

Keel-hauler's Ka-news



JANUARY, 2026



President's Message From Robin Shell

What a great way to wrap up the year! Thank you to everyone who came out to our holiday party! It was awesome to see so many familiar faces off the river, sharing food, stories, and a few laughs about swims that *definitely* weren't our fault. Events like these are a reminder that our club is just as much about community as it is about whitewater. (Special thank you's go out to Jacki Zevenbergen, Meesh Crum, Loretta Mowry Given, Kristen Walters Maag (a special thank you for photographing the evening) and Brian Smart for all their help in planning a great party.

While winter has officially settled in and the air (and water) temperatures have dropped, paddling season isn't over yet. Some of us are still embracing dry suits, hand warmers, and that unmistakable post-paddle glow that only comes from cold-weather boating. There's something special about quiet winter runs, leafless banks, and having the river mostly to ourselves.

If you're heading out, remember to dress for immersion, check flows and weather carefully, and paddle with a solid crew. Cold water ups the stakes, but it also sharpens skills and builds confidence for the season ahead.

For those choosing to stay warm on shore, don't worry—spring will be here before we know it. Until then, keep your skills sharp with pool sessions.

Thanks again to everyone who made the holiday party a success. Stay warm, stay safe, and whether you're paddling or cheering from dry land, we'll see you on (or off) the river soon.

Robin Shell
President

Veep's Views
By Jacki Zevenbergen

I want to thank everyone who attended the Holiday Party. We had great food and wonderful companionship as always. Kelleigh Miller won the Kid's Kayak and paddle. That raffle raised \$45. Chris won the 50/50 raffle; the club's share was \$75. Michael Duvall bid the highest on the blue picture and Chris won the bid for the green picture. This raised \$70 for the club. We are grateful to everyone who participated in the raffles. Raffle proceeds covered the cost of the party. The kayak was donated by Falls Outdoor Company. They have been a great supporter of our club. We're sad that they're closing their store. Please support their closeout sale.

Last month, I mentioned that I personally want to focus on getting more of the trips and events organized early so people can get them on their calendars. With this in mind, I created a tentative schedule based on the 2020 trip schedule, currently published release schedules, and tentative schedules based on last year's releases. I shared this with our trip coordinator, Cliff Wire. A copy of a very rough draft schedule is available in this newsletter. Please review it 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.

We still have 2 January and 2 February pool sessions and kayak soccer at Meyers Lake YMCA. We have plenty of space in this pool (20 spots) so I hope to see many old and new friends joining us. Be sure to register online. You can register for one at a time or multiple sessions. We need an average of 11 people to pay per session to cover the cost of the pool. We've had an average of 8 so far. Now that we play soccer at UA on Tuesday nights, it has been a bit more challenging to get people to join us in Canton. If you live in the Canton area, please join us and consider introducing a new friend to kayaking. I really like this pool and hope we can continue to rent it in the future.

I want to thank all of our members for paying their dues. Those funds allow us to donate to organizations that help keep the waters we paddle clean and access available. Please encourage paddling buddies who are not members to support our efforts by becoming dues paying members.

If you have any questions or comments, please reach out to me at VPkeelhaulers@gmail.com.

Jacki

**Keel-hauler Treasurer's Report
December 22, 2025
From Michael Duvall**

Checking \$6767.84

**Keel-hauler Canoe Club Meeting Minutes
Thursday, December 18, 2025
By Meesh Crum**

Galt Park Lodge, 2000 Oneida Road, Cuyahoga Falls, OH 44221

07:24 PM - Call to Order, President Robin Shell

1. Welcome and over view
 - a. Twenty-four members counted in attendance
 - b. Thank you for support throughout the year.
 - i. Decoration committee headed by Jacki Zevenbergen, Brian Smart, Kristin Walters-Maag, Loretta Given, and Meesh Crum
 - c. Invitation to join: \$20 annual membership fee mostly goes to conservation. Events like Slip Fest raise money for other benefits such as insurance at club events, festivals, free/reduced cost roll practices, instruction clinics and safety courses.
2. Treasurer's report:
 - a. We have money, we need more
 - b. Please make bids on raffles
3. Upcoming Opportunities- Brian Smart
 - a. Boat Show January 15-18, 2026
 - i. We need volunteers willing to help with any of the following:
 1. Pool demonstrations
 2. Announcing
 3. Table/booth
 - b. Slip Fest April 17-19, 2026
 - i. If you are interested in volunteering, contact Rachel Faber

4. Raffle Winners

- i. 50/50 Raffle - New member Chris
- ii. Kid's kayak, courtesy Falls Outdoors - Kelleigh Miller

7:40 PM - Meeting adjourned and merriment was had

**Keep Our River Ratings Alive: A Community
Verification Project
From Domenic Bentz**

The beginning of a new year is a natural time to reflect: what's working, what's drifting, and where a small, steady effort could make a big difference.

