

Lower Mississippi River Dispatch No. 288

Tuesday, May 5th, 2015

“What God Really Intended It To Be...”

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I said, ‘Just tell everybody (the loggers) to go home.
We’re going to shut the whole thing down.’
We took the next couple of years
really reassessing the plants and wildlife
to help make it what God really intended it to be.”*

-Paul Broadhead

Upon his 1993 purchase of Brandywine Island



What kind of world are we leaving for our kids?

Intro to LMRD #288:

Warning! Oil Spill effecting backside of Mosenstein Island. Big Muddy Mike Clark says he can't go for his morning swim or let his River Kidz touch the water until the spill is cleaned up. What? Just what is this world coming to? We can't let our kids swim where they normally swim (wade, splash, paddle, clean-up) in the heartland confluence of our biggest and most cherished rivers? Stop this absurdity now! Read Big Muddy's report below, and call the Missouri DEQ for immediate action. What kind of world are we leaving for our children?

Meanwhile almost 400 miles downstream of St. Louis (above Memphis) Brandywine Island is for sale “to right buyer with vision...” The only way we'll protect the river for our future generations in through the preservation of the islands & batture along the big river, and the creation/enforcement of the critical riparian zones of its tributaries. Paul Broadhead passed in 2007, but his widow is staying true to his impassioned feelings for the island paradise found on Brandywine. Mrs. Broadhead says she will wait for the right buyer. This is good news. But river lovers, let's not sit on our hands and rely on dreams alone to come to the rescue. This sounds like a challenge to us contemporary conservationists to put our money where our mouths are, or at least direct our leaders to make appropriations for the same. See below story by Tom Charlier of the Memphis Commercial Appeal. Meanwhile, \$100 million is being slated for restoration and conservation engineering through the recently completed Lower Mississippi River Resource Assessment, a 75 page document identifying stretches of the river that have been made better for wildlife (and paddlers!). If you love the river, you'll enjoy the read. It includes sections on real needs for things like better access and more river guides. How about an appropriations set aside for land purchases for the protection of island paradises like Brandywine? If we don't set the funds aside, it won't be there when we need it!

We recently helped with the latter need (more river guides) at the University of Louisiana in a weekend workshop called Canoe 101 for dreamers interested in starting their own small business as a river guide... Stay tuned for new ventures to open within the next year providing more access to the beautiful wild bayous, rivers and lakes that abound throughout the greater Lower Mississippi River Valley.

Lastly, a beautiful 23x28 watercolor poster is now available through Arkansas Dept of Heritage featuring 3 big canoes paddling up into the mouth of the St. Francis River, partly in celebration of the 30th Anniversary of the Delta Cultural Center in Helena, Arkansas. See below for how to obtain a copy of this striking poster that is a must-have for any paddlers or river lovers. It's also free! Sincerely yours in service of the river, -Driftwood

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Canoe! Canoe! now available as 23x28 Poster from Arkansas Heritage

Special Notice:

2015 Arkansas Heritage Month poster

"Canoe! Canoe!"

Now available! Free!

From Arkansas Heritage: Each year we publish a free, collectible Arkansas Heritage Month poster. This year's poster features the watercolor painting, "Canoe! Canoe!", by John Ruskey from the Delta Cultural Center Collection.

To order online, go to this address, and complete the form below.

http://www.arkansasheritage.com/News-Events/Heritage_Month/heritage-month-posters



*Visitors at Mississippi & Missouri Confluence:
You may not want to walk barefoot here until further notice*

Oil Spill seeping into The Big Muddy Wild & Scenic Stretch of River?

On Earth Day, April 22, 2015 Mike Clark sent me a disturbing email:

"Yesterday morning, while paddling across the Mississippi on an eco adventure with 15 students and staff of Incarnate Word Academy, we were overcome by the extreme stench of fuel oil. As we landed on Mosenthein Island preparing to do a trash bash, we began to see the oil slick rolling in. Another major oil spill? On the eve of the anniversary of the BP Gulf disaster? I called the US Coast Guard to report it and they referred me to the National Response Center for such disasters. At the end of my filing of the report while the overwhelming fumes and the horrible sight began to give me a headache, I asked if they had already received a report of this from upstream. They put me on hold to check, and then came back with a definitive "no." This was at 11:05 AM. An hour later, the Missouri Department of Natural Resources called me to confirm and asked my location. I had not contacted the MO DNR. I gave them exact description including river mileage and proximity to the St. Louis Water intake and treatment plant at Chain of Rocks. Yes this oil spill is in the reach of our precious water supply.

"At 2:30 PM we returned to our take out having still seen no response except for a helicopter fly over, most likely US Coast Guard. After some thought and conversation with my friend and river guide, Greg Poleski, I was coaxed into calling the news, KMOV and the Post Dispatch. After reading the article, I am extremely concerned that either there is a lack of factual reporting, if not some form of a cover up to the size and scope of the disaster, or there is a grave error in their assessment.

