

# Bottom Moose remains Northeast's premier class 5 expert run

There may be more technical rivers in the United States...and there may be more continuous rivers...but in terms of vertical, runnable drops—few rivers can match New York's Bottom Moose.

And when you combine the Bottom Moose's spectacular drops with a long and dependable paddling season—the result is one of nation's premier class 5 destinations.

**Fowlersville Falls**—Is this any way to start a river trip? Just yards from the put-in, the Moose sluices over an 8-foot pitch and pillows against a rock ledge before dropping over a 40-foot high slide at an angle of 60 degrees.

The hydraulic at the bottom is dangerous at any level and very risky at levels over 4'. The middle of the hole is particularly perilous.

**Funnel**—After a small class 3 rapid, the river bends and narrows as it enters Funnel. After a series of small holes, the river sluices down an 8' drop onto a diamond-splitter rock in the center of the channel.

**Knife Edge**—After a mile of calm water and a pair of class 2-3 rapids, the river necks down to a width of 20' and enters a gorge of sheer granite walls.

A horizon line marks Knives Edge where the river plummets 12 feet through a pair of holes. A sneak route is found through a break in the left wall. A paddler died in the main drop at low water in 1985.

Knives Edge remains one of the most hazardous drops on the river. A number of pins have occurred at

the pinch point at the bottom of the main channel.

**Double Drop**—200 yards downstream from Knives Edge, the river falls 20' over two ledges separated by a pool of turbulent water.

**Agers Falls**—Following a portage around a dam and a ¼ mile paddle across a pool, the river flows over a runnable dam and then the sheer 18' Agers Falls. After a 20' pool, the river drops an additional 10' down a steep, shallow slide.

**Shurform**—A mile and one class 2-3 rapid below Agers, the Moose drops 60' over a 100-yard stretch. Shurform is run on either the left or right of a rocky middle island. The right side is a serpentine slide while the left offers a series of drops through a tight, technical maze. The main drop is preceded by fast entry water—don't get washed past the last eddy.

**Powerline**—1/8 mile past Shurform, the river narrows and funnels right through a pair of hydraulics. Good boaters can catch five or more eddies in the rapid. Rescues should be made immediately as Crystal lies just below.

**Crystal**—Crystal is actually a series of drops culminating with the most impressive rapid on the river. Immediately after Powerline, the river divides into two channels: the right drops over an abrupt 6' falls and two smaller, trashy drops before an eddy by an old canal carved into the rock—the left side washes through a technical rock garden that leads down to the same eddy.

Care should be taken not to miss the eddy as the



main drops follow: a 4' ledge, a 6' ledge and the final 12' falls.

Multiple routes exist through the final drops of Crystal depending on water level and the ability of the paddler.

**Magilla**—Just below a pool and a low dam lies the Moose's version of the Green Narrow's notorious Gorilla rapid. The similari-

ties are obvious...the river pours through a narrow slot and drops 18 feet.

Many paddlers opt to take out above Magilla. If you don't—wear your elbow pads.

The overall difficulty of the Bottom Moose is considered to be class 4-5 but the river is considerably more challenging at levels over 3.5' when the water be-

comes powerful and pushy.

The river below Agers Falls runs through property controlled by a hydroelectric company. Bottom Moose paddlers planning on running that stretch of river should sign-in with the utility while running their shuttle. The sign-in is conducted at the hydro plant just above the take-out.

## Scheduled releases provide predictable season

# Bottom Moose is just one of NY's dam release rivers

In most places in the country, whitewater paddling is purely a seasonal sport pursued in the spring or after the occasional summer cloudburst.

But not so in New York state where summer and fall recreational water releases guarantee paddlers navigable flows on a variety of whitewater runs.

The Black (class 3-4) and Sacandaga (class 2-3) run pretty much every day through the summer while the Hudson Gorge (class 3) features releases two days a week throughout the seasons.

But in addition, NY boaters can vary their routine by taking advantage of six releases on Stone Valley of the Raquette (class 5), six

releases on the Salmon (class 2-3), six releases each on the Taylorville and Eagle sections of the Beaver, one release on the Moshier section of the Beaver and twenty releases on the Bottom Moose.

New Yorkers didn't always have it so good. With the exception of the Hudson—all of the releases have been gained during the past twenty years. And not surprisingly—all of the releases were the result of direct negotiations conducted or assisted by American Whitewater—the nation's premier advocate for whitewater recreation.

And when you consider that AW also assisted in securing access to the Genesee River through Letchworth Gorge (class 2), the Ausable Chasm (class 4-

5) and also helped maintain releases on the Mongaup River—it's accurate to claim that no other river organization has made as significant a contribution to the preservation of boatable rivers as American Whitewater.

Surprisingly--AW receives little support from the whitewater community for its efforts. Although AW claims more than 6,000 members on a national basis--that number represents less than 6% of the total estimated population of whitewater boaters.

The relatively low percentage of participation by the whitewater community makes funding AW a challenge.

During the past sev-

eral years, the outdoor industry has suffered through some severe contractions and corporate donations have diminished.

Similarly, instability in the stock market has diminished funds available through conservation endowments.

Consequently, AW has restructured its national staff and examined other cost-cutting measures to remain financially secure.

But membership is always AW's primary source of funding. Boaters who utilize any of NY's convenient dam-release rivers should consider supporting the organization that has so substantially effected the state of NY boating.

