

## River Safety - *Cache La Poudre*

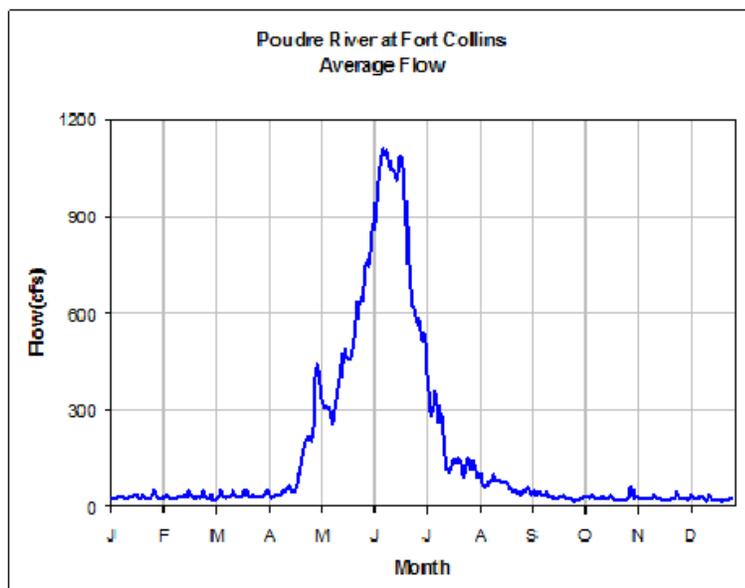
The Cache La Poudre ranks as the eighth largest white water river in the State of Colorado (Colorado White Water Association). Each year between 200 and 500 people are killed in North America by floods and other swift water accidents. If you are planning a trip on the Poudre please check information on streamflows and strainers <http://www.poudrerockreport.com/> or follow them on Twitter @poudreflows.

### **Know the River**

Before tubing on a section of river understand what you might encounter downstream. Is this a mild float? Are there some rapids you may encounter? Classification is assigned to a section of river to help whitewater boaters understand the difficulty they can encounter. Class I consists of easy moving water. Class V, for experts, contains extremely difficult rapids and significant hazard to life in the event of a mishap. The class is also affected by the flow, so be aware of increasing difficulty with higher water [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International\\_Scale\\_of\\_River\\_Difficulty](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Scale_of_River_Difficulty).

The flow on a river is measured in cubic feet per second (cfs); this is the volume of water moving past a specific point every second. There are gates through the state that measure the flow of rivers. The graph shows the average flow of the Poudre through Fort Collins. On the Poudre the flow in the canyon would be much higher than the flow in Fort Collins due to water being diverted out of the river after it exits the canyon. In the canyon downstream of Poudre Park is a large rock with bright orange markings designating various water levels by half foot marks. Knowing the flow will help you understand what the river will be like and when it is best to go tubing. June typically means high water and is not the ideal time to be tubing. Flow information for the Poudre can be found at the following locations:

- Fort Collins: <http://waterdata.usgs.gov/nwis/uv?06752260>
- Canyon Mouth [http://www.dwr.state.co.us/SurfaceWater/data/detail\\_graph.aspx??MTYPE=DISCHRG&ID=CLAFTCCO](http://www.dwr.state.co.us/SurfaceWater/data/detail_graph.aspx??MTYPE=DISCHRG&ID=CLAFTCCO)



No one without proper equipment and training should voluntarily enter the river during high flow times. Most people do not understand the power of moving water. Although it may appear to be moving slowly, water moves deceptively fast and can exert great amounts of pressure. Melting snow packs in spring increase water flows. Exposure to cold water can quickly lead to hypothermia, an extremely dangerous condition involving the lowering of the body's "core" temperature. Symptoms include loss of strength and muscular coordination followed by mental confusion and irrational behavior. Hypothermia can be lethal.

Extreme caution should be exercised while near or around the river. Rocks and soil near the banks can become slippery or unstable.

### **Swift Water Safety**

- DO NOT ENTER OR ALLOW OTHERS TO ENTER THE POUDDRE DURING PEAK FLOW TIMES. You may be overwhelmed by the power of the river. Not only are you placing yourself in danger, would be rescuers are placed at substantial risk.
- Use extreme caution while near the river. Students or other children walking near the river should be accompanied by an adult. All pedestrians including walkers and joggers are encouraged to stay on established pathways and trails. Never allow children to play along the river unattended.
- Should you fall in, do not attempt to stand up. Drownings may result from getting a leg or ankle caught in an underwater rock ledge or between boulders. The force of the water can push you over and hold you under. The standard defensive swimming position in fast water is lying on your back with your feet pointing downstream and toes up towards the surface. Always look downstream and be prepared to fend off rocks with your feet. While in this position, try to maneuver to the edge of the river and crawl out.
- Should you see anyone fall in the river, call 911 immediately. If possible someone should try to maintain eye contact with the victim. Unless trained and equipped, you should not attempt a rescue by entering the swift water. A rope, branch or similar object may be thrown to the victim.
- Boaters or rafters are encouraged to allow flows to subside before entering the river. Children should never be allowed to enter the river alone. All boaters and rafters are encouraged to wear helmets, exposure suits and approved personal floatation devices. If you do enter the river, make sure someone knows when and where you enter and when you are expected to return.
- Scout downriver to locate hazards and always have another person with you when entering moving water.
- Be aware of the fact water conditions change daily; hazards that aren't visible one day can appear the next day.
- Carry a throw bag if you're tubing or rafting down the river.
- Don't drink or do drugs if you're spending time on the water.
- Know your limits. Beginning kayakers should take lessons from qualified and experienced instructors.

PFA has 70 firefighters trained in swift water rescue, with a typical rescue requiring around 16 personnel.

Video link <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bFo7laQFLP8>