"For the record, we took pictures and collected water samplings with oil obviously in it. We watched over 200 pelicans seek refuge on a wing dike and sand bar unwilling it seems to enter the water with its oily sheen. We paddled down the Mosenthein Chute where the stench and the visual of the slick continued to grow. The immature bald eagle who nests on the island with his parents flew circles overhead. The oil starting to collect on the sand and mud of the bank with the signs of game trails and tracks coming from the island to the water edge to drink. Obviously, the deer, coyote, raccoons, eagles, herons, etc... are in trouble on Mosey. So are we. This is a refuge. This island survives under the laws of nature. An oil spill is way, way outside of those laws. But not our laws regarding the protection against such corporations and people who make so much money and have become adept at the cover up, the negotiation, the refusal to accept any claim of guilt.

"Final thought. For fifteen years, I have been paddling this amazing reach, the only 11 non-commercially navigable river miles of the Mississippi, with two pristine islands and most of its banks in the public trust. For 12 years, I have been guiding this reach, and almost always, someone asks "what is that?" as we come into the Confluence and look upstream on our beloved Mississippi River with the refinery a glaring presence on the Illinois side, I mention that it is one of our nation's largest refineries and it sits in what has always been the American Bottoms. And it has been a never ending concern to me because I do not believe, despite all of the assurances, that this refinery would not someday, have an "accident" and this reach will be poisoned, just as Valdez, and the Gulf Coast, and the pipelines all across this country have proven. Today, we are witnesses to this. It saddens me greatly. But moreover, it angers me, that we are not rushing in to do whatever we can to fully contain, and then begin whatever can be done for a clean up. It appalls me that the news organizations have buried this from front page, and in fact have simply reported what they have received as a press release.

"Who owns the water? Who are River Citizens? Will we all wake up to the glaring signs that our blue planet is in trouble and it is our own making? Will it be too late?

"I have heard there are dozens and dozens of pipe lines crossing the river there. I'm afraid this incident though small by potential is just one of what has been and will be many more. They are not going to safe guard as they should, beholden to the financial shareholders as they are. But you know all that. Missouri Coalition for Environment may take this and run with it.

"As it is, Swimming at Mosey may not happen for a while. I'm gonna run the chain this afternoon and check out the after effects now almost two weeks hence."

*-Big Muddy Michael F. Clark
Owner, Big Muddy Adventures
Near the Chain of Rocks, St. Louis*

http://www.stltoday.com/news/local/metro/phillips-estimates-gallons-of-diesel-leaked-near-wood-river-refinery/article_92970b2f-98d3-5275-bff8-5d0264950352.ht

LMRD Readers: Please Show your support for the Lower Mississippi River Resource Assessment!

(This recently received from Bruce Reid) John: I hope you are well. I posted the following link and text to Facebook today. Please consider posting it to your Facebook group or promoting it wherever you can. We have developing a webpage for sending online letters of support for the LMRRA and its recommendations. Thanks,

www.wildlifemiss.org/river.

If you love the Lower Mississippi River, please take a few moments to send an online letter supporting habitat restoration, clean water and enhanced recreational opportunities, as recommended in the recently released Lower Mississippi River Resource Assessment. Most of the hard work is done for you. Indicate your areas of interest in the check boxes (for example, habitat restoration, more boat ramps, more bike trails, water quality monitoring), add a personalized message to the stock letter and hit "submit." Your letter will be sent to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which is leading the Lower Mississippi River Resource Assessment, along with the Lower Mississippi River Conservation Committee, The Nature Conservancy and other partners. PLEASE SHARE THIS WITH YOUR FRIENDS. We are not collecting your personal information for any other use. Thank you very much. -Bruce Reid

From Website <http://www.wildlifemiss.org/River/>

Go to website for a copy of the final report.

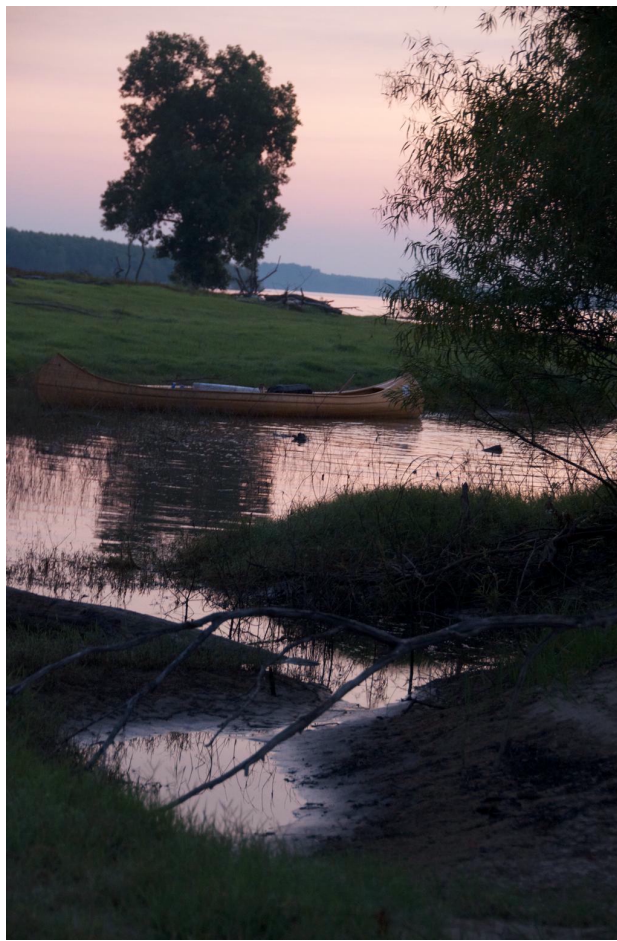
A draft final report for the Lower Mississippi River Resource Assessment has been prepared by the U.S Army Corps of Engineers and non-federal partners. This congressionally authorized report compiles three different assessments into one document with recommendations. The three assessments are the Assessment of Information Needs, Assessment of Natural Resource Habitat Needs, and Assessment of River Related Recreation and Access. Together this work documents key elements to improve river management including: increase information to help inform management decisions; identify priority opportunities for fish and wildlife, natural habitats, and ecological processes; and improve river-related recreation and public access.

