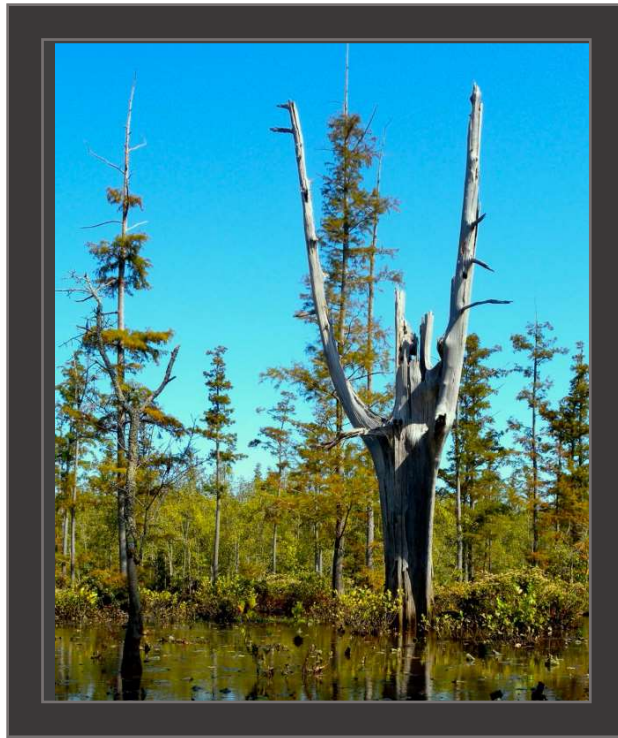


The Wolf River Conservancy



Photo /Dale Sanders

Volunteer River Guide Handbook



The “Ghost Tree” image was featured in
“The Sound Track Project: A Tangible Birthplace”
For Ghost River Brewing by Memphis Chamber of Commerce

Video: www.wolfriver.org

Photo: Dale Sanders

Nikon Cool Pix P6000: F 5.2, shutter speed 1/250, with ISO of 64. October 1, 2009 at 1128 Hours.

Wolf River Conservancy
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Table of Contents

Letter from the Executive Director.....	3
The Volunteer River Guide Program.....	4
Brief Summary of Our Mission:	5
Procedures.....	6
A. Trip Planning	6
Trip Administration/Registration.....	6
B. Before Leaving Home	6
Trip Safety/Weather/Cancellations	7
Parking/Shuttle Arrangements.....	8
Cold Water/ Weather Paddles	8
C. The Day of the Trip.....	8
D. Just Before Launching.....	10
Boat Skills Review for Beginners.....	12
E. The Launch.....	13
F. Emergency Situations.....	14
G. The WRC Paddle – Safe, relaxed, fun.....	15
H. Finishing the Trip—Trip Reports.....	15
1. Trip Report forms: WRC/Events/Paddling the Wolf River	15
2. Trip Leaders must complete/submit Trip Reports	15
I. Wolf River Guide Sample Trip Report	16
J. Trip Leader Equipment List	17
Appendix A – River Guide Training.....	18
Appendix B – Release Form	20
Appendix C - Safety	21
Exit Points-LaGrange to Bateman (Ghost River):	21
Exit Points-Bateman to Moscow (Lost Swamp Trail):	21
Rescue Procedures	22
Snake Bites	22
Allergic Reactions.....	23
Actual Case Studies	23
Appendix D – Identifying Snakes	25
Identifying Venomous / Non-venomous species.....	26
Mid-South Snakes	29
K. Favorite Section Descriptions.....	30
Handbook Disclaimer	35



Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Wolf River Conservancy River Guide Volunteer,

First, let me say thank you for being a “Volunteer” as one of the Wolf River Conservancy’s River Guides. You play a very important role to the conservancy in our recreational outreach activities on the Wolf River! The recreational experiences you provide to our members, present and future, are among the WRC’s most popular activities.

We believe getting folks out on the river is important to our mission for many different reasons, including:

Enjoying the great outdoors develops an appreciation for nature in general; becoming familiar with the beauty of the Wolf River underscores the importance of our mission, especially our land conservation projects; Trips on the Wolf build an understanding of the river’s role in protecting and recharging our drinking water aquifer; Wolf River paddle trips showcase some of our most beautiful native flora and fauna, providing living proof of the need to protect their habitat; and... It’s FUN!

A great deal of time and effort has been put into creating the Wolf River Conservancy River Guide Handbook by volunteers and staff who all share a love for the Wolf River and a commitment to our mission to protect it. We appreciate their leadership in this effort.

As good as we believe this latest version of the handbook is at the time of this printing, we plan to continue to refine the contents so that it becomes even better over time. Please feel comfortable in sharing your suggestions for improvement with me or any of the WRC staff.

Again, we appreciate each one of you and are proud that you have chosen to represent the Wolf River Conservancy as a river guide volunteer.

Enjoy,
Keith Cole, 12/30/2014

The Volunteer River Guide Program

Handbook by Dale Sanders; Founder, River Guide Program/Director of Outreach

For centuries, if one aspired to view the Wolf River waterways, self-guided excursions were the only option. The average paddler simply could not chance venturing into the unknown of the Wolf, especially the deep swamps upstream. Through the Wolf River Conservancy (WRC) River Guide program, the majority of our members now have numerous opportunities to paddle the river, swamps, water filled spatterdock wetlands, water-filled old growth forest, and the channelized grasslands.

Since the early 1990s WRC has offered tours, but such opportunities were not formalized as advertised river guided programs until the mid 2000s. Over the years the number of guided trips has increased, and on January 2, 2010 the first historic 'First Saturday Paddle' took place. The number of volunteer guides has quadrupled, and more and more people are now able to enjoy supervised paddles on the Wolf River. Our WRC River Guides are the vital link in the development of these water-based programs.

An active volunteer force of trained individuals is essential. This River Guide Training Program represents an attempt to fill this need.

Seasoned paddlers and trainees can find most information needed to effectively lead trips under the "Activities and Events" "WRC River Guide Program" tabs on the WRC website, which has links to the Volunteer Training Manual/Handbook, Safety Information, River Gauges, Guide Registration, Trip Report and River Guide Application.

Potential River Guides are requested to review this manual/workbook and other applicable documents prior to applying to enter the program.

If this program appeals to you, please feel free to submit an application. Applicants must be paid members of WRC, at least 18 years old, and have some prior experience paddling on the Wolf River. This River Guide program is administered by the WRC Director of Outreach. All responsibility for the formal River Programs pass through this office. Please feel free to contact the Director of Outreach as the need arises.



Brief Summary of Our Mission:

To Conserve and Enhance the Wolf River Watershed

Since the 1990s, the WRC has devoted countless volunteer hours to preserve the Wolf River Corridor and Watershed as a sustainable natural resource. Programs which seek to educate the public about the importance of the Wolf River and its wetlands are central to this mission, especially those promoting activities in and around the river.

WRC-led paddle excursions on the Wolf River are a powerful tool, both for educating people about the river's value and for promoting membership in the Wolf River Conservancy. Trained River Guides effectively organize and lead WRC-sponsored trips on the Wolf, while at the same time maximizing the safety of those involved. Positive and memorable experiences are invaluable to the success of the paddle program.

WRC River Guides play a crucial role as ambassadors of the Wolf River and the Wolf River Conservancy, projecting a positive image of the organization, encouraging the purchase of memberships, reinforcing the WRC mission, and helping other people discover this natural treasure, and we appreciate your volunteer efforts.