One of the most valuable resources on the Keel-Haulers website is the River Rating System. People use it to choose trips, to plan progression, and to compare runs across regions. For newer paddlers in particular, it can feel like a roadmap—something you reference when you're deciding what to step up to next.

But rivers don't stay still.

Channels shift. Floods move rocks and wood. A single season can change a line, a hazard, or the "feel" of a section at a given level. And even when a river hasn't changed much, our understanding of it can—especially as the club's collective experience grows and evolves. Right now, we have a strong rating framework... but we don't have a consistent way for paddlers to report back what they're seeing. If we want the River Rating System to stay useful (and trustworthy), we need to treat it like what it is: a living community resource.

A quick reminder: what the KHCC ratings are (and aren't)

Our river ratings are intended to reflect the paddler skill level required to attempt an entire section—not just the difficulty of one rapid. Conditions and water levels matter tremendously, and ratings are never a substitute for scouting and honest self-assessment.

Also, remember that the KHCC system is intentionally more granular than the standard International Class I–VI scale. Small changes in the KHCC number can still represent meaningful differences:

- ±1 point: very similar
- ±2 points: noticeable difference
- ±3 points: meaningful difference
- ±5 points: profound difference

(That granularity is a feature—when it's maintained.)

What we're starting: a simple feedback + verification inbox.

To make it easy for everyone to contribute, I've set up a dedicated email inbox where paddlers can submit river rating feedback and "verification" notes.

You don't need to be an expert, and you don't need a perfect argument. What we need most is a steady stream of real-world observations from paddlers running rivers at real levels.

Here's the simplest way to help:

- 1) Pick a river section you paddled recently from the River Ratings spreadsheet.
- 2) Note the level you ran it at (use the closest listed level if it isn't exact).
- 3) Send a quick email saying either:
 - "I agree this rating still feels right," OR
 - "I disagree—here's what felt different and what I'd change."

Even an "I agree" email is valuable. It tells us the entry is being actively confirmed by people on the water.

Long-term goal: keep the list current through regular verification.

This part is a proposed maintenance rule we can adopt as a club once we've built some momentum: Starting in 2030, the goal is for every listing to have at least one verification email within the previous 5 years. If a river section hasn't been verified in 5 years, it should be removed (or archived) until someone runs it again and confirms it.

That approach keeps the list evolving alongside the natural world—and prevents us from quietly carrying outdated information forward.

How to submit feedback (copy/paste template)

To: khrierrating@gmail.com

Subject: River Rating Feedback – [River Name]

Body:

River: [River Name]

Section: [Section Name]

Level: [Level when you ran it — use the closest level listed in the spreadsheet, or suggest a new one]

Rating on site today: [KHCC number]

Your feedback:

- [] I agree this rating still feels correct.
- [] I disagree. I think it should be: [new KHCC number]

Why: [1–5 sentences is plenty. Examples: "more continuous than the rivers just below it," "rescue felt harder," "hazards/wood made it feel more serious," "at this level it was pushier than expected," etc.]

A safety note, because it always matters:

Ratings are a starting point—not a green light. Water levels are critical, conditions can change fast, and nothing replaces scouting and good judgment. If you're stepping into Class III or above, the club strongly encourages taking an accredited Swiftwater Rescue Course.

Closing thought:

There's a famous saying from Heraclitus that paddlers frequently reference: "No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man." The paddler changes—and the river changes. Let's make sure our River Rating System reflects that reality.

Thanks for helping keep this resource accurate, relevant, and useful for the next generation of Keel-Hauler's.

Proposed 2026 Trip Schedule By Jacki Zevenbergen

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

Month	Date(s)	event	River Rating	Organizer
Feb		Slip	13-21	
Feb	7	Little Miami Downriver Race		Eric Bartl
March		Spring Break TN, NC, WV	22-32	
March		Salt (AZ)	22-32	
March		New River Dries	30	
March	14,15 ?	Tohican Release Tentative		
March	21 & 22	Slipping into Spring	13-21	Jacki Z
March	28,29	Slip	13-21	
April	4,5	Slip	13-21	
April		Tallulah - Cheoah GA, NC	30-34	

