

## *State's whitewater season officially underway*

West Virginia's commercial whitewater season is officially underway, following a run down the Lower New River on Monday by a group of 24 Old Dominion University students.

The trip, booked by ACE adventure Center of Oak Hill, is believed to be the first of the 2006 season.

The Old Dominion students' raft trip was a part of a three-day visit to the New River George that included hiking, mountain biking and horseback riding. While outfitters are mainly gearing up to begin training for new guides these days, "We usually see a couple of bookings in March," said Eric Pories, director of the West Virginia Professional River Outfitters, "They Usually involve people who have rafted here in the past."

Pories said favorable river levels and rafting weather have helped make the past two years good ones for the state's whitewater outfitters.

"Whether or not this season will be good will also depend largely on the weather," he said.

Trends to look for this year include more collaborative efforts between whitewater outfitters and the outfitters of other outdoor activities, including horseback riding, mountain biking, ATV riding, rock climbing and heritage tourism.

"It's all about partnership now," he said. "Our industry is the primary reservation source for all the other activities you can do here, plus lodging. Everyone's working to make the area a destination for an extended stay, rather than a drive-in, drive-out raft trip."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Charleston Gazette. *State's whitewater season officially underway* (08 March 2006).