

FACT SHEET  
Auburn State Recreation Area  
**Whitewater Management Program**  
7/10/17

This document describes the development and evolution of the current system for managing whitewater (ww) recreation use within Auburn State Recreation Area, and specifically commercial ww recreation use. The current system is based on several past ww management plans and studies, which are summarized below. The specific manner in which the current system is based on these past plans and studies is specifically highlighted and discussed, as are differences between the current system and past plans.

The California Department of Parks and Recreation (CSP) began managing recreation and public use of the Auburn Dam Project Lands in 1977 through a series of agreements with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation). The area was named and classified as Auburn State Recreation Area in 1979.

**I. Auburn Reservoir Project and Folsom Lake State Recreation Area General Plan, October 1978, California Department of Parks and Recreation.**

CSP prepared a General Plan for both Folsom Lake State Recreation Area and the Auburn Reservoir Project in 1978 (approved in 1979). The assumption for the Auburn portion of the Plan was that the Auburn Dam would be constructed and the area would be a reservoir based recreation opportunity. Given that the Dam was not constructed, the General Plan was never useful for managing the recreation use and resources of the two river canyons.

**II. Early Whitewater Management**

Whitewater recreation on the North Fork (NF) and Middle Fork (MF) of the American River within ASRA was relatively light through the 1970's. However, beginning in 1980, both commercial and non-commercial use of the NF and MF began to grow in popularity. Starting in 1982, CSP implemented a commercial ww use permit system on stretches of the NF and MF. In 1982, six commercial use permits were issued, by 1985 fifty-seven commercial permits were issued.

Based on the rapid growth of ww recreation use, and problems and conflicts occurring, CSP implemented additional management actions and requirements in 1985 for commercial outfitters:

*North Fork*

- Established a permit period for commercial operators from May 4 – July 7.
- Assigned start times to commercial outfitters, 2 trip starts every 30 minutes from 9am through 1pm on weekends and holidays.
- Established limit of 18 trips per day.
- Limited trip size to 4 rafts.
- Separated commercial put-in and non-commercial put-in.

### *Middle Fork*

- Established permit period from May 4 – September 15.
- Assigned start times to outfitters, 2 trip starts every 30 minutes from 9am to 1pm on weekends and holidays.
- Established a limit of 14 trips per day.
- Limited trip size to 5 rafts.
- Various other requirements related to overnight camping, portage and take-outs.

All of the above was summarized from the Proposed Whitewater Recreation Management Plan (Watson,1986), which is described below.

### **III. Proposed Whitewater Recreation Management Plan for the North Fork and Middle Fork of the American River, California, March, 1986, Chuck Watson Environmental Consulting.**

The “Proposed Whitewater Recreation Management Plan for the North Fork and Middle Fork of the American River, California”, March, 1986 was prepared by environmental consultant Chuck Watson for Reclamation and CSP. It documented the rapid increase in whitewater recreation use on the NF and MF between 1980 and 1985. This rapid increase in use by both commercial and non-commercial whitewater users resulted in an increasing number of conflicts reported between commercial and non-commercial users at put-ins and rapids and conflicts between ww recreation users and other recreation users and private landowners along the river. The study also indicates there were concerns regarding the recreational carrying capacity of these rivers. For these reasons, ww management planning efforts were initiated by CSP and Reclamation in 1984. The Proposed Plan conducted surveys over the 1985 boating season to identify characteristics of the ww recreation resource, use level estimates and behavior patterns and to inform the management recommendations for the NF (from Iowa Hill Bridge to Upper Lake Clementine) and MF (from Oxbow to the Confluence).

### **Characteristics and Use**

#### *North Fork*

The Proposed Plan identified and examined three segments on the NF: Iowa Hill to Shirttail Canyon (4.7 mi), Shirttail to Ponderosa Crossing (4.5 mi) and Ponderosa to Upper Lake Clementine (4.1 mi). It characterized the 4.7 mile stretch of the NF from Iowa Hill Bridge to Yankee Jims Bridge (commonly referred to as the Chamberlin Falls Run) as a steep gradient narrow bedrock/boulder gorge Class IV run. While ww boating equipment and skill has evolved and increased over the decades, this remains an accurate characterization and rating of this run. The 4.5 mile run from Yankee Jims (Shirttail Creek) to Ponderosa Crossing is primarily a Class II run with a couple of boulder/bedrock Class III rapids and the 4.1 mile segment from Ponderosa Crossing to Upper Lake Clementine is a Class II run composed of gravel bar riffles.

