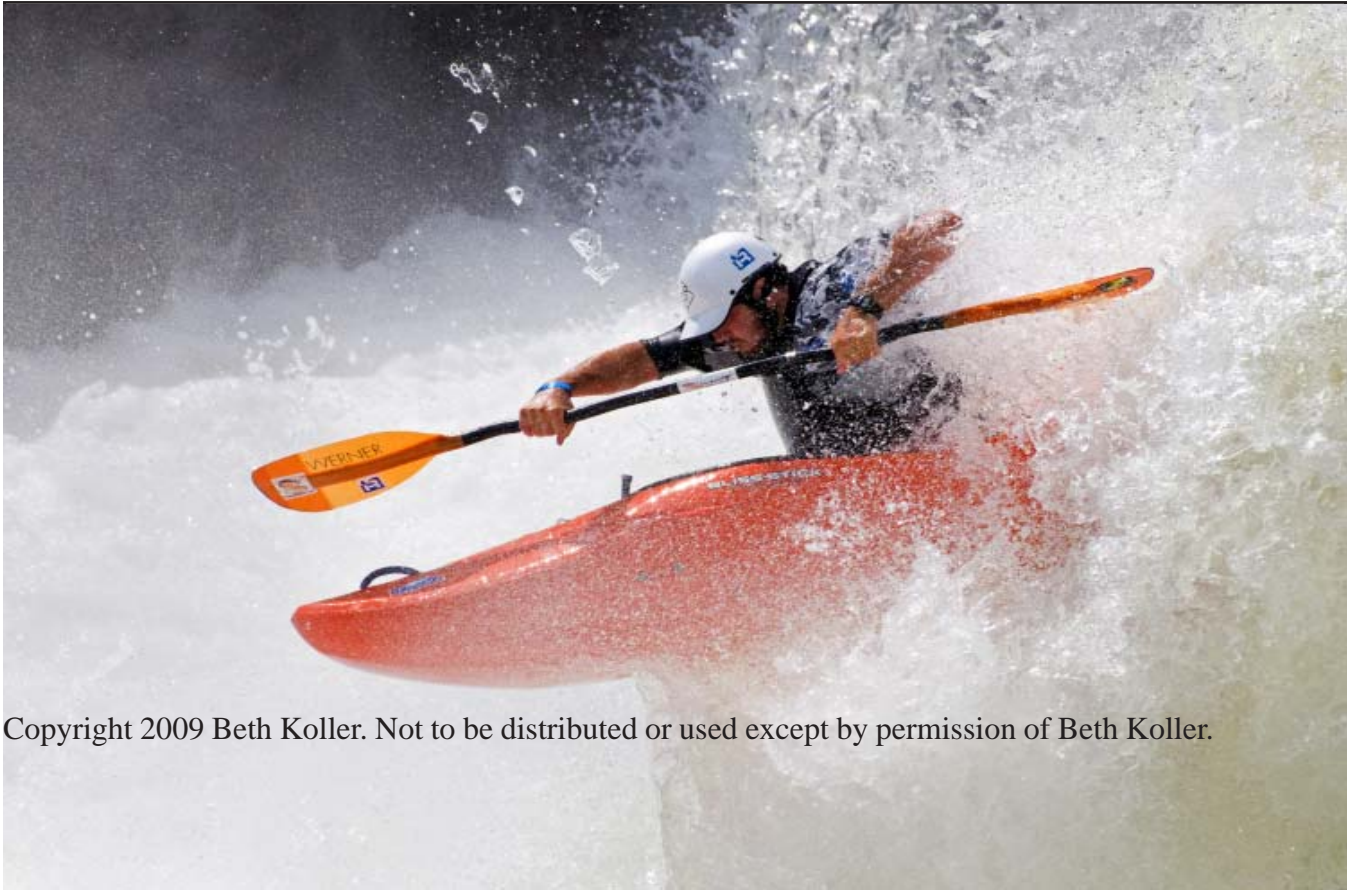


# MONOCACY CANOE CLUB **MOKE SIGNAL**

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Monocacy Canoe Club  
www.monocacycanoe.org

