

August 22, 2011

## **An Open Letter to Gauley River Boaters**

Dear Boaters,

The rangers and staff of the Gauley River National Recreation Area welcome you to the 2011 boating season. National Park Service (NPS) employees have been working, and are continuing to work, on preparing the put-in's, take-out's, and other public use spots for upcoming Gauley River NRA visitors. We hope that this season will prove to be safe and spectacular for everyone.

There are a few changes for the upcoming season over last year. We are pleased to announce the recent acquisition of a parcel of land at upper Swiss that provides a public take-out on the lower Gauley for the first time in the history of the NRA. This 25 acre parcel of land at upper Swiss had already been used by boaters for years while it was in private ownership. Those accustomed to the use patterns on this property will not see any changes for 2011.

The Gauley Tailwaters campground and the boat launches will continue to operate much like they have in the past. Camping at the Gauley Tailwaters campground is free of charge and is on a first come, first served basis. There is a maximum of 8 people allowed in each campsite. There is a 2 tent, 2 vehicle maximum at each site. Quiet hours are from 10pm to 6am in the campground. Rangers provide patrols and may register each campsite. Campers who bring their pets are asked to keep their pets on a leash. The public boat launch at the Tailwaters is being improved by the park maintenance staff prior to the boating season.

NPS will continue to manage Mason's Branch as we did last year. Because of the limited amount of public land available at this access, the narrowness of the road, and the retained rights of both the upstream and downstream adjacent landowners, NPS will restrict private vehicle access on Saturdays and Sundays. Private boaters may park at the upper parking lot at Mason's Branch Fridays and Mondays. The road and parking lots are closed to private vehicles on Saturdays and Sundays. To help with parking, American Whitewater has leased the Legg field above Mason's Branch. The field will be available throughout the Gauley season for private boater parking. The NPS is also making arrangements to provide a free boater shuttle service from Mason's Branch to the Legg field. This free service has worked well since the acquisition of the property and is a benefit to boaters who cannot park their personal vehicles at the take-out on the weekends. Mason's Branch suffered damage from a flash flood in August; a portion of the primary ramp was washed away. The repair by NPS employees is currently underway and expected to be completed prior to the beginning of the season.

NPS will manage parking at Wood's Ferry as it has in the past, on a first-come first-served basis. We will ask boaters to park close together to take advantage of all the available space and to create parking opportunities for other boaters. Wood's Ferry filled to capacity on the Saturday afternoon of Gauleyfest weekend last year. Boaters should be aware that this may happen again on particularly busy days and that parking is available but not unlimited.

NPS river patrol operations will continue as in the past. The NPS provides daily river patrols during the scheduled releases with an emphasis on EMS and rescue. The NPS river ranger patrol boat carries an AED in addition to other medical supplies and our rangers are available to provide both routine and emergency boater services as the need arises.

Park Rangers and local emergency personnel may request a reduction of the scheduled water release from Summersville Dam in the event of an emergency. Such a request was made on two different occasions during 2010. To help ensure that boaters are not surprised by a sudden and unexpected drop in water level, NPS river rangers will implement a sign and signal flag program to provide visual aids along the river in the event of an emergency. A press release explaining the system will be posted on the American Whitewater and Gauley River NRA website.

As our Gauley season planning efforts progress, we will post information on our web page at [www.nps.gov/gari](http://www.nps.gov/gari) and will continue to provide information to private boaters through partnering organizations such as American Whitewater and the West Virginia Rivers Coalition. For this season as in the past, we appreciate all of the boater public cooperation that helps to make the Gauley boating season the special time that it is.

Sincerely,

Jeff West, Chief Ranger  
New River Gorge National River  
Gauley River National Recreation Area  
Bluestone National Scenic River