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## Fun Float Planning Guide and Tips

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**IS THERE A CALM AND EASILY ACCESSIBLE RIVER IN YOUR AREA? IF SO, THIS GUIDE PROVIDES A BASIC OUTLINE OF STEPS TO TAKE AND VARIABLES TO CONSIDER WHEN PLANNING A FUN RIVER FLOAT. A FUN FLOAT CAN BE AN EASY, FUN, AND HIGHLY PROFITABLE WAY TO FUNDRAISE FOR YOUR NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION, SPORTS TEAM, OR OTHER EFFORTS WITH LOW OR NO FUNDING.**

- **Planning.** *Start planning and promoting your float early, 6 months to a year is not too far in advance. Don't expect to put on a great float event with out adequate time to plan and promote.*

- **Set a date and stick to it.** *Consider these variables when setting a date. Ask yourself, "Are other similar activities happening on your proposed date? Can you think of any reason why your date won't work for most people attending?" Etc.*

- **Get permission.** *Are there any authorities in your region that need to be notified? For example, is your river controlled by a dam? Perhaps contact the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Does your float require the use of a privately-owned parking lot or land? Get the OK from land-owners. Do you have an insurance policy? Notify your insurance carrier and get your event cleared. Event insurance is available per-day if you need it.*

- **Shuttle services.** *The key to a successful fun float is a shuttle service. Shuttle services are especially nice for out-of-towners for two reasons; It eliminates the need for a second vehicle for groups and individuals attending your float. It also adds value to those attending your events as this is something they would have to figure out themselves. In an unfamiliar environment this also eliminates the fear of getting lost.*

*There are a number of options for shuttle services and all of them may not be listed here. The best option we have found so far has been to utilize the local school board and petition them for use of their buses and drivers. The school board may be willing to offer these services for free, but the more likely scenario is that you will be required to pay for this service. If so, work that into the price of admission to ensure your event makes, and doesn't lose, money. This is a very cost-effective and safe option. A school bus is a very high capacity option compared to other standard vehicles.*

*Other options can include, local town/community public buses, buses used by senior citizen services, and renting large capacity buses from car rental establishments.*

*It is recommended that event-goers drop off their gear, as well as most of the members of their party, at the starting/staging area of the float, then drive their cars to the take-out location (or to their desired take-out locations if more than one is offered.) At the take-out location, have the shuttle/s waiting on stand-by and in sight of the parking area. At a pre-designated time, the shuttle will depart and return all event-goers to the starting/staging area to begin the float. This accomplishes two important things. Event-goers can now take as long as they like on the river, because their vehicles are already waiting for them at their take-out. This eliminates the need of having buses on stand-by after the float has started, lowering event costs and wasted time.*

- **Registration.** *Registration can be handled a number of different ways. One way is to utilize a paper registration form, this is the easiest way from the planning side, however event-goers may find the process of printing out a form, filling it out by hand, and mailing in a check to be too much work and/or something they easily forget to do. Though it is easier, it will likely garner less participation. (A paper registration example can be found on page 4.) If the sponsoring organization has access to fund processing services such as Square or PayPal, they may be able to create a digital form which can*

accept payment through one of these sources. Another option is utilizing a web service that is specifically built for event registration. Websites like Tri State Runner can be used for registration. However, they will charge a small fee to the end user. Most participants will not mind trading a small percentage of their registration fee for the convenience of an online registration.

- **Registration Fees.** In order for your event to be a fundraiser, you will need to charge a fee, gather sponsorship from businesses that see your event as an advertising opportunity, or both. Determining a registration fee amount may be difficult. The best place to start is to look around and see what others charge for a comparable event. It's our experience that a standard fee tends to be around \$10 - \$30. This can vary depending on how interested your likely market will be, and also on how that audience feels about the cause the proceeds will ultimately be benefiting. You will also need to factor in such over-head as, shuttle services, event shirts, bottled water or any other added value components you've included with your event.

- **Sponsorship.** Since the event involves a water supply, contacting businesses who could use good publicity involving water, outside physical activity, or conservation might be good candidates for sponsorship. Be sure to have something to offer companies as an incentive. Don't rely on just asking to be enough to persuade them to sponsor your event. For example, be sure to offer mentioning them as a sponsor any way you have available to you. For example: in public service announcements, press releases, on social media, on a website, on event shirt, etc. Also offer to display signage or a banner that they provide, if possible. Also try to utilize sponsorship request to help eliminate possible over-head cost. For example, if you'd like to offer free water at your event, contact a company that produces, or has cheap access to bottled water and ask for however much you require as a sponsorship in lieu of money.

- **Event Volunteers/staff.** There are several key staff positions that will need to be filled to help facilitate a successful float trip.

Registration – Staff to check in event-goers and groups.

Start/Staging – having a few staff members in the staging area to help people with their gear and to give directions or field questions.

Take-out – At least one staff member, if not more, at the take-out location/s at the beginning of the float to help park event-goers or to field questions and direct event-goers. Also have staff at the end of the float to help event-goers with their gear when finished, and to field questions, provide driving directions, or area information.

