

When river flows are higher than your familiar with on the South Fork of the American River (or any river) here are some things to think about before deciding to get on the river:

➤ Preparation, Planning, Skills

- Advanced boating skills are recommended.
- Inner Tubbing at higher flows on any section of the South Fork American River is not advisable.
- Some rapids may be more difficult and less forgiving than at regular flows.
- Time between rapids can be greatly reduced.
- Guide should have experience on large volume and pushy flows.
- Self-rescue knowledge e.g.: recovery from flips, aggressively swimming to safety.
- Knowledge of standard hand signals.
- River rescue training experience recommended.
- The “normal route” through a rapid may no longer work due to large waves and holes that form at higher water.
- Scout a rapid if you do not know the high water route.
- Long swims are extremely hazardous due to cold water & strainers.
- Single boat trips should be avoided.
- Learn emergency egress locations and have an emergency plan.
- Proper Boat Spacing (stay close together).

➤ Equipment

- Dress warm (wear a wetsuit or drysuit) – Avoid cotton clothing!
- Wear a life jacket designed for paddle sports (No horseshoe or waterski vests)
- Use multi-chambered whitewater rafts only.
- Rig for flips - No loose lines or gear.
- Bring extra paddles & warm dry clothing.

➤ Group Fitness

- Long hard paddling may be needed at higher water.
- Have the ability to help rescue yourself or others.

➤ Cold Water Dangers

- Your body loses heat and strength quickly.
- You can quickly lose your ability to swim to safety, rescue yourself or others.

If you are not familiar with the concepts listed above consider going with a permitted outfitter with professionally trained guides.

https://www.edcgov.us/government/River/pages/American_River_Rafting_Outfitters.aspx