



The Prairie Dog Companion: Newsletter of the North Texas River Runners

Dinosaur River

The Gates of Lodore. What beating heart could fail to quicken at the Tolkienesque imagery evoked by that magical name? In the spring of 2007, the NTRR's most able organizer, Laurie Patterson, gained a permit for the Lodore, Whirlpool, and Split Mountain Canyons section of the Green River, traversing the entire width of Dinosaur National Monument, and the quest for Lodore was launched.

Our group of bold, brave, and/or somewhat apprehensive adventurers (The Fellowship of Lodore!) consisted of the illustrious Laurie, riding with rafter Larry Lewis, solo rafter and river leader Ray Foley, Margaret Thompson, gracing the bow of Jack and Yolanda Deatherage's raft, and Ted Drake, keeping an eye on the map for Weldon Sanders, who was heroically propelling a heavily loaded

and (one might even say) unwieldy cataract. Brandishing single bladed paddles were the tandem canoe teams of George Wilhelm and Linda Newman, and Charles Smith and Jean Muncrief. All alone in their solo canoes were the fearless Allen Harrison, and your fearful reporter, Ronnie Ash.

Pre-trip scouting via the wonders of Google Earth revealed frequent (and frequently long stretches of) whitewater. With rapids sporting such menacing names as Disaster Falls and Hell's Half Mile, and disturbing reports of badly battered swimmers, (not to mention a fatal bear attack, please!) a few of us were dealing with damp palms and dreadful dreams long before our actual departure.

In accordance with Western Rivers SOP, we assembled at Panther City Shipyard, the home of your humble scribe, on the morning of June 23. As arriving vehicles offloaded

by Ronnie Ash

boats, kit, and supplies onto a large staging tarp, it soon seemed that climbing gear would be required to reach the top of that stack. Once again the packing skills of our experienced trippers accomplished the seemingly impossible, and we somehow succeeded in stuffing or lashing all that equipment into or onto Weldon's giant diesel truck, Jack's full size van, Laurie's littler van, and 2 trailers.

And so it came to pass, after weeks of planning and preparation - time to lock the gate behind us, forsake the comforts of home, and be about it, bound for Lodore and the great unknown.

Our first day's travel brought us to Clayton Lake State Park in north east New Mexico. This small park proved to be a picturesque and pleasant overnight camping stop, with a pretty little lake and hundreds of dinosaur tracks, discovered

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September Program!

Matt and Jennifer Fritz will be showing a presentation on their favorite local play-spots, and what levels those are good at, and maybe a few back east highlights as well. They will also have a skills building presentation on 360 spins. Matt & Jen can really bridge the gap between canoeist and kayakers. They have fabulous video footage, and I've never seen anyone better at spins than Matt, he has really worked hard on them.

Commodore's Column

Likely, you all have been able to tell from my talk and writing that I have had great concern that the club officers are guiding the club in the direction the membership desires. But, you know what; I am not concerned with that anymore. The August elections resulted in all those who would consent being returned to office. That indicates to me that the membership is satisfied with those in office and

the actions which they are taking.

You might want to take a look at the home page of the Austin Paddling Club. I had always thought that they were a premier paddling club. It was my belief that they were a large, active club with multiple activities. You will note on their web page that they are considering disbanding the club. They state that they have general concerns that the club has

by Allen Harrison

become irrelevant in today's technological environment. They are concerned about the poor attendance at monthly meetings and ask if meetings should be continued. Unwillingness of members to step up and serve as officers has put a burden on the few that are willing to do so.

The concerns of the Austin club sound similar to things I have heard expressed from

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Commodore's Column (Con't)

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some of our members, i.e. club officers are hard to recruit, officers get burned out, our web page is poorly organized and not interactive, members don't come to meetings, nobody new ever joins the club, newsletter contributions are skimpy, meetings are held too often.....and so on. Obviously, our club membership is not alone in the way we feel. We may find it necessary to adapt to a changing environment in the future. I do not know what those changes might be or when they might come. As a member, ask yourself this question, "Does the NTRR meet my needs?" In those cases where it does, please let your officer staff know what those needs are and how the NTRR meets them. In those cases where the club fails to meet your needs, please let us know what those needs are and how the club fails to meet them.