October 2009



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## **Congratulations Beth Koller**

Winner: Still Image, "Koller-Driver"

2009 National Paddling Film Festival, Lexington, KY ([www.npff.org](http://www.npff.org))

Subject: Matt Fithian, Ohionyle Falls

*This picture will be available as a 16x20 poster print for the next 3 months with the proceeds to benefit the West Virginia Rivers Coalition (WVRC) - Contact Beth Koller*

## **Annual MCC Covered Dish Dinner**

Tentatively Scheduled for Thursday, November 12

Venue to be Announced - Check for changes to the on-line

Cruise Schedule and/or postings on Paddle Prattle

**Chair**

Mike Sawyer  
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**Co-Chair**

Dick Gramm  
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**Treasurer**

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**Safety Chair**

Tony Allred  
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**Cruise Schedule Chair**

Open

**Cruise Schedule Co-Chair**

Bob Whiting  
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Do you ever look down and wonder what is in that water as you paddle? As you pass a discharge pipe, do you question what is coming out of it? Here at West Virginia Rivers Coalition we work every day to keep our state's water clean, for us and all our downstream neighbors.

In the Eastern Panhandle there are many issues that affect the water, but you wouldn't think discharges from water treatment plants would be one of them. Water that goes down the sewer gets treated to be clean before it is discharged, right? It should! But over the past year several Public Service Districts, the departments responsible for treating the water, have fought the more stringent discharge limits imposed by the WV Department of Environmental Protection. Fought these limits by not only appealing their discharge permits, but even the right for the DEP to enforce the permit limits.

But WVRC joined the fight too. In a legal appeal to the West Virginia Environmental Quality Board WVRC petitioned that these pollution limits are needed to protect the health of the rivers from their origins in West Virginia all the way to their outlets in the Chesapeake Bay

We are proud to report that in late August the Environmental Quality Board ruled in favor of WVRC and upheld the more stringent pollution limits. The ruling also upheld our DEP's right to enforce those limits.

Because of our action less pollution will end up in that water you paddle. Help keep your waters clean, support West Virginia Rivers Coalition.

For more information on all of our work visit [www.wvrivers.org](http://www.wvrivers.org)

West Virginia Rivers Coalition working for you.

The MCC is looking for a new Cruise Schedule Chair who will be responsible for preparing the MCC cruise schedule to coincide with scheduled dam releases, to ensure club events are included in the calendar, and for coordinating volunteer leaders for club trips. Please contact Bob Whiting at the email address provided on the right.

## MCC Swift Water Rescue Course, 2009

Tony,

Just a note to say thank you for instructing the safety class. I am sure I really did learn the most, and I was truly appreciative for the opportunity to try some skills and observe a lot more. And really awesome I got to see things done right while learning for the first time! I may not have seemed like I took in a lot, but I did. Just really new territory for me. I have a big learning curve, but I get there bit by bit. I also was grateful for the bits of whitewater paddling. Very beautiful as well. I find it a special occasion every time I get out on the river.

Here is my little trip report for you to read and use as you like. It will be taped into my exercise journal for my reference. Please pass on my thanks to the other instructors as well. You make a difference and are “riverkeepers” of paddlers!

Gayle Jackson

### **Trip Report: Swift Water Rescue/Safety Course 8-15 & 8-16-09**

I had contacted Tony Allred to ask about his upcoming safety class. I paddle flatwater, and I am not an elite flatwater paddler either, just someone trying to get better at it all.

Certainly I am not a whitewater paddler level anything, but I keep running into the stuff on my “flatwater” river trips. I was getting worried I would eventually “swim” and be surprised in a very bad way about that. I knew there was a lot to be aware of, and I knew little to nothing.