Our thanks to Dale Sanders, who authored this guide, along with technical advice from Keith Kirkland and Ray Graham. Cathy Justis, provided valuable information on snakes and internet support. Thanks to Beth Hoople, who capably edited this material and made it ready for printing.

These procedures have been developed by experienced river guides, staff, and professional affiliates, with a goal of standardizing safety requirements and outlining steps for smooth and effective river programs. We welcome suggestions and ideas for improvement to be included in future revisions of this Handbook.



Procedures

All volunteer River Guides/trainees should read and be familiar with these procedures.

A. Trip Planning

The paddle schedule is planned annually. Trips are promoted on the WRC website, in newsletters, and local media. The website also provides answers to the most common questions paddlers ask, including directions to the put-ins/take outs, section descriptions, boat rentals, shuttle services, registration, and clothing appropriate to the type of trip.

Trip Administration/Registration

Volunteer River Guides must register for trips on-line at

<http://wolfriverconservancy.wufoo.com/forms/river-guide-registration-form/>

Paddlers also register on line. Safety Information and any needed trip details are then forwarded to registered paddlers, along with a required canoe/kayak Liability Waiver, which will be signed electronically to complete the registration process. To conform to insurance mandates, EVERY WRC trip participant should register and acknowledge this waiver.

For reasons of safety, planning, and trip reporting, Trip Leaders must print out and take with them to the launch site a **complete list of participants**. Assistant River Guide Trip Leaders are encouraged to become pro-active in the launch process, assisting the Lead Guide with check-in and administrative details as much as possible. Trip reporting and documentation is critical participation data for fundraising, membership and event planning, as well as providing problem-solving data for future needs. Copies of trip reports will be email forwarded as appropriate to participating River Guides.

Social media sites can be extremely valuable for promoting trips, but please be aware that any comments, statements, or opinions might easily be misinterpreted in these media outlets. Stating the time and place, then referring them to the website, is always appropriate when promoting WRC events.

B. Before Leaving Home

At least 2 days before the event, a **Trip Registration Spread Sheet** with information about number of participants, number of boats/type, number of minors, and participant experience levels will be sent to the guides.



You will use your expertise and experience to *evaluate this information* to ensure a safe, fun trip.

In some instances, a registered paddler might need to be contacted to clarify important information.

WRC Insurance Regulations require a 1:12 Certified River Guide-to-guest ratio, i.e., six tandem boats per Certified Guide. Trainee Guides are not counted in the guest ratio.

If you are short on Certified Guides, please contact other guides and WRC before departing for the put-in.

Trip Safety/Weather/Cancellations

Before any WRC-sponsored trip, River Guides/Trip Leaders should check weather reports and river gauge water levels:

- Water levels **above eight (8) feet** are for experienced boaters only, persons that have paddled this river multiple times before.
- If water levels are **above nine (9) feet** the morning of a trip or at launch time the trip should normally be canceled, unless special approval was granted by WRC.
- The Lead Guide will need to make weather-related calls based on most recent weather reports for the area to be affected.

Cancellations: *A decision to cancel/postpone/re-schedule a trip due to weather or other related factors is made by the Lead Guide and Director of Outreach. If the Director of Outreach is not available, the Lead Guide has the authority to cancel, based on safety, cold weather, possible storms, unsafe water levels, or other factors. When in doubt, it's best to err on the side of safety. Please let WRC/Director of Outreach know if the trip has been cancelled.*



Parking/Shuttle Arrangements

Generally, those paddling in WRC-sponsored on-river programs may park at the **Moscow Strip Mall**, and are exempt from paying the \$5.00 per car parking fee. Trip Leaders must contact the Mall owner **John Dobbins at 901-921-5300**, for approval in advance, to take advantage of this WRC-event free parking arrangement. Remind everyone to leave valuables out of sight to help avoid potential break-ins.

The WRC Trip Leader will arrange for shuttle service either before the paddle or after, as appropriate.

All other persons using this lot for non-WRC sponsored events must pay the required parking fees or risk having their vehicles towed by the property owner.

Cold Water/Weather Paddles

These special conditions require the Trip Guides have enough experience as assistant guides before taking a leadership role. Paddlers must be fully briefed about paddling in these conditions, and demonstrate that they have the required personal items, and that they understand and accept responsibility.

Proper clothing is essential for cold weather trips. A base layer of synthetic materials that dry quickly is best. Cotton clothing is not recommended; it absorbs moisture, doesn't dry quickly, and will weigh down a paddler struggling to recover an overturned canoe/kayak. Neoprene wetsuits, gloves, and booties also work well; it warms any moisture against the skin, providing protection. If in doubt, additional information is available on the web. The American Canoe Association, as one of the leaders in promoting cold water canoe and kayak survival, provides guidelines for cold weather/water conditions that you should become familiar with.

C. The Day of the Trip

Volunteer River Guides are requested to make every effort to represent WRC in a professional manner. If unable to keep your time commitment, etc., contact assistant guides and trainees about changes or situations that may negatively affect the program or WRC.

- 1. Loading Your Vehicle**—make sure you have a **Trip Registration Sheet** printout, all required safety equipment, First Aid Kit, extra Liability Waiver release forms, and personal items you may need.

Please take along large durable plastic trash bags.



Often paddlers volunteer to pick up trash at parking lots and on the river. Everyone is expected to practice **Leave No Trace**, leaving the river and access areas better than you found them.

2. **At The Launch Site** – Arrive at the launch site at least 45 minutes prior to launch time (generally, 8:15 for a 9 a.m. paddle) Vehicle shuttle will be arranged after the paddle for those who arrive too late to shuttle before the paddle. As paddlers arrive, greet them, introduce yourself and assistant guides, and direct parking as needed. Do not allow anyone to block access to adjacent farm lands on either side of river access points, or parking on private property. Remind everyone to store valuables in the trunk, out of sight, or take them along in a waterproof bag.

Have a plan; delegate as many tasks as possible to your assistant guides, such as:

- Greeting paddlers as they arrive
- Check in Registered Paddlers
- Adding Names/Collecting Signed Waivers from unregistered paddlers
- Answering general questions/making everyone feel welcome
- Explain 'Rest Room' etiquette – no facilities exist at put-in, lunch, or take-out sites, so paddlers not making a head call prior to arrival at the put-in must find a secluded spot to answer the call of nature.
- Offer personal assistance as needed.

Trip Leaders can then get the group organized, monitor progress of Check-in procedures, manage special situations, and make sure each paddler complies with all safety requirements details at www.wolfriver.org/ under the *Paddling the Wolf River* tab.

Trip Leaders must also verify that the required ratio of 1 certified guide per 12 paddlers is maintained. If there are not enough guides, the Trip Leader decides if the trip must be cancelled, or explore alternative solutions and act according to good judgement.

If paddlers show up without needed items, the Trip Leader has the authority to deny participation. (The online trip registration process covers this requirement in detail).

3. **Lead/Sweep/Float/Count Guide Assignments** -- A Certified Guide should normally be assigned as a Lead Boat, and Sweep Boat, when practical.

Assistant/trainees can be assigned as a Count Boat and Floater Boat(s). Floater Boats provide a valuable contribution by ensuring everyone is as comfortable as possible. Make sure every assistant has an assignment; make your assistant guide feel capable and important to the success of the trip.