The Corps of Engineers and its partners are now seeking public comment and support for the report's recommendations. Major recommendations include:

- Establishment of a program to restore floodplain habitat.
- Establishment of a Science Technology Information Center.
- An ecological inventory.
- Studies of where and how to restore fish and wildlife habitat.
- Establishment of a water quality monitoring program.
- Construction of boat ramps, bicycle trails and riverfront parks.

The new report provides the most comprehensive assessment of the Lower Mississippi River in more than 40 years. Once public comment is obtained, a final report will be delivered to Congress later this year.

If you use and enjoy the Lower Mississippi River, please show your support for this valuable resource and indicate the river topics or improvements that interest you. Aside from the prepared text of a letter of support, you may also add personalized text to the letter. This information will be sent to Colonel Jeffery Anderson at the Corps of Engineers' Memphis District, who is in charge of the Lower Mississippi River Resource Assessment.



Top End of Brandywine in High Water

Brandywine Island for sale

“to right buyer with vision...”

http://www.commercialappeal.com/news/local-news/with-a-32-million-price-tag-scenic-brandywine-island-available-to-the-right-buyer_28948967

BRANDYWINE ISLAND, Ark. — Once the Mississippi River had retreated, revealing this island in all its immense, scenic glory, Rod Alexander took another drive across the small concrete bridge that leads to another realm — one of persimmon and sycamore forests, of secluded oxbow lakes and of yellow turnip flowers swaying in the breeze.

With a \$32M price, scenic Brandywine available to right buyer with vision

By Tom Charlier charlier@commercialappeal.com

BRANDYWINE ISLAND, Ark. — Once the Mississippi River had retreated, revealing this island in all its immense, scenic glory, Rod Alexander took another drive across the small concrete bridge that leads to another realm — one of persimmon and sycamore forests, of secluded oxbow lakes and of yellow turnip flowers swaying in the breeze.

Blue-winged teal scattered from flooded bottomlands and herons glided toward treetop perches as Alexander’s truck negotiated the mud and sand roads of Brandywine Island one recent morning. In the tall grass ahead of his vehicle, several wild turkeys that were strutting and feeding on insects scurried away and then took flight.

Eventually, Alexander reached the eastern edge of the island and looked out over the broad surface of the Mississippi, which shimmered in the morning sun and contrasted with the dense green edifice of Meeman-Shelby Forest State Park on the opposite bank.

“This view will never change,” said Alexander, manager of the 10,000-acre island. “There’s not a lot of places on the Mississippi River where there’s forest on both sides.”

Rich in history as well as in wildlife, Brandywine is a natural wonder just 45 minutes from Downtown Memphis.

And now, four years after a historic flood and eight years after the death of its longtime owner, the island is for sale.

Sherry Broadhead of Meridian, Mississippi, is asking \$31.95 million for the island that her late husband, Paul Broadhead, bought and fell in love with. But the sale will not result in the timber-rich island being clear-cut or otherwise despoiled, said Tom Smith, whose Ridgeland, Mississippi, real estate firm is listing the property. He said the owner is looking for a buyer who shares Paul Broadhead’s vision for the island.

Ads for the property highlight its “world-class” hunting for deer, turkey, waterfowl, dove and other game. The island has 400 acres of lakes, 800 acres of duck sloughs and hundreds of acres of food plots for deer. The 8,000 acres of hardwoods are so rich that more than \$5 million worth of timber could be harvested through selective cutting and thinning.

There’s also a 2,000-square-foot cabin and a 4,000-foot grass landing strip. “It’s a once-in-a-lifetime piece of property,” said Smith, owner of Tom Smith Land and Homes.

While there may be larger islands in the river — Davis Island, near Vicksburg, Mississippi, covers at least 23,000 acres — Brandywine is unusual for having just one owner.

Despite its daunting listing price, Smith said, the island has attracted interest from two types of prospective purchasers: individuals and corporations. Some companies have been interested in using the island as a retreat for executives, he said.

