



Welcome ~ [Join/Donate](#) ~ [Community](#) ~ [Multimedia](#) ~ [River Tools](#) ~ [Shop](#)

[Login](#) | [Search](#)

[River Info](#) ~ [Gauges](#) ~ [Streamkeepers](#) ~ [River Explorer](#)

American, Middle Fork, CA

1) Tunnel Run: Oxbow Bend (Ralston Afterbay) to Drivers Flat Road

Class II-IV(V+)

17 Miles

Avg Gradient 23 fpm

Max Gradient fpm



Paddle High Five!

Photo of Raft Successfully Running Tunnel Chute by Matthew S. Urdan taken August 11, 2002 @ 1100 cfs

River Description

See [CA Creekin'](#) description.

Book References: Cassidy & Calhoun, Holbek & Stanley, Martin, Penny, Gerald Meral

Check out [Class V Love](#), an article by Mark White from the AW Journal Archives.

Rapid Summary

Mile Rapid Name

0.1 Panic Alley

2.4 Last Chance

2.5 Tunnel Chute Entrance from Upstream

Disclaimer

Alerts

[TRUCKEE RIVER, CA: FARAD DAM REPORT NEEDS YOUR COMMENTS](#)

[Boater's Alert: Comments Needed for Borel Hydro project, Kern River California](#)

[Cache Creek, California: Information Needed](#)

Maps

About

[TopoZone Topo Map](#)

[Tiger Mapsurfer Map](#)

[MapBlast Shuttle Directions](#)

Links

[All-Outdoors California Whitewater Rafting](#)

[Tributary Whitewater Tours](#)

[Otter Bar Lodge Kayak School](#)

Gear, Guides & Services

[EPA Surf This Watershed](#)

[NPS CA Rivers Inventory](#)

Local Clubs

Class Features (Legend)



2.5 Tunnel Chute Left Channel

2.5 Tunnel Chute

2.6 Entrance to the Tunnel from Right Bank

2.6 Sun Shafts

2.7 Numerous Class III Rapids

5.0 Kanaka

5.2 Nine miles of Class I and II

6.0 Cash Rock

8.0 Jump Rock

14.2 River Access

14.3 Chunder (a.k.a Upper Ruck-A-Chucky or Duck Soup)

14.5 Ruck-A-Chucky Falls

14.5 Ruck-A-Chucky Falls

14.5 Ruck-A-Chucky Falls

14.5 Ruck-A-Chucky Falls

14.5 Ruck-A-Chucky Splendor from Downstream

14.7 Cleavage (Lower Ruck-A-Chucky)

15.0 Parallel Parking

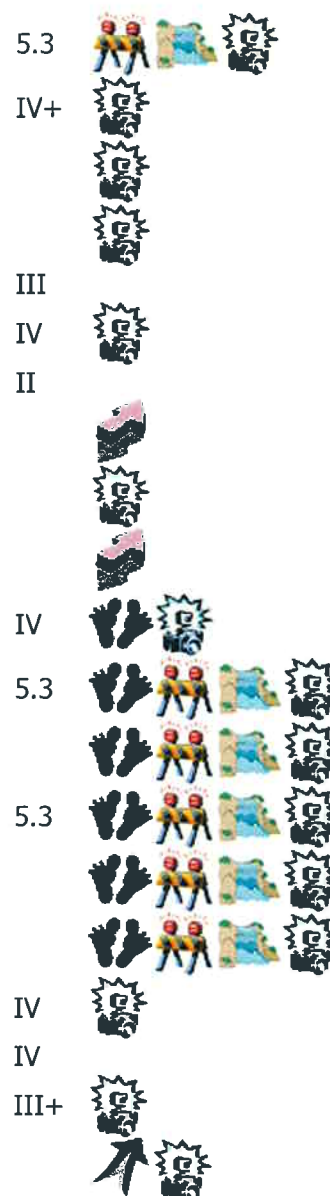
15.5 Class III-IV Rapids

16.5 Best Raft Crew on the Middle Fork celebrates at the takeout.

Rapid Descriptions

Panic Alley (Class III, Mile 0.1)