D. Just Before Launching

1. Gather all paddlers comfortably around the water's edge with assistant guides and trainees. No boats should leave the launch area, but all should be ready to launch when the signal is given.
2. Welcome everyone, introduce WRC staff or Board Members, and for smaller groups, encourage self-introductions. This is your chance to help break the ice and make paddlers feel comfortable, relaxed, and ready to have fun! It's especially helpful to know if anyone is a medical doctor, and self-introductions can often reveal valuable information about the paddlers.
3. Request that any paddlers with a medical condition, a history of allergic reactions like insect stings or other special circumstances to discreetly discuss such with one of the River Guides prior to paddling out.
4. Make sure parents with minor children are confident that the child can handle current river conditions.
5. Paddlers under 18 must be accompanied by an adult legally responsible for their well-being.
6. Ensure there are no minors 12 years or younger on the trip unless at least one parent or legal guardian is present.
7. Share your thoughts about why WRC Membership is vitally important, and encourage everyone to visit the website to find ways to actively participate. Explain that WRC sponsorship requires complying with standard water safety rules and regulations.
8. **Insurance regulations require all paddlers wear Coast Guard-Approved Life Jackets/Personal Flotation Device (PFD) while on the water.**
9. PFDs must be properly sized and fit snugly, especially for children, because too-large life jackets ride up and, in a capsize event, will not keep their heads out of the water.
10. Briefly explain evacuation procedures in the unlikely event of a medical emergency. In the event of a serious emergency, dial 911, or in appropriate situations, contact the appropriate City/County emergency number.

Other issues paddlers must be aware of include:

- WRC trips are *paddle* trips, not *float* trips. Paddlers must be physically able to *actively paddle* the entire length of the trip.
- Paddlers should understand the concept of a "class one" river rating, and that conditions can rapidly escalate under certain conditions. The greatest danger in many situations is the tendency to panic; remaining calm is often the best way to handle potentially dangerous unexpected events.
- Discuss "strainers," avoiding broadside "boat pins" against logs, jams, obstructions in faster water, and the danger of grabbing limbs and letting them go, which might cause them to whip back on the paddler behind.
- Warn paddlers to avoid fishing limb lines, which may have fish hooks on line ends.
- Fear of **snakes** is common: assure everyone that Water Moccasins and Copperheads generally do not climb trees, and rarely, if ever, drop into boats. Most other snakes they may see are not poisonous, and no danger exists if they simply leave snakes alone. Brief paddlers that River Guides are trained in snake bite protocol and are familiar with snakes.

11. Explain “Lead-” and “Sweep Boats” and why they’re necessary for group safety.

- While it’s best for everyone to take cell phones, make sure paddlers understand that WRC is not responsible for lost or damaged personal items of any type, whether left in a vehicle, taken on the river, or otherwise.
- Advise paddlers that:
 - It’s wise to use dry bags/dry boxes and remind them to have access to their car keys for arrival at the take-out.
 - They should make sure their vehicles are properly secured, and parked properly.

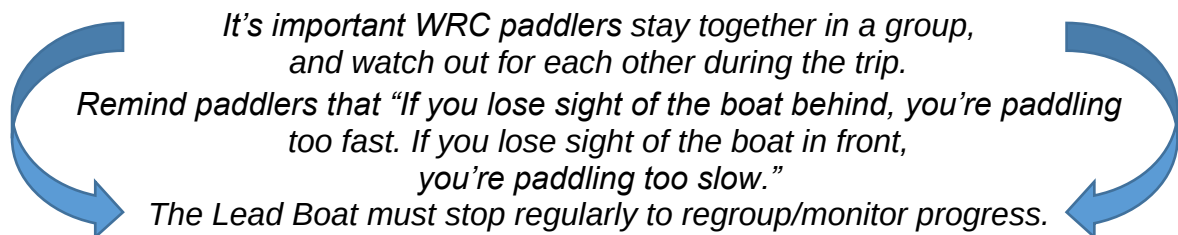


Boat Skills Review for Beginners

1. Ask for a show of hands for who has paddling experience to ensure there's an experienced paddler in every boat. Re-assign paddlers to boats as needed.
2. Demonstrate/assist with bracing the canoe/kayak while paddlers enter/exit craft, and how to crouch with hands on gunwales and feet moving along the centerline (keel). Mention keeping the body's center of gravity low for proper boat trim. Beginners who master smooth boat entry/exit likely will become more confident paddlers.
3. As boats are launched, remind everyone to remain near the launch point until a trip officially begins. Assistants can begin preparing for a head count. If needed, suggest changes in seating/gear storage for proper trim to balance weight evenly in the boat.
4. Each boat should have ONE Captain—the person in charge, usually the stern paddler. However, if the stern paddler is inexperienced, the front paddler can assume the “skipper” role.

If necessary, demonstrate forward/reverse strokes, right/left draw, and “rudder,” and give beginners paddle tips and positive encouragement to boost their confidence.

Remind paddlers if the craft hits something sideways, they need to lean forward, not away from the object, and the danger of immediate capsize if the upstream gunwale dips below the surface of the water.



E. The Launch

1. Prepare to paddle out as close to advertised launch time as possible. Announce a boarding call with reminders about securing all gear, especially electronics, food, water, personal medications, sunscreen, extra changes of clothing, rain gear, hat and other supplies in dry bags/boxes, and make a 'head call.'
2. Ensure each paddler has an extra change of clothing with them in the boat.
3. As boats launch, remind paddlers not to start the trip until everyone is safely on the water, counted, and ready to paddle out.



F. Emergency Situations

No matter how well-trained River Guides are, nothing replaces good judgment, experience, and good old-fashioned common sense. Being prepared often requires thinking ahead, being aware, and recognizing unforeseen circumstance and responding appropriately to avoid disaster. In emergency situations:

1. Provide emergency first aid/life support aid and comfort, if necessary, and make sure someone calls 911 immediately, and/or local law enforcement.

The following emergency and non-emergency numbers are for on-river use in Shelby, Fayette and Benton Counties. Please program these numbers in your cell phones in the event of an emergency while paddling on the Wolf River. (These numbers may change, so please update them in your phone at least semi-annually.)

Shelby County. Emergency. Dial: 911. If 911 does not work try **901-379-7620, which can also be used for emergencies.** The Sheriff's non-emergency number is: **901-379-7625**

Fayette County. Emergency. Dial: 911. If 911 does not work try **901-465-3456**; This Sheriff's Department Emergency and Non-Emergency number is the same. To reach Emergency on this alternate number — ask for “Dispatch Please -- This is an emergency”.

If you are paddling in **Benton County, Mississippi**, it is advisable to let the Sheriff's department know when/where you will be launching from and where/when you intend to take out. The Non-emergency number to use is: **662-224-8941; 911 is still applicable if phone cell service permits.**

2. Be prepared to provide details if rapid evacuation is necessary and find out where an ambulance, medical helicopter or power boat meet-up could be rapidly arranged. Make sure a responsible person stays with the sick/injured paddler until emergency response personnel take over.
3. For minor emergencies, an injured paddler might be paired with a strong paddler, fast assistant guide or trusted participant. If this is not possible provide as much assistance as possible to get to a pre-arranged emergency take-out. The rest of the group can follow, at a slower pace, led by one of the experienced assistants.

