

For Immediate Release: September 17, 2009.

Contested Fall Release of the West River in Jamaica VT Scheduled for September 26<sup>th</sup> , Local Economy To Be Impacted,

Over the last decade, actions by the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), (who manage Ball Mountain Dam on the West River), and the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (VANR), have significantly reduced scheduled opportunities for whitewater boating tourists to enjoy the West River in Jamaica VT. This loss of scheduled releases has had a negative economic impact on an area already hard hit by the global recession.

The West River in Jamaica, VT is one of the premier whitewater rivers in New England, and at one time hosted the Olympic Trials for whitewater paddling. In the past there have been two full weekends of whitewater releases starting in April and a two-day release in the fall.

While participants are hopeful for a large turn out, the one-day release scheduled discourages many to attend this event.

Historically, a scheduled two-day Fall release has drawn several thousand attendees to enjoy the river. A 2005 study, paid for in part by the Town of Jamaica, conservatively estimated a \$440,000 positive economic impact to Jamaica and surrounding communities for the two day event. The economic loss of reducing the release by one day is \$147,973 amounting to a 34% reduction in revenue to the local economy.

Several organizations including; The Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC), American White Water, New England Flow, Friends of the West River, and many volunteers have been attempting to work with the ACOE to enhance the recreational and economic opportunities provided by the existence of the dam.

Charles Still from the FriendsOfTheWestRiver.org states “The reduction in scheduled paddling days on the West River has a serious impact on Jamaica and the surrounding communities. Since limiting the release to a one-day event, attendance is down. The total loss to the community is easily in excess of a million dollars of lost tourism revenue since the initial cancellation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of the fall release in 2003. I am also disappointed in the VANR who is using bureaucratic posturing to avoid working with the various interested parties to find agreeable solutions.

The VANR and ACOE need to be held accountable to the citizens of Vermont and the country. In 2009 over a thousand whitewater enthusiasts won't be visiting the West River. The mismanagement of this resource could not come at a worse time for an area already struggling in a down turning economy. We need solutions that support tourism and generate direct revenue for local businesses and tax revenue for the local and state

economy."

After significant discussions last fall and this winter, paddlers, including representatives from AMC, New England Flow, American Whitewater, Friends of the West River, commercial rafting companies, and concerned citizens questioned the planned release change and sought a solution that would support public use of the West River. Despite the feedback both public agencies were receiving the Fall Release is still scheduled for only one day.

The Friends of the West River has collected over a thousand signatures and will be forwarding them to the Governors office. "We are hopeful that we can get local and state politicians involved in this issue." said Still.

More information online at  
[www.friendsofthewestriver.org](http://www.friendsofthewestriver.org)

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