And when you are thinking about these matters, while floating down the river or driving down the highway or biking down the mountain or however you travel through your day to day life.....don't forget to paddle with a purpose!

See you at the next meeting.
Allen



Helping to Keep Texas Beautiful One River at a Time

by Laurie Patterson

The North Texas River Runners showed their support for improving the rivers and environment in our area by assisting the Fort Worth Nature Center with a river clean up April 22nd. Thanks to Barb Cutter and Chris Gross for arranging this clean up with the Nature Center. Several of our members assisted with boat launching and simple instructions. We had a wide variety of people join us in the clean up including fellow paddlers, a father and son team, a mother and son's team, couples and friends. It was great to see so many people interested in helping to celebrate Earth Day by cleaning up the Fort Worth Nature Center water ways.

We put the first canoes on the water at 10:00 and within an hour we had boats returning with cargos of trash, including an electric drill press, tires, bottles, mattress springs, cans and Styrofoam Pieces. We had three piles, recycle, trash and treasures. (You know one mans trash is another mans treasure). Overall it was a very successful day and we have been invited to return again next year.

Thank you to all the NTRR members that supported both the Brazos River clean up and the Fort Worth Nature Center clean up.

Something New @ the Raffle

At the beginning of the summer, we tried a new raffle option. In addition to the usual raffle, we purchased a Boundary Waters Bag to be raffled at the August meeting. Members had 3 months to acquire raffle tickets for this item either by paying \$2 per raffle ticket or by getting a free chance with every \$5 spent in the regular raffle. Diane Jasso was the winner of the Boundary Waters Bag!

This month we will start "selling" chances for another big item (to be raffled at the November meeting). The Grand Raffle Prize for the next 3 months (or so) is a Coleman Perfect-flow Instastart Fold N Go 2-Burner Stove

Specifications include:

- * Instastart – Matchless lighting
- * Powerful - 20,000 BTUS in two high-performance burners
- * Compact – Folds in half for easy transport and storage
- * Takes less space than traditional 2 burner stoves
- * Extra Large Cooking Area – Accommodates up to 12 inch pans with extra large 13 inch burner
- * Adjustable – Independent, fully adjustable controls
- * Easy to Clean – Nickel-chrome grates and cooking surface
- * Fuel - Propane
- * Color - It's RED – so you won't misplace it!



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during the construction of the dam. Informative markers guided visitors on an elevated boardwalk tour through the dinosaur track zone. Those paleontologists who mapped out the tracks weren't lacking in imagination. One sign described a muddled set of depressions as a place where one dinosaur had lost its balance and momentarily touched its tail to the ground, and another claimed these to be the tracks of a dinosaur that hesitated and shuffled his feet momentarily before moving on. OK!

Our second day on America's highways became a long 700 + mile push to reach the put-in, with crawling bumper to bumper traffic from Pueblo to Denver, a considerable switchbacked climb to surmount 11,315' Berthoud Pass, and a testosterone intensive brush with an irate motorcyclist on the descent. We entertained ourselves with mystifying radio miscommunications, which came to be known as "WTF? Moments," and prompted veteran radio operator Ted (W5TB) to start designing a radio procedures orientation to be implemented before the next big trip. Ever on the lookout for a chance to laugh, we made great sport of a fuel stop at the "Kum & Go" in Craig, CO, and in Weldon's truck, an old line from the Buster Brown Show, "Plunk your magic twanger, Froggie!" became a passport to instant hilarity.