While it remains listed for sale, Brandywine still is used for group hunts that are anything but cheap. For instance, a four-night, five-day guided deer hunt, with lodging and meals included, runs \$6,500 per person.

Located east of the community of Frenchman’s Bayou, Arkansas, some 25 miles north of West Memphis, Brandywine owes its name to a fiery disaster on the Mississippi more than 180 years ago. On the evening of April 9, 1832, the steamboat Brandywine, bound from New Orleans to Louisville, Kentucky, caught fire and ran aground a quarter mile off the island’s shore. Of the 230 or more on board, only about 75 survived.

Through the decades, the size and shape of the island have changed with the shifting flow of the Mississippi. A Corps of Engineers map from the 1880s shows the main channel of the river on the west side of the island — the opposite of where it is now. The corps’ navigation work on the river, which includes the dredging and the construction of dikes that funnel more water into the main channel, helped realign the Mississippi so that today the island’s west side is separated from the mainland by just a narrow chute, or secondary channel, that sometimes dries up during summer.

The changes played havoc with the island’s political boundaries. Although most of Brandywine lies in Crittenden County, Arkansas, portions of the southern and northern ends are in Shelby and Tipton counties in Tennessee.

Located beyond the protection of levees, the island is subject to regular flooding, but about one-fifth of it remains dry even when the river reaches the 34-foot flood stage at Memphis.

The island’s lush stands of cottonwood, hackberry, pecan and other hardwood trees first attracted Broadhead, a timber baron and mall developer who was one of the nation’s wealthiest entrepreneurs. In 1993, he purchased the island from U.S. Gypsum Co. for about \$6 million.

Broadhead had every intention of clear-cutting the island and shipping the logs by barge to mills along the Gulf Coast, with some of the wood eventually bound for Asia. “When he bought the property, his plans were to cut the timber off it and sell the property,” Alexander said.

But as Broadhead told a reporter for The Commercial Appeal in 2001, he halted the timber harvest during a visit to the island.

“I said, ‘This is just too beautiful to slaughter. It’s just breathtaking.’ I didn’t know what to do. I was just astounded. I said, ‘Just tell everybody (the loggers) to go home. We’re going to shut the whole thing down.’ We took the next couple of years really reassessing the plants and wildlife to help make it what God really intended it to be.”

In 1999, Broadhead constructed a 12-bedroom, 8,000-square-foot lodge on Brandywine Chute, just across from the island, at a cost of \$1.5 million. Built out of Douglas firs, it featured a wide front porch, expansive fireplace with bronze statues on either side and an eclectic collection of furnishings and decorative items collected during world travels. He also improved access to the island, raising and grading better roads. When the Corps of Engineers refused to allow a culvert bridge to the island — arguing that it could clog up

Brandywine Chute — Broadhead built a much more expensive concrete span that allows the channel to remain open, said Darian Chasteen, river-engineering team leader for the corps in Memphis.

Broadhead also set about to manage the island’s wildlife, which Alexander said greatly benefited as a consequence. The harvesting of some of the older trees and the clearing of certain areas caused the deer population to “explode,” he said. Crews also cleared areas in some sloughs to create openings that would attract more waterfowl.

As an indication of the island’s richness, about 90 percent of the wild turkeys hunted throughout Arkansas originally had been trapped on Brandywine, said Howard Norvell, a lieutenant with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission.

By about 2004, deer had become so big and abundant that Alexander was finding the carcasses of large bucks that had been killed fighting one another. The longtime island manager talked his boss into allowing group hunts on the property.

“It took some convincing — he didn’t want to do it,” Alexander said. Broadhead also considered selling selective shares or parcels of the island so that others could build cabins and enjoy the island. But after a small group of wealthy Memphians toured the island, and expressed interest in building, he had a change of heart, Alexander said. “I think at that point, Mr. Broadhead decided he just wanted it for himself,” Alexander said.

Broadhead, who had undergone a heart transplant in the 1990s, died in 2007 at age 70. Four years later, the lodge and a cabin overlooking the Mississippi were lost to the great flood of 2011, which covered all but about 10 acres of the island.

Although the island is listed, Broadhead's widow is willing to wait for the right offer, Smith said.

Norvell wishes Brandywine would become a state or federal wildlife refuge. "Me, personally — I would like to see the government buy it ..., " he said. "But I don't know that we could afford it."

For the full story with photos, go to:

http://www.commercialappeal.com/news/local-news/with-a-32-million-price-tag-scenic-brandywine-island-available-to-the-right-buyer_28948967

From the News-Star of Monroe, Louisiana:

ULM to hold canoe outfitting and guiding course on Black Bayou

April 17, 2015

The Office of Continuing Education at the University of Louisiana at Monroe provides various certificate, licensure, leisure and learning, technology, and personal development courses for those seeking to gain extra experience, or learn a new trade. From May 2-3, the office will offer a two-day course for those seeking to start their own canoe guide and rental service business.

The course will run May 2-3, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day. Deadline to register is April 23. The class will feature indoor and outdoor classroom opportunities to learn the basics of guiding and outfitting.