Put-in on the

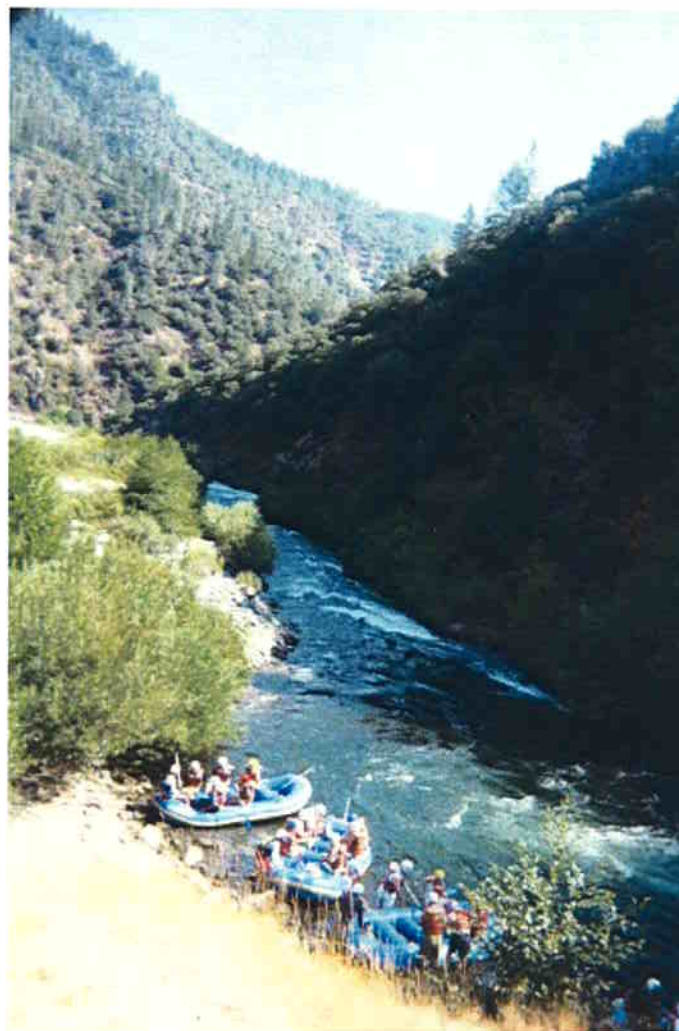


Weather for Foresthill
 Partly Cloudy
 Time: 10:00 am
 Temp: 48 F
 RealFeel Temp: 53 F
 Humidity: 70 %
 Winds: NNE at 2 mph

[Click for 5-day forecast!](#)

powered by AccuWeather.com

Middle Fork is just below the Oxbow Powerhouse penstock. This results in a cold wake-up call as the abruptness of this irregular rapid with swirly mid-40s August water slaps you in the face.