The Proposed Plan noted the NF is a free flowing river and the ww season was generally from April to mid-June. Based on surveys, the Proposed Plan estimated use on the NF in 1985 at

4141 users with 55% of the use commercial and 45% of the use non-commercial. CSP issued 57 commercial outfitter permits in 1985.

### *Middle Fork*

The Plan examined 24 miles of the MF from Oxbow to the Confluence, identifying three segments: from Oxbow to Canyon Creek (13 mi); Canyon Creek to Oregon Bar (2.1 mi, Class III-IV and Ruck-a-Chucky was considered un-runnable at the time); and Oregon Bar to the Confluence (8.9 mi, Class II with Class V Murderers Bar). Note: this Oregon Bar is in the Greenwood/Ruck-a-Chucky area, there is another Oregon Bar downstream.

The Proposed Plan estimated 8063 users on the MF in the 1985 boating season and noted that 97% of use was on the stretch from Oxbow to Canyon Creek or Oregon Bar. It indicated 90% of the use on the MF was commercial use.

## **Use and Management Problems**

### *North Fork*

Observations, counts and surveys in the 1984 and 1985 boating seasons documented traffic and parking issues at river access points, congestion at put-ins and take-outs, congestion at a rapids/river constrictions, and conflicts between commercial and non-commercial users. Another issue noted was the narrow technical channel, which resulted in congestion, bottlenecks and delays at rapids at lower levels of use than other regional rivers. Observations documented the very limited amount of space and parking at the commercial put-in area, which limited how many commercial outfitters can use the put-in at any one time.<sup>1</sup> The Proposed Plan noted that in the middle of the 1985 season, CSP separated the put-in for commercial and non-commercial use at Mineral Bar to different sides of the river, which helped reduce conflicts.

### *Middle Fork*

Observations documented concentrated use and congestion on weekends at river access points and along the river down to Tunnel Chute. Much of the congestion and conflict can be attributed to the release patterns at Oxbow Powerhouse.<sup>2</sup>

Based on the 1984 and 1985 observations, the Plan concluded there were serious conflicts between commercial and non-commercial use on both the NF and MF. In the 1985 season, CSP implemented requirements of commercial permittees to address some of these congestion problems. These requirements included designated start times and trip size limits, the designated commercial put-in on the NF and parking limitations at take-outs.

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<sup>1</sup> This physical constraint remains true today.

<sup>2</sup> This remains a constraint on the Middle Fork to the present time. Though modest adjustments have been made in the recreational flow release schedule through FERC re-licensing, in most water year types there is a commitment for only a 3-4 hour window of boatable flows in the morning on summer weekends.

## **Management Objectives**

The Proposed Plan developed management objectives for the NF and MF based on the characteristics of the ww resource including physical characteristics (channel, technical difficulty), season of use, trip length, proximity to population centers and comparison of these parameters to other rivers in the region including the South Fork American and Tuolumne. The Proposed Plan noted that due to the narrow constricted channel and technical aspects of the run (presumably Chamberlin Falls segment), the NF has a primitive character despite its proximity to population centers. The Proposed Plan highlighted the importance of the MF as a ww recreation resource due to reliable summer boating flows and the relatively isolated nature of the upper portion of the MF.

## **Carrying Capacity<sup>3</sup>**

The Proposed Plan described carrying capacity concepts and methodologies on how these apply to river recreation. The Proposed Plan used a simple approach to addressing carrying capacity, considering physical, facility and social factors, the Plan utilizes a “user contact” concept to address carrying capacity. The Proposed Plan provided descriptions of low, moderate and high contact levels.

“Moderate Contact” is defined as:

“This is a level of contact that imparts a sense of user/group contact as an obvious element of the experience and may require some accommodation of itinerary or use pattern, but is not great enough to make contact a major element of the experience. A moderate contact, “primitive experience” is possible and user perceptions range from a sense of user/group contact to a sense that “crowding may be an identifiable element of the experience.”