Mid-float Rest Stop – Optional\*\* It can be a good idea to have a sanctioned rest stop, so event-goers can stop and stretch their legs. This would also be a great opportunity to have a refreshment stand to sell drinks and snacks. If this is something the sponsoring group would rather not handle, this could be a good opportunity to bring in another group who could benefit from the people who attend your event, thus spreading the benefit of the event and also providing a more enjoyable experience for your event-goers.

- **Potential Audience.** It's likely that the core of your event attendees will not be local residents, but people who live close enough to drive to your area. Focus promotion on outside the area or social media where news of your event can reach a greater geographical area. Guests to the area will likely make up a bigger percentage over-all.

- **Promotion.** Don't start promoting your event until all necessary variables are locked into place for the event. For example: if your event requires the use of a facility that you discover you can't use, but you've already promoted your event you will have to modify or cancel your event. This can lead to confusion or anger among your potential event-goers.

Does your region have a convention and visitors bureau or a division of tourism? Is there a social media or other web presence for the body of water you plan to use? Contact them to let them know about your event so they can help

*promote it! These entities are ALWAYS looking for things to talk about and promote, they can do a lot of lifting for you when promoting your event. If no social media exists create your own. Use of social media is a free and efficient way to spread the news of your actives. Even if they do exist, creating something specific about your event that others can share will be beneficial as well, and help you to start building your own audience.*

*It is also recommended that your event be a fun float and not a race. We have found that most people would like to participate in a mass float down a river at a leisurely pace and most are not interested in paddling hard and competing for first place. A race would also require time-keeping, finish-line staff, awards, etc. Which in turn equals more overhead and more staff requirements.*

**This guide was prepared by the Braxton County Convention and Visitor’s Bureau and the Elk River Water Trail Group. Please feel free to use and share this guide and send us suggestions on updates if you find that key or helpful information is missing. Email us at [info@braxtonwv.org](mailto:info@braxtonwv.org). The Braxton County Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Elk River Water Trail Group accept no responsibility for the planning and safety of your event/s. Should you utilize these guide-lines you are acknowledging that the Braxton County Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Elk River Water Trail Group will not be held accountable for you, your organization, your event, and participants of your event or their property. Version 1, 3.28.2018**



[www.BraxtonWV.org](http://www.BraxtonWV.org)



[www.ElkRiverWaterTrail.com](http://www.ElkRiverWaterTrail.com)

**YOUR EVENT'S NAME**

**Event Date/Time**  
**Day-of Registration Times**

**RACE CONTACT:** E-mail: event@email.com Phone: (555) 555-5555

**REGISTRATION DATES AND ASSOCIATED FEES**

**\$20** registration fee if entry form and fee are postmarked before **July 5th 2018** (or whenever) \*

Day-of Registration is \$25.

...If your event has a shirt option, put it here...

Send registration form and make checks payable to:

Group  
208 Main Street  
Anytown, USA 55555

PLEASE PRINT :

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: Male\_\_\_ Female\_\_\_ Shirt Size\*: S\_\_\_ M\_\_\_ L\_\_\_ XL\_\_\_ 2XL\_\_\_

**If Multiple-take-outs/ending points are an option, list options here.**

**Waiver:** I agree to participate in a responsible manner, bring enough water to prevent dehydration (1 quart or more, water will also be provided), wear my PFD (Personal Floatation Device) at all times for the duration of the event, and release the rights to any photo or film taken of me by event organizers for publishing in an advertisement, flyer, brochure, news release, newspaper article, or for television viewing.

I realize that risks from storms, lightning strikes, overturning of boats, and other dangers exist in my participation of boating activities made available by the Braxton County CVB. I also represent that I and the persons for whom I am responsible for are in good health and physically able to safely participate in the sport of boating. I realize and agree to inform minor children in my care that participation in boating may result in property loss, delay, illness, injury, paralysis, or death due to the foregoing dangers, the negligence of others, forces of nature, or other causes known or unknown. I specifically realize that the dangers increase significantly if anyone leaves the boat and enters the water. I am also aware that medical services may not be readily available or accessible during part or all of these activities. By my participation in these activities, I hereby knowingly and expressly assume all risks arising out of them.

As a parent, guardian, or supervisor of a minor child, children, or other adult, I make this agreement individually and on behalf of this minor child, children, or adult, to induce the Braxton County CVB to allow the child, children, or adult, to ride in or operate a boat.

I, on behalf of myself, my personal representatives, and my heirs, hereby covenant not to sue and I agree to release, hold harmless, and indemnify the Braxton County CVB and their agents, officers, employees or successors from any and all contract or negligence claims and suits for bodily injury, property damage, wrongful DEATH, loss of services or otherwise which may arise out of my participation in this activity or in the participation of those persons or children for whom I am legally responsible. I further agree to participate in this activity only if every member of my party (including myself) properly uses a PFD (life preserver), realizing that the proper use of this life preserver is my/our responsibility. All payments are non-refundable.

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**Signature**

**Date**

The Braxton County CVB (CVB) and Elk River Water Trail Group (ERWT) accept no responsibility for the use of this registration form, it is merely given freely as an example of how a registration form might look. Any use or any altered versions of this form are not sanctioned by the CVB or the ERWT. Organizers use and plan their events at their own risk and with their own event liability insurance.