

Keel-hauler's Ka-news

🍀 **MARCH, 2026**



President's Message From Robin Shell

Hello Keel Haulers.

It has been a cold February, and everyone is itching to get onto the water. I'm so proud of all of you for making it as long as you did in this cold snap/snow that we had and also being safe! That is NOT easy for us to do.

Personally, I was feeling it as well but was able to scratch the itch by helping Eric Bartl and Ohio Whitewater Kayak Instruction for putting on (and cancelling due to safety factors) the Little Miami Downriver Race. Boaters broke up ice (less ice than Pennsylvania currently has) in the morning and, while the race portion was canceled, quite a few boaters chose to not race but float the ice down the river. It's what I would call class iii ice. It was an experience - reading ice as you float along. Those that chose to not paddle - I applaud you. Those that chose to paddle - I applaud you as well because you did it in a safe manner - by not trying to be the fastest. If you're in Southern Ohio and need any sort of Kayak assistance, please feel free to reach out to Eric.

The team has also been hard at work planning Slip Fest. T-shirt pre-orders are available. It's how you can guarantee your arm length and size. We're selling both long and short T-shirts and Rachel really out did herself with the graphics this year.

If you play an instrument, feel free to bring it along. We're going grassroots for music this year and would love to showcase your talent.

Warmer weather is on the way, and I bet by the time this newsletter comes out we'll be able to get back on the water. Be safe everyone and I'll see you on the river.

Robin Shell
President, 216-482-6100

Veep's Views

By Jacki Zevenbergen

Some thoughts on trip organizing and participation:

There are several types of KHCC trips.

Scheduled trips - An organizer commits to planning a trip in advance for the trip schedule.

Impromptu organized trip - a member invites others to join them on a specific trip announced on Facebook or in a group chat - more last minute but time and place decided by organizer.

Impromptu call to paddle - a member asks if anyone wants to paddle and interested parties collaborate on the details.

Organizing a trip does not mean you MUST lead people down the river or take on PFDs. Those choices are common but optional. If you do decide to allow people who are stepping up or doing a PFD you can help them find a buddy or you can ask them to find their own. Your responsibility as an organizer is to set the date, the time, the meet point and discuss skill levels with people who are going to participate. You also should figure out the shuttle details. The organizer usually lets people know where they are camping if an overnight stay is involved and invites people to dinner if the group is going out after the run. If you don't know all the rapids you can just bring along someone who does. They'll be grateful you handled all the logistics!

Trip etiquette - let the trip organizer know you are coming, talk to them personally if they don't know you, be reliable, tell them ASAP if you have to cancel due to an emergency, don't offer unsolicited advice unless there is a safety concern. Don't confuse people by discussing a new plan on someone's event post or event chat - advertise your own trip if the current plans don't work for you.

Please let me know if you would be willing to organize a trip on the Slip, Stony, or LOYO in May. I'm also interested in finding organizers for some Casselman, Cheat Narrows, and Connoquenessing Creek trips.

It would be great to see newer boaters, who are running class 3 or more, paying mentorship forward by organizing a trip on the lower slip, lower stony or middle Yough for newer boaters who are not class 3 comfortable.

The updated trip/ event/ release schedule is being posted in the newsletter each month. Please reach out and I'll get you on it.

Link to view schedule:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1iRGtZinVPHOzy-tfEbs3OfR3s93VSBp3ULA6l3gQoM8/edit?usp=sharing>

Jacki Z

**Keel-hauler Treasurer's Report
February 25, 2026
From Michael Duvall**

Checking \$9484.00

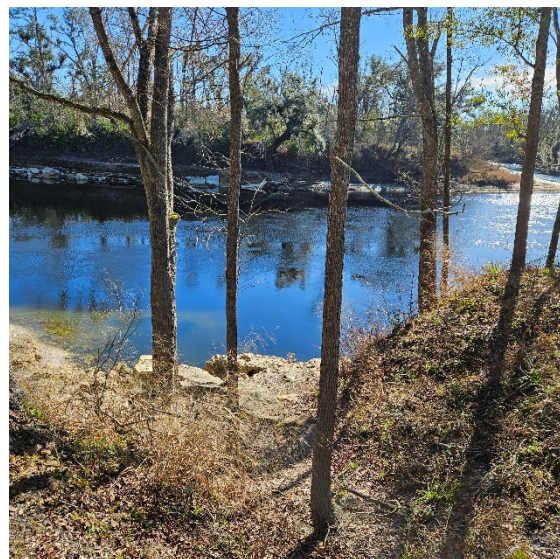
**Rob and Dave's Big Adventure on the Suwannee
By Rob Hammond**