The Moderate Contact level is differentiated from a Low Contact level by providing an opportunity for a “primitive” experience versus a “wilderness” experience.

## **Findings and Recommendations**

The Proposed Plan recommended managing both the NF and MF at Moderate Contact use levels; and to focus management on non-commercial values for the NF and commercial use values for the MF (due to logistical challenges for non-commercial users). The Proposed Plan recommended establishing daily commercial use limits to achieve this management objective.

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<sup>3</sup> The concept of carrying capacity in recreational settings has been around a long time and different approaches and methodologies have evolved over time (ROS, LAC, VERP, etc). While approaches and methodologies have changed, carrying capacity has not been abandoned as a concept and tool by recreation managers, researchers or all land management agencies. It is our understanding that Reclamation no longer utilizes WALROS, however CSP is required by law (CA Public Resources Code 5001.96 and 5019.5) to address carrying capacity of our park units in our General Plans. Carrying capacity is a concept and strategy to establish and achieve the management objectives and prescriptions for different areas within a park unit or public lands. The Management Zones and Land Use Designations proposed for the current ASRA GP/RMP project are another example of a framework and tool to establish broad management goals and objectives.

Based on observations at the put-ins, bottleneck points along the river and take-outs, the Proposed Plan developed instantaneous (# of groups at one time) and daily capacity limits (# of groups per day) for commercial operators in order to achieve the “Moderate Contact” objective. Here is a summary of these numbers:

#### *North Fork Weekends*

- Iowa Hill put-in – 4 groups at one time, 19 groups per day.
- Chamberlin Falls - 3-4 groups at one time, 5-6 groups per day
- Ponderosa take-out – 4 groups at one time, 8 groups per day.

#### *Middle Fork*

- Oxbow put-in – 6 groups at one time, 7 groups per day.
- Tunnel Chute – 5 groups at one time, 22 groups per day.
- Ruck-a-Chucky take-out<sup>4</sup> – 6 groups at one time, 17 groups per day.
- Ruck-a-Chucky portage – 3 groups at one time, 5 groups per day.
- Oregon Bar (Greenwood) take-out – 2 groups at one time, 24 groups per day.

Considering all of the information developed and looking at the most limiting areas and factors, the Proposed Plan recommended the following overall daily limits for commercial use. Note: it is our understanding of the Plan that for making observations and developing carrying capacity limits the term “groups” is used to describe a distinct set of rafts traveling down the river together as a unit. For the purposes of defining limits in commercial outfitter permits or contracts, the Plan uses the terms “trips” or “trip starts”.

#### *North Fork*

- A limitation of 6 commercial trip starts on weekend days and 12 trip starts on mid-week days.
- A limit of 4 rafts per commercial trip.

#### *Middle Fork*

- A limit of 10 daily commercial trip starts per day and 5 Ruck-a-chucky portages per day.
- A limit of 5 rafts per trip for 1-day trips and 6 rafts per trip for overnight trips.

#### *Other recommendations (both Forks):*

- Require outfitters to meet clients off-site
- Permit requirement limited to commercial operators.
- Pre-season allocation system that assigns daily trip starts to commercial outfitters so daily use limits can be assured.
- Adjustments to commercial daily use limits based on changes in trends in non-commercial use or changes in use patterns.
- Requirements for specific areas and mode of operations at put-ins and take-outs.
- Require fire pans, portable toilets, solid waste removal, and proper food management.

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<sup>4</sup> This take-out no longer used on a regular basis due to the condition of the road from Ruck-a-Chucky to the take-out location at Canyon Creek.

#### **IV. Draft White Water Management Plan North Fork and Middle Fork, American River, 1987, California Department of Parks and Recreation.**

CSP developed this Draft WW Management Plan (Draft WWMP) based primarily on the “Proposed Whitewater Recreation Management Plan for the North Fork and Middle Fork of the American River, California, March, 1986”. Using the information developed in the 1986 proposed plan, with the assistance of consultants, CSP conducted 14 meetings with an advisory group consisting of commercial outfitters, non-commercial boaters, conservation group representatives, resource agencies (Reclamation, Bureau of Land Management, US Forest Service, California Department of Fish and Game [now Wildlife], California Department of Forestry) and the California Highway Patrol. Input from this advisory group informed the Draft WWMP.

