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Great Ohio River paddlers brave rain, lightning and tons of floating debris (submitted by **Rich Cogen**)

(June 12-13) It was a stormy first day on the Ohio River for paddlers in the Great Ohio River Paddle (GORP) – Voyage of the Dammed. This 7th edition of GORP was more of a challenge than in past years as Saturday featured torrential rain storms. Lightning suspended paddling on the river for about 2 hours while the storm raged on and passed through the area. But by mid-afternoon skies cleared and the paddlers added a few more miles of Ohio River paddling to their White Oak Creek morning paddling experience.

Sunday was calmer with lots of sun to accompany paddlers on their trip through the auxiliary lock at the Captain Meldahl Locks & Dam. Because the storms flushed tons of debris into the tributaries and on into the Ohio River, paddlers had to act as ice breakers forging single file through the barrels, tires, and acres of tree limbs greeting them in the middle of the lock chamber.

GORP veteran Laura Taphorn of Cincinnati remarked, “This GORP was definitely very memorable with diverse and challenging weather conditions during the two days, but GORP and Ohio River Foundation staff managed them fabulously well.”

“Great food, great time, and fun people,” commented Don Winton of Chardon, OH. “My first GORP and I’ll be back.”

Mick Vank (another GORP veteran) of Cold Spring, KY said, “The experience of paddling safely during heavy rainstorms and visiting Augusta, KY were some of the many weekend highlights.”

According to Executive Director Rich Cogen, \$9,000 was raised for Ohio River Foundation’s conservation work, including a new project to restore rivers by removing lowhead dams. “Our experienced group of educators and safety paddlers again proved important assets in guiding and helping our guests to have an enjoyable and memorable experience. We are heartened by all the paddlers commitment to ORF and look forward to involving them and other citizens in our work to protect and restore rivers.”



Great Ohio River Paddlers wait along with