The cost is \$199 per person, and includes all necessary canoeing gear (canoes, paddles, lifejackets, safety ropes, and rescue ropes). Each participant will receive an introductory printed package for starting a small business in nature tourism.

Participants will learn techniques to safely guide canoeists through local bayous, rivers and lakes; the many challenges and opportunities associated with a nature tourism business; how to proceed in the pursuit of an outfitting business, and more.

No previous canoe experience is required, but participants must be comfortable in water settings, and must be capable of physical exertion, including lifting and loading.

John Ruskey of Quapaw Canoe Company will teach the course, assisted by Mississippi River Guides Braxton Barden and Mark River.

Indoor portions of the course will be held at ULM, and outdoor sessions will be held at Black Bayou Lake National Wildlife Refuge.

For more information, or to register for this course, visit <https://webservices.ulm.edu/ce/content/canoe-outfitting-guiding-101>

Mark River Journals:

The Greenville Bends Expedition

Day 1 - The Arkansas River

The morning comes fast for the expedition team. It's a beautiful, sunny day in the Delta, as we finalize our packing and head towards the Arkansas River. As we head out of town, fisherman line the highway fishing the backwaters of Moon Lake, taking advantage of the spawn. Going over the bridge to Helena, AR, the Mississippi River is rising, covering every bit of sand. We continue to Dewitt, AR and cross the White River overflowing its channel with only the tops of willow trees showing. We stop at a catfish restaurant in Dewitt.

The waitress takes my order," Catfish, onions, and bread."

She replied, " River or pond?"

"River", I answer with conviction.

Having the choice between wild or farm raise catfish made my day. The wild catfish has a distinguishable taste that separates them from all. After a delicious lunch, we made a quick stop at the Arkansas Post museum to look for books and pick the curators mind about early Quapaw establishments. We eventually make our way the boat launch. Below the dam was loaded with fishermen. One husband and wife had fourteen catfish. A raft of pelicans drift down stream on a log. Two bald eagles greet us at the boar ramp. That's a great sign. Before the day was over, I had spotted seven bald eagles. We came to the first island and made camp. Barred owls hoot in the distant. Coyotes yap out of key. Cliff swallows nest in the cut bank. A storm briefly hits us, but moves on. The sunset was amazing, as the fish start to feed in the shallows. Mark River

Day 2 - On to Cat Island

It's five thirty in the morning, the rains start and hammer us for the next two hours. I take this chance to sleep in, waiting for the front to pass. The storm moves on and I immediately head for the cooler to grab grapes, cantaloupe, bacon, and eggs. There's a small amount of garlic steak sauce in the dutch oven, so we decide to cook the bacon in it. Good paddling fuel for the team. A bald eagle flies over heading for breakfast also. We do a "wet pack" and start towards Cat Island. Planing ahead knowing the top of the island will be the only sand between us and the Mississippi River.

The river is bank to bank, with the willows flooded around every bend. All the bayous and sloughs are open, flowing connecting various waterways on Big

Island. We dip into a manmade infrastructure trying to stop the White River from jumping over to the Arkansas River. The flow is tremendous. A six foot drop of raging water making the low road unaccessible. Large silver and big head carp shoot out of the water like salmon headed upstream. Young willow trees cling for their lives. You can feel the incredible power of water in your soul.

We find a grassy forest with big trees and have lunch. The river is foot below the cut bank. Probably a long walk during low water. Eagles continue to fly around us as we paddle long bends. The wind stirs up the big bay-like channels, making the paddling challenging, only to calm around the bend. As we get closer to the Mississippi River, it pushes into the Arkansas River, slowing its current. Hunting camps start to appear, so I know we are getting close to camp. We spot a sandy oasis just above Cat Island. Beautiful sand dunes and flooded willow forest with amazing spots to camp. You could hear the towboats on the Mississippi River in the distance and it soothes my heart.

I walk over a bluff of sand and sit by the flooded willows. I trade calls with redwing blackbirds as fish feed, splash, and spawn in the shallows. I hope the river doesn't recede before the spawn is complete, so the fish will be able to return to the main channel and secure good fishing for the future. But we know the ones that don't make it, will be recycled in the cycles of life. Mark River

Day 3 - The Mississippi River

I role over at 5:40 am. Perfect, I head to the campfire. Oatmeal and fruit for breakfast, as I feel strong from the dinner of lemon salmon and brown rice from the previous night. I prepare breakfast and take a walk to the flooded willow forest I visited yesterday. The redwing blackbirds are at it again. Trading songs of courtship, but today the tunes seemed tweaked, as if they listened to a jazz improvisation, prior to the day. Storms start to develop, so we broke our tents down to insure ourselves dry tents for later.

We pack eagerly, looking forward to the Mississippi River, Arkansas River confluence. The channels are wide do to the flooding of Cat Island, as we paddle over the bottom end of the island. The grasslands and the strip of willow trees are flooded with rafts of driftwood congregating in between. A lone raccoon scavenges through the debris looking for trapped fish. It turns to us as if in amazement- then scampers on through the pile. The rivers are so high, the towboats appear to weave in between the trees.

