

BACKGROUND

Explorer Post 20, which consists of young men ages 14 through 17, has as its own special activity the exploring of wild rivers of the West. These wild rivers are one of the few remaining frontiers of our Nation that remain in the same condition as the early pioneer explorers such as Lewis and Clark or Major Wesley Powell first found them in the last century.

This opportunity to explore the canyons of these wild desert rivers in the southwest is rapidly diminishing due to the numerous power dams and subsequent loss of water by evaporation. In spite of these problems for 17 years, Explorer Post 20, with an average membership of 30 boys has managed to maintain this program on the remaining wild rivers of southwest. The young men who have participated in this type of expedition agree that river exploration trips are unexcelled for true adventure. Consequently, this rewarding activity is continued each year with enthusiasm among the Explorer Scouts and Staff for the unique excitement and beauty that can be found only along our wild and untamed rivers. In fact, we note that this sport is not limited exclusively to Explorer Scouts since Explorer Post 20 quietly followed Senator Kennedy down the Middle Fork of the Salmon during July of 1966. We read of his continuing white water adventures more recently on the Hudson River Gorge, this last May, including Secretary of the Interior Udall with their families.

This sport has become so popular during recent years that the State of Utah has required all commercial river boatmen and guides to take an extensive qualifying examination before taking passengers for hire. While not required on the non-professional Explorer Scout trips in Utah, I am proud to have passed this examination and personally rowed or paddled my own raft canoe or kayak down nearly 2,000 miles of southwestern rivers including leading Explorer Post members during the past 17 years 97,540 man-miles without any accidents.

The nearby Rio Grande has always been of great value to Explorer Post 20's activities. This principal river down the middle of New Mexico is the training ground for all white water boatmen in New Mexico. Consequently, this great recreational resource provides the basis of our activities. To date we have 12,619 river man miles logged on the Rio Grande and its chief tributary the Rio Chama. We therefore want the Rio Grande, in Northern New Mexico, protected and preserved in its present wilderness state. We believe the National Scenic River System to be the best policy in the Nation's future interest to preserve specific portions of noteworthy rivers, including the Rio Grande. Specifically let us examine the several features of the Rio Grande South from the Colorado-New Mexico border to the town of Pilar as described in several of the bills. This is a part of the canyon that I am personally familiar with, having made numerous raft trips over the lower section between Dunn's bridge at the confluence of the Arroyo Hondo and the town of Pilar.

RAFTING, KAYAKING, AND CANOEING ON THE RIO GRANDE IN NORTHERN NEW MEXICO

The Rio Grande is the primary white water boating river in New Mexico. The water flow in nearly all the other rivers and streams is seasonal with adequate water only in the spring. All sections have been boated, and most of it is being run with increasing regularity.

Rubber rafts, kayaks, and canoes are the standard craft for this sport. The people participating range from small family groups to large scouting organizations. This section of river offers run of all levels of difficulty to match the skills of all boaters.

So much interest in this section of the river is being shown by out-of-state boaters that a river running guide book is being prepared.

It is indeed fortunate that the best white water boating stream in the state flows through such wild and beautiful country. This lucky combination is becoming all too rare. A run on a clear splashing stream down a sheer-walled canyon, isolated from the everyday cares of the civilized world, is most certainly an experience and an opportunity worth preserving by a Wild and Scenic River System.