

## Planning Your Float Trip: Safety First!

Paddling the Wolf River in a canoe or kayak can be a wonderful experience. The quality of that experience, however, will depend largely on your forethought and planning. Your trip will be much more enjoyable and comfortable if you bring the appropriate clothing and gear. Also, any river trip involves an element of risk, and it is absolutely necessary to be prepared for emergencies. Please read the following rules and recommendations, and consider them carefully in planning your trip.

- Participants in Wolf River Conservancy float trips will be required to wear an approved Personal Flotation Device (PFD) while on the water; these are provided by the outfitters along with boat and paddle for those renting. Paddlers arranging their own trips are required by state law to have an approved Personal Flotation Device for each person on board; children 12 years old or younger are required to wear a PFD at all times while on the water. For state regulations regarding Personal Flotation Devices, see page 6 of the [Tennessee Boating Safety Guide](#).
- Familiarity with basic boating safety rules is strongly advised, especially for those arranging their own trips. Please read Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency's [Safety Checklist for Canoeing and Paddle Sports](#). More information can be found at the TWRA [Boating Safety Education website](#) and in the [Tennessee Boating Safety Guide](#).
- Always assess your skill level. Although the Wolf is rated as a class one river (no whitewater), conditions can rapidly change. It is imperative that paddlers realistically evaluate their experience and abilities in regard to an anticipated trip. Paddlers of any skill level should check both [weather conditions](#) and [water level](#) prior to departure. WRC recommends that only highly skilled paddlers float any section of the river if the [gauge at LaGrange](#) reads 8 ft. or above. Beginners are advised to accompany someone more experienced and not to attempt a trip on the river alone. WRC member trips are well-suited for beginners, depending on the river section, because they are led by experienced paddlers familiar with the route who provide limited basic instruction at the beginning of the trip.
- Always bring plenty of drinking water, regardless of the season.
- Always bring necessary allergy medications and emergency supplies such as a first aid kit, prescription medications, a change of clothes, flashlight, whistle, compass, rain gear, cell phone, sunscreen, insect repellent, snacks, etc, and a waterproof "dry" bag to hold these items. Local outfitters are a good source for other suggestions as well as ready-made kits and supplies; these can also be found online.
- Always tell someone where you are going and when you expect to return.

- Always check [weather conditions](#) and [water level](#) before your trip. Do not attempt a trip if the forecast indicates severe weather such as a thunderstorm. Do not attempt a trip during flood conditions. For [river gauge](#) readings of 8 ft. or above, WRC recommends that only highly skilled paddlers attempt a float trip.
- Always wear clothes and shoes suitable for conditions. During cold weather, it is essential to bring a full set of rain gear and at least one change of clothes in a dry bag in order to prevent hypothermia. Participants in cold weather WRC trips will be *required* to bring a change of clothes in a dry bag and a full set of rain gear.
  - Cold weather clothing suggestions: Neoprene booties, synthetic (e.g., fleece) or wool fabrics worn in layers, a hat, gloves. Avoid cotton clothing. Avoid waders or rubber boots which could fill with water.
  - Warm weather clothing suggestions: Neoprene booties, water shoes which fit securely, layered clothing, including synthetic fabrics, and a hat with a brim or visor. Avoid flip-flops and crocs which can easily slip off the foot, rubber boots, and waders. A change of clothes in a dry bag is recommended. Be sure to bring sunscreen and insect repellent as well.
- Other items to consider: food and snacks, binoculars, camera, field guides. Again, if you want to keep it dry, store it in a waterproof bag.
- Participants in WRC member trips must sign a [canoe trip waiver form](#) which can be found on our website. Please download, print and sign a form for each participant and bring the signed releases with you to give to your trip leader. Paddlers 18 and older must sign a waiver. Participants under 18 must be accompanied by an adult who has legal responsibility. The responsible adult boater(s) must ensure their on board minors are capable and strong enough for the duration of the trip.

***ENJOY YOUR TRIP, AND BE SAFE!***