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With the garbage from previous river floaters littering the rocks and shoreline along the Coeur d'Alene River, Gabriel Clark, left, Ezra Clark and Hunter Clark, 11, relax below the Old River Road bridge after playing on the rope swing Wednesday. The Shoshone County Sheriff's Department is increasing its patrols to curtail the ill effects of the influx of people who recreate on the river during the weekends.

# Rolling on the river

Shoshone County sheriff keeping a closer eye on weekend recreation

By ALECIA WARREN  
Staff writer

Tucker Anderson watched his inner tube fatten with air at a Kingston gas station as his friends prepped for the float trip.

Inner tubes? Check.

Beer? Check.

Done.

"You just get relaxed, hang out with the bros, drink a couple beers," the Coeur d'Alene 21-year-old summarized with a grin.

It's the common recipe for a successful float down the Coeur d'Alene River: Searing sun, tubes lifting up and down on lazy waves, and a little bit of intoxication.

In some cases, unfortunately, a lot of intoxication.

"There are definitely people out here who overdo it a little bit," Anderson conceded as his friends loaded up. "You have situations like people jumping off the



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Carly Garcia, 17, waits for her inflatable orca to deflate after finishing her float Wednesday down the Coeur d'Alene River.

bridge (into the water). You can tell they're a little drunk, they're almost hitting people when they jump. All you have to do is paddle away, but some situations aren't as easily avoidable."

His friend, Chris Combo, agreed some just get a little too rowdy.

"I think it's maybe a little bit of the young crowd, in their 20s, who drink too much," said Combo, himself 21.

The Shoshone County Sheriff's Department is on it.

# RIVER

from A1

In response to the ongoing hootenanny of floating and drinking on the river, the department is setting up weekend emphasis patrols along the water to provide some stern chaperoning.

"When there are a number of deputies out there, it just keeps people in line. They know we're there," said Sheriff Mitch Alexander.

The department has observed common shenanigans from floaters who over indulge on the water.



Incidents have included underage drinking, DUIs, trespassing on private property and parking along the roadway.

Hopefully the presence of men and women in uniform will quell the unruliness, Alexander said.

Officers won't necessarily be dispensing tickets to violators, he added, so much as doing some lecturing on the correct way to behave.

Last weekend he handed out fliers at the river, he said and stopped cars to discuss safety and behavior issues.

"I think with any large assembly of people, I think the majority of people are law-abiding citizens who want to have a good time," he said. "We're trying to work with the community here. We want people to come to the Silver Valley. My goal isn't to run people out of here."

Devoted river floater Chynna Freshour, 22, was glad to hear on Wednesday that officers would be keeping an eye out.



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**Chris Combo, left, and his brother, Nick, fill up their tubes Wednesday at a gas station before floating down the Coeur d'Alene River.**

"A lot of people get too drunk on the river," the Coeur d'Alene girl said as she filled up her inner tube. "They can't even walk up the bank, and then they have to drive home."

Most think they can get away with it on the river, her friend, Morgan Aguilar, noted.

"It's one of those places where they don't think there are a lot of cops, so they think it's safe to drink," the Coeur d'Alene girl said.

They both drink while they float, they said, but just enough to enhance the intoxication of bobbing on the river itself.

"It's summer and we're young. It's what we're go-

ing to do," Freshour said.

That afternoon, the river was cluttered with gaggles of greased-up bodies splayed across their doughnut-shaped vehicles.

Taylor Morrell of Smelterville joined his band of floating buddies in a celebratory beer before they unloaded the tubes stacked on their car.

They don't mind officers cracking down on the problem few, they agreed.

"As long as it's not illegal for me to float and

drink, that's fine," Morrell said.

His pal, Justin Perez, said they always pick a designated driver, but he does worry about other folks piling into cars after drinking for hours.

Maybe, Perez suggested, officers should stick to the parking lots and test people's breath.

"At the end of the float, they should make sure some people aren't driving," he said.

A Coeur d'Alene teen

**"I think with any large assembly of people, I think the majority of people are law-abiding citizens who want to have a good time."**

**MITCH ALEXANDER**, Shoshone County sheriff

named Tyler, standing on the shore while his friends mounted a raft on the waves, admitted he and his other underage companions drink when they float.

He would prefer officers not crack down too much, he said, as many consider alcohol a natural piece of the floating atmosphere.

"It's just the thing to do," the 18-year-old said. "We usually have one to two people sober to drive."

He added that an officer stopped their car when they visited the river the other day, to give them a reminder about safety.

"It was fine. He just said a few things and we drove off," he said.

Did the words have an impact?

"Mm...No," he said.

Alexander acknowledged that last weekend, there were still incidents of DUIs, underage drinking, public urination and trespassing along the river.

But he believes most recreators absorbed his suggestions.

"We were busy, but I think it's been better than it has been in the past," he said.