(Appendix information provides information about emergency routes in each section.)

4. In case of heavy lightning, consider spreading the group under low trees to provide shelter from larger trees which may be struck. In open water, aluminum boats are especially vulnerable.



G. The WRC Paddle – Safe, relaxed, fun

1. The Lead Boat makes regular stops to regroup, and often, on Ghost River Section, the numbered signs make great stopping points. They offer a chance to remind participants WHY it's called "The Ghost" and the consequences of venturing off marked trails. **Hearing that experienced paddlers have gotten lost and spent a night on the river often motivates paddlers to stay close to the group.**
2. Trip Leaders, Trainees and Assistants should always expect the unexpected. No matter how much experience, some situations require good judgment. Dangerous situations can develop quickly. Be prepared and ready to react sensibly to avoid potential disaster.
3. By the time the group arrives at the take-out, some paddlers may be exhausted; especially beginners. Your experience, assistance and helpful attitudes are especially important at this point.
 - a. All assistant guides and trainees help paddlers get in and out of their boats and pull boats out of the water as necessary to keep a steady flow of incoming boats landing and loading. Recruit younger, stronger members of the group to help out.
 - b. Weary paddlers may need assistance carrying and loading boats on their vehicles.
 - c. Providing, cheerful, positive assistance and personal attention at trip's end often leaves paddlers with a lasting positive impression, a desire to continue participating, and to recruit additional members. Thank everyone for their participation, remind them about the WRC web site, and help make sure nothing is left behind.
 - d. Take a group photo if practical. The Trip Leader is the last person to leave the take-out site.
 - e. Remind paddlers they may wish to view the WRC Facebook page by "liking" without having to join the Facebook community.

H. Finishing the Trip—Trip Reports

1. Trip Report forms: WRC/Events/Paddling the Wolf River
2. Trip Leaders must complete/submit Trip Reports
 - ✓ After every WRC membership canoe trip.

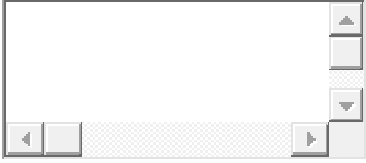
I. Wolf River Guide Sample Trip Report

To be filled out by Lead Canoe Guide only.

- Date of Canoe Trip * MM / DD / YYYY 
- Section of Wolf River Canoeed: *
- Lead Canoe Guide * First Last
- Please list all Volunteer Canoe Guides and indicate what position they assisted with:

- Start Time of Trip: * HH : MM : SS AM/PM
- End Time of Trip: * HH : MM : SS AM/PM
- Total Number of Boats: *
- Total Number of Registrants (including paddlers/people, guides, guests, children):
- Brief Trip Description: *

- Incidents (accident, swamped boat, near drowning, fights, animal problem, etc.): *

- Other Information/Recommendations/Observations: *

- Environmental Conditions (water Level, weather, trail condition, portage, etc.): *

J. Trip Leader Equipment List

<i>ALL Trip Leaders should have this equipment on WRC paddle trips. While some equipment is available for check-out, Certified Guides generally have their own personal items.</i>		✓
Item	Description/Notes	
Life Jacket/PFD	Recommend hunter's orange or bright color for visibility.	
Whistle	Attach to PFD or clothing.	
Cell Phone	Readily accessible, fully charged, programmed with emergency numbers	
Dry Bags	1. For supplies, equipment, personal valuables 2. Extra clothing, foul weather gear, fire starter, etc.	
First Aid Kit	WRC has kits that can be checked out, Certified Guides generally build their own based on experience.	
Gorilla Tape	Too many practical uses to list here!	
Throw Rope	At least 50 ft., critical for rescue, pinned boat, basic maintenance, other emergencies	
Trash Bags	Heavy-duty 45-55 gallon bags, can be emergency rain poncho, sleeping bag, dry bags, and for trash.	
Extra Water	Always carry extra water/liquids for consumption.	
Hard Candy	For possible diabetic insulin shock/hypoglycemia	
<i>To prevent overloading, the Trip Leader may distribute items among assistants.</i>		

Appendix A – River Guide Training

WRC River Guide/Trip Leader Training Program Checklist

This checklist includes the minimum requirements for **WRC Volunteer River Guide/Trip Leader Certification**. It is a self-paced program; time needed for certification varies, depending on experience level, motivation and opportunity.

Name (Print) _____ River Name (Optional) _____
(River Guide/Trip Leader candidates must be at least 18 years old)

Checklist	Date Completed	WRC Guide Verification Signature: ****	Date Verified
Completed the On-Line Application*			
Prior River Experience**			
Assistant Guide - Section of Choice: _____			
Equipment Requirements (Detailed in Training Manual)			
Assistant Guide - Section of Choice: _____			
Has a WRC River Guide Training Handbook, Familiar w. Contents			
First Green Shirt Presented			
Assistant Guide – Ghost River Section			
Lead a Ghost Section Trip			
Paddle in WRC sponsored annual, Training Program (Like moonlight paddle)			
Volunteered in at least one off-river WRC program. (Tree Planting, Booth, Privet pull etc.)			
Certified in CPR and AED, (ARC or ACA):			
Attend a WRC Annual Guide Trainee Meeting (Annually with CPR Training)			
Completes at least one paddle training session or course outside WRC (ARC, BCCC, ACA, etc.)			
Other ***			
Other ***			

I have completed requirements listed above and submit this document for approval. I agree to offer my volunteer services and participate in at least one WRC sponsored river trip annually, plus one other event, possibly off-river program, like youth education program, WRC booth, a service project or administrative assistance:

Signature _____ Date _____

Signature, WRC Director of Outreach: _____ Date _____

Certificate Issued by WRC Office Manager: Initials ____ Date _____

* WRC Membership required before submitting this application.

** Submit a short BIO of past boating experience. Please keep a copy of your own documentation, which can be journal entries, released publicity documents, electronically dated photos, witness signatures, certification letters/certificates and the like.

*** Any related activity the River Guide Candidate wishes to submit for consideration, that will show versatility, experience, and education to further support this candidates WRC River Guide Certification application. (Ie: College degree in related field etc.)

**** To be signed by currently Certified WRC Leaders/Guides: by signing your name here, you are certifying that the candidate has successfully documented and completed said requirement.

Note: Address questions to WRC, Director of Outreach.

Prepared by Dale Sanders, Revised January 2015

NOTES FOR WRC USE: _____



Appendix B – Release Form

PARTICIPANT AGREEMENT, RELEASE AND ASSUMPTION OF RISK

Revised: 12/09/2014

In consideration of the services of **Wolf River Conservancy Inc. (WRC)**, **Wolf River Canoe Trips**, **Ghost River Rentals** and their agents, members, officers, board members, volunteers, participants, employees, its cooperating activity vendors and all other persons or entities acting in any capacity on their behalf, I hereby agree to release, indemnify, and discharge WRC, on behalf of myself, my spouse, my children, my parents, my heirs, assigns, personal representative and estate as follows:

1. I acknowledge that my participation in canoeing and river rafting activities entails known and unanticipated risks that could result in physical or emotional injury, paralysis, death, or damage to myself, to property, or to third Parties. I understand that such risks simply cannot be eliminated without jeopardizing the essential qualities of the activity.