I did in fact just observe a lot of this course, but I did try some skills. It was my privilege to be there. I was really glad to have had the opportunity to try to “swim” a few times, as that first time for me is now over. I know I was so fortunate to practice in this safest river environment possible! I also got to practice paddling in what to me was fun and significant whitewater (which I think was hardly noticed by the other students!).

I had hoped to learn to walk better in the current, and I did learn how to do that better with the assistance of a paddle, with a buddy, and with a pyramid of buddies!

I found I liked the aluminum carabineers well enough that I will fork out the extra bucks for them. I was glad I had gotten some new water shoes instead of my older water sandals. I got to see a lot of cool gear.

I still could not get my throw rope to go too far, but I tried it, and I can work on that. This was the first time I had a chance to practice throwing it to someone really swimming.

I am “knot challenged”, but I did learn to tie some knots slowly (even if it was worse than calculus), and I can work on that too. I was happy to see how to anchor webbing and attach a carabineer so there is a pivot point for the rope. Very handy.

I most likely can't save anybody's butt if they are in a complicated situation, however the first thing Tony told us is that the best way to resolve an unsafe situation is not to have it in the first place. That starts with me. I thank both the students and instructors in this course for allowing me the opportunity to improve my self safety and rescue skills. I now know that even I can push-pull up a flipped paddler, or offer my bow to for assistance. I can help stabilize in small ways, or maybe just know when to stay out of the way.

And, oh my, I somehow even tried to swim over that pipe “strainer”. I know to stay away from strainers, now I know even better. It made me wonder how the folks who work on removing them can even accomplish the task!

The land based classes were great too. That really gave me a big picture of what goes on in “safety/rescue” situations. I learned a lot of vocabulary that comes second nature to the other experienced students.

This class is announced as being appropriate for anyone who wants to come to learn and do what they feel they can do. And that is how everyone treated it, even though I was clearly the only one horribly out of my comfort zone. There was no eye rolling or any negative comments thrown in my direction by any student or instructor. First class folks (students and teachers) all around! This has seemed in keeping with what I am finding out about the paddling community at large. - *Continued on page 6*

## Trip Report: Lower Gunpowder River - Phil Dawson

It was a wet May and we managed to get some rain on a Friday so when I got a call about paddling in the Gunpowder system, I couldn't think of a reason to say no. The call was from a venerable and respected paddling friend. This friend had been instrumental in my development as a paddler. You probably know this guy and he has probably helped you at some point as well. How could I say no? This paddler shall remain nameless because I don't want to cause him any embarrassment.

When I looked at the put in on the Little Gunpowder at MD 165, I had my doubts, but I had great trust in the instincts of my paddling friend. The Little GP runs through a beautiful state park and forms the political boundary between Harford and Baltimore Counties. It rarely runs above canoe zero, so it could be a long time before I could try it again. Nothing in my paddling career had prepared me for the safari we were about to undertake.

We were still within sight of the put in when the narrow channel spread out over a shoal, and we were out of our boats dragging across the gravel bottom. This scene would be repeated dozens of times before our day was over. Minutes later we encountered the first of many strainers. God knows the number of portages we performed that day was easily ten times the number I had performed on any other river trip.

With each deadfall encounter, we were faced with a number of distasteful choices. Standing knee deep in some sort of adhesive muck, you could lift your boat over the strainer. As Mr. Newton observed the action of lifting the boat produced an equal and opposite reaction driving my legs to near the point of no return in what felt like drywall joint compound on the bottom. So the next time I tried forcing my boat under the strainer. This worked well, but in the process of scraping under the deadfall I managed to dislodge all manner of irate and voracious insects into the boat I was now about to enter. The next option was to drag the boat up the muddy bank and through the poisonous plants and parasites. Then there was my favorite method of climbing onto the offending wood and balancing on the

slimy, round surface while hauling my boat up and over. I can say that I am now master of the portage, and every conceivable method is truly rubbish. As bad as this experience was for me, it was even worse for my nameless friend. He was paddling an inferior boat, and each of these encounters forced him to release some sort of flexible cover on the top of his boat called a skirt (I guess he hasn't learned how to keep the water out of it yet), squeeze out through a small hole in the top of the boat, perform his portage, and reenter through the same small hole. I

can't feel bad for him, though. He should paddle a proper boat with an open top that allows him to enter and exit more easily.

