

No excuses: If an 8-year-old can brave the river, so can you

By Dudley Brown

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Mac Condrey, 8, negotiates some small rapids along the Tyger River, as Milton Mann keeps a close eye on him during a recent outing in preparation for this weekend's Tame the Tyger race.

Eight-year-old Mac Condrey spent Tuesday afternoon scouting the Tyger River for Saturday's Tame the Tyger. He saw geese and started to master going down rapids.

After about three hours on the river, he got out of his kayak grinning and called the experience "cool" and "fun."

Mac and his dad, Eric Condrey, will race Saturday for as long as they can in the 7.5-mile race, which is organized by the Spartanburg County Parks and Recreation Commission. If they become exhausted, they'll join the groups of floaters enjoying a leisurely pace along the scenic river.

Get there early

Registration for the ninth annual Tame the Tyger begins at 7:30 a.m., and the race starts at 10 a.m. from Morris Bridge Road. Prizes, including boats and gear, will be awarded to the top three finishers in each category.

The race has categories for kayakers in boats longer than 10 feet, those shorter than 10 feet and canoes. People younger than 18 can't participate unless they attended a mandatory pool session.

People participating in a recreational float will leave at 9:30 a.m. from Morris Bridge Road.

Christine Boush, outdoor recreation coordinator for the county, said the river is a good place for beginning kayakers to practice paddling in the flat waters. So much flat water and the course's length makes it an endurance challenge for advanced kayakers, who should complete the course within two hours.

Churning the waters

Between 75 and 100 kayakers are expected to be out, including kids.

"My goal is to make this a much more family-based race to get families out there," said Boush, who said a lot of gear is being sold for kids.

There are spots along the river where people can watch kayakers, and a river festival will be held beginning at 11 a.m. at Big Tyger River Campground on Old Hills Bridge Road. The Shane Pruitt Band will perform, and barbecue will be sold. Vendors will sell gear and have kayaks that customers can test. There also will be a rock-climbing wall.

Safety first



Josh Young of Shelby, N.C., participates in a past Tame the Tyger River Race and Float. FILE

PHOTO

Ian Farnsworth started tubing and canoeing on the river more than 20 years ago. Farnsworth, who'll serve as one of 14 safety boaters on Saturday, likes the attention the race brings to the river.

Farnsworth said he doesn't see many kayakers on the Tyger River. The river has Class 2 rapids, which aren't that exciting for many experienced kayakers. But, the opportunity to enjoy nature is what Farnsworth likes about the river. He's seen deer, fish, beavers, turkeys, ducks and kingfishers.

"This is the most beautiful spot in Spartanburg County," Farnsworth said. "I'm just hoping they'll appreciate it like I have over the years and see the beauty and understand it's not something to throw a beer can at."