The Mississippi River is in our view. I feel like I'm reuniting with one of my college buddies. Two towboats side by side thrust upstream and we take the chance to ride the wake headed towards Catfish Point for lunch. A survey boat goes back and forth across the colossal channel as we eat lunch. The crew explored the gravel bars and admired the big beautiful sandbar.

Choctaw Island is in the distance. Our plan is to set up and prepare a campsite shielded from the south wind, because storms are in the forecast. We find another flooded willow forest with high bluffs of sand. A plethora of great campsites throughout the island. I picked a camp three bluffs from the canoe, protected by huge cottonwoods. Three female deer walk across the sandbar adjacent to my tent carrying big stomachs. They looked like they were ready to calf. The rain starts and we prepare a shelter over our kitchen and start a fire with wet wood. I spend the day exploring in the rain, eventually getting to my tent early, to weather the storms throughout the night. Mark River

Day 4 - Choctaw Island

A storm pounds our camp throughout the night. I laid in my tent as I hear strong winds building in the canopy of trees, but not feeling its strength, due to a strategic choice of campsite. It finally moves on and I head to the canoe knowing it would be full of rain water. I bail out the canoe and start the bacon for breakfast. The day is cloudy, but there's no chance of rain. We discuss a loud booming sound heard throughout the evening. Some think it's a catfish farm trying to ward of the cormorants, some think it's a farmer trying to keep the redwing blackbird from their crops.

I venture back to my tent, only to see in the distant, a large buck grazing in a grassland about 100 meters away. I marvel at the size of his hips, they reached the first branch. I circle around to get a closer view only to spook him. Investigating the branch, I was correct, he was huge. This island is a haven for deer.

Packed and ready to go, we continue downstream to enter the Greenville Bends. Instantly started to see hunting camps and vacation homes. Water snakes swim around every bend. Islands 81 and 82 are trophy deer and turkey hunting camps. Integrated channels only accessible by ferry. We met a great guy from the area, who shows us the entrance to Paradise Lake and explained how they controlled the flow by releasing water out of Lake Chicot.

He commented, " Paradise Lake is a beautiful place, created by the Lord and the flood of 1927!"

We have farewell laugh and continue on. I beautiful lake, but mostly private. After the rest of the team took a swim break, we paddle back out to channel and make another detour down Spanish Moss run-out, eventually connecting to the back channel of Island 82, back to the Mississippi River. We camped on the back channel between the bottom of island 82 and Warfield Point after a long day of paddling. We even skipped lunch! We sat around the campfire and listened to great live music, sharing our last night together. Who-ute! Mark River

Day 5 - Warfield Point

The morning comes quickly, but it's the best day yet. I left my tent flap opened, so I was awoken by the song birds and a speck of sun atop the trees. I rose with great energy and spirit-overload from the music the evening before. A barred owl hoots from nearby and the doves are singing the same song as usual, as I trample to the fire ready to start breakfast. Raft potatoes, a Quapaw staple, for breakfast.

I take a walk to the same place I sat the night before and instantly the scenery started to work my mind and soul. I'm looking across the channel at the tall flooded willows of the bottom of Island 82, with a rising river flowing swiftly, but effortlessly, down the back channel. I sat upon a asphalt mat that had been cool by the river, peeking through small flooded sycamores and ash trees. Ideas are breeding in my mind, while the sun glistening off the water. I fluff my cypress knee-like hair and a toothpick falls at my feet. I chuckle by myself, and thank the Creator for this fabulous day.

We leisurely packed the canoe, having plenty of time, knowing we are just two channel crossings to our landing. We make an enthusiastic crossing, stopping in the flooded willow forest, floating between the trees, taking a break from the hot sun. The temperature drops immediately in the trees, as we finally get our hot Mississippi River day. Our second channel crossing has the same feel, as our fresh paddle strokes carry us through. We float pass a rock structure constructed

after the flood of 2011, and land at Warfield Point. The Quapaw's take the opportunity to enjoy the swing set in the park. We are quickly informed, the park is closing due to high water. Perfect timing as our shuttle arrives. Mark River

-Mark River

Mark River Peoples is a guide and teacher with Quapaw Canoe Company and is also the 1 Mississippi Southern Region Intern representing the Lower Mississippi River Foundation. Please go to www.bigmuddyisland.org for the Mark River Blog with photos, maps, videos, and other depictions of the Big River!

Men on the Water: A Healing Journey

Fri May 22 - Mon May 25, 2015

Adventure Workshop on the Mississippi River

Jim PathFinder Ewing, the author of seven books on eco-spirituality and mind-body medicine, will be teaching a three-day workshop on the river. Timed to coincide with the release of his new book, *Redefining Manhood: A Guide for Men and Those Who Love Them* (Findhorn Press, Spring 2015), the workshop will focus on reassessing the concept of men and their roles in today's society.

Canoe builder and youth leader John Ruskey and his team of Mighty Quapaws will be your outfitters, guides and cooks for the expedition.