April	4,5	Stony Release 1	21	
April	4,5	North Branch Potomac Release 1	18	
April		Cheat and Potomac South Branch Watersheds - potomac, stony, casselman, Dry Fork, Upper Big Sandy or Little Sandy	18	
April		Grand River	6	
April	3rd sat	Upper Yough Release Tentative	32	
April	11	Slip	13-21	
April	17-19	Slipfest, Race, Swap	13-21	Rachel Faber
April	18,19	Stony Release 2 (conflicts with Slipfest)	21	
April	18,19	N BR Potomac Release 2 (conflict with Slipfest)	18	
April		Middle Fork and Tygert	29	
April	24	Scenarios class		
April	4th sat	Upper Yough Release Tentative	32	
April		Mad Hatters Race		
April	25?	Cuyahoga Falls Kayak Fest	28	
April	25?	Cheat Canyon Paddle (Sat) and Race Clinic (Sun)	26	
May	1-3	Cheat Fest and Race (include Narrows or similar tr	18-26	Laura V
May	1st fri,sat,Mon	Upper Yough	32	
May	2,3	Stony Release	21	
May	2,3	N BR Potomac Release	18	
May		Slip	13-21	

May		Cheat Narrows (WV) or Casselman (PA)	18	
May	8 & 11	Upper Yough Release Tentative	32	
May		Cheat and Potomac South Branch Watersheds - potomac, stony, casselman, Dry Fork, Upper Big Sandy or Little Sandy	21	
May	15	Upper Yough Release Tentative	32	
May		Slip	13-21	
May		Cheat Narrows (WV) or Casselman (PA)	18	
May		Intro to Cheat Canyon	26	
May		Slip	13-21	
May	16,17	N BR Potomac Release	18	
May	15-17	Stony Rendezvous	21	
May	16	NEO Ohio Outdoor Adventure Fest		Tim Eberling
May		Loyo	23	
May	23	Stony Release Memorial Day Weekend	21	
May	24,25	Upper Yough Release Tentative	32	
May		Slip	13-21	
May	30,31	Stony Release	21	
May		LOYO	23	
June		Wednesdays on the Water (Lock 29 beginner WW)	11	Doug Waltman

June	6	Savage	26	
June	6, 7	TRPC Slip Clinic	13-21	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 saturd	32	
June	13,14	Stony Release	21	
June		Rescue rodeo	13-21	
June		New River Dries	32	
June		Upper New	17	
June		New River Gorge	26	
June	27,28	Stony Release	21	
June , July	27-4	Week of Rivers CCC (NC)	All levels	Jacki Z
July	5	Savage	26	

July		Wednesdays on the Water (Lock 29 beginner WW)	11	Doug Waltman
July		Cheat Canyon	26	
July		Cheat Narrows (WV) or Casselman (PA)	18	
July	17-18	Blazing Paddles	FLAT	Tim Eberling
July		Upper Yough (All Mon, Fri, Sat) ?	32	
July	11,12 & 25,26	Stony Release	21	
July		LOYO	23	
July		Middle Yough	12	
July		Upper New	17	
July		New River Gorge	26	
August		Wednesdays on the Water (Lock 29 beginner WW)	11	Doug Waltman
August		Purple Martin Watch	FLAT	
August	1,2	Turkey Bash	12-23	TRPC
August		Upper Yough (All Mon, Fri, Sat) ?	32	
August	8,9	Stony Release	21	
August	9 or 16?	Valley Falls Clinic		
August	8,9 or 15,16?	Summer Picnic OhioPyle		Bri and Seth
August	8,9 or 15,16?	LOYO	23	
August	8,9 or 15,16?	Middle Yough	12	
August	15	Whiskey Island Paddle fest		
August	15,16?	Huckfest		
August	22,23	Stony Release	21	
August	22,23	LOYO	23	
August	22,23	Middle Yough	12	
August	22,23	Upper New	17	
August	22,23	New River Gorge	26	
September		Wednesdays on the Water (Lock 29 beginner WW)	11	Doug Waltman
September		Upper Yough (all Fri and Monday plus first 2 saturd	32	
September	4,5,6,7	BeaverFest		

September	4,5,6,7	Labor Day Gauley season opening (Fri - Mon)		
September	4,5,6,7	Upper Gauley	33	
September	4,5,6,7	Lower Gauley	27	

September	4,5,6,7	Upper New	17	
September	4,5,6,7	New River Gorge	26	
September	5,6,19,20	Stony Release	21	
September	12,13	Upper Gauley	33	
September	12,13	Lower Gauley	27	
September	12,13	New River Gorge	26	
September	12,13	LOYO	23	
September	12,13	Middle Yough	12	
September	18-20	Upper New	17	
September	18-20	New River Gorge	26	
September	18-20	Upper Gauley	33	
September	18-20	Lower Gauley	27	
September	18-20?	Gauley Fest		
September	26	Savage	26	
September	26,27	Upper New	17	
September	26,27	New River Gorge	26	
September	26,27	Upper Gauley	33	
September	26,27	Lower Gauley	27	
October		Upper Yough (first 2 Fri and Monday plus first satu	32	
October	3,4,17,18	Stony Release	21	
		Slip	13-21	
October		Annual Election		
October	3,4 or 10,11?	Fall Colors Trip - WV (Gauley, NRG, Upper New)		Harlie and Seth
October		LOYO	23	
October		Middle Yough	12	
October	9-11	Brandywine Ski Patrol Gear Swap (Includes non-motorized watercraft and bicycles)		
October	17,18?	Upper New	17	
October	18	New River Gorge - Bridge Day		
October	17,18	Upper Gauley	33	
October	17,18	Lower Gauley	27	
October		Slip	13-21	
November	7,8?	Tohican Release		

November		LOYO	23	
November		Slip	13-21	
Dec	?	Holiday Party		

Roll Sessions

Roll Sessions, Clinics, and Practice — Keel-Haulers Canoe Club

Preregistration is required at most of these sessions. Go to the above link to sign up.