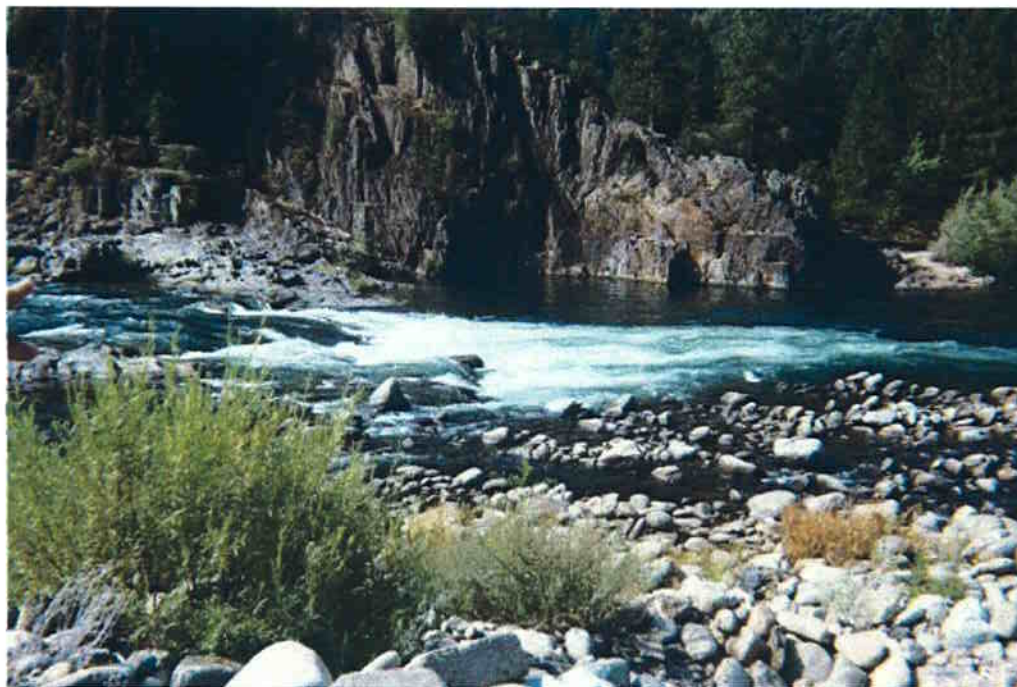
Middle Fork American Put-In

Photo of Tributary Whitewater Tours Rafts putting on the Middle Fork by Matthew S. Urdan taken August 11, 2002 @ 1100 cfs

Last Chance (Class III, Mile 2.4)

Last Chance is a sticky hole you want to run clean. Just downstream is Tunnel Chute. If you elect to portage Tunnel Chute,

eddy out on river right or river left immediately below Last Chance. If you're not sure, the well-worn river bank on the right gives you great photo and scouting opportunities. The portage is easier on river left, but above 2000 cfs; according to Cassidy, Cross, and Calhoun; its very difficult or impossible to put on below the chute just in front of the 90' long tunnel blasted by gold miners that gives the rapid its name.



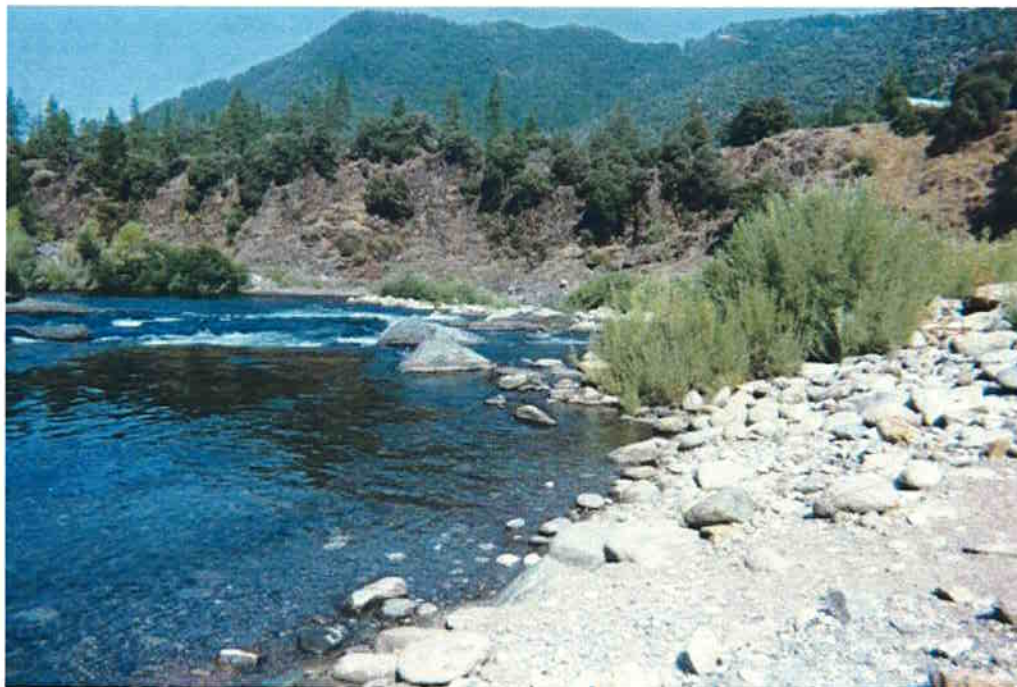
Last Chance before Tunnel Chute

Photo of Last Chance Rapid by Matthew S. Urdan taken August 12, 2002 @ 1100 cfs

Tunnel Chute Entrance from Upstream

Stay to the right to ride the chute, or go left if you choose to portage.

Warning: Above 2000 cfs, it becomes very difficult to put back on after bypassing Tunnel Chute because the distance is short between the bottom of the rapid and 90' Rock Tunnel and at that level the water on the left bank is very turbulent at the bottom of the rock wall you need to descend to get to the river. (See pictures below.)