Naturally, it was quite dark by the time we reached the most navigationally challenging phase of the trip, a minor maze of dirt roads from the lonely two lane highway to the put-in at Lodore Campground and Ranger Station. Our headlights shown upon so many jackrabbits in those final few miles that one was tempted to think we'd made a wrong turn and were driving ever deeper into an episode of the "Twilight Zone: Planet of the Jack Rabbits," or some such hideous alternative future. After maintaining our formation all the long day, discipline faltered when we needed it most and we lost Jack's van. That second set of headlights that we could see in the rear view mirror turned out to be "not Jack." At the campground we were pleased to find George and Linda, already arrived from Seattle, and alarmed to discover that Jack and company were not amongst us. Repeated radio calls failed to raise him, but after 20 or 30 anxious minutes, the van came trailing in and the group was reunited.

Daylight on our launch day revealed an interesting notice, prominently posted at

both the restroom and launching ramp. "Warning! Due to recent bear sightings, lunch stops are prohibited between here and Winnie's Grotto." Now oddly enough, our first assigned campsite was "between here and Winnie's Grotto." Although we were prohibited from having lunch, apparently it was all right to cook and consume dinner, spend the night, and break fast in the morning. Riddle me that, Mr. Ranger!

The morning light also illuminated another, more inspiring sight, the Gates of Lodore, patiently guarding the entrance to Lodore canyon about a mile downstream from us. The thought that we would soon pass through the portal flanked by those massive and ancient abutments, and enter the mystic realm beyond, filled me with an odd admixture of desire and dread.

Our scheduled launch time was 1300 hrs, and that was none too late. Rigging up and apportioning loads was a long and demanding task. The resident ranger could easily have been the subject of a Forest Service recruiting poster, he was so immaculately groomed and uniformed, with a Smokey the Bear hat and a Sam Browne belt from which depended every law enforcement implement in the catalog. After he performed the requisite equipment inspection, the raft ranger (who was preparing to put in for his routine patrol) assembled us for a river orientation. His official mission may have been informative, but I suspect that he privately delighted in scaring people!

Finally, the last strap was cinched down tight and it was time shove off, to point our bows downstream and seek what lay beyond the bend. My old Whitesell, the "Cottonmouth Mistress," was clearly delighted to be afloat again, feeling frisky and hitting eddies as we bore on down toward the Gates of Lodore.

Due to the vagaries of the assigned campsite system, our first day's float was a mere 2 ½ miles. Hardly had we entered the canyon but it was time to stop at our first camp, Wade & Curtis Campsite. The Green, subjugated by its concrete master, Flaming Gorge Dam, was exhibiting a pulsing flow pattern, dropping to a low of about 900 cfs at night and building to a peak of 1900 – 2000 by afternoon. Following the raft ranger's advice, we moored the rafts in the deeper water at the upstream end of the site, so as not to find them hard aground come morning.

After unloading the rafts, a shout from Jack brought us all running to check out a

long, slender, and oddly patterned snake that even our master naturalist, Jean, was unable to identify. Thank goodness I would be sleeping in my Christmas Kelly tent, guaranteed by the manufacturer to be bear and snake proof!

With daylight left for leisure, Charles tied a little lure on his pole and set off down stream to tease a few trout. After a bit, I trailed along to inquire about his luck. It turned out that the trout were teasing him, but we encountered Allen, who was out for a stroll, and the three of us proceeded to Winnie's Grotto, a narrow and intriguing cut in the canyon wall, remarked upon by Major Powell in 1871. As we climbed away from the river and up the tight defile, we soon found our way blocked by a great boulder, wedged tight and filling the corridor, leaving only a tiny tunnel through which a determined traveler might scrape.

Allen squirted through it like a chihuahua jumping through a hula hoop, but for Charles and I it was more of a "fat man's squeeze," and that's as close to spelunking as I care to come! Continuing on, we climbed to several hundred feet above river level before a 50' vertical wall brought an end to our explorations.

