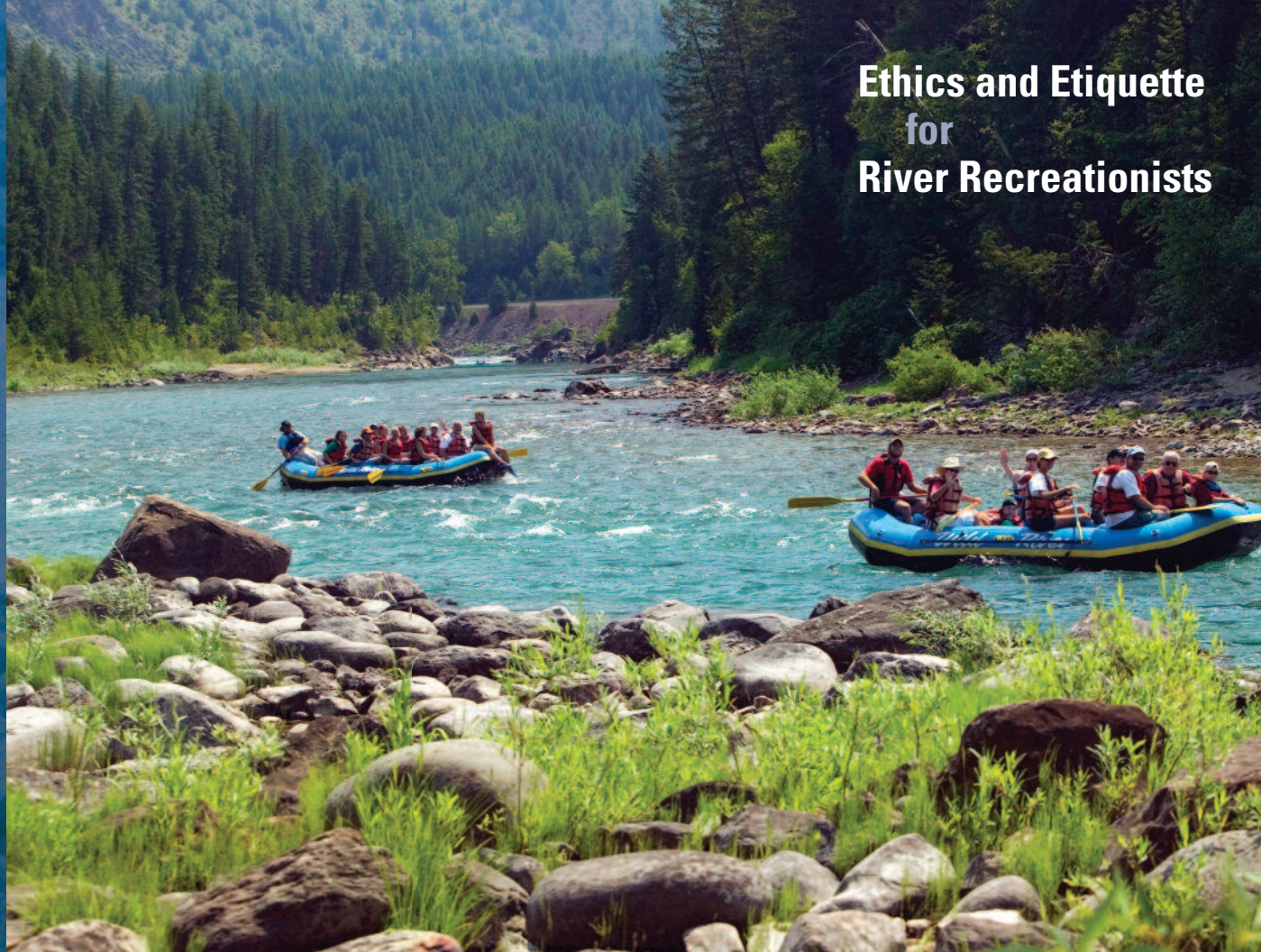
RESPECT YOUR RIVERS



Ethics and Etiquette for River Recreationists

Montana's rivers and streams are among our state's greatest assets.

STEVEN AKRE

Unparalleled recreational opportunities await our state's visitors and residents alike.

As recreational use on and near Montana's river resources continues to grow, different river user groups (fishing, floating, tubing, camping, etc.) are encountering each other more frequently. This can lead to conflict between users or a perception of river crowding.

Access sites and boat launches are receiving more traffic and at times are congested. In some cases, river users are not respectful of private land, causing tension between river users and landowners. Additionally, increasing recreational use of rivers is placing pressure on natural resources and resulting in problems such as litter, human waste and vegetation degradation.

It is crucial for river users to work together to protect our rivers.

This brochure describes river ethics and etiquette that each person who enjoys Montana's great river resources can follow to help protect the recreational experience and the resource.

Be ready to float before you get on the ramp.

- Organize gear and load boats before approaching the ramp.
- Inflate and rig rafts away from the ramp.
- Be aware of the space available at the launch area and use only what you need.
- Rig and unrig fishing rods away from the ramp.
- Once in the water, clear the launch area as soon as possible.
- When taking out, leave boats off to side of ramp until trailer is ready.

KERRY T. NICKOU

Remember...You're sharing the river with other folks, too.

- Profanity and obnoxious behavior is inappropriate and offensive.
- Boating under the influence of alcohol or drugs is dangerous—be responsible when drinking alcohol on and around the river.

BARRY & CATHY BECK

- Be discrete when changing clothing.
- Keep dogs under control and on a leash.

CAROL POLICH

Encounters and group size affect the river experience

- Be prepared for encounters with other river users.
- Be friendly and communicate when encountering others on the river.
- River crowding is often attributed to encounters with other floaters—keep your group size and number of watercraft to a minum.
- Using firearms in a river corridor can be hazardous and disturbing to others. During hunting season, remember that others may be using the river.

Give space to other river users and remember your river etiquette.

- Give anglers wide berth to avoid floating through the area they are fishing.
- If it is impossible to avoid floating through the area someone is fishing, politely explain your situation and apologize for the intrusion.
- Attempt to keep out of sight of other boaters and anglers.
- Don't monopolize a fishing hole. Fish for awhile and move on.
- Non-motorized watercraft usually have the right-of-way over powerboats.
- Non-motorized watercraft should yield the deeper channel to powerboats, which require a deeper channel to navigate safely.
- Powerboats should use no-wake speeds when passing non-motorized watercraft and wade anglers.
- Paddlers 'surfing' on a wave should yield to 'through boaters.'

CRAIG & LIZ LARCOM

Practice 'Leave No Trace' river ethics

- Know river skills and carry the necessary equipment to minimize your impact.
- Don't leave your trash—Pack it in-Pack it out.
- Use existing restrooms or pack out human waste and toilet paper with a portable toilet.
- Avoid using the streambed as a pathway and instead—walk along the shoreline within the high water mark.

- Observe wildlife from a distance.
- Camp in designated campsites.
- Do not build rock fire rings—use designated fire rings or a fire pan.
- Always be mindful of fire danger and make sure campfires are dead out before leaving.

Respect private land along the river

- Know your rights and responsibilities under the Stream Access Law.
- Stay below the ordinary high water mark.
- Respect private property, don't trespass.
- Keep dogs on a leash and under control.
- Respect ranchers' needs for fencing, and learn how to use float gates and portage routes.
- Leave gates as you find them.
- Obtain permission before camping or recreating on private property.

ROLAND TAYLOR

BARRY & CATHY BECK

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