Approaching Tunnel Chute

Photo of Class IV+ Tunnel Chute Rapid by Matthew S. Urdan taken August 12, 2002 @ 1100 cfs

Tunnel Chute Left Channel (Class 5.3, Mile 2.5)

Rather gnarly Class V.
Avoid the Left Entrance,
opt for the right side and
ride the chute.



Left Entrance to Tunnel Chute

Photo by Matthew S. Urdan taken August 12, 2002 @ 1100 cfs

Tunnel Chute (Class IV+, Mile 2.5)

Tunnel Chute is a violent narrow steep chasm the entire river flows through. Immediately below the chute is a 90' long calm rock tunnel that gives the rapid its name. Blasted by gold miners, the chute leading to the tunnel has sharp sides that can damage rafts, kayaks, and people. River right is a vertical rock wall. River left is waterfall that runs the entire length of the chute. Swimming here may be just a quick flush down the center of the chute, but it easily could result in injuries if a swimmer is pounded against the rock wall on the right, or perhaps a deeper and longer experience if the swimmer gets caught in the holes at the bottom of the falls on river left.



Tunnel Chute

Photo by Matthew S. Urdan taken August 12, 2002 @ 1100 cfs

Entrance to the Tunnel from Right Bank

At the bottom of the chute,
the rapid becomes
analogous to the "It's A
Small World" Ride at
DisneyWorld...or at least it

seems that way after the adrenaline rush of the Chute. This picture gives some idea of the rock wall on the left bank, so if Tunnel Chute is portaged and you try to put back on below the chute prior to the tunnel, you can get an idea of the difficulty--especially when the water is above 2000 cfs and this water remains quite turbulent.



Entrance to the Tunnel

Photo of Heading into the 90' Tunnel by Matthew S. Urdan taken August 12, 2002 @ 1100 cfs

Sun Shafts

Emerging from the Tunnel, looking back through it at the left wall of Tunnel Chute.



Looking Back at Tunnel Chute emerging from the Tunnel

Photo of Tunnel Chute Rapid by Matthew S. Urdan taken August 11, 2002 @ 1100 cfs

Numerous Class III Rapids (Class III, Mile 2.7)

Between Tunnel Chute and Kanaka, there are numerous Class II and III rapids and maybe a IV-. They go by different names depending on who's guiding you, and include Soul Train, Pin Cushion, Lettuce Hole and Thread the Needle

Kanaka (Class IV, Mile 5.0)

Kanaka is a fun rapid that western boaters say is similar to Sunderland's Chute on the Tuolumne; and eastern boaters say it's similar to but not as difficult as Insignificant on the Upper Gauley. Having run both, I'd say it's more like Sunderland's Chute. At the end of a pool, the river drops pretty steeply. Like Insignificant, there are a

couple of big holes obstructing the channel, but they are nowhere near the same scale as that 5.0 behemoth. Unlike Insignificant, Kanaka is pretty much a short straight run once you are lined up and the reversals are evident from the top. Scout and portage on the left.



Kanaka

Photo of Kanaka Rapid from Downstream by Matthew S. Urdan taken August 11, 2002 @ 1100 cfs

Nine miles of Class I and II (Class II, Mile 5.2)

After Kanaka, the river changes in character and flattens out. From here until Chunder it's easy Class I and II in a spectacular forest green river canyon. Scattered throughout this section are active miner rigs with divers along the river bottom, geologic faults in the rock walls, and numerous places for side hikes, sunning beaches, and places to pick wild blackberries. Wildlife includes deer, eagles, hawks, ducks, and rattlesnakes, so be careful along the banks. Bear have been sited in the canyon, but are rare.

Cash Rock

A very bad 4-wheel drive road used mainly by miners leads from the left bank to Volcanoville.

Jump Rock



More Dangerous than a Keeper Hole....

Photo of Jump Rock on the middle section of the Middle Fork by Matthew S. Urdan taken August 11, 2002 @ 1100 cfs

River Access

A rough dirt road leads downstream from here to the Greenwood Bridge site and better roads out of the canyon. If your 4WD vehicle is up to it, and if the road is open, you can avoid portages at Chunder, Ruck-A-Chucky, and the next two miles of Class IV by taking out here.