I haven't written for the newsletter for at least a minute, but back in the day, my fellow paddlers knew me as a whitewater paddler. But my whitewater paddling took a big hit when I had to leave Cleveland for work in Texas, and then in San Francisco. When I had a chance to move back East to a farm in Maryland 15 minutes from the Upper Yough, I expected to be doing a lot of Class V boating. But 16 years away from the rivers took a toll on my skills. Now farming scratches my loving the outdoors itch along with a few class III or IV run every year. A few years ago, my brother-in-law David started talking to me about a week-long canoe camping trip in Northern Florida. But a week on flatwater wasn't getting me very excited. Last year both of us retired, and I thought a week in the wilderness could be interesting, especially if we didn't have to carry our supplies on our back. Since I am always up for an adventure, and retirement provides time flexibility, I agreed to go.

My idea for camping is rolling out a sleeping bag in the back of my van. So, I didn't have the equipment that would fit into the small cargo holds on David's sea kayaks. Nor did I have experience in primitive camping. But David is an avid outdoorsman with decades experience in backpacking and leading Boy Scout camping expeditions. He would lend me the equipment I needed and would level up my meager camping skills. The downside... we are both old farts well into our 7th decade.

On the 2nd week of January, we both arrived in Northern Florida, at the Suwannee River Wilderness River Trail takeout to shuttle to the put-in at Stephen Foster Folk Culture Ctr. Why January? David, a Miami resident, says that this time of year is great because: it's not too hot, bugs are manageable, and it's too cold for the Alligators! I can sympathize with the alligators, the first three nights got down into the upper 20's. Now young-me used to ski in minus 30-degree weather, but old-me doesn't tolerate the cold like young-me. I brought a lot of layers, but not enough for this cold.

The river is known from the song by Steven Foster. Although Foster is memorialized with the Spirt of the Suwannee Music Park, a large park and music venue, Steven never laid eyes on the river he made famous.



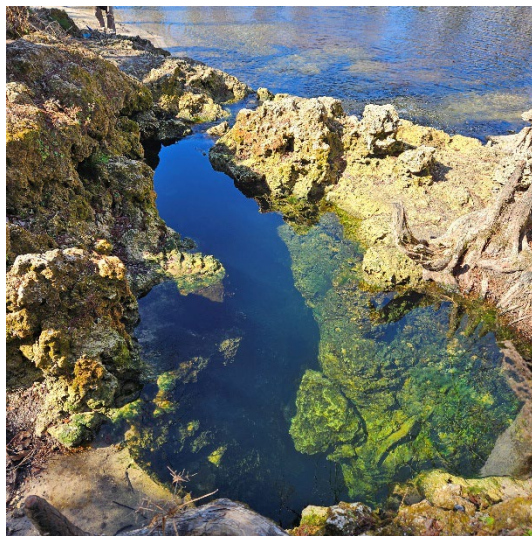
Suwannee River

The River Starts in the Okefenokee Swamp in Georgia and empties about 200 miles later into the Gulf. We paddled almost 50 miles of it. It was running at about 51 feet (I am guessing at 500 to 700 CFS) which is about as low as you would want to run the river. This was the maiden voyage for David's boat. He spent several months building a wood inlay boat, it was beautiful, more like a piece of furniture than a boat. I asked Dave if the boat had a name, it did not. I announced, as I pushed him off that "this is the maiden voyage of boat No Name!" After lunch David asked if I wanted to try paddling his boat. I said, "No Way!" As I was kicking the deck of my plastic boat to knock the sand off my Teva's, "I do not want to be the one putting the first scratch in your pretty boat!"

The first thing you notice about the river is the color caused by the tannins from the surrounding vegetation in the water. In shallow water it looks like weak tea, but in deep water it looks like a dark roast coffee. When the water is still, the black river makes a perfect mirror. When you pass a riverbank, the reflection creates a beautiful scene where you can't tell where the bank ends and the reflection starts. The beaches were numerous, large and full of white sand and wood to make a campfire, making them an attractive place to spend the night, which we did most nights. The first night, we had a reservation at a state campground. The campground was nice; it is only accessible from the river, so it is only for river travelers. David reserved a screened platform, which had running water, and even an outlet to charge your phone. We were the only ones there, the camp host was bored, so he built a fire for us, split some wood for us to make a morning fire. When you wake up to a 25-degree morning, fire is certainly appreciated. The downside was access to the campground was up a long winding ramp. The ramp was not friendly to David who has a back issue. His back doesn't bother his paddling, but hiking uphill was a challenge, so after that we camped on the beaches.



