Dear Superintendent Foust,

Congratulations on your recent appointment as Superintendent of Dinosaur National Monument (DINO). Utah is a fantastic place to call home and raise a family. Moreover, the Uinta - Flaming Gorge - DINO area is one of the best-kept secrets in the state.

The purpose of this letter is threefold: an introduction to the American Packrafting Association (APA), a thank you for all the work DINO has done to enable the use of packrafts in the Monument, and lastly, a request to review and modify one of the current DINO boating regulations to allow for foot and paddle backcountry trips with packrafts.

The APA is a dynamic group of wilderness explorers who take small lightweight (<10lbs) inflatable boats on backcountry trips that involve combinations of backpacking, hiking, canyoneering, biking and paddling. Founded in 2012 with a rapidly growing membership of over 900 individuals, the APA’s mission is to promote conservation of river resources and safe, low impact, packrafting practices. Although the technology used to manufacture these durable whitewater boats is relatively new, the use of portable, lightweight boats on wilderness expeditions is a very old tradition that dates back to man’s first forays into the west.

Packrafts are used throughout the world, on all types of water, by all manner and ability of people. They represent a shift in river travel from heavy, high impact, raft trips requiring extensive infrastructure (boat ramps, metal kitchen boxes, bug tents, chairs, hibachis etc.) to small,
lightweight, low impact, leave no trace wilderness travel that requires essentially no infrastructure, not even roads.

The APA is actively engaged with land and river managers to adapt existing river regulations to accommodate packrafts. Packrafting in national parks, monuments, and wilderness areas is becoming commonplace and is widely recognized as a great way to connect people with the natural environment. The APA has been working with several national parks, notably Grand Canyon and Canyonlands, to develop packrafting specific regulations (see the attached).

Current DINO boating regulations do permit the use of packrafts on the standard river paddling trips that begin at the Gates of Lodore (Green), Deerlodge Park (Yampa), or Rainbow Park (Split Mountain Daily) and end at the Split Mountain boat ramp. A variety of sensible packrafting specific regulations have also been developed. A recent APA trip with DINO River Manager Kelly Kager was a great success and enjoyed by all. We are very grateful for your willingness to evaluate and incorporate these new boats into the river management plans in DINO.

The existing regulations and infrastructure are appropriate and necessary for standard raft trips that require hardened boat ramps to minimize and contain impacts. But for packrafters, this is unnecessary. Packrafting is by nature, low impact, and river access typically dispersed. DINO’s restriction greatly limits the types of packraft trips one can conduct in DINO. The primary reason for using a packraft is to combine foot and paddle trips in a wilderness environment. For example,
a three segment trip in DINO that involves backpacking down Pot Creek to the Green River, paddling the lower Green followed by an exit hike up Jones Hole canyon would make for a fantastic 2-3 day weekend (something appealing to parents who rarely get extended time off from family duties). These shorter trips would also allow folks to make better use of cancelation permits since they can be put together with short notice.

The current DINO River Management Plan (RMP) does not mention or appear to imply a restriction on alternate launch and recovery sites. The Superintendents Compendium does specifically addresses this issue under Section 3.8(a)(2) and grants permission for DINO to approve alternate access on a case-by-case basis, relevant text underlined:

**SECTION 3.8 – VESSEL OPERATIONS**

(a)(2) The following areas are designated vessel launch and recovery sites: Cross Mountain parking lot, Deerlodge boat ramp, Lodore boat ramp, Echo Park boat ramp, Rainbow Park boat ramp, Split Mt. boat ramp and Placer Point day-use area. The Echo Park boat ramp is for administrative/emergency vessel launching and recovery only, as well as for play permit access to Steamboat Rock for hikers and rock climbers. While a permit is not required for launching vessels at the Placer Point day-use area, the launching of rafts and motorized vessels are prohibited as the site lacks an adequate boat ramp capable of handling larger, heavier craft.

Launch and recovery sites are designated on river permits. Only those sites identified on the permit may be used.

The Superintendent or designee may temporarily allow the launching and recovery of vessels at other locations upon request.

**Determination:** Launching and recovering vessels outside of designated areas can lead to unauthorized boating activities, bank erosion, impact to sensitive plants, parking issues and user conflicts. The Superintendent may approve requests to launch and recover vessels outside these designated areas on a case-by-case basis.

This sort of request process is not mentioned in the current DINO Boating Information and Regulations booklet. Thus, it is hoped an extensive review and revision of the 1979 RMP would not be necessary, just a reinterpretation and or modification of the annual compendium followed by an update to the Boating Information booklet. As far as backpacking and camping, the current regulations would work well for packrafters and need no modification. At large camping is permitted so long as it is at least an 1/8th mile from the Green or Yampa and 100ft from any water source or cultural site. If the RMP does need to be modified, please consider this a formal request for a review of the 1979 plan.

In practice, packrafting trips in DINO that involve both foot and river travel would be a very limited activity given the difficulty in securing a river permit. It is our hope that for the lucky few who do win the lottery, they would be able to work with DINO to put together a trip of a lifetime that travels through some of the more spectacular and seldom visited parts of the Monument.
Again, many thanks for the work you have already done to enable the use of packrafts in DINO. We look forward to working with you to review the feasibility of incorporating alternate put-ins and take-outs in the DINO river regulations. Do let us know how we may be of further assistance.

To move this forward, we propose scheduling a meeting to review the issues. Would a day in early December work with your schedule (1st or 5th)?

Best regards,

Brad Meiklejohn, President, Eagle River, AK

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