## *Bottom Moose boaters should sign-in at dam*

The good folks at Fortis Energy are very flexible about their sign-in policy during the Fest weekend. They realize there will be folks on the river from 10 am until 5 pm.

But on other release days, paddlers are reminded that if they don't sign-in...Fortis will not turn on the water. Remember to sign-out as well so the folks at the dam can go home to enjoy the rest of their weekend.

It's good policy to sign-in on Fest weekend as well. Your signature is proof that the resource is being utilized which sets a good precedent for similar releases on other rivers across the country.

Iron Bridge to Fowlersville

# Lower Moose appropriate for intermediate boaters at fall levels

At typical fall levels from 3' to 4.5'--the Lower Moose section from Iron Bridge to Fowlersville Bridge provides a challenging run appropriate for strong intermediates.

The drops of the Lower Moose remain as vertical as ever--but the lower flows make the river less pushy and more forgiving.

**Iron Bridge** -- Recognized by a private steel bridge spanning the river just above the rapid, the river tumbles over a 200-yard lead-in before dropping over a four-foot ledge. After a brief pool, the rapid finishes with a long run-out of small ledges.

**Tannery**--A 1/4 mile below Iron Bridge the river tumbles over a long, technical rapid with three

holes lurking down the middle right. At the bottom, the flow necks down in the right and flushes over a four-foot ledge.

**Rooster Tail**--After a 1/2 mile of fast-moving water, the river enters a long rapid starting with a funky diagonal ledge that extends from the left shore forming a tricky hydraulic. After negotiating the hole (or missing it by skirting between the hole and the big boulder in the middle of the river), the paddler moves center through a series of ledges before the river necks down to form a series of breaking waves at the bottom. Take the waves down the middle--the chute is shallow on the right.

Rooster Tail is long and difficult to scout but the

trickiest part is at the top and can be avoided by scraping down the far right. A boating death occurred here in the fall of 1998.

**Froth Hole**--Two miles of fast water and a pair of class 2 rapids precede Froth Hole where the river plunges over an eight-foot ledge. The drop features a tricky approach around a pair of holes.

A rock in the center of the drop produces a pinning potential at certain levels and first-time boaters should carefully scout on the left or right.

**Mixmaster**--Another two-mile paddle and one easy class 2-3 rapid precedes the most prominent rapid on the Lower Moose. At Mixmaster--the river flows over a steep eight-foot

high slide in a narrow, diagonal tongue that feeds into a pair of ravenous holes. Many first-timers end in the hole that generally keeps a boat only temporarily. An easy scout and/or portage is on the right.

**Elevator Shaft**--A mile after Mixmaster, a series of low ledges form melow surfing hydraulics. Immediately after the holes, the river is divided by a rocky island and drops down a steep eight-foot ledge. Run down the middle of the right channel.

In addition to the major drops, the Lower Moose contains many unnamed rapids of class 2-3 severity.

Although the Lower Moose is considered an intermediate run at normal fall

levels--its difficulty increases significantly at higher flows. When the river passes 8'--it should be considered an expert run. Boaters have scraped down the Lower at levels as low as 2.7', but an optimal first-time level for an intermediate boaters lies between 3.2' and 4'.

The put-in for the Lower Moose is just above Iron Bridge off the Moose River Road with the take-out at Fowlersville. However--boaters looking for a quick hit of the Lower can takeout on the left a quarter mile below Rooster Tail. The short trail back to Moose River Road is partially hidden by an island on the left. The trail reaches the road just east of a white cabin marked Deer Run Camp.

*Singing Waters to Iron Bridge*

# Middle Moose perfect for novice/beginning kayakers

Beginning or novice boaters shouldn't be discouraged by the hardcore reputation of the Moose--there's plenty of paddling appropriate for you.

Because the section of the river starting above Singing Waters Campground known as the Middle Moose promises up to 10 miles of class 2-3 whitewater perfect for boaters looking for a day of easy play or to practice their skills.

Access to the section can be found off the loop road just north of Singing Waters or from Route 28 where the river is visible from the road.

From the put-in to the river's junction with the South Branch Moose just above McKeever, rapids are generally long stretches of riffles and small pour-overs separated by pools of fast-moving current.

The only exception is Nelsons Falls--a series of three sharp ledges where the river drops eight feet over a 30-yard stretch. At decent flows, formidable hydraulics develop below the ledges and the rapid becomes a very solid class 3.

The volume of the river doubles with the addition of the South Branch and flows quickly to the Route 28 bridge. Paddlers can leave the river there--but more excellent boating continues below.

In fact--the stretch from McKeever Bridge down to Iron Bridge is commonly

run through most of the summer by commercial raft and ducky trips and is considered a prime destination even during periods of low flows.

Moose River Road parallels the river below the bridge and for the mile that the Moose runs along the road--the current is slow and deep. However, the road soon rises above the water level as steep banks close in on both sides of the river.

The constriction produces navigable water even at lower flows and three long class 2-3 rapids can be found in the next two miles where the choked stream rises up in standing waves over foamy hydraulics. At the most prominent rapid--House Rock--a huge boulder forces the current to pile up and spill through a series of hydraulics on the right.

The takeout for the Middle is located on the left where the road rejoins the river. Boaters looking for added challenge can continue downstream to tackle Iron Bridge--the opening class 3 rapid (at lower levels) of the Lower run. The road continues to follow the river until the bottom of the rapid.

The Middle Moose from Singing Waters to McKeever is a prime destination during the Festival weekend because releases from upstream reservoirs augment flows providing decent levels.



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