Chunder (a.k.a Upper Ruck-A-Chucky or Duck Soup) (Class IV, Mile 14.3)

Chunder is a straightforward Class IV ledge drop. However, 80 yards downstream of Chunder is Ruck-A-Chucky Falls--a 30' Class V+ to VI waterfall. The right side of Ruck-A-Chucky is a Boulder Sieve that is very fatal. If the crash into the boulders at the bottom doesn't kill you, the recirculating hole with the water crashing down on you will. Most rafts run Chunder and give paddlers the opportunity to walk-around. A swim here is easy as a pool separates Chunder from Ruck-A-Chucky, but urgent nonetheless. If you are not prepared to run Ruck-A-Chucky and you think that Chunder might give you trouble, PORTAGE on river right.



Chunder

Photo of Chunder by Matthew S. Urdan taken August 12, 2002 @ 1100 cfs

Ruck-A-Chucky Falls (Class 5.3, Mile 14.5)

This picture shows the view looking downstream at the Ruck-A-Chucky Falls horizon line. WARNING: The right side is a Boulder

Sieve Death Trap that has claimed lives, kayaks, and rafts. The 30' middle channel drop is Class V+ and runnable in a raft. The left side (not visible) is Class VI and should not be attempted. Please note, while the Middle Channel is now run regularly by raft guides from some companies, there are submerged boulders at the bottom of the drop and many severely undercut rocks. A swim here would be long, deep, and potentially highly injurious. Portage on River Right.



Top of Ruck-A-Chucky Falls from Upstream

Photo of View of the top of Ruck-A-Chucky Falls by Matthew S. Urdan taken August 12, 2002 @ 1100 cfs

Ruck-A-Chucky Falls

The right channel of Ruck-A-Chucky Falls is a boulder sieve death trap. But it's also a hazard for rafts. Most companies require their guides to push the rafts over the 30' drop. However, if a raft went over the right side, it would be a major project to extract the raft, and even then, in all likelihood the raft would be severely damaged. So there is a rope guarding the right channel, and when raft guides push the rafts over

the falls, one of the guides mans the rope guard and tries to prevent the rafts from going down the right side by pushing the raft into the main current. Here, Sasha from All Outdoors Whitewater Rafting (see link on top right of this page) performs that function. Guides from some companies actually run the Middle Channel after they have unloaded their guests, but the Middle Channel is Class V+. The bottom of the falls are boiling and there are many submerged rock hazards. A swim here would be long, deep, and could easily result in a severe injury.



All Outdoors Guide Sasha guarding the Right Channel

Photo of Guarding Right Channel of Ruck-A-Chucky by Matthew S. Urdan taken August 12, 2002 @ 1100 cfs

Ruck-A-Chucky Falls (Class 5.3, Mile 14.5)

Excellent view of all 3 channels at the Top of Ruck-A-Chucky while a Tributary Whitewater Tours guide (see link at top right of this page) sets up to run the Class V+ Middle Channel. To the left of the raft in the top of the photo is the entrance to the Class VI left channel characterized by being obstructed with huge boulders all the way down. The middle channel, that the raft is about to run, is relatively free of

obstructions, but at the bottom are submerged boulders and severely undercut rocks. A swim here would be long, deep, and quite possibly injurious. On river right (foreground) is the entrance to the Boulder Sieve Death Trap that you must avoid at all costs.



Tributary Raft queing up to run Middle Channel

Photo of Tempting the MF Gods by Matthew S. Urdan taken August 11, 2002 @ 1100 cfs

Ruck-A-Chucky Falls

At the top of the photo is a good view of the boulder choked left channel. Middle of the photo is an obstructed view of the middle channel, and at the bottom of the photo is the right channel--boulder sieve death trap. The Tributary raft at the bottom just successfully ran the Middle Channel.



Left Channel of Ruck-A-Chucky

Photo of Left Channel of Ruck-A-Chucky by Matthew S. Urdan taken August 11, 2002 @ 1100 cfs

Ruck-A-Chucky Splendor from Downstream

Looking upstream at Ruck-A-Chucky Falls, you can see the Boulder Sieve on river right, the turbulent main channel run by some raft-company guides--but not in kayaks--and the rocky left channel. There are many submerged rocks at the bottom of the falls and a swim here would be long and deep.