Dave's Pretty Boat & the Yellow Banana



Little Gem Spring Flowing into the Suwannee

Another interesting feature of the river is the numerous springs that fed the river. At this time of the year many were not running, but there were many visible near the river, and some in the river, where you would see clear water bubbling up. The area the river runs through is solid limestone, so you don't see much dirt, it is either white sand or limestone. The sand is nice, but the limestone is unforgiving to knees and boats (especially pretty boats). We only encounter one rapid of any significance. It wasn't too hard to navigate, anyone with class II river boating skills could manage it, but did I mention unforgiving limestone? David was navigating through the drop and I, 50 yards away, heard the crunch of rock on wood fiber. Those of us used to plastic boats would not have given the rock a thought, but those of us lucky enough to have built our own fiberglass boats before plastic boats became a thing, knew that was the sound of an on-river repair.

We like to be off the river by no later than 4:00, to set up camp, since it was close to that time we started looking for a good camping spot for the night. Once we found a friendly beach, we took David's boat out of the water and turned it upside down, to examine the damage. The damage was minimal a couple of cracks and a small hole. We would repair the boat after the hull had time to dry, meantime we started gathering firewood,

and looking for places to pitch our sleeping bags. Since we didn't have any rain on the trip we didn't use tents, we put down a ground cloth, blew up our air mattress, and rolled out our sleeping bag. I knew the night temps would be cool, so I bought a ground cloth that had an integrated space blanket. These are great for reflecting your body heat back to you. I always knew when my sleeping bag/air mattress was slipping off the space blanket, because my feet would get cold. David's sleeping bags were rated for 20-degree temperatures, but don't think you can sleep in your jammies when it gets cold. I would put on 2 pairs of socks, 2 layers on my legs, 4 or 5 layers on my torso, a ski cap on my head, and I was still cold on the sub-freezing nights.

David's boat was built using thin wood strips held together by I don't know what, and then he covered the boat with layers of fiberglass. As any fiberglass boat owner knows, you don't leave river-edge without some duct tape. Once the boat was dry, we applied tape over the cracks and the hole. That was all that was needed to get us down the rest of the river. A more permanent repair will require some fiberglass, which will make a good repair, but it will leave it with the look of a fiberglass boat that has seen some river time.

If you are doing primitive camping as we were, fire making skills are important. David, with his many years of camping experience, could build a fire in the desert during a rainstorm. He would find kindling materials, and start the fire with a lighter, if he had to, he could use more primitive lighting technology, but he is getting old. Then he would slowly add more kindling, some bigger sticks, and then even bigger sticks. He could have a roaring fire in 20 minutes. Me? I have fire making skills as well. But they come from burning brush as I clear land around the farm. I don't bother with all of that kindling and slowly building a fire nonsense. I find a gallon of diesel fuel works just fine, and if it doesn't, 2 gallons surely will!



Dave and Riverside Campfire

Overall, it was a good trip for David and me. We typically paddled around 12 miles per day. A lot of beautiful scenery, some wildlife (sans alligators), good camping experiences, and a good time. We didn't see any other boaters, a few people on the riverbanks waved to us, but no one offered a beer or a hamburger off the grill. Although some of the nights were cold, the days were pleasantly warm, usually in the 50s, sometimes in the 70s. I learned some good camping skills, and I taught David a few things, oh like, if you are going on a multiday canoe trip, don't ask a whiney, surly, know-it-all; especially if he is related, or someone who asks "Wahda ya mean there's no toilets?"

Would I do it again? Probably not, I liked the adventure of it, the camping was fun, and I would do another multiday trip with David, but a little warmer would be nice, and I like a little more adrenaline in my boating, just having a few more class II rapids would have made it more interesting. But I wouldn't want it to get too interesting, I think running a class III or IV river with a loaded sea kayak could be challenging for those of us used to the maneuverability of whitewater kayaks. So, if you are thinking about winter boating in Florida, keep in mind that Northern Florida in January can get a little chilly!

Rob Hammond, Oakland, Maryland

Slip Fest
April 17th -19th, 2026
Registration is now open!