Our second day on the river would be no leisurely float. Our next campsite was 11 miles away, and in order to reach it, we must needs negotiate every major rapid in Lodore Canyon. As I buckled on my helmet that morning, I knew that this day would be as much a test of my "feeble mind" as my canoeing skills! The amusing sight of Laurie with a "helmet cam" strapped to her head provided some welcome relief from my grimly serious mindset.

The first named rapid that we would encounter was Winnie's Rapid, just adjacent to Winnie's Grotto, but Lodore, it seemed, was adorned with some sort of rapid at nearly every bend, leaving little time for idle thoughts. We splashed gracefully through Winnie's, but the next challenger, Disaster Falls, where Major Powell's expedition lost a boat in 1869, would be a different tale indeed.

Upper Disaster was courteous enough to provide a manageable sneak on river left for the canoeists. Middle Disaster was long, rock strewn, and exceedingly busy. The thought of turning over at the top and swimming could quickly lead one to madness, or systemic failure! Weldon and Ted became briefly stuck on a rock, although, as was later pointed out, so long as there

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was no camera running to document the event, everybody had a clean run!

The River Troll had his way when Jack's raft hit a hole and bounced Yolanda out of the boat and into the water. Margaret reacted quickly and latched onto Yo, but was unable to pull her back into the raft. Jack, with a wife in the water and the responsibility of controlling the raft in a long and complex rapid, did his best to row with one hand and rescue with the other, but the combined efforts of Margaret and Jack remained insufficient. So Charles (for whom rescue is a genetic imperative rather than a voluntary act) and Jean came charging to their aid. Maneuvering alongside, Charles could devise no better alternative than to stand with one foot in his canoe and one on the raft tube while he attempted to hoist Yolanda back aboard the raft.

The result would have been entertaining in a Daffy Duck cartoon, but on the Green River it was hard to see the humor as the gap between canoe and raft began to quickly widen and something gave way in Charles' hip with an audible pop and a stabbing pain. Suddenly, Charles and Yolanda both were swimming, and Jean had become a solo canoeist. Somehow, the awkward conglomeration of rafters, paddlers, swimmers, and wounded worked their way into an eddy on river left and our whole group gathered to assess the damage.

Yolanda was shaken up but unharmed. Jack had wrenched his shoulder in his attempts to haul Yo back inboard. Initially we feared that Charles had dislocated his hip, but since nothing seemed too badly misshapen, we then suspected a torn hamstring muscle or a severe sprain on the right side of his hiney. Using a paddle for a crutch, he could, with considerable pain, walk. Fortunately, he discovered that the pain was minimized while in his usual kneeling position in the canoe, so he could continue to paddle, albeit in a "half arsed" manner!

Somewhat subdued, we took to the boats again. Harp Falls, the next major obstacle, was scouted and run on the fly. Boy-oh, was I glad to be aboard the old Whitesell. She might weigh as much as a ¾ ton truck, but a guy couldn't ask for a more steadfast or able ally when the current is swift and the rocks are menacing.

At our lunch stop, Charles parked his pained posterior in the river, in hopes that the cold water might provide some relief.

As he ate his lunch, he noticed a 16" long sucker family type fish vacuuming the bottom near by. In short order the busy little pescado transferred his attention to Charles' right wet suit boot, and then he began energetically grooming his way up Charles' leg. As his efforts rose above the knee, Charles decided that continued intimacy with the little fellow might become improper and shooed him away.

With such short intervals in between rapids, there was little time for orientation, and I was having a bit of trouble keeping up with our position on my map. As I came around a bend, I could see the lead rafts pulling up to a little beach on river left at what I suspected must be the scouting trail for Triplet Falls. Driving my bow onto the sandy shore, I jumped out of the boat and said, "Triplet Falls?" "Oh no," Ray replied. "This is Hell's Half Mile. We've already done Triplet Falls. Hardly seemed worthy of a class III rating, did it?" "Whew," I thought, "now there's a relief!" I'd been worrying about Triplet Falls all day long.

