

# Great Falls of the Potomac

## Warning to Our Visitors

- Seven persons a year, on average, drown in the area.
- Nearly all drowning victims are 15 to 25 years old.
- Most victims had been drinking or using drugs.
- The Potomac seems so tranquil that people are unaware of danger. Water currents can be extremely strong with massive undertows even where the surface looks calm.
- Stay away from the water's edge; wet rocks are slippery.
- It is prohibited to launch boats from the Virginia shore between Great Falls and the Aqueduct Dam one-third mile upriver.
- Do not boat in these waters without expert guidance. Know the river and your skills.

**IN CASE OF EMERGENCY:**  
 Contact a Park Ranger  
 Dial 911  
 Call U.S. Park Police 426-6600

## Drowning is for Real

	When	Where	How	Age of Victim
1	06/01/75	Little Falls Dam	Fishing	20
2	06/01/75	Little Falls Dam	Fishing	18
3	07/02/75	Great Falls Spout	Rock Hopping	19
4	01/21/76	Fishladder at broken bridge	Hiking	05
5	05/29/77	Little Falls	Canoeing	24
6	10/24/77	Little Falls	Canoeing	19
7	04/04/78	Fishladder	Hiking	74
8	07/11/78	Great Falls Spout	Sunbathing	21
9	07/18/78	Great Falls Spout	Rock Hopping	30
10	09/02/78	Little Falls Dam	Wading	16
11	09/02/78	Little Falls Dam	Wading	17
12	03/19/79	Billy Goat Trail/Mather Gorge	Hiking	22
13	05/09/79	Great Falls	Rafting	27
14	05/26/79	Little Falls Dam	Boating	17
15	05/26/79	Little Falls Dam	Boating	19
16	07/22/79	Great Falls Spout	Rock Hopping	22
17	09/03/79	Great Falls Spout	Canoeing	29
18	04/03/80	Little Falls	Canoeing	16
19	04/24/80	Chain Bridge	Fishing	31
20	07/20/80	Difficult Run	Swimming	17

	When	Where	How	Age of Victim
21	08/10/80	S-Turn	Swimming	23
22	05/30/81	Little Falls Dam	Canoeing	20
23	05/30/81	Little Falls Dam	Canoeing	19
24	06/07/81	Catfish Hole	Swimming	19
25	06/07/81	Catfish Hole	Swimming	33
26	06/11/81	Fishladder	Rock Hopping	16
27	05/03/82	Sherwin Island	Swimming	19
28	05/15/82	Stubblefield Falls	Swimming	16
29	06/18/82	Cow Hoof/Sandy Landing	Swimming	16
30	06/20/82	Cow Hoof	Swimming	19
31	06/20/82	Little Falls	Canoeing	25
32	05/05/84	Little Falls Dam	Rafting	20
33	05/05/84	Little Falls Dam	Rafting	23
34	05/05/84	Little Falls Dam	Rafting	19
35	05/05/84	Little Falls Dam	Rafting	20
36	05/05/84	Little Falls Dam	Rafting	19
37	05/12/84	Chain Bridge	Fishing	51
38	05/22/84	Little Falls	Fishing	33
39	06/03/84	Yellow Falls	Swimming	17
40	07/14/84	Chain Bridge	Rock Hopping	18
41	07/14/84	Chain Bridge	Rock Hopping	14
42	08/18/84	Aqueduct Dam	Swimming	18
43	04/21/85	Rocky Islands	Swimming	19
44	04/27/85	Chain Bridge	Fishing	18
45	04/29/85	Great Falls Spout	Fishing	16
46	05/26/85	Rocky Islands	Sunbathing	16
47	06/02/85	Sandy Landing	Swimming	23
48	04/05/86	Great Falls	Rafting	16