Join us at  **SLIP
FEST**  **APRIL
17-19th**

More information and sign up here: [Slip Fest — Keel-Haulers Canoe Club](#)

Get ready to paddle hard, play harder, and celebrate the wild spirit of whitewater at Slip Fest 2026! Join us this April at McConnells Mill State Park, Pennsylvania, for an **action-packed weekend of whitewater racing, camping, vendors, and gear raffles.**

Whether you're a racer, paddler, or outdoor enthusiast, this festival is the perfect way to kick off the spring paddling season. Don't miss the excitement, community, and adventure—mark your calendars now for Slip Fest 2026!

[For quick updates follow our Facebook page](#)

DID YOU KNOW?

100% of our profits from the festival, raffles, merch sales and race registration go towards river safety, access, members river classes and conservation?

Learn more about our impact here!

FRIDAY EVENING

Potluck dinner featuring a main dish provided by Keel-haulers, and a community bonfire.

SATURDAY

Whitewater race on Lower Slippery Rock Creek, breakfast and dinner available, gear raffles with the award ceremony, and a community bonfire.

SUNDAY

Independent whitewater trips on Upper and Lower Slippery Rock Creek & other local rivers.

The Race: Saturday, April 18th, 2026, on Lower Slippery Rock Creek (As conditions seem fit)

The race will take place on Lower Slippery Rock Creek, between Eckert Bridge and Harris Bridge. The race course takes place on a [Class II Whitewater section as defined by American Whitewater](#), recommended for experienced paddlers. Race classes are available for kayaks, canoes, rafts, and SUPs. The safety team will be placed throughout the course at major rapids.

Proposed 2026 Trip Schedule By Jacki Zevenbergen

[2026 trip/release/event schedule as of 02/13/2026 - Google Sheets](#)

Please review this proposed schedule and reach out to me or Cliff to volunteer to organize at least 1 trip during 2026. We could especially use organizers for pre-planned, weekend Slip, LOYO and Stony trips. In addition to myself and Cliff, there are plenty of members who will mentor you through the trip organizer process if you are new to organizing. Please pay it forward to the club for the support you received as a new boater or the subsidized training you received from the club.

Jacki vpkeelhaulers@gmail.com

Cliff cwire64@sbcglobal.net

Purple = release, Red = event, Black = trip

March	15	Feeling Lucky? St Paddles Day - Slip	13-21	Kristina McCrone
March	21 & 22	Tohican Release Tentative		
March	21 & 22	Slipping into Spring	13-21	Jacki Zevenbergen
March	21 & 22	New River Dries Release (Tentative)	32	
March	28,29	Slip (Connie backup)	13-21	Bob Koenig
April	4,5	Stony Release	21	
April	4,5	North Branch Potomac Release and Race	18	
April	12	Slip	13-21	Mike Gillam
April	17-19	Slipfest	13-21	Rachel Faber
April		Cheat and Potomac South Branch Watersheds - Casselman, Dry Fork, Upper Big Sandy or Little Sandy	18	
April	3rd sat	Upper Yough Release Tentative	32	Expert level - needs organizer
April		Middle Fork and Tygert	29	Expert level - needs organizer
April	24	Scenarios class		Duffy - Full
April	4th sat	Upper Yough Release Tentative	32	Expert level - needs organizer
April	25	Mad Hatters Race		Lake Metroparks
April	25	Cuyahoga Falls Kayak Fest	28	Need tent setup organizer
April	25?	Cheat Canyon Paddle (Sat) and Race Clinic (Sun) WV	26	Expert level - needs organizer
May	1st fri,sat,Mon	Upper Yough	32	Expert level - needs organizer
May	1-3	Cheat Fest and Race (include Narrows or similar trip?)	18-26	Laura Vaughn
May	2,3	Stony Release	21	
May	2,3	N BR Potomac Release	18	Mike Bailey
May	2 or 3	Slip	13-21	