The risks include, among other things: slipping and falling, whether on shore or while entering into, exiting from or venturing in a watercraft that may be unstable and/or slippery when wet; accidental drowning; collision with fixed or moveable objects or other watercraft; water hazards; boat capsizing and entrapment; exposure to temperature and weather extremes which could cause cold water shock, hypothermia, hyperthermia (heat related illnesses), heat exhaustion, sunburn, dehydration; exposure to sun, strong wind, cold, storms, large waves, eddies and whirlpools, and lightning; exposure to potentially dangerous wild animals, insect bites, hazardous plant life, and aggressive and/or poisonous marine life; equipment failure; improper lifting or carrying; travel in remote areas with poor or no access to emergency and/or medical services; my own physical condition, and the physical exertion associated with this activity.

Furthermore, WRC employees and volunteers have difficult jobs to perform. They seek safety, but they are not infallible. They might be unaware of a participant's fitness or abilities. They might misjudge the weather or other environmental conditions. They may give incomplete warnings or instructions, and the equipment being used might malfunction.

2. I expressly agree and promise to accept and assume all of the risks existing in this activity. My participation in this activity is purely voluntary, and I elect to participate in spite of the risks. Additionally, I agree to wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved personal flotation device (life jacket) if required, while participating in this activity.

3. I hereby voluntarily release, forever discharge, and agree to indemnify and hold harmless WRC from any and all claims, demands, or causes of action, which are in any way connected with my participation in this activity or my use of WRC's equipment or facilities, including any such claims which allege negligent acts or omissions of WRC.

4. Should WRC or anyone acting on their behalf, be required to incur attorney's fees and costs to enforce this agreement, I agree to indemnify and hold them harmless for all such fees and costs.

5. I certify that I have adequate insurance to cover any injury or losses I may cause or suffer while participating and agree to bear the costs of such injury or damage. I further certify that I am willing to assume all risk I may experience while participating.

6. In the event that I file a lawsuit against WRC, I agree to do so solely in the state of Tennessee, and I further agree that the substantive law of that state shall apply in that action without regard to the conflict of law rules of that state. I agree that if any portion of this agreement is found to be void or unenforceable, the remaining document shall remain in full force and effect.

By "ACCEPTING" this document, I acknowledge that if anyone is hurt or property is damaged during my participation in this activity, I may be found by a court of law to have waived my right to maintain a lawsuit against WRC on the basis of any claim from which I have released them herein.

I HAVE HAD SUFFICIENT OPPORTUNITY TO REVIEW THIS ENTIRE DOCUMENT. I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD IT, AND I AGREE TO BE BOUND BY ITS TERMS. (COMPLETE BELOW AS APPLICABLE):

Individual: I accept the above Terms & Conditions for myself: (Print) _____

(Signature) _____, Today's Date: ____ MM / ____ DD / ____ YYYY

Family: I accept the above Terms & Conditions for MYSELF AND REGISTERED GUESTS, (INCLUDING MINORS UNDER THE AGE

OF 18: (Print) _____ (Signature) _____, Today's

Date: ____ MM / ____ DD / ____ YYYY

River Guides Only: If you wish to electronically / manually sign annually for any / all WRC program(s):

I do hereby grant such permission, on my behalf, for all year: Check: Yes _____ No _____

(Signature) _____, Today's Date: ____ MM / ____ DD / ____ YYYY

Appendix C - Safety

Emergency Exit Points, Safety Issues and Case Studies

If you need to walk out of the river and don't know where you are, it is generally a good idea to walk, river right, towards HWY 57. HWY 57 crosses the Wolf River at Moscow.

If you are on the river above the Feemster Bridge in Moscow, HWY 57 is to the north or on the right side of the river as you face downstream. If you are below the Feemster Bridge, HWY 57 is to the south or on the left bank of the river.

Exit Points-LaGrange to Bateman (Ghost River):

- a. Within the first two miles, there is a man-made lake, river right, over the levee. Atop the levee is a gravel road. Paddlers will have to climb a bank and negotiate a barbed-wire fence to reach the gravel road. Keep in mind that this is private property and should be respected as such; use only in emergency situations.
- b. The Leatherwood Rd. access between the sandbar lunch spot and Ghost River entrance sign offers another possible emergency evacuation point. There is a small white sign with "Leatherwood" etched in it on a tree to river right, along with two of the familiar blue and white metal WRC trail marker signs. From here paddlers have to hike 70 yards through wooded wetlands to a grassy road that leads a mile to a locked gate, gravel parking lot, and paved road (Leatherwood Rd.) which leads to Hwy. 57. This is State of Tennessee, TWRA property and should be respected as such. If it is hunting season, make sure to wear a bright orange vest, or other suitable identification as human, not game. Only use this access for emergencies, unless advance approval has been granted by appropriate TWRA personnel.

Exit Points-Bateman to Moscow (Lost Swamp Trail):

- a. Prior to reaching the lunch stop, there is a clearing to river right, which leads through the field to the Poole Road parking access. The area is marked with two of the familiar blue and white metal WRC trail marker signs. From here, paddlers must hike a quarter mile through the field that leads to Bateman Road or Hwy. 57. This is State of Tennessee, TWRA property and should be respected as such. If it is hunting season, make sure to wear a bright orange vest, or other suitable identification as human, not game. Only use this access for emergencies, unless advance approval has been granted by appropriate TWRA personnel.
- b. At the lunch stop, a fit person(s) could hike, river right, through the woods and fields to Poole Road. Keep in mind that this is private property and should be respected as such; use only in emergency situations.

Volunteer River Guides should become familiar in-person with emergency exit points.

Rescue Procedures

1. Assess the situation and decide if a rescue is needed.
2. Call 911 or the Fayette County Sheriff's Department, and ask for instructions. Follow evacuation instruction given by emergency agents as best as you possibly can. It is advisable that all WRC River Guides program in ALL emergency numbers in their phones prior to paddling any section on the Wolf River.
3. Administer first aid and move to a rendezvous point as advised by authorities.
4. If you must move the victim, a water rescue may be the best choice. Place the injured party in the bottom of a canoe with an experienced paddler in the stern and paddle towards the nearest accessible access. If possible, send a couple of fast-moving kayakers out ahead to meet the rescue personnel and lead them to the injured person.
5. If safe & possible, the Lead Guide should remain with the group. In any situation, an experienced person should be left in charge of the remaining group.
6. It should be up to the Trip Leader to determine which paddlers should be given which task. The leader must be flexible and make decisions based on the situation.

Snake Bites

1. Snake bites are rare on the Wolf River, though snakes are common (please see Appendix D for more information on snakes).
2. Prevention is the best strategy. Leave all snakes alone. Paddlers should never attempt to catch, kill or harass snakes; it is a violation of state wildlife laws to do so.
3. Paddlers should always be aware of where they place their hands and feet outside of the boat, exercising caution near shrubs and logs and when walking on land.
4. Any kind of snake bite should be treated as a medical emergency requiring a 911 call and evacuation of the victim. Because snake identification in the field can be questionable. *It is always best to err on the side of caution.* Non-venomous snake bites require medical attention as well, though they are not life-threatening.
5. Follow American Red Cross/Wilderness First Aid snake bite guidelines. Call 911. If you wash the wound, use only appropriate solutions you have been trained to apply. Keep bitten body part still, and, if practical, lower than the heart (if the victim can do so in a comfortable position). Do not cut the bite, apply ice or attempt to suck poison out by mouth. Follow instructions given by emergency personnel, *which may include* wrapping a roller bandage over the bite tissue. Any bandage should not restrict circulation. Evacuate the victim and seek medical attention immediately, regardless of what type of snake bit the victim.

