

ROANOKE RAPIDS AND GASTON, FERC PROJECT NO. 2009
ARTICLE 424 WHITEWATER BOATING PLAN
Cooperative Management Team 3rd - 5-Year Review 2016-2020
February 2, 2021 - 2:00 PM

Meeting Minutes

1. Attendance:

Each of the license Article 424 Whitewater Boating Plan Cooperative Management Team member groups: NC Department of Environmental Resources division of Water Resources (NCDEQ); Halifax County, NC; Carolina Canoe Club; and Dominion were represented at the meeting. John Simeon of the City of Roanoke Rapids was invited but did not attend.

Chris Wicker - Local Paddler
Dave Blodget - Lake Gaston Outfitters
Tony Young - USACE
Edward Woodley - USACE
Fred Tarver - NCDEQ
Mike Watson - Local Paddler
Shane Brown - Carolina Canoe Club
Cristina Wells - Halifax County
Greg Lawson - Roanoke Canal Commission
Corey Chamberlain - Dominion Energy

The meeting was held virtually due to Covid restrictions.

2. Documents

During the meeting the group had access to and referred to the following documents:

- A. Second 5-Year 2010-2015 Whitewater Boating Plan review
- B. Annual Whitewater Boating Reports

3. Discussion

The meeting began with introductions all around and then a discussion as to the purpose of the meeting, which was discuss the effectiveness of the current Plan, potential changes to the Plan and the effect of the Corps of Engineers (Corps) water control plan for Kerr Reservoir (known as the Quasi Run of River plan or QRR).

Initially there was an extensive discussion about the QRR and the effects on the river flows, particularly during a year with significant rain such as 2020. There was general consensus that the QRR has had a positive effect on the whitewater flows though the higher flood discharges do have some impacts on the shoreline trails.

The group then focused on the effectiveness and adequacy of advance planned releases; short term planned release and advanced waves.

In general, everyone agreed that the planned releases were working well. Chris requested that any changes to the plan be communicated as quickly as possible on the Dominion web page. Shane asked if there a way to for Dominion to include the gage information from the Halifax gage on the Releases page. Corey will look into that.

Corey mentioned that Dominion had updated all of the external websites and links and that while he had reviewed them, he asked that the members notify him if they ever notice any issues with the web pages.

Discussion regarding the unplanned releases was generally favorable and no recommendations or requests were made.

Chris was asking about whether Dominion tried to provide flows during the weekday. Corey mentioned that while good paddling may be available during the summer months, it was not ever planned but just a result of normal operations when flows in the river are lower during the summer. Dominion is hesitant to advertise that whitewater exists during the weekdays due to the hazards created by Peaking.

Fred asked a question about the 2021 advanced schedule. Corey mentioned that it was not planned yet but that the weekends that are planned are generally the same each year unless the group wanted to change that. No comments were made regarding changing the weekends.

Regarding the Advanced Wave Planned Release, Shane made a request to change the name to something less confusing. "Big Wave" was proposed but no decision was made. Shane also mentioned that the Carolina Canoe Club really enjoys the Advanced Wave. And many people will drive from the Raleigh area to Weldon just for this wave. Corey will develop a list of potential names with the assistance of the group, and a decision will be made before the start of the Whitewater season.

As in 2016 meeting, the group asked about the potential of having the Weldon Boat Ramp camera linked to the Whitewater page so that paddlers can see what the conditions are before they drive to Weldon. In the past Dominion's IT was hesitant to link to an outside website due to security concerns, but Corey will inquire again to see if that issue still exists. Chris will work with Tourism to see if it can be done. Mike mentioned that he has not been able to access that camera in a long time and is not sure it still works.

A final from Shane about the flows was that due to the fact that many people who enjoy the whitewater come from some distance, timely communications via the web site is critical to helping them plan their visits. The flow and pool level are really important for the decision as to whether to come.

The final part of the meeting was an open discussion. During this phase, Chris mentioned that NCWRC is contemplating installation of a Canoe and Kayak access above the Rt. 301 Bridge above the rapids at Weldon and he wondered if Dominion would be willing to partner with them. Corey agreed to inquire as to whether the Dominion Foundation would be willing to provide support.

Mike asked about the USGS plan to move the Halifax gage. Corey explained that the plan to move it had been cancelled.

No new criteria or amendments were developed during the meeting.

4. Review of annual reports to FERC

The reports were posted annually on the Dominion paddler web site. No changes were requested to the information or format of the report.

5. Action Items

(1) *Inclusion of Halifax Gage information on Dominion Whitewater web page.* Corey will investigate adding this information or a link to the web page and report back to the group.

(2) *Report issues on the web page to Corey.* The group will notify Corey via email if there is an issue with the operation or accuracy of the web page or links.

**Ongoing*

(3) *Develop a new name for the Advanced Wave Planned Release.* Corey will develop a list of potential names with the assistance of the group, and a decision will be made before the start of the 2021 Whitewater season.

**Group selected "Expert Paddler Wave" as the new name.*

(4) *Linking Weldon Boat Ramp Camera to the Whitewater web page.* Corey will check with Dominion IT regarding connecting to the camera. Chris will work with Halifax Tourism to obtain permission from Weldon for the connection and to confirm the camera is still functional.

(5) *New canoe/kayak access point upstream from the rapids.* Corey will contact the Dominion Foundation to see if funding might be available to partner with the NCWRC.

**Chris Wicker was put in touch with a representative of the Dominion Foundation.*