As we approached the first road bridge, I offered to arrange a ride for us so we would not have to continue this excruciating journey, but my nameless friend was steadfast that conditions were about to improve. They did not. At another road bridge downstream we did encounter a proper stick gauge and a couple of small ledges that would be a lot of fun when covered with water. After what seemed like days, we saw a hiker on river left and inquired about the distance to the take out. She also warned us of impending doom due to the rough water we were approaching. We did encounter some Class 1- drops before the bridge at Harford Road. I was never so happy to see a bridge in my years of paddling.

Lessons learned:

If you are inclined to try this stretch, put in just upstream of the Guyton Road bridge. You can enjoy this very scenic stretch while avoiding dozens of shoals and strainers. The stick gauge is on river right just upstream of the same bridge, and it should read absolutely no lower than 1.5'. No one is perfect, not even those for whom you have the greatest respect. Trust your own instincts. The really funny thing is if my nameless paddling friend offered to do this stretch again tomorrow, I'd do it again. Some friendships are just that good. Thanks for the company, Tony.



## **Trip Report: Another Bloomie Release - Jay Dover**

What is better than a great day on a beautiful river? A great day on a beautiful river with new friends, of course. On Saturday, September 12, I was fortunate enough to meet up with a small group of friends comprising many local paddling clubs to take a leisurely run down the North Branch of the Potomac from Barnum to Bloomington.

Local paddlers know this section well for its cold clear waters, reliable dam release schedule, and fun, mellow whitewater. The Bloomington run is known as a great step up for novice paddlers as well as a safe place for intermediate paddlers to work on their boat control and play moves. Furthermore, a Bloomington trip is a great opportunity for experienced paddlers to try their hand at shepherding novices.

I met up with Tony Allred, Phil Dawson, Ed Evangelidi, and Beth Koller at the Barnum area put in. The local fishermen looked a bit confused about the crowd of boaters at their normally quiet put in (and perhaps they were also disturbed at the \$2 a head parking fee!).

We put on to the river and paddled to the upstream play wave where some surfed, some ferried, and some chatted and watched. We had a great time as we headed downstream through the bouncy wave trains. It was all pretty much read-and-run the whole way as everyone in our group seemed comfortable on the water. Terry Irani surfed everything in sight using his home made hand paddles. Marg Pruitt had a perma-grin pasted on her face as she took her Aire inflatable out for its first run.

The lunch wave featured some nice surfing. Beth Koller was nice enough to set up for photos at both Robin's Nest and Top of the World. Everyone in our group nailed their lines.

There was word of a strainer on the right fork of the last split near the bottom, so our group scraped through the gravel bar on the left before the two channels returned together.

What else is there to say about Bloomington? On days when I feel shaky (like the time my kids kept me up half the night in our tent at Robert Craig Campground!) it is easy to just point down stream and bomb through the rapids. On the other hand, Bloomington offers a ton of long boat surf for the days when I feel well rested and confident and want to push myself.

It is always a pleasure to paddle with such nice, unassuming, and experienced friends. I hope to join this crew on many more rivers in the future.

## **Trip Report: Faux Rescue on the Lower Yough - Lisa Fallon**

Although it was partly cloudy, it was otherwise was a lovely day in Ohio, PA. The temperature was moderate (low 70s) as were the water levels (1.75 feet). A semi-impromptu trip was assembled at the put-in. Needing a shuttle does bring about strange bedfellows!!! The participants were Lou Compagna, David (Cotton) Cottingham, Lisa Fallon, Beth Koller, and Daniel Mullins. The day was filled with incidents, many incidents.