The purpose and goals of the Draft WWMP, in the context of carrying capacity and observed use patterns, were to develop estimates of appropriate recreational use levels, to develop appropriate user pattern requirements, to develop a whitewater permitting process that would maintain desired recreational use levels, to develop coordination amongst agencies, and to simplify the permitting process.

The Draft WWMP summarizes much of the information from the Proposed Plan, including the characteristics of the ww recreation resources on the NF and MF, levels and patterns of use, current management, management problems and user conflicts and proposed facility improvements at put-ins and take-outs.

The Draft WWMP then defines 34 objectives for ww management, some general and some specific to the NF or MF. Among these many objectives is the recognition of the value of the ww recreation resource; using environmental, facility, physical and social factors in developing carrying capacity estimates; using carrying capacity concepts to establish recommended use levels; and employing the concept of User Contact thresholds and developing standards to achieve “optimal public use” which balances maximized use and quality recreational experiences. The Draft WWMP also reiterates and establishes the Moderate Contact threshold for both the NF and MF.

##### *North Fork Allocation*

To achieve the Moderate Contact objective, the Draft WWMP estimates the standard for number of rafts at one time at select indicator locations: the commercial and non-commercial put-ins at Iowa Hill Bridge, Chamberlin Falls and at the Ponderosa take-out. Using these standards for the indicator locations, the Draft WWMP developed an overall estimated capacity of 3.5 groups per hour. Based on survey data from past years, the Draft WWMP estimated the non-commercial unaffected use demand as 9 groups per day. There is no limit on non-commercial use, but using the estimated demand for non-commercial use, the Draft WWMP did establish:

- the commercial use limit of 11 group starts per day with 1 non-profit/institutional group start per day.

It is interesting to note that the Draft WWMP originally proposed an allocation of 6 trips per day with no assigned start times for commercial use, but outfitters expressed a desire for an increased number of starts by regulating start times. Start times were initially set at 20 minute intervals which accommodate 15 trip starts per day. However, CSP observed the outfitters consistently could not make start times separated by only 20 minutes, so the plan extended the start time interval to 30 minutes and reduced the total trip starts to 11.

The Draft WWMP also established trip size limits:

- 4 boats total per day per outfitter, trip/start limit of 2 boats per trip and a limit of 7 persons per raft including guide.

#### *Middle Fork Allocation*

Similar to the NF, based on observations and survey information, the Draft WWMP estimates a standard for the number of rafts at one time and a time delay at various indicator locations in order to meet the Moderate Contact objective.

- Oxbow put-in – 6 groups at one time.
- Tunnel Chute – 25 rafts total in the eddy to scout the rapid.
- Ruck-a-Chucky portage – 30 minute delay for portage

Because a large flood event in February 1986 caused changes to the access roads and facilities at Ruck-a-chucky, the Draft WWMP determined it was not necessary to impose a commercial allocation limit immediately. Instead, when use patterns or facility capacities warranted a commercial allocation limit, the Draft WWMP objectives would be utilized to establish limits on control days.<sup>5</sup> The Draft WWMP did establish a trip size limit:

- 5 paddle rafts or 4 paddle rafts and 2 oar rafts (6 total) and a maximum of 7 person in a paddle boat and 2 person in an oar boat.

The Draft WWMP defined a number of items regarding the permit system for commercial outfitters including: a reallocation process; how use is allocated among commercial outfitters; defining different classes of outfitters (high volume, low volume, institutional/non-profit); permit application process; lottery process for start dates; start date schedule and pre-season start date trading; performance, training and equipment requirements; and shuttle requirements.

The Draft WWMP described a multi-tier system of allocating use to both high volume and low volume large outfitters and low volume small outfitters. This “two-tier” allocation system and classification of outfitters was abandoned shortly after the Draft WWMP was developed. The current ww management program does not use “tiers” or different classes of outfitters. Each

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<sup>5</sup> Drivers Flat Road, the access to the take-out, and facilities at the take-out were repaired and have been improved over the years. With use returning to previous levels, the need to establish commercial use limits on the Tunnel Chute run returned and daily use limits were re-established.

outfitters allocation of trip starts is based on their recent past actual use (past 3 years on NF and past 6 years on MF).