The scout was pretty much a mile long goat trail. With Charles incapacitated and waiting by the boats, the canoeists scouted the rapid thoroughly, discussing and determining the route in minute detail so we could bring back a report to Charles and scratch a map in the sand, as he has done so many times for us. The trick was at the bottom of the rapid, where the River Troll had set a trap. The river narrowed right down with the main force of the flow directed into the canyon wall on the right. Unless one took determined and active steps to avoid it, one would then be swept into a narrow gap between 2 large rocks. It was one of those horror story gaps where you could go in, but you would never come out.

As I socketed myself into the Whitesell's Perception saddle, an alien took over my brain and I heard my own voice say to the other canoeists, "You want me to go first so I'll be down there in case of trouble?" (What the...Jeez I hope that was just an auditory hallucination...) "Sure, go on," Charles said. (Dang!)

After bouncing and leaping through that lengthy maze of rocks, pourovers, pillows, holes, and boulders, and deftly denying the River Troll at the bottom, I was breathing hard through a severe case of cotton mouth when I fetched up alongside Ted and Weldon in an eddy at the bottom. "Doggone," I gasped, "I'm sure glad to have Hell's Half Mile behind us."

As the other canoes emerged from the rapid and gathered in the eddy, we congratulated ourselves on dealing with Hell's Half Mile so effectively. Ted introduced a hiccup into our celebrations when he said, "I don't think you all should relax just yet. I've been following the map and I believe that was Triplet Falls." (What did the fish say when he ran into the concrete wall? Dam!) I knew it was too good to be true.

Sure enough, no more than a quarter mile downstream we were parking on river left once again, at the start of another scouting trail. One look at this rapid left no doubt. This was Hell's Half Mile indeed, and it was aptly named. The first 50 yards were truly hellish. Beyond that were several hundred yards of confused but manageable class III mayhem.

Right of center at the top the river dropped swiftly through a shallow and heavily congested boulder garden, with no hope of a route through it. Left of center the river accelerated down a roaring aerated tongue right into a huge pour over with a god awful hole behind it. The River Troll that lived in that hole was certainly sporting cloven hooves. The way to the right of the pour over was defended by a vicious triangular tooth rock, and the narrow path on the left was flanked by a hole so gnarly that I was afraid to even make eye contact with it. There was no sneak, no way. It was right in the gut or give it over.

Weldon pointed out that if one were to make an eddy turn behind the big rock just above the triangular tooth, that would set one up to skirt the pour over in a controlled manner. (Oh, yeah...if I ever got into that eddy I would stay there till they shut the dam off and I could walk out!) Allen liked Weldon's theory and declared his intention to run it.

The rest of the canoeists were unanimous. (Charles, in his half-arsed condition, was obliged to vote with Jean, although, if he'd been in a solo boat, there would have been no restraining him, of course.) We would heed the wisdom of the ancients, who sagely observed that "No Indian ever died on a portage," and carry around the first 50 yards.

One hour and 15 exhausting minutes later, we weren't dead but we were doggone tired. The portage didn't kill us but it sure wore us out. Poor Charles was severely distressed by his inability to assist us. As we struggled to haul, drag, and hump the canoes over that rugged terrain,

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we did have a good vantage point from which to watch Allen and the rafts.

Allen made it look easy, spinning in behind Weldon's rock without apparent effort, ferrying across that furious flow to carve around and slip past the left side of the giant pour over and into an eddy, then sliding backwards over a little drop to park securely in another eddy on the left bank.

The rafts met the challenge equally well. Although I think that they all intended to pass left of the pour over, each of them seemed to bank off the bulging water cushion on its upstream side, then slide smoothly right. Ray made the trip twice, having accepted Jack's invitation to row his raft through, since Jack's shoulder continued to trouble him.