The first was Lisa's. This was her 5th run on the river in a kayak although she had run the river previously in an inflatable. For her, Entrance Rapid went off swimmingly, quite literally. She missed her roll in a repeat performance of Saturday's run. Cotton came to a rapid rescue of Lisa, but her boat drifted downstream. An orange boat was unpinned by several parties from river center after about 40 minutes. Lisa's heart, however, sank when she saw the keel of the boat, "My boat doesn't have a crease in the bottom like that! I've ruined my boat!" Happily, she found out that her orange Jackson Super Fun had been rescued by Daniel and was downstream. The trip participants had been rescuing the wrong boat!

Lou was the focus of the second incident. He had forgotten his bailer. He thought he could make do with a "small" coffee cup. Right! Bailer-version 1.0. Lisa later located a larger Styrofoam cup for bailer-version 2.0. Still later, Lisa located a pre-cut plastic gallon jug so that Lou could upgrade to bailer-version 3.0! - *Continued on page 6*

## Trip Report: Upper Monongahela River and Tributaries - Ed Evangelidi

I hate flat water. I hate big rivers. On August 17<sup>th</sup> this year I had run out of most of my river choices; run out of friends to shuttle with, and run out of excuses to avoid looking further afield for unusual trips. I stumbled on an "Upper Monongahela Water Trail" map and it started to look better than it ever had before. I studied the area carefully and applied my own cockamamie sense of logic: "If I put in here, I can see these three rivers; or I can finish this river, etc." The water trail is the upper 65 miles of the roughly 130-mile Monongahela River. Being a commercial river, the Corps of Engineers pretty much guarantees adequate flows all the time - dredging of the main channel helps here too.

I looked at a place called Point Marion, Pa. and realized that I have paddled most of the Cheat River but somehow forgot about the last three and a half miles below Lake Lynn. (How many people do you know that talk about the Cheat being the largest undammed river in the east but forget about the one at Lake Lynn, Pa. and the power plant dam at Albright?) So I put in on the Mon at a nice town park and paddled down to the confluence. The river was actually a bit narrow here and the scenery was very pleasant. The town has a pleasant enough water front. Once down to the confluence I eagerly paddled up the Cheat to add to my Cheat basin mileage. I paddled past many kids enjoying the river on this hot day and a few fishing boats plying the cooler shaded areas for their angling entertainment. About half way up the river I found something that I hadn't contemplated - I ran out of water. It wasn't too bad though; with a little boat assisted hiking I was able to get over the few shallows between pools. One can also put in at a nice parking area at the base of the dam and skip the up and back that I did. On the way back down river I noticed something that I found to be quite odd. Pennsylvania is perhaps the state with the most "Oldies" /1950's era Doo Wop music stations. I found it odd that people half my age would be blasting 50's era music on their boat radios. Finally at the confluence again I headed down river for a while even though the river was considerably wider here.

The next day I drove up river to Fairmont, WV. My odd goal here was to see the lower part of the Tygart Valley River and the unfamiliar (to me) West Fork River. Fairmont also has a convenient city park and a not-too-bad river-front face. Clearly not as nice as Point Marion. The river was also wider here, even though it was almost 40 miles upriver. The first strange thing I saw here while paddling up river was a "grove" of banana trees. Seems that a garden supply place was pushing these exotics. At the confluence I first headed up the Tygart. Both the Tygart and West Fork seem to be narrow enough for me (a creek boater) to be somewhat comfortable. At first the scenery was quite nice but then there was quite a long stretch of marinas and houses. The scenery here was also "enhanced" by traffic noises from US 250 and I-79. I did not make it much further up river. On the way downriver I was surprised by a rain shower. I ducked under a park shelter and had lunch while it rained for quite some time. Wearing an impervious rain jacket when it was 90+ degrees and ~100% humidity did not seem like a comfortable alternative. I then headed up the West Fork and it too had its good and its ugly parts. Among the ugly was much acid mine drainage. I did not make it to the towns of Monongah, Worthington or Shinnston; which I knew had boat ramps. I also noted much more river garbage here than in the Pennsylvania section. It seems like neglected bikes, trikes, footballs, etc., are the favored debris. Footballs probably are favored as most people here are West Virginia University and Pittsburgh Steelers fans.