The Draft WWMP also described the development of an Advisory Task Force composed of CSP staff, commercial outfitters, non-commercial boaters, environmental groups and other agencies. The task force was to meet annually to review ww management and to address any problems.

Much of how the current ww management program is operated comes from the guidelines and direction in the Draft WWMP (which was adopted in the IRMP, described below).

**V. Auburn State Recreation Area, Interim Resource Management Plan, September 1992, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.**

The IRMP was prepared by CSP staff for Reclamation and is the current management framework for the entire unit. The IRMP was developed because construction of the Auburn Dam had been put on hold for an indefinite period and the two agencies were managing a river-based recreation resource and not a reservoir-based recreation area.

The IRMP has a section on the Whitewater Management Program (pages 130-142). The IRMP states:

“The WWMP (Whitewater Management Plan) for the North and Middle Forks of the American River was developed under a separate planning process than the rest of the IRMP. This program provides a context for making management decisions for the 15 and 24 miles respectively of whitewater recreational resources along the North and Middle Forks (plate 12). A draft WWMP was developed and implemented in 1987. This IRMP adopts and finalizes the guidelines and standards developed in the draft WWMP and presents these in their final form in this chapter.”

The IRMP then re-states thirty three of the thirty four objectives from the Draft WWMP. The one objective that was left out of the IRMP had to do with the importance of the fishery resource on the Middle Fork. Fishing is addressed elsewhere within the IRMP.

The IRMP re-iterates the Moderate Contact user threshold for both the NF and MF. The IRMP also includes guidelines identifying key indicator locations and the standard for each:

*North Fork*

- Iowa Hill Non-commercial – 12 rafts along bank or in water at one time, 9 boats in lower staging area at one time, 8 boats in parking lot at one time.
- Iowa Hill Commercial put-in – 4 groups staging at one time, 20 rafts on bank at one time (stacked rafts can count as one), 3 client groups on site at one time.
- Chamberlin Falls – 30 minute delay in trip.
- Ponderosa take-out – 8 groups at one time, or 3 commercial client groups, or 10-15 inflated rafts at one time (stacked rafts can count as one).

### *Middle Fork*

- Oxbow put-in – 6 groups at one time.
- Tunnel Chute – 25 rafts in the eddy at one time.
- Ruck-a-Chucky portage – 30 minute delay in trip.

The IRMP reiterates much of the use allocation information in the Draft WWMP, including the 3.5 groups per hour capacity estimate for the NF, and that outfitter representatives agreed to a specific number of daily starts and specific start times. The IRMP indicates the start times would be strictly enforced and that spacing between start times would be increased if start times were not met consistently.

On the MF, the IRMP indicates that weekend use has historically exceeded the maximum number of acceptable users and that outfitters agreed to limit the number of trips on weekends, but no specific start times would be established.

The IRMP also describes the formation of an Advisory Task Force composed of CSP staff, commercial outfitters, non-commercial boaters, environmental groups and other agencies. The task force was to meet annually to review ww management objective information and to aid in resolving any issues.

## **VI. Current Whitewater Management Program**

As with the IRMP, the current limits and requirements of ww use on the NF or MF apply only to commercial ww outfitters or non-profit/institutional outfitter. There are currently no limits on non-commercial whitewater use. All commercial outfitters must obtain a ww concession contract annually from CSP, which replaces the permit system proposed in the Draft WWMP. There are 5 commercial runs within ASRA:

1. NF Class IV – Iowa Hill Bridge to Ponderosa Crossing
2. NF Class II – Ponderosa Crossing to Upper Lake Clementine
3. MF Class IV - Oxbow Powerhouse to Greenwood/Ruck-a-chucky
4. MF Class II – Greenwood/Ruck-a-chucky to Mammoth Bar/Confluence
5. Lower NF/Confluence Class II – Confluence to Oregon Bar

Each of these runs has a different commercial outfitter concession contract with specific requirements. The daily use limits for commercial use apply only to control days, which consist primarily of weekends and holidays in the peak ww season for each run. Outside of the control days, there are no daily limits on commercial ww use. New control days, such as Fridays during the peaks season, may be established if commercial ww use, measured through boat counts and monitoring, begins to approach or exceed the daily use limits. The trip size limits apply to commercial outfitters whenever they use the river.

