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**Vermont Economy
takes hit from loss of
spring event at
Jamaica State Park**

Press Release

Local Economy To Be Impacted by Change to Recreational Dam Release Schedule at Ball Mountain Dam in Jamaica, Vermont

September 26th, 2008

The Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) have announced changes to the spring 2009 dam release schedule on the West River in Jamaica, VT that will severely impact whitewater rafting, kayaking and canoeing. After over thirty years of scheduled releases in the last calendar week of April, the ACOE is moving the scheduled release two weeks earlier in the season to April 11th and 12th. This change will significantly impact public enjoyment of the West River, since Jamaica State Park, which borders the West River, will be closed during the release. The Park serves the vital role of providing river access, camping, shuttle opportunities, and a meeting place for recreational boaters.

The change is expected to negatively impact the local economy, which benefits from the visitation of hundreds of paddlers normally attracted to the releases. It has been estimated that hundreds of thousands of dollars are generated by this spring release weekend. Beneficiaries include restaurants, recreational boating businesses, rafting companies, Jamaica State Park and the local schools - which offer parking for a fee next to the river.

Moving the releases to an earlier date will make commercial rafting difficult or impossible based on weather and access challenges.

Bruce Lessels of Zoar Outdoors suggested that the decision to impact public recreation could not have come at a worse time, "We have heard that tourism in Vermont has been impacted by higher fuel costs and reduced spending. These are not the economic times for local businesses to get hit with the withdrawal of a huge stimulus from such a large event".

The ACOE sites concerns regarding interference with the downstream migration of young salmon as the justification for the change. Paddlers question the validity of this concern because salmon are adapted to the natural moderately high flows that regularly occur in late April. In fact, flows suitable for paddling are just as likely to occur in late April as they are in early April. Based on hydrology records, there is a 75% chance the river will flow at a level suitable for paddling even if the ACOE does not plan a release.

David Goff, a recreational kayaker from Massachusetts is frustrated, "We can't understand why the Corps has decided to massively impact public recreation by ending a release that would happen

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naturally 3 out of 4 years anyway. It just doesn't make sense, and they are not explaining their decision.”

“The impact of the normal spring release on Salmon is very hypothetical, because normal rainfall and/or snowmelt could cause the Army Corp to make a similar size release during our preferred weekend, nullifying any supposed benefits that they are trying to achieve for the Salmon”, added Charles Still a local paddler that has conducted hydrological analyses of the river.

Representatives from American Whitewater and New England Flow requested the studies that the ACOE is basing their changes on by September 25th, and have had no response. Paddlers will gather this weekend on September 27th for the single remaining fall release.

The aforementioned groups, along with individuals and other organizations have put together a website www.friendsofthewestriver.org, outlining the present issues at hand. The groups are working collectively to restore historically scheduled flows to the river. More information on this topic can be received by contacting Charles Still at chuck@friendsofthewestriver.org or Kevin@amwhitewater.org