Just below this hellish passage, where the river broadened and shallowed, Weldon and Ted found themselves stubbornly stuck. Ted hopped about attempting to shift the center of gravity. Weldon strained at the oars so mightily that they bowed way beyond their engineered limits, but the raft refused to budge. Fortunately, Allen was in a position and possessed of the skills to help. He ferried over to them and somehow managed to get out of his boat and onto a large rock. With Allen pushing, Weldon pulling, and Ted strategically bouncing the raft came free. This left Allen in an awkward position from which he was unable to remount his boat. A vain attempt to leap into the canoe put him in the water, but he kept his head and quickly self rescued.

Meanwhile, the rest of the weary single bladers had a big drink of water and clambered back aboard their canoes to run the remainder of Hell's Half Mile. About a hundred yards downstream of the rapid we came upon the raft ranger parked in an eddy, from which he had observed our battle with Hell's Half Mile. Although he had bragged about his many rescues during our orientation at the put-in, his position relative to the rapid ensured that the only assistance he could have provided us would have been to call dial-a-prayer or medevac on his satellite phone if we were to have gotten in trouble.

He praised Ray's raft run and complimented the canoeists for showing the good sense to portage, but seemed strangely disdainful of the obvious skill that Allen had displayed in his open canoe run. Is it possible that ego or prejudice could influence the judgment of a uniformed agent of the US government?

Soon thereafter, with visible relief, we staggered ashore at Rippling Brook 1 Campsite, our home for the night. After another of Laurie's magnificent meals, the tired dishwashing crew finally dipped the last utensil into their bucket of sterilizing chlorox solution at 2230 hrs and crawled gratefully off to bed. (This pattern of rising at 0600 or earlier, pushing hard all day, and securing the galley at 2200 or later, would persist throughout the rest of our adventure. – The entire group is agreed that the next time we do this we'll opt for 5 days on the river instead of 4 if at all possible.)

This article will be continued in the October newsletter!

Shout Out!

A message board, of sorts, to send out thoughts, congratulations, and/or humor to those you haven't seen in awhile or those you are just thinking about. Send your message to cdboerner@sbcglobal.net for the next newsletter!

Ben P– How's your headstand?

Steve G–I'm winning the bruise contest!

Ted D– Keep on keeping on

Cathy & Bruce– Finished building your nest yet?

Beth B– We miss your smiling face!

Brent S–What can you do with a C-1?

Scott P– Time for a Picnic! :)

Calendar

September 22rd, 10-2pm
Drill Day at Laurie's house (see p. 6 for details)

October 20-21
Calm water paddle led by Jean Muncrief

October 26th-28th
Caddoween sponsored by DDRC

November 2-4
Women's Trip led by Diana Boerner

December 8th (evening)
NTRR holiday party

Upcoming NTRR Activity The Details...

I am still planning the Drill Day at my house 181 La Costa Circle in Weatherford for September 22 from 10-2pm. We will provide hamburgers and ask those planning to attend bring a side dish. All members and their families are welcome. (dogs are okay if they play well with others). We will practice drills, rolls, rescue rope throws etc....

Contact Laurie for more information: queenbee@uwmail.com



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Look too good to be true? Don't let your NTRR officers get turned upside down! Help them out with ideas, suggestions, feedback, and participation.

PSSST! Hey Read This!

Send any articles for the newsletter to cdboerner@sbcglobal.net Trust me, I will NEED some articles! You don't even have to ask! Here are some examples of things you can send in!

[Trip Reports](#) [Recipes](#) [Shout Outs \(see p. 5\)](#) [How-to](#) [Photos](#)

[Activities](#) [Announcements](#) [For Sale/Wanted](#) [Environmental](#) [Safety](#)
[Instructional Tips](#)

Moonlight Float (the latest club outing)

by Lorraine McPhee

A bright moon shown down on the 20 paddlers participating in the NTRR Moonlit Paddle on the Brazos, Sat. Aug 25th, 2007. Clyde & Laura Mahler, Rich and Jan Bassi, The McPhee family, Donny Dawson and his 3 kiddos, Alan Harrison and Jean Moncrief, Susan Blair, and Ruth Geer all met just below the Lake Whitney Dam.