CSP collects fees from the outfitters through the concession contracts. The revenue from the concession contract fees helps fund the operation and maintenance of the ww program at ASRA.

1. **NF Class IV** – Chamberlin Falls Run – Iowa Hill Bridge to Ponderosa  
(Note: commercial use cannot take out at Yankee Jims)

- 14 starts (trips)/day. Starts have assigned time and there is a 40 minute window in which the outfitter trip must launch. Control days: weekends in the whitewater season – April-June.
- Trip and start size = 4 rafts/boats max per start/trip, 2 boats minimum, 28 people total including guides. For trips including clients kayaking, up to three kayaks can be substituted per one raft.
- The commercial trip start times are from 8:30am to 10:30am and from 12:30pm to 2:30pm. The period from 11am to noon is reserved for non-commercial trip starts. There is also an “institutional/non-profit” (e.g. Sac State, UC Davis outdoor programs) launch window at the end of the non-commercial only window. If this window is not claimed by an institution/no-profit, it can be utilized by outfitters.
- Up to 2 safety kayakers may accompany each trip regardless of flow level. On flows above 3,000 cfs, an additional safety raft may be added to a trip.

2. **NF Class II** – Yankee Jims Bridge or Ponderosa Crossing to Upper Lake Clementine.

- A maximum of 4 commercial outfitter starts per day total on control days. Control days: weekends in the whitewater season – April-June.
- Trip Size = Maximum 14 persons per trip, including guides. Maximum of 4 rafts or 10 single kayaks or 3 tandem kayaks and 2 guide/instructor kayaks per commercial trip.

***Discussion***

The current limits on the number of commercial trips are largely consistent with the Draft WWMP and the IRMP Moderate Contact objective. The Draft WWMP recommended a lower limit of 11 commercial trips per day on the Chamberlin Falls Run, but a longer interval between starts of 30 minutes. The Draft WWMP discusses a period when the start times were 20 minutes and there were 15 trips per day. The current limit of 14 works well. The purpose of the daily trip limits and the designated start times is to achieve the “moderate contact” objective while still maximizing recreation used. The trip size limit (4 boats/trip) is consistent with the Draft WWMP and the IRMP.

3. **MF Class IV** – Tunnel Chute Run – Oxbow to Greenwood/Ruck-a-chucky.

- 60 rafts/boats, 300 clients (360 people, including guides)
- 25 starts/day (25 X 2 rafts/start = 50, plus the extra 10 boat pool = 60 boats). Control days are primarily weekends and holidays in the ww season – roughly Mid-May-September.
- There is an extra 10 boat/day pool from which outfitter may request additional boats for a trip ahead of their start date. This allows 10 additional boats, but no additional clients. The original purpose of the extra boat pool was to allow for additional gear boats for trips, but it can be used for paddle rafts as well.

- Start size = 2 boats/rafts per start, 14 people total (12 clients).
- Trip size = 5 boats, 35 persons max (30 clients) – or - 6 boats max (any combo of oar/paddle rafts), 36 people total (30 clients). 2 boat min. Outfitters can combine individual starts into single trips up to the limit.
- No specified start time slots on MF, though there is often a limited window of boatable flows of 3 to 4 hours in the morning.
- There is a 30% allocation limit of the total commercial use for any single outfitter, which assures there will be at least several outfitters offering a variety of trips to the public.

**4. MF Class II** – Greenwood Bridge site to Mammoth Bar, or to the Confluence.

- There are currently no control days or daily use limits.
- Trip size limits – 5 rafts and 35 people maximum or 6 rafts and 36 people maximum (including guides). Two kayaks (single or tandem) may be substituted per raft. The maximum number of kayaks per trip is 12 with no rafts.

