

## Western Whitewater Association Activities - Current and Historic

It has come to the Western Whitewater Association's board attention that there are some that believe that the club is doing little to further the cause of jetboating and public land use. In response, the WWA board would like to outline some of the actions that have been taken in the past couple of years to ensure that equitable use of rivers and wild lands continues.

The club developed a safety video to allow new boaters and others an opportunity to see how some activities are conducted on the river from the luxury of their home TV or computer, without the distractions of normal boat operations. Many basic skills are addressed in this video that is still available.

Mixed use and wake issue safety videos have been created. WWA members have been willing contributors, when the need arises, to educate boaters on items that are evolving or represent boating safety factors.

A short section of the Rogue River was in danger of being closed due to one group wanting to control one section of the river. The WWA made it a priority to contact the Oregon Marine Board and voice our opposition to that action. The Marine board chose not to close it and allow the waters to be used by power boaters.

The WWA was contacted by Our Land Our Voice, a collation organized to keep the Owyhee Canyon Lands from being listed as a federal monument. The WWA was quick to donate to the cause. Because of this grassroots movement the designation was stopped. The collation took a proactive stance and did the work that resulted in the Malheur Community Empowerment for the Owyhee Act. More information is available at [www.ourlandourvoice.com](http://www.ourlandourvoice.com)

C.J Strike's Black Sands boat launch is now a better launch site due to funds provided by the WWA.

Hells Canyon Recreation Collaborative - Shay White, as the representative of the WWA, has spent a good deal of time and effort helping develop this group of people from all user groups with the purpose of ensuring that everyone is represented in the decision-making process in the canyon. The WWA has supported the group both monetarily and through sweat equity. This group was instrumental in stopping the proposed fee charge, grant writing and providing manpower to improve the Pittsburg Landing campground and the revamping of ramp at Hells Canyon Dam. This model is now being used in other parts of the county where there are multiple user groups. It should be noted that Shay, as the club's representative, has developed relationships with state and federal leaders through this collaborative so that a jetboater's voice is heard on a continual basis. Let it be noted that Shay has recently been appointed a member of the John Day/Snake River RAC which advises in the development of balanced decisions that serve the interests of all public land users.

The past several years the WWA has collaborated with Team River Runners and devoted time and boats to take disabled military veterans and their families on fishing and site seeing trips in Hells Canyon as an annual community service.

From the mid 1990's into late 2003, the Western Whitewater Association spent considerable time and funds in the effort to get back to a realistic access level for private jetboats on the Wild Section of the Main Salmon River (Long Tom Bar on the west end and Corn Creek on the east end – approximately 90 miles). The permitted private use level at that time had been set at five overnight permits and five individual day permits (or 15 boat-use days per week), during the control season. These levels were established without a true consideration of the private jetboat uses on these waters at the time of the initial plan development in the 1980's.

The WWA contacted many of its longtime members and asked for documentation of historical use on the river. Through the help of the members, many meetings, securing legal counsel and several levels of negotiation the private powerboat permit levels were raised to the current level of 6 permits per day and a limit of up to seven days on the river by any single permitted trip (42 boat use days per week). It was also clarified that this was the "not less than" level observed in the founding act language and not the ceiling of allowable use.

Members of the WWA were very active in the process of the Fee Demonstration / User Fees on Main Salmon River. While the fees were not stopped, there was an active campaign to guide where the funds would be spent. There was even a FOIA request made for the expenses from this program and it may be time for another request to see where the funds are being spent and how they compare to the information received in the first request.

There was a proposed whitewater park that was to be placed in the west channel of the Salmon River at the bridge downtown Salmon, Idaho. This proposal would have included the construction of three dam-like structures and would have blocked upstream navigation. The WWA (along with other users and agencies) provided information that put that proposal on the back burner until a more suitable site could be found.

The WWA in conjunction with the USFS and the Idaho Department of Agriculture assisted in weed control projects along the Wild Section of the Main Salmon River. These efforts were largely responsible of getting a handle on invasive weed populations that were taking off in the canyon. Many of these operations were also on lands of private in-holders. Currently, forest service crews or contract crews do most of the weed control in the canyon.

The Corn Creek ramp somehow had several huge rocks placed in the water directly where jetboats launch. WWA contacted the Forest Service and instigated the removal of the obstructions. Now launching is back to the way it was intended.

USFS emergency closure of a 19-mile section of the scenic Salmon River west of North Fork was found to be without merit and after a WWA inquiry and request the closure order was rescinded.

Funds from the club (and a few boat loads of materials) helped to restore the Idaho Fish and Game cabin at MacKay Bar.

Safety boats have been provided at Salmon River Jetboat Races and other venues. The WWA has been highly active in supporting the SRJBR and the community of Riggins for many years. Many private jetboaters have learned additional boating skills and had a front row seat at these events.



Many may not know this, but the Salmon/Challis Forest Plan was up for revision in 2017 (still in process at the time of this letter) and jetboats were completely written out of (or omitted from) the draft revised forest plan language. The concern here is that there is a revolving door in the USFS staffing, administratively and at the staff level, and every decade or less there will be new administrators and plan development/implementation staff, if the plan does not include language recognizing private recreational jetboat operations new personnel may not understand that it is a legally authorized use of the navigable Main Salmon River.

The WWA stepped up and created a list of talking points (desired future conditions) for members to send into the forest service during the comment period. The draft plan has been scrapped and a new draft is being developed so it will be interesting to see if our comments on the first revised plan will be considered in the second draft. WWA has been represented at the regional planning meetings in Salmon area for the past two years by Bob and Becky Hays. They have represented the WWA in the Central Idaho Public Lands Collaborative (CIPLC), providing insight into highly regulated access issues to other user groups/stakeholders within the recreational subcommittee and full collaborative. Bob and Becky know the Salmon and its history in the jetboating boating realm well and understand the issues that we face. They step into those meetings well prepared to defend our rights and ensure that the jetboating community is well represented, and rights are preserved. The work on that plan continues and Bob and Becky deserve a big thank you for their willingness to take on this long and arduous task for our benefit. They often ask for others at monthly meetings to join them. Would you be willing to be that person?

King Hill Snake River Bridge – When the Snake River Bridge at King Hill was replaced several years ago the original design would have made navigation of this stretch of river impossible, it would have been too low for navigation during periods of high flows (not just run off but also high-power generation flows and therefore could not be predicted by season). When you see the current hump-back design, part of the reason is for navigation and the other factor was that the railroad track also sets roadbed elevations. When members of the WWA became aware of the restrictive nature of the new bridge the WWA lobbied that this navigable river stay that way and the bridge design was altered to provide for navigation.

While this is a long read, people need to understand that there is action taking place within the WWA even if you are not witness to it. It takes a lot of work in the background to make sure that we all can enjoy the waterways and the lands of the west. People who came before us put in the time and money to ensure what we enjoy is in place. There are people in this organization that are actively doing the same today.

In closing, let it be said it is not a given right to be on the river. It has been earned and it is a fragile thing that takes a good deal of care. WWA is a respected force in the recreational arena. The work of the WWA does make a difference in the making of policy, preserving and improving resources, and providing education to ensure that the resources we hold dear remain accessible for generations to come. WWA's premise has always been based on safety, education, equitable use, and proper river etiquette. So as a board, we would like to ask, how you would like to help our association safeguard our right to be on the rivers and

lands we care about? It can be through volunteering to be a voice for our common cause or it could be as simple as just playing nice with others whether it be another land user, jetboater or a rafter, because we are all representatives of our sport.