The next day I drove to Ten Mile Creek, Pa. The river here is a bit wide for my taste and scenery varies quite a bit too. Ten Mile Creek has a 2.5 mile lower section that is always paddleable and the lower half is one long pleasure boat parking lot. But there is a small park (Ten Mile Creek County Park) with a beautiful waterfront. Paddling from here upriver has its scenic ups and downs too. Paddling downriver results in welcoming the hugely wider Monongahela River just to quit passing moored pleasure boats. (I should note that I did this trip all on weekdays and boat traffic was minimal.) The river trail can also be enjoyed for much of its distance by bike. The Mon River Trail, Caperton Trail and Deckers Creek Trail all intersect and are presently 50+ miles. The Green River Trail (5 mi.) in Pa. and MC Trail and West Fork Rail Trail (15 mi.) in WV, as well as some hiking trails in the area (Catawba, Pricketts Fort State Park, etc.) can keep you busy exploring.

The river is pretty much always up for river traffic (check gauges on the lower Tygart and West Fork Rivers for flow rates) and there is much more for me to explore on this river. So, will I be back? We shall see. As I said, I hate flat water and I hate wide rivers.

**Trip Report: Swift Water Rescue/Safety Course - Continued**

This was a very encouraging and supportive bunch of folks for whatever you felt you could or could not do. This is what will make them good trip leaders, river guides, and instructors. They may not know that yet, but I do. Teaching has been my profession for many years, and you can have all the skills you want and not be able to share them with others without first offering that “humiliation and fear-free” environment for the comfort of your students. Few students will take the risks needed to improve themselves in a negative environment. I am sure that must be true for “victims” as well. I had a huge learning curve here, and an open invitation was extended to me anyway.

I finally closed my eyes to get some sleep long after that last class only to see folks standing on rocks holding a variety of ropes while hearing carabineers confidently clipped into place, and the sounds of short boats being carried to the rocks on the river banks with a distant echoing thud.....

Respectfully submitted by a grateful and extraordinarily reluctant river swimmer,

Gayle Jackson

**Trip Report: Faux Rescue on the Lower Yough - Continued**

There were no incidents at Dimple Rock! There were no incidents at Swimmer’s. There were no incidents at Bottle of Wine. Daniel was the target of the next incident. He forgot to put on his nose plugs at Double Hydraulic and swam above the drop. He executed a brisk self –rescue and ran the rest of the rapids with aplomb.

All was well at River’s End. Everyone, including Lisa, made the eddies. Million Dollar Wave provided some nice surfing for the group. Lisa, however, thought she needed another incident. The wave didn’t get her. Peeling out into flat water did. She affected a prompt self-rescue. No faux rescues were involved. Cotton, Daniel, Lisa, and Lou all threaded the needle through the rocks on river left of Brunner Run. Beth ran the traditional, or as Lisa would kindly say the sensible, line.



Monocacy Canoe Club  
P.O. Box 1083  
Frederick, MD 21702-0083

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**Membership Form**

Membership dues are still only \$15 per family living in the same residence. Please make check payable to **Monocacy Canoe Club** and send to:

**Monocacy Canoe Club**  
**P.O. Box 1083**  
**Frederick, MD 21702-0083**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you want delivery of the newsletter and cruise schedule as Adobe PDF files via email instead of regular mail?      Yes    No

Any changes in membership information?    Yes    No (If No, please do not fill out the rest of this form).

Family members: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Day Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Email 2: \_\_\_\_\_ Email 3: \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTICE AND ASSUMPTION OF RISK**

Canoeing or kayaking (paddling) can be physically demanding and/or dangerous. Canoeists and kayakers (paddlers) take personal responsibility for their personal safety. By participating in Monocacy Canoe Club activities, you acknowledge an assumption of the risk involved in paddling, which could involve risk of serious injury or death.