Allergic Reactions

Allergic reactions, especially to insect bites, are commonly indicated by rash or hives, dizziness or confusion, trouble breathing, tightness in the chest and throat, and/or swelling of the face, neck and tongue. Although the first aid kit contains supplies to counteract such reactions, they should always be treated as emergencies requiring a 911 call and evacuation of the victim.

Actual Case Studies

1. When Good Paddlers Go Bad:

Your group is a mile downriver from the LaGrange Access when a paddler capsizes his canoe; he is very experienced, but turns his boat over two more times. He appears to be lethargic and disoriented. After the third time, you land his canoe on the levee of a man-made lake to assess the situation. The weather is sunny with temperatures in the 70s.

- a) How do you assess the subject?
- b) If evacuation is needed, is it better to paddle the mile back upstream or find a land exit?
- c) What are your instructions for the remainder of the group?

After questioning the subject, the trip leader determined that the man was diabetic. The leader gave the man a piece of hard candy and called 911. A rescue unit was dispatched and rescue personnel met the leader and the victim on the gravel road on top of the levee. The rest of the group waited nearby and looked for eagles as the evacuation proceeded.

2. Too Much of a Good Thing:

During a private trip, a woman became disoriented and exhausted. She was overweight and paddling a canoe by herself on a hot day. There was not a counterweight in the bow, so paddling was even more strenuous.

- a) What do her symptoms and weather conditions indicate as a possible malady?
- b) What could have been done to make her trip easier and possibly improve her condition?
- c) Given the location, there was not an available land exit. What is the best evacuation procedure?

It turned out that the woman had a small stroke. The guide called 911, then treated her for heat exhaustion by having her change out of her wet clothes and having her drink small sips of water. As a land route was not available, she was placed on her back in the bottom of a canoe and an experienced guide paddled her downstream to the nearest river access as quickly as possible, where emergency personnel awaited.

3. Many Hands Make Light Work:

You are leading a late autumn float when a canoe containing a woman and two children is swamped and pulled under a strainer by the strong current. The temperature is in the 40's with mostly sunny skies.

- a) What do you do first?
- b) After the family is safely on the bank, what is your next move?
- c) You have other qualified guides to help. How do you delegate them?
- d) To what extent should you risk the safety of your party to free a trapped canoe?

As soon as the family went into the water, several experienced paddlers moved in to help. Two of them helped the family to the bank, while another retrieved dry clothes. Four other paddlers worked vigorously to free the canoe, as others assisted the family in changing into dry clothes.

No evacuation was made. As the temperatures rose the children became warmer and enjoyed the remainder of the trip.



Appendix D – Identifying Snakes

There are 32 known species of snakes living in the Wolf River watershed. Only 7 are considered to be water snakes. Only two species, the water moccasin and the copperhead, are venomous. However, occasionally coral snakes may be seen in this part of the U.S. non-venomous snakes will defend themselves vigorously if necessary (Gibbons and Dorcas 2005, *Snakes of the Southeast*).

WRC paddlers most often report seeing the midland water snake (*Nerodia sipedon pleuralis*) and the cottonmouth (*Agkistrodon piscivorus*).

Although there are clear differences between cottonmouths and non-venomous species, it does take practice to identify them. For paddlers, behavior around snakes always requires leaving them alone. No close-up snapshots. No selfies! Additionally, all snake bites are treated as an emergency situation.

While fear of snakes is common, paddlers can be educated about venomous snakes by being reminded that:

- Cottonmouths and copperheads are not tree climbers, so it is not likely for one to fall into a boat from an overhanging tree branch.
- Most snakes remain still to avoid being detected, but noises and human activity usually motivate them to move away from people to avoid contact. This is especially true for venomous snakes.
- All snakes are an important part of the ecosystem, and should not be exterminated, injured or harassed while we visit their home turf.

It is illegal in Tennessee to harm, kill, remove from the wild or possess animals taken from the wild, including ALL snakes, without the proper permits.



Identifying Venomous / Non-venomous species

Remind the group that any paddlers interested in identifying snake species in detail requires use of a camera/smart phone, at a distance. Human noise and activity motivate snakes (and other Wolf River natives!) to move away, or to strike if taken by surprise.

Cottonmouth/Water Moccasin (Venomous)

Cottonmouths don't like climbing.

They bask on land / logs / stumps near the water and swim with their **heads above the water** with their bodies riding on the water's surface.

Prefer slow-moving streams, swamps, backwaters.

They may vibrate their tails and gape their mouths when threatened.

Have triangular heads with elliptical eye pupils and a heat-sensing pit

Typically keep their heads cocked

If banded, design is widest and hourglass-shaped on the sides and narrow on top; single row of scales on the underside of their tails.

Once it empties venom into its prey, it takes time to produce more venom. Therefore, they tend to bite **ONLY** what they can eat; biting a human predator may mean there would be no venom available when the next meal comes by.

Water Snakes (Nonvenomous)

Water snakes are agile climbers.

They bask on shrubs / tree limbs overhanging the water, and typically **swim below the water's** surface.

Prefer large, open areas, reservoirs

When disturbed, almost always flee by diving beneath the water.

Have round eye pupils

May flatten their heads to mimic a cottonmouth.

If banded, bands are wide on the top.

Eastern Hognose (Nonvenomous)

Often mistaken for Cottonmouth snakes

Prefer living near the water

Have an upturned (hog-nose) snout

If disturbed, may flatten its head, hiss, or, it rolls over and plays dead

Can be almost black and patternless; or have large, dark blotches on a tan or yellowish background.

Cottonmouth (*Agkistrodon piscivorus*) Snakes



Non-Venomous Snakes that may be mistaken for cottonmouths



Pattern of bands are wide on top, and are not 'hourglass' shaped.

May flatten its head to look more triangular, like a cottonmouth.

Midland Water Snake (Nerodia sipedon pleuralis)

The colorful diamond-patterned scales are clearly not banded, and it has round eyes and a flat head



Diamondback Watersnake (Nerodia rhombifer)

Other Non-Venomous Water Snakes



Yellow-Bellied (*Nerodia erythrogaster flavigaster*)



Broad-Banded (*Nerodia fasciata fasciata*)



Western Green (*Nerodia cyclopion*)

Other Wolf River snake residents



Red-bellied Mudsnake (*Farancia abacura*)



Queen Snake (*Regina septemvittata*)

For additional information, contact the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency office nearest you:

West Tennessee (Region I) 1-800-372-3928
 Middle Tennessee (Region II) 1-800-624-7406
 Cumberland Plateau (Region III) 1-800-262-6704
 East Tennessee (Region IV) 1-800-332-0900
 Website: www.state.tn.us/twra

Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation website: www.parcplace.org

This content was produced jointly by the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA), The Nature Conservancy of Tennessee (TNC) and the Wolf River Conservancy. Adapted with permission from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Non- game- Endangered Wildlife Program (GADNR) and the Savannah River Ecology Laboratory (SREL). Text by John Jensen (GADNR) and Lisa Powers (Froghaven Farm).