May	9	Grand River	6	Mark Spang
May	9,10	Cheat Narrows (WV) or Casselman (PA)	18	
May	9, 10	Cheat and Potomac South Branch Watersheds - Dry Fork, Upper Big Sandy or Little Sandy	21	
May	10	Slip	13-21	
May		Intro to Cheat Canyon	26	Expert level - needs organizer
May	8 & 11	Upper Yough Release Tentative	32	Expert level - needs organizer
May	15	Upper Yough Release Tentative	32	Expert level - needs organizer
May	15-17	Stony Rendezvous and Race	21	Benscreek CC
May	During fest	Lower Stony or comparable		Chris Curley
May	During fest	Stony Canyon or comparable	21	Kristina McCrone
May	16, 7pm	Stony Potluck Dinner		Anne Little/Kristina McCrone
May	16	NEO Ohio Outdoor Adventure Fest		Tim Eberling
May	16,17	N BR Potomac Release	18	
June	16,17	Dry Fork with North Branch Fall Back		Cliff Wire
May	23	Stony Release Memorial Day Weekend	21	
May	24	Slip	13-21	Meesh Crum
May	23, 24 or 25	Loyo	23	
May	23, 24 or 25	Upper Yough Release Tentative	32	Expert level - needs organizer
May	30,31	Stony Release	21	
May	30,31	LOYO	23	
June		Wednesdays on the Water (Lock 29 beginner WW)	11	Doug Waltman
June	6	Savage	26	Expert level - needs organizer
June	6, 7	TRPC Slip Clinic (to be confirmed)		TRPC
June		Cheat Canyon	26	
June		Cheat Narrows (WV) or Casselman (PA)	18	
June	5 & 8	Upper Yough (all Fri and Monday plus last 2 Saturdays)	32	Expert level - needs organizer
June	13,14	Stony Release	21	
June		Rescue rodeo		
June		Upper New		
June		New River Gorge	26	Expert level - needs organizer
June	27,28	New River Dries Release (Tentative)	32	Expert level - needs organizer
June	27,28	Stony Release		
June , July	27-4	Week of Rivers CCC (NC)		Jacki Z

July	5	Savage	26	Expert level - needs organizer
July	5	New River Dries Release (Tentative)	32	Expert level - needs organizer
July		Wednesdays on the Water (Lock 29 beginner WW)	11	Doug Waltman
July		Cheat Canyon	26	Expert level - needs organizer
July		Cheat Narrows (WV) or Casselman (PA)	18	
July	11,12	New River Dries Release (Tentative)	32	Expert level - needs organizer
July	17-18	Blazing Paddles		Tim Eberling
July		Upper Yough (All Mon, Fri, Sat) ?	32	Expert level - needs organizer
July	11,12 & 25,26	Stony Release	21	
July	18	New River Dries Release (Tentative)	32	Expert level - needs organizer
July	19	LOYO	23	Dave Roush
July		Middle Yough	12	
July		Upper New		
July		New River Gorge	26	Expert level - needs organizer
July	25,26	LOYO	23	Matt Fredmonsky - tentative may be following week
August		Wednesdays on the Water (Lock 29 beginner WW)	11	Doug Waltman
August	1,2	Turkey Bash (to be confirmed)		TRPC
August		Upper Yough (All Mon, Fri, Sat) ?	32	Expert level - needs organizer
August	8,9, 22,23	Stony Release	21	Not likely to have water
August	8,9 or 15,16?	Upper New		
August	8,9 or 15,16?	New River Gorge	26	
August	8,9 or 15,16?	Summer Picnic OhioPyle (tentative)		
August	8,9 or 15,16?	LOYO	23	
August	8,9 or 15,16?	Middle Yough	12	
August	15	Whiskey Island Paddle fest		
August	22,23	LOYO	23	Dave Roush
August	22,23	Middle Yough	12	
August	22,23	Upper New		
August	22,23	New River Gorge	26	Expert level - needs organizer
September		Wednesdays on the Water (Lock 29 beginner WW)	11	Doug Waltman
September		Upper Yough (all Fri and Monday plus first 2 Saturdays)	32	Expert level - needs organizer
September	5,6,19,20	Stony Release	21	
September	11-14	Upper Gauley Release	33	Expert level - needs organizer