NO SWIMMING

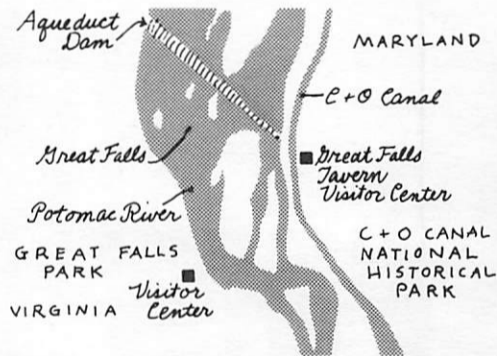


NO WADING



NO ALCOHOL

## Why is the Potomac River So Dangerous?

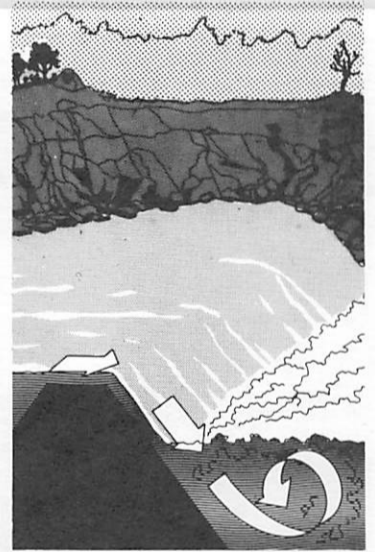


**Fast Water**  
 Above Great Falls the river funnels down to 200 feet, causing the current to speed up tremendously.

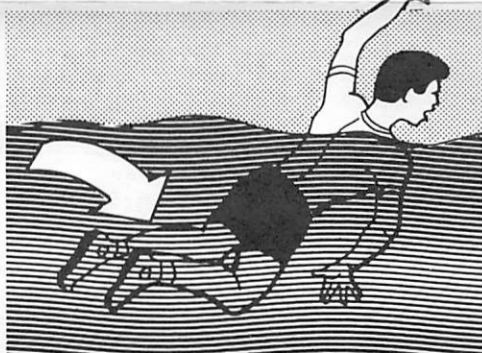
**Rising Water**  
 Water rises quickly. Water changing to muddy means danger. In 10 minutes you can be stranded on rocks and islands.

**The River's Edge**  
 The rocks are dangerous because of poor footing. Stay a body length from the water.

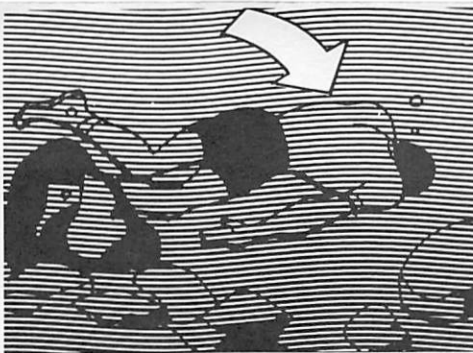
**"Killer Hydraulic"**  
 When water goes over a fall or dam, the current underneath runs faster than the surface. This causes water to curl backward, sucking down floating objects.



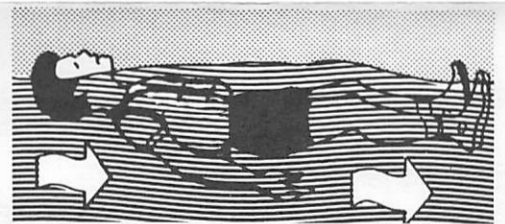
## Fast Water



**Falling in River**  
 Victim tries to signal for help. Raising an arm makes his feet go down.



**Drowning in Fast Water**  
 When feet go down in shallow water, they may snag on rocks. Rushing currents wedge feet under, making escape impossible. In deeper water, powerful currents can pull even a strong swimmer under. In certain currents, even wearing a life jacket may not be enough.



### Surviving Fast Water

- Don't panic.
- Float through the rapids on your back with toes up and pointing downstream.
- When you reach calmer water, swim to shore.
- If you fall out of a boat, hang on and stay on the upstream side.
- Don't attempt to swim against the massive power of the river's current.

