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Cater Pots

Mangum Pottery

The New River offers scenic summer fun

All summer long, people love to hop in innertubes, rafts, kayaks, canoes, fishing boats and other craft for a relaxing trip through the New River's pastoral corridor.

The gentle New River, thought to be the second oldest in the world, has two forks that flow through Ashe County from headwaters in neighboring Watauga County. The North Fork and South Fork converge in the Piney Creek area of Alleghany County, and the "big river," as locals call it, heads north in and out of Virginia. With mostly flat water and class 1 rapids, the New graciously accommodates paddlers and floaters of all ages and skill levels, or people who just want to wade or fish.

A number of outfitters are available to rent the craft of your choice and provide shuttles. New River State Park offers launch areas, camping, picnicking areas and other amenities. Trips range from a few hours to overnights.

The river in this area doesn't accommodate motor boats, and boats with keels are not recom-

mended. Innertubes are not recommended in especially low water.

Occasional class 2 and 3 rapids dot the river and are more frequent after heavy rains. A popular stretch for more experienced paddlers is near Cox's Chapel Road just over the Grayson County, Va. line.

North Carolina law requires canoes, kayaks, jonboats or any other craft to carry a PFD (personal floatation device, or life preserver) for each person in the vessel, said Game Warden Nathan Cox. Boaters under age 13 must have them on at all times.

An exception is made for innertubes, he said. They are considered to be PFDs themselves and additional devices are not required by law.

"I recommend that no matter what you're doing in the water, having one on at all times is a good idea," Cox said.

Much of the land along the river is private property. However, launch, picnic and camping areas are available at commercial outfitters and at designated

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The New River Outdoor Guide

Publisher: Coby LaRue, publisher@alleghanynews.com

Special Publications Writer: Zachary Weaver, allevents@skybest.com

Production and Design: Sarah Maynor, ads@alleghanynews.com

This guide was produced by Alleghany News Specialty Publications in conjunction with the Alleghany County Tourism Development Authority. P.O. Box 8, Sparta, NC 28675 • 336.372-8999.

For publication schedule, rates & deadlines:
publisher@alleghanynews.com