Summary: 4-day weekend with paddling, camping and workshops. Muddy Waters Wilderness. This is a journey through some of the wildest & remote islands & forests of the Lower Mississippi. Described in a 12-page article in *National Geographic Adventure Magazine*, August 2007. Great back channels & oxbow lakes to explore. Fossil finding & rock hunting at Knowlton Crevasse & Catfish Point. Great swimming throughout. Abundant wildlife, exceptional birding, world class fisheries, the greatest concentration of white tailed deer in the country, as well as the Louisiana black bear. No towns or industry. The only evidence of civilization is the tugboats on the river.

See http://www.island63.com/expeditions-muddy_waters.cfm for photos and description.

Charge: \$550 each all inclusive includes all workshops and teachings, shuttle, meals, guiding and outfitting, and everything you will need for the river. Special deal for fathers and sons, and same deal for couples: 500 each.

Meet: 9am Fri May 22nd

Quapaw Canoe Company

291 Sunflower Avenue

Meet at 9am. Park your car, pack your bag and load the canoe. Shuttle to Mississippi River and set off downstream. 4 days on the biggest river in North America. Primitive Camping. Bring tent and sleeping bag, or arrange rental.

Finish: Mon May 25th

Return to the same sometime mid-day. Unpack your bags. Say goodbye to new friends. Your car will be waiting you. Return home.

Men on the Water: A Healing Journey

Jim PathFinder Ewing

Workshop Description:

The workshop is normally taught in two segments: one as a men's retreat (the "Men" part of the title) as a path for men in self-discovery and inner growth; and one for women ("Those Who Love Them"), so they can understand and help men grow in wisdom and stature to meet today's changing roles. This workshop is for men, women and children, or singles, and will focus on concepts in the book as well as living in harmony with nature, in keeping with being on the river.

The outline of the three-day workshops is an evening session of approximately two hours, followed by a full day, then a morning session to wrap up and share what is learned.

This workshop teaches men how to be men in a new, yet time-tested way, by reevaluating how they were brought up and determining which behaviors are suitable for adopting, and which are suitable for rejecting. No one is taught what to believe, only how to examine what is believed, so self-discovery can take place.

Participants should bring notebook or paper and pens to write down insights and understandings. It is recommended that those attending the workshop read *Redefining Manhood* before the trip and be prepared to discuss the concepts. Some exercises in the book will be part of the workshop.

Paddling and Camping Description

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Food & Gear: Quapaw provides all necessary river gear & emergency equipment. Normally we prepare all food & refreshments, drinks include spring water, juices and milk. Alcoholic beverages BYOB. We will pack all necessary cookware and eating utensils, as well as camp tables and camp chairs.

Bring all personal gear and stuff into our waterproof drybags before launching (or use your own). These are backpack-style bags made of tough waterproof material - great for packing on a rainy day! It takes three complete fold to make them water-proof, be sure to lock all four buckles! If you have any questions, check with your guide.

Be prepared for rain or intense sun UV exposure! Sunlight is surprisingly intense on the river, even in the winter (you get the sun twice – once from above and once reflected from below). Sunburn is our number one complaint and has caused more than one Mississippi River paddler very painful days and sleepless nights. Be forewarned! Sunglasses, sun screen, long sleeve clothing and a wide brim hat are all good ideas, especially for anyone particularly sensitive.

We can supply tents & sleeping bags to anyone who needs them, \$35ea/person/trip regardless of length. Otherwise, bring your own and pack with your gear into our dry bags.

Camping: Remote islands, sandbars, towheads, usually sandy places, sometimes it's necessary to make a muddy landing. In inclement weather it might be necessary to find shelter within the forest. This is primitive camping on a river island, no services of any sort. Bring everything you need to make yourself comfortable. Bring your own toiletry. Bring a change of warm clothing, including summer months, when mornings can be cool. It's always cooler on the river.

Charge: \$550 each all inclusive includes all workshops and teachings, shuttle, meals, guiding and outfitting, and everything you will need for the river. Bring your personal items and camping gear and we'll provide everything else. Fee includes canoes, paddles, lifejackets and all necessary river gear, first aid kits and emergency gear; and meals, which include all the food prep, campfire cooking, cookware and eatware, and cleanup. Also includes shuttle and transportation of canoes and gear plus our vehicles and drivers to and from Clarksdale to the river.

Deposit: \$250 deposit required to hold date, remainder due at trip start. Deposit refundable in case of severe weather or other unforeseeable disastrous or dangerous occurrence.

About the Book:

While women have forged ahead in the workplace and society, men are finding themselves increasingly marginalized, socially, professionally, economically — enough so that one book on bestseller lists recently has been titled *The End of Men*. This has led to calls for a men's movement and courses are being taught, but they are failing to find traction among men. The reason should be plain: where once Iron John stood as an archetype, along with the King, Warrior, Lover and Magician, those roles have become sadly outdated. The old archetypes of manhood no longer apply.