Kids ran everywhere, noisy and laughing as the adults ran shuttle, divied out life jackets, and paddles,



secured gear and settled everyone into a motley assortment of boats. There were canoes -old and new, sea kayaks, a huge sailing type of



kayak, a little white water kayak, you name it!

For the children, the important thing seemed to be being in the lead, and from the moment the boats slipped into the water, cries of "paddle faster dad!" could be heard.

Generally Jean and Alan remained vanguard however-leading the way to both our beach dinner stop, and the take out. Paddling the Brazos was beautiful. Limestone walls dripped with spring water and were lined with moss. As it grew dark, the moon shown brightly, stars appeared, there were fireflies, and the silvery clouds were luminous. The beach stop was leisurely and

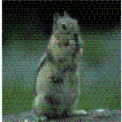


enjoying a paddle, and good conversation.

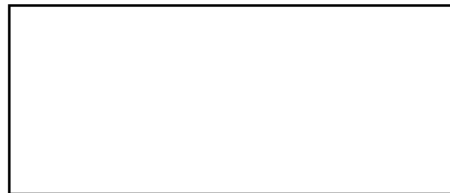
The paddle was about eight miles, and the shuttle took about 30 minutes each way round trip. There was a \$6 fee per boat for the take out at Dick's Outpost. It was a very fun paddle!



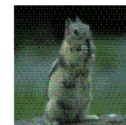
beautiful, filled with night sounds and the children playing with their glow lights. It is always so fun to be with great people,



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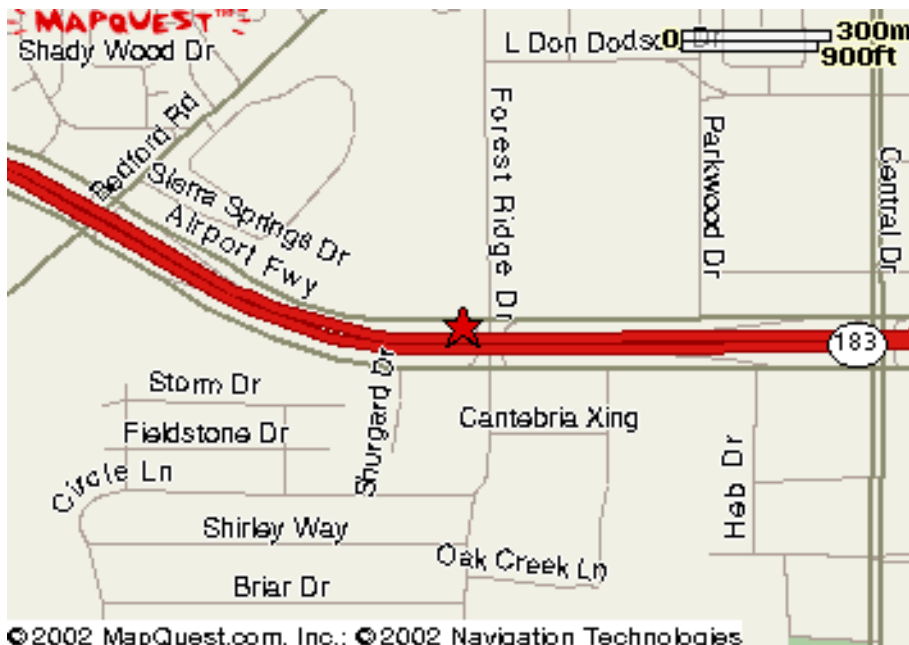


Home of the Prairie Dog Surfing Society
"If we're not in the hole, we're sitting right beside it."



We're on the web!
www.river-runners.org

If you would like to receive the Newsletter by email, please
contact: cdboerner@sbcglobal.net



Club meetings are held on the third Tuesday of the month at Spring Creek Barbeque from 7:00—9:00 PM
Next Meeting: September 18th

Spring Creek Barbecue
1509 Airport Freeway
North-West Corner of Forest & 183
817-545-0184