Mid-South Snakes

Order: SQUAMATA - SNAKES AND LIZARDS

Suborder: SERPENTES – SNAKES

Family: COLUBRIDAE - Colubrid Snakes

Species and Subspecies:

Midwestern Wormsnake, *Carphophis amoenus helenae*

Northern Scarlet Snake, *Cemophora coccinea copei*

Southern Racer, *Coluber constrictor priapus*

Mississippi Ringneck Snake, *Diadophis punctatus stictogenys*

Corn Snake, *Elaphe guttata*

Gray Rat Snake, *Elaphe obsoleta*

Red-bellied Mudsnake, *Farancia abacura abacura*

Eastern Hog-nosed Snake, *Heterodon platirhinos*

Prairie and Mole Kingsnakes: *Lampropeltis calligaster*, *Lampropeltis calligaster*

Common Kingsnakes:

Speckled Kingsnake, *Lampropeltis getula holbrooki*

Eastern Black Kingsnake, *Lampropeltis getula nigra*

Milksnake and Scarlet Kingsnake:

Scarlet Kingsnake, *Lampropeltis triangulum elapsoides*

Red Milksnake, *Lampropeltis triangulum sypila*

Coachwhip, *Masticophis flagellum*

Northern Rough Green Snake, *Opheodrys aestivus*

Western Green Watersnake, *Nerodia cyclopion*

Yellow-bellied Watersnake, *Nerodia erythrogaster flavigaster*

Broad-banded Watersnake, *Nerodia fasciata confluens*

Diamondback Watersnake *Nerodia rhombifer*

Midland Watersnake, *Nerodia sipedon pleuralis*

Northern Pine Snake, *Pituophis melanoleucus melanoleucus*

Southeastern Crowned Snake, *Tantilla coronata*

Midland Brown Snake, *Storeria dekayi wrightorum*

Northern Red-bellied Snake, *Storeria occipitomaculata occipitomaculata*

Western Ribbon Snake, *Thamnophis proximus proximus*

Eastern Ribbon Snake, *Thamnophis sauritus sauritus*

Eastern Garter Snake, *Thamnophis sirtalis sirtalis*

Rough Earth Snake, *Virginia striatula*

Western Smooth Earth Snake, *Virginia valeriae elegans*

Family: VIPERIDAE (Pit Vipers) Species and Subspecies:

Copperhead, *Agkistrodon contortrix*

Western Cottonmouth, *Agkistrodon piscivorus leucostoma*

Timber Rattlesnake, *Crotalus horridus*

Western Pygmy Rattlesnake, *Sistrurus miliarius streckeri*

Sources: Gibbons and Dorcas, 2005, *Snakes of the Southeast*, Univ. of Georgia Press; Tennessee Herpetological Society website (www.tennsnakes.org/scientific_names.htm)

K. Favorite Section Descriptions

The Wolf River in west Tennessee - called "Blackbird River" by the French in the late 17th century - offers opportunities often overlooked by the modern paddler. For centuries, the upper Wolf River has been largely unspoiled by human hands, never having been channelized or subject to industrial pollution.

The river section descriptions here provide details about the two most popular section paddles, and often lure beginners into First Saturday excursions, cleanup paddle trips, and WRC membership and support.

LaGrange to Bateman Road: The Ghost River Section

9 Miles / 4-6 Hours

The river between LaGrange, TN, and Bateman Rd., just east of Moscow, stands out as unique and deserving of special attention. It is beautifully representative of a wild swamp river, and paddlers can observe five distinct ecosystems, or plant communities, as the river meanders through:

- 1) bottomland hardwoods,
- 2) open shrubby wetlands,
- 3) cypress-tupelo swamp,
- 4) open water swamp, and
- 5) grassy wetland

Depending on the time of year, paddlers may also see flowering catalpa trees, smoky ruby spot damselflies, wood ducks, scarlet tanagers, prothonotary warblers, red-headed woodpeckers, herons, egrets, eagles, and other species.

The only passage through this section of the Wolf is via canoe or kayak. Motorized craft, rafts or tubes could not negotiate the many narrow twists and turns. Most paddlers can navigate the approximately nine miles between LaGrange and Bateman in four to six hours. Portage is rarely necessary, due to volunteer efforts to keep the well-blazed and signed water trails open. There are six signs, numbered 1-6, visible along the route. These have been carefully placed to denote important landmarks and are often used as rendezvous points on guided trips.

To access the put-in, from Memphis take Hwy. 57 east to LaGrange. Turn right at the flashing yellow light, and continue down the hill to the bridge. The LaGrange access is off Yager Road (Main Street) to the right, just before you cross the bridge. Upon launching, and shortly after departing the boat access, paddlers see some indications of human

encroachment. Ironically, it is within one of these areas, a diked lake at **Sign #1**, that we often see the bald eagles that have begun to frequent the Wolf basin.

Further down the river, except for the small (3" x 6") blue and white metal canoe trail markers, there is little evidence of civilization. This part of the river is characterized by bottomland hardwood trees, especially oaks like swamp chestnut and cherry bark typical of this community.

To help keep this habitat intact, large sections of the river's adjacent forest and wetlands have been purchased by WRC. By doing so, WRC prevented the scheduled logging of the massive trees visible from the river. A portion of one such major purchase (the Beasley Plantation) is marked by **Sign #2**, a 6" x 6" sign on the left bank.

Sign #3 denotes an area called the "lunch stop" where paddlers often stop to eat and rest. Turn right at the sign and paddle up a small tributary stream for about 20 yards. This will be one of the only places on this section with a relatively clean, solid surface area for beaching canoes, picnicking, and resting. The sandy bottomed stream offers an excellent opportunity to cool off and relax. On departure, please remember to leave the site cleaner than you found it.

As you depart Sign #3 at the lunch stop, you will be paddling in the second plant community, the open shrubby wetlands with plants such as Virginia Sweetspire (*Itea*). Continue downriver in a well-defined channel for roughly a mile before reaching the Ghost River entrance. Along the way, there are several indications that water is being diverted off to the left, into what appears to be a deep swamp. That is just what the Ghost section is - a deep swamp. Don't make the common mistake which earlier explorers often made and paddle into any of these apparent entrances. If you were to take the wrong route, passage would be virtually impossible.

The only entrance to the Ghost will be partially hidden on the left bank and marked by a "**Ghost River Entrance**" sign, approximately 14" X 16" in size, along with several of the regular blue and white trail markers. There is also a **Sign #4** on river right. If you miss the Ghost River Trail entrance, the channel of the main river will disappear a couple hundred yards downstream. Go back up river and look for the "Ghost Entrance" sign, which you can easily see, now on the right side of the river paddling upstream.

When you reach the Ghost Entrance signs, stop and take a good look around. You are about to enter the "**Ghost River section**," a cypress-tupelo swamp and the third plant community found in the LaGrange to Bateman section. After turning left off the main channel into the Ghost, follow the numerous trail markers through the swamp's narrow twisting corridor fringed by Virginia Sweetspire (*Itea*) shrubs and elegant cypress and tupelo trees. For the next mile or so, there will be no evidence of a flowing Wolf River. The only movement in the water of this vast swamp will be wakes created by boaters, and wildlife which calls this area home. The river channel seems to disappear, hence the name "Ghost River".