September	11-14	Lower Gauley Release	27	Expert level - needs organizer
September	12,13	LOYO	23	
September	12,13	Middle Yough	12	
September	18-20	Upper New		
September	18-20	New River Gorge	26	Expert level - needs organizer
September	17-21	Upper Gauley Release	33	Expert level - needs organizer
September	17-21	Lower Gauley Release	27	Expert level - needs organizer
September	17-20	Gauley Fest		
September	26	Savage	26	Expert level - needs organizer
September	26,27	Upper New		
September	26,27	New River Gorge	26	Expert level - needs organizer
September	25-28	Upper Gauley Release	33	Expert level - needs organizer
September	25-28	Lower Gauley Release	27	Expert level - needs organizer
October		Upper Yough (first 2 Fri and Monday plus first saturday)	32	Expert level - needs organizer
October	2-5	Upper Gauley Release	33	Expert level - needs organizer
October	2-5	Lower Gauley Release	27	Expert level - needs organizer
October	3,4,17,18	Stony Release	21	
October		Slip		
October		Annual Election		
October	10,11	Fall Colors Trip - WV (Gauley, NRG, Upper New)		Harlie and Seth
October	10,11	Upper Gauley Release	33	Expert level - needs organizer
October	10,11	Lower Gauley Release	27	Expert level - needs organizer
October	12	Holiday Paddle		
October		LOYO	23	
October		Middle Yough	12	
October	17,18?	Upper New		
October	18	New River Gorge - Bridge Day	26	No Club Trip
October	17,18	Upper Gauley Release	33	Expert level - needs organizer
October	17,18	Lower Gauley Release	27	Expert level - needs organizer
October		Slip		
November	7,8	Tohican Release		Doug Waltman with Lehigh Club
November		LOYO	23	
November		Slip	13-21	

November	21	Holiday Party		
	Future ideas			
April	3-6	Spring Break TN, NC, WV	22-32	
April		Tallulah - Cheoah GA, NC	30-34	Expert level - needs organizer

Another Scam Reminder

Received this spam email this past week. Please don't fall for this.

Robin Shell

From:pdency37833@gmail.com

To:peetzaguy@aol.com

Fri, Feb 27 at 8:28 AM

Kelly,

I trust you're doing okay today. I wanted to draw your attention towards a great cause, I'm currently unavailable & I need your assistance on my behalf for "Keel-Haulers Canoe Club".

Can you assist with Voucher donations Aid to Veterans at Hospice care via the Angel Wings for Veterans.. Please let me know if you're available to assist so I can send further details.

Sincerely

Robin Shell
KHCC

Raid Erie Free Annual Event July 31st-August 2, 2026

RAID ERIE is a free annual community event. The organizers are working to build community through paddle/row/sail small craft events in the Lake Erie region.
Check out the website: <https://www.raiderie.net/>

March Trips and Events

Calendar of Events — Keel-Haulers Canoe Club

21 MAR, SAT

All day, Slipping into Spring (Day 1/2), Rose Point Park Cabins & Camping, 8775 Old, US-422, New Castle, PA 16101

All day, Tohican Release tentative (Day 1/2)

22 MAR, SUN

All day, Slipping into Spring (Day 2/2), Rose Point Park Cabins & Camping, 8775 Old, US-422, New Castle, PA 16101

All day, Tohican Release tentative (Day 2/2)

28 MAR, SAT AND 29 MAR, SUN

All day, Slippery Rock Creek trip

4 APR, SAT AND 5 APR, SUN

All day, NB Potomac Release

All day, stony release

2025-2026 Club Officers

President:	Robin Shell	Clevelandkeelhaulers@gmail.com
VP:	Jacki Zevenbergen	VPkeelhaulers@gmail.com
Secretary:	Meesh Crum	
Treasurer:	Michael Duvall	

Meetings: Approximately 4 meetings per year. Please check the website for the next meeting time and location.

Membership: \$20 per year. Membership Chairman: Rachel Faber, membershipkeelhauler@gmail.com

New memberships, renewals, change in address or phone, mail to the Treasurer: Keel-hauler Canoe Club, 2215 Atkins Ave, Lakewood, OH 44107.

Any opinions, views or recommendations expressed in the articles in this Newsletter are those of the article's author. Printing these articles in no way implies approval or advocacy of any of the opinions, views or recommendations by the Keel-Haulers Canoe Club or any of its Officers, editor, or members. Water sports are a potentially dangerous activity. Keel-Haulers Canoe Club recommends and encourages all of its members and others to abide by all laws, regulations and recommended practices when engaging in such activity. Each member is responsible for assessing her/his own abilities and for not engaging in activities which are beyond those limits. Members assume any and all risk when choosing to participate in any activity and the Keel-Haulers Canoe Club is not responsible for any damage resulting from such participation.

KHCC WEB PAGE URL: www.keelhauler.com

Please consider writing a trip report, an article, or sending a photo for the next newsletter! The deadline for the April 2026 issue of the newsletter is 3/23/2026. Please send articles and/or pictures to:

Kelly Miller at peetzaguy@aol.com.

Keel-Hauler Ka-news

MARCH 2026

Kelly Miller, Editor