Ruck-A-Chucky Splendor

Photo of Ruck-A-Chucky Falls from Downstream by Matthew S. Urdan taken August 12, 2002 @ 1100 cfs

Cleavage (Lower Ruck-A-Chucky) (Class IV, Mile 14.7)

Cleavage is a 6' drop only 20 feet from the bottom of Ruck-A-Chucky. Run the narrow chute right down the center and then move left. The right side of the photo shows the Cleavage Horizon Line from upstream.



Bottom of Ruck-A-Chucky Falls, heading straight into Class IV Cleavage

Photo by Matthew S. Urdan taken August 12, 2002 @ 1100 cfs

Parallel Parking (Class IV, Mile 15.0)

In some ways very similar to Double Pencil Sharpener on the Upper Youghiogheny, but a little steeper and elongated. Enter the rapid as if you were parallel parking a car facing the left river bank, ride the slide and move right.

Class III-IV Rapids (Class III+, Mile 15.5)

A couple more Class IVs, including Driver's Ed, Catapult, and Shareen's Dream, and then easy Class II to the takeout. Here, raft mates float towards the takeout.



Floating Towards the Take-Out

Photo of Raft Mates Cooling off on the Middle Fork by Matthew S. Urdan taken August 12, 2002 @ 1100 cfs

Best Raft Crew on the Middle Fork celebrates at the takeout.

This is the site of Greenwood Bridge, which was washed out when Hell Hole Dam gave way in 1964. Primitive campsite on the right. Driver's Flat Road leads out of the canyon.
















Best Raft Crew on the Middle Fork American

Photo of All Outdoors Guide Sasha and her Crew by Matthew S. Urdan taken August 12, 2002

Photos/Video (Thumbnail Index)

Middle Fork American	15.79KB .jpg
Approaching Tunnel Chute	90.68KB .jpg
Bottom of Ruck-A-Chucky Falls, heading straight into Class IV Cleavage	78.19KB .jpg
Entrance to the Tunnel	91.40KB .jpg
Chunder	93.53KB .jpg
Kanaka	81.38KB .jpg
Last Chance before Tunnel Chute	108.38KB .jpg
Left Entrance to Tunnel Chute	96.50KB .jpg
Calm awaits downstream of Tunnel Chute	44.69KB .jpg
HAZARD! Right Channel Boulder Sieve	97.09KB .jpg
Rope Guarding Right Channel of Ruck-A-Chucky Falls	89.57KB .jpg

Ruck-A-Chucky Splendor	 97.94KB .jpg
Best Raft Crew on the Middle Fork American	 93.60KB .jpg
Looking Back at Tunnel Chute emerging from the Tunnel	 74.48KB .jpg
Another look from the Top of Ruck-A-Chucky Falls	 108.60KB .jpg
All Outdoors Guide Sasha guarding the Right Channel	 101.25KB .jpg
Tunnel Chute	 85.79KB .jpg
Paddle High Five!	 61.45KB .jpg
Middle Fork American Put-In	 82.90KB .jpg
More Dangerous than a Keeper Hole....	 92.01KB .jpg
Top of Ruck-A-Chucky Falls from Upstream	 80.14KB .jpg
Tributary Raft queing up to run Middle Channel	 97.09KB .jpg
Left Channel of Ruck-A-Chucky	 74.02KB .jpg
Floating Towards the Take-Out	 83.56KB .jpg

Detailed Information

County: Placer/El Dorado
Zipcode: 95631
Agency: California State Parks
Putin Lon: -120.7472229
Putin Lat: 39.0041656
Takeout Lon: -121.0402756
Takeout Lat: 38.9166679
USGS HUC: 18020128
Putin EPA RF1: 18020128007
Takeout EPA RF1: 18020128005

StreamKeeper: Matthew Urdan

Status: unverified

Last Updated: 2004-10-28 16:39:10

StreamKeeper Project - Find out more about the StreamKeeper Project, where this data comes from, how it is maintained, and how you can become a StreamKeeper.

User Comments

Registered users can submit comments.

© 2003 American Whitewater | 1424 Fenwick Lane | Silver Spring, MD 20910 | 1-866-BOAT-4-AW | info@amwhitewater.org