In this book, the author of six previous books on energy medicine, Native American spirituality and mindfulness, outlines why the current courses on men's empowerment are failing and offers a new way of looking at male roles that predates the modern era. It is a "back to the future" approach to manhood that actually is better suited for the male psyche, having existed for thousands of years in all parts of the globe. Modernized, this "survival kit" for the male gender can revitalize male and female relations on a more balanced and time-honored footing. This book serves as a self-help manual for men, a guide for men's retreats, and a primer for wives, daughters, mothers and female friends to help the men in their lives adopt a newer, healthier way of living in balance with a society that is rapidly shifting its roles.

Other books on this topic repeat tired stereotypes of the "king," "lover," "warrior," "magician" and similar shorthand versions of men's roles; but those roles no longer hold much value in today's society. In a society where women have more education and higher earning capacity than men, a woman can be "king." Women no longer sit idly waiting to be awakened by a Prince Charming; they are active lovers, emancipated from the Sleeping Beauty archetype. If men try to adopt outdated "lover" roles, they find themselves alone, even pitied. Women are warriors, and magicians, and welders, firefighters and CEOs. An "Iron John" who wishes to retreat into what he is taught is his strength in masculinity — the wild man of ancient times — will find himself alienated and out of step with reality. Conversely, if men try to adopt feminized versions of men's roles, they will find themselves equally marginalized. Women don't need men to be women. Nor do they need men who patronize them.

Redefining Manhood: A Guide for Men and Those Who Love Them

Findhorn Press, Spring 2015

by Jim Ewing

Some Thoughts on Jim Pathfinder Ewing's newest book:

Redefining Manhood: a Guide to Men and Those Who Love Them

by John Ruskey

The male spirit, in its purest form, is as wide and wild as the great distances that create our continent, and the vast landscapes that predominate: from the Appalachians to the Rockies, from the Great Plains to the Lower Mississippi Floodplain, from the Cumberland Plateau to the Colorado Plateau. All men are all born with it. But too easily it slips away only into the wild warlike side of things. Untempered by other essential manly qualities like wisdom and compassion, and without elders, or other living guides to point the way, Man's good qualities become wildly destructive.

Jim Ewing's *Redefining Manhood* rekindles fires long neglected by Men and Those Who Love Them and let to burn out in our society. Jim is a fire-maker if nothing else. He has found ashes from fires that burned brightly in pre-Christian societies where men and women worked in harmony with each other and with the mother earth we all live on, and depend upon for our survival.

The native peoples embodied this spirit when they lived close to the land, and it was passed on through the generations through stories, trials, vision quests, agrarian practices, hunts and celebrations. Us Anglos, we sometimes find it, embody it, breathe it into our existence. But more often we lose it and let paranoia rule. Fear of the dark. Fear of the woods. Fear of bears. Fear of snakes. Fear of ladybugs. Fear of ladies. Fear of our more gentle qualities. Fear of art and poetry. Fear of being quiet. Fear of silence. Human paranoia too easily overcomes the ethereal spirit of the wildlands. Without parents, grandparents or elders to show the way, there is no way but to close the door on the fearful places and turn on the television or the computer. *Redefining Manhood* is a connection to that pulsing spirit of the male-ness that is flowing everywhere but is hard to hear amongst the noise and commotion of our busy lives.

Jim Ewing looks beyond the loss of the "Wild Man" to find man's essential qualities in a path of peace. This pathway offers timely and much-needed alternatives to the pathways of fear and war which seem to be rampaging across our planet. Instead of aggression and greedy accumulation of property, *Redefining Manhood* discovers manly qualities of love, empathy, resolve and responsibility that predate the hardening of the Christian world several millennia ago, and shows us how we can rejuvenate those beautiful qualities back into our lives for the benefit of all: our families, our friends, our society, our world.

I grew up on the edge of Arapaho National Forest in the Front Range of the Rockies. My father taught me to walk softly in those ponderosa piney woods, a lesson which saved my life and gave me a life-long love of the multi-ever-varying forms and patterns of life. I have always been a misfit in society. But when I finally found myself freed by my father's gentle forgiving spirit, and the endless wilderness behind our house, I no longer cared. And the strangest thing was suddenly I fit in. What if you didn't have a wild woods to run around in as a kid? What if you didn't have mentors, or readings like Redefining Manhood to open your imagination to what's out there and to find your place in it? I shudder at the thought it is so confining and claustrophobic. Life without it would be like losing your way in a suburban neighborhood never to be able to leave, never able to escape the gridlock checkerboard tendencies of civilizations.

Later in my life, in the flatlands and the structured East Coast prep school society it was some of the same lessons found in Redefining Manhood that once again saved my life, this time in my imagination, in my education, and in the mentors who watched over my growth through puberty into manhood.

If Redefining Manhood had been published when I was going through those awful pimply pubescent years when I made so many stupid mistakes it probably would have saved me and my family several years of moral anguish, and fear of society. It probably would have saved my mother's hair from turning prematurely grey, like mine is doing now.

We are nature, not separate from it. It is only in separation that we invite worldwide environmental problems. When you experience the wilderness you begin to feel and care for it, and care for all its abundance of creative life forms, and colors and patterns, aromas and poetry and music. And then you become livened and emboldened with the passion