On exiting the Ghost section at **Sign #5**, you will enter a section referred to as “**Spirit Lake.**” This lake-like area, or open water swamp, also home to numerous cypress and tupelo trees, is the fourth community in the LaGrange to Bateman run. There are no visible river currents in the lake. Navigation is well-defined and signed for easy passage, preventing paddlers from becoming disoriented. Just follow the trail down the old river bed, which meanders its way through this expanse of water and trees. If you have a compass, your heading will be roughly 270 degrees, or west.

Note the beautiful wetland meadows filled with common floating aquatic plants (swamp doc) stretching seemingly for miles toward the distant southern tree line. **Sign #6**, which marks the end of Spirit Lake, will be the last of the numbered rendezvous markers. It takes most paddlers approximately 45 minutes to paddle through Spirit Lake. You will know you are leaving the lake when the river current becomes visible again.

As you leave the lake, note the log cabin on the right which belongs to the Fayette County Rod and Gun Club. Downstream a few yards on the left is a large sandbar where Mt. Tena Creek enters the Wolf. This is another good picnic area, swimming hole, and a scenic view. WRC recently acquired the land which includes this favorite spot. Please help protect it by leaving no trash or other items behind.

This final mile of the Ghost River journey contains the fastest flowing waters on the Wolf. As the river begins to flow rapidly west, it soon empties into an open grassy wetland, the fifth and final plant community encountered on this section of the Wolf. Look for sawgrass and alder shrubs, as well as wading birds like herons and egrets.

The take-out point at Bateman Bridge is only a few hundred yards down river.

The access ramp is on river right, before passing under the bridge. To reach the Bateman access by car, take Hwy. 57 east through Moscow and turn right at Bateman Rd., 3.3 miles east of the Feemster bridge over the Wolf River. Drive south on Bateman Rd. for 1.5 miles and turn left into a gravel parking area before crossing the bridge over the river.



Bateman to Moscow: The Lost Swamp Trail

6 Miles / 4-5 Hours

This section, about six miles long, from Bateman Road Bridge to Moscow, is a favorite of many paddlers. On a scale of 1-10 for scenic beauty, WRC rates this section a 9+, second in popularity only to the Ghost River Section from LaGrange to Moscow.

To reach the put-in at Bateman Bridge, take Hwy 57 east through Moscow, Tennessee, and turn right onto Bateman Road, which is 3.3 miles east of the Feemster Bridge over the Wolf River at Moscow. Drive south on Bateman Rd. for about 1.8 miles and turn left into a gravel parking lot just 100 yards before crossing the Bateman Road bridge.

From the put-in at Bateman, the river flows in a relatively open channel through a normal riverbed for about a mile. At this point, the riverbed disappears ahead, where the old "Hill and Dale" trail exited the main river channel. Paddlers must turn right here, where the main river channel ends, and paddle into the recently named Lost Swamp Trail (LST) to navigate their way to Moscow. The Lost Swamp Trail begins with a narrow water passage between two trees into a large old growth cypress forest. Watch for the familiar blue and white canoe trail signs. This new section of the old Bateman to Moscow trail is about 2.5 miles long. The sometimes narrow trail makes numerous zigzags and sharp turns through large forests, two large swamps and grass-lined channels into areas where vast spatterdock fields thrive. Often boaters must paddle in single file.

This section of the river may not be suitable for everyone. By mid to late summer, the spatterdock lilies do take over the water trails in some locations. You may experience these conditions just a couple hundred yards from the Emergency Take-out (detailed below). Paddlers could possibly be forced to exit their craft several times in order to pull the boat across small lily patches through knee- to waist-deep mud and water. Spatterdock can stick to the bottom of boats and sometimes feels like glue, forcing all but the strongest paddlers out of their boat to navigate a couple of short stretches.

Emergency Take-out: At the halfway point through the Lost Swamp, there is an emergency exit to river right. This emergency exit can easily be identified for there is no other place in this neck-of-the-woods where the canoe trail passes solid ground. A word of advice: only use this emergency exit for true emergencies, for one will still have approximately half mile of walking through tall grass in order to reach the State of Tennessee TWRA Poole Road Fishing and Hunting access.

Paddlers reach an area we call the "lunch stop" about quarter mile past the emergency take out. This area is marked by two of the familiar blue and white canoe trail signs. This is the only place on the entire water trail where it is relatively safe and easy to take a "bathroom break." Please keep in mind there are no toilet facilities anywhere on the Wolf River and, wherever Mother Nature calls, paddlers are requested to practice the "Leave No Trace" principles.

After the lunch stop, paddlers may experience feelings of isolation. In comparison to the upper half of the LST, the swamp becomes very dense, with large thickets of undergrowth, passing through meandering narrow openings. Don't worry - if you follow the signs, you should have little difficulty navigating this section. Follow the signs - and you should be able to reach the main channel of the Wolf River after about one mile of paddling through these gently moving waters.

When paddlers reach the new trail confluence with the main channel of the Wolf River, they still have close to three miles of water trails left to navigate before exiting the river at Moscow. When exiting the new trail and joining the main channel, one must paddle about two miles before reaching the next split in the trail. At the split, there are two signs: "Scenic Route," indicating a trail leading down river to the left through a scenic forested swamp filled with beautiful cypress trees, and "Fastest Way Out," also a very scenic route through numerous cypress trees. Paddlers may wish to take this route if pressed for time or if the water level is low; paddlers can decide which route is preferable upon reaching the signs.

This paddle adventure should take average paddlers 3 to 4 hours to paddle from the Bateman Road put-in to the Moscow take-out at Feemster Bridge. Less experienced paddlers should allow more time. The channel leading to the take-out at Moscow is primitive, very narrow, sometimes overgrown and somewhat hidden. Just after passing under the Hwy 57 (Feemster) Bridge, make the very first possible river right, taking the narrow water passage to the takeout.

We strongly recommend that paddlers carefully view take-out conditions BEFORE beginning their trip, walking down to the river's edge. The spatterdock may have overgrown the entrance. Depending on weather and water conditions, this take-out can be challenging for some people. Please also be aware that you must pay to park a vehicle at the nearby parking lot. After the Feemster Bridge take-out, the next take-out is 13 miles downriver at Rossville, Tennessee. More than one paddler has unexpectedly spent the night on the river, having missed the take-out point at Moscow! Don't forget to turn right immediately after passing under the Hwy 57 bridge at Moscow.

The Wolf may be a "class one" river but don't let this deceive you; though there are no rough whitewater paddling conditions, other factors must be considered. One must be able to make sharp turns around trees, though meandering channels, and through thick submerged vegetation and lily fields. The river becomes increasingly difficult as water levels increase. Paddlers must be committed to paddle the entire six miles through to Moscow, TN, before entering this trail system. Always take extra precautions when paddling the Wolf River, especially when entering this area. We recommend plenty of water, appropriate clothing (no cotton) plus an extra set of clothing in a dry bag. Take plenty of food and medical/ first aid supplies to fulfill your personal needs.

This section of the river should not be paddled when water levels reach eight feet by lay paddlers, and nine feet for guided trips

Handbook Disclaimer

This Volunteer River Guide Handbook is a work-in-progress and is not necessarily all-inclusive. Many possible emergency scenarios/problems might occur which may not be included herein. Trip Leaders must evaluate situations as they arise, and make adjustments as needed based on safety and other requirements, taking into account river conditions and participant skills.

Learn who your fellow paddlers are, delegate appropriately, and follow through until potential problem situations are successfully resolved.
Please record noteworthy happenings in the Trip Report.