Cuyahoga Falls Natatorium



UPDATED 10/9/25

POOL SESSIONS

Cuyahoga Falls Natatorium
2345 4th St., Cuyahoga Falls

Sundays, 7pm to 9pm
January 11, 2026
January 25, 2026

Equipment and Logistics:
All incoming kayaks must be very clean. Please remove airbags or anything else that may hold debris when cleaning the boat. We reserve the right to turn a dirty kayak away. We will enter via the maintenance area.

Need Equipment?
The club has some equipment and can help outfit anyone who needs gear, but you must ask in advance. (Use the note option when registering.)

Need Help?
Are you interested in learning basic kayaking skills? The club will have a presence at every session and will be more than happy to work with any paddler who requests help. The Keel-Haulers club has a roll instructor that will work with students on learning the kayak roll. You must request this service in advance (use the note option when registering). It is not guaranteed that the roll instructor will be available. If you take advantage of this service, we request that you are or become an active paid club member.



Price:
This pool is limited to 12 kayaks in the pool at once. The cost for each pool session is **\$12 per person (members)**; **\$15 per person (non-members)**. Family is welcome to come watch for free if they are not getting in the pool.



Lake Meyers YMCA



UPDATED 9/19/25

POOL SESSIONS

MEYERS LAKE YMCA
1333 North Park Ave NW
Canton, OH 44708

Sundays, 9-11am

November 9, 23
December 7, 21
January 4, 18
February 1, 15

Equipment and Logistics:
All incoming kayaks must be very clean. Please remove airbags or anything else that may hold debris when cleaning the boat. We reserve the right to turn a dirty kayak away. We will enter via the maintenance area.

Need Equipment?
The club MAY have some equipment and can help outfit anyone who needs gear, but you must ask in advance. (Use the note option when registering.)

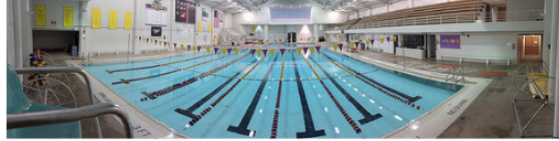
Need Help?
Are you interested in learning basic kayaking skills? The club will have a presence at every session and will be more than happy to work with any paddler who requests help.



Price:
The cost for each pool session is
\$12 per person (members)
\$15 per person (non-members)
Family is welcome to come watch for free
if they are not getting in the pool



Lakewood High School



UPDATED 8/5/25

Saturdays, 3pm to 5pm

POOL SESSIONS
LAKEWOOD HIGH SCHOOL
14100 Franklin Blvd, Lakewood

December 6
January 3
January 10
February 21
February 28

Equipment and Logistics:

Kayakers cannot enter the building until 2:50 PM. All participants must shower and be completely out of the building by 5:15pm. All kayaks and gear must be completely clean, inside & out. Please remember helmets are required. Please use Door #15.

Price:

This pool is limited to 20 kayaks. The cost for each pool session is \$8 (pre-registered). \$10 (exact change) at the door. recreation.lakewoodcityschools.org

For more information, Phone: (216) 529-4081 recreation@lakewoodcityschools.org



January Trips and Events Calendar of Events — Keel-Haulers Canoe Club

3JAN, SAT

3 – 5pm Lakewood Roll Sessions, Lakewood High School

4JAN, SUN

9 – 11am, Meyers Lake YMCA Pool Sessions, 1333 N Park Ave NW, Canton, OH 44708-3081

11JAN, SUN

7 – 9pm, Cuyahoga Falls Pool Session, 2345 4th St, Cuyahoga Falls, OH 44221-2573

18JAN, SUN

9 – 11am, Meyers Lake YMCA Pool Sessions, 1333 N Park Ave NW, Canton, OH 44708-3081

25JAN, SUN

7 – 9pm, Cuyahoga Falls Pool Session, 2345 4th St, Cuyahoga Falls, OH 44221-2573

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

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 **FEBRUARY 2026 issue of the newsletter is **1/24/2026**. Please send articles and/or pictures to: Kelly Miller at peetzaguy@aol.com.**

Keel-Hauler Ka-news

JANUARY 2026

Kelly Miller, Editor