***Discussion***

The current daily limits for the Class IV Tunnel Chute run on the Middle Fork of 60 boats and 360 people is more generous than the daily limit of 10 commercial trips in the Proposed Plan. The current trip size limit (5/6 boats) for both the Class IV and II runs is the same as proposed in the Proposed Plan and the Draft WWMP, and complies with the IRMP’s Oxbow put-in indicator standard of 6 boats at one time.

**5. Lower North Fork** – Confluence to Oregon Bar. There are currently no daily total use limits for commercial use on this run.

- Trip Size – maximum of 4 rafts, or 10 single kayaks, or 3 tandem canoe/kayaks accompanied by 2 instructor/guide single canoe/kayaks.
- Maximum of 24 people per trip, including guides.

***Discussion***

This stretch of the river was reopened in 2008 and private ww use resumed. Commercial use has been incorporated into the ww management program on a pilot basis. Thus far, interest by commercial outfitters has been relatively low, as has the amount of commercial use. While there are trip size limits, there is currently no total daily limit.

**Other Requirements for Commercial Outfitters Applicable to Both NF and MF**

- Open outfitter concession contract system. Any qualified outfitter can apply for a ww concession contract. Even with this “open” system, the number of outfitters has decreased over the years.
- All commercial outfitter must meet certain minimum requirements and obtain a concession contract from CSP.

- The % of use on control date starts is allocated annually to outfitters based on each outfitter's recent past use (past 6 years on MF and past 3 years on NF) compared to total commercial use in that period.
- Specific control day starts are allocated by an annual draw. Each outfitter has an assigned number of starts based on percentage of total starts, which is based on recent past use (see above). Outfitters can transfer or release their assigned start dates.
- Commercial use is allowed on non-control dates (no limits on starts) with a valid concession contract for that whitewater reach. Trip size limits still apply.
- A process is in place to monitor some non-control days (e.g. Fridays in prime whitewater season) to document the frequency when daily capacity limits are exceeded. This will determine if they should become control dates.
- There are also requirements and information related to overnight camping, food safety and disposal of waste.
- Each concession contract includes shuttle requirements and limitations for all of the put-in and take-out locations.
- The ww concession contracts have very clear language and procedures for addressing violations of the provisions of the contract terms and conditions ("defaults") including defining major and minor defaults, documentation and notice of defaults, State's remedies for defaults and a dispute process. Having a clear default definitions and procedures has been key to administration and enforcement of the concession contracts.

### **Whitewater Use Data**

The Auburn SRA Whitewater Recreation Office (WRO) collects and maintains data for the ww management program including both commercial and non-commercial use data by day, month and year for the 5 NF and MF runs. This use data includes breakdowns of clients, guides, rafts, kayaks and other craft. The commercial use data is derived from outfitter trip reports, compliance monitoring and surveys, and counts of private use.

The WRO documents on-site observations at Oxbow, Tunnel Chute and Ruck-a-chucky to assess wait times at critical choke points. The WRO has conducted outfitter client surveys on the MF and has non-commercial boater surveys from the NF. Both surveys include basic user data and questions regarding satisfaction.

Data is used for a variety of purposes, including: ensuring compliance with commercial outfitter concession contracts, for establishing the annual allocations among outfitters of trip starts on control days, and in making determinations when new control days need to be established in order to meet the management objectives and standards.

**Discussion**

While based on the Draft WWMP, the whitewater program has taken an adaptive management approach over the years, relying on use data, a close collaboration with outfitters, testing changes during pilot periods and monitoring results.

CSP works with the outfitters to make adjustments, such as the daily trip limits and start time intervals to achieve the management objectives while meeting commercial operator needs. The current limits and start time intervals are consistent with the objectives and guidelines of the IRMP.

An Outfitter Advisory Committee meets with CSP staff on an as needed basis to discuss issues and changes to the ww management. In the past, this committee has meet up to 4 times per year to work through adjustments to the commercial whitewater program. CSP is always open to meeting with non-commercial boaters and other interests when requested; however, the current system generates few complaints from the public.

A key element of the ww management program has been river patrols. These patrols have been essential not only to monitor and manage commercial ww use, but also to address other problems and issues along the river(s) including medical emergencies, addressing river hazards, illegal camping, unauthorized OHV use, illegal mining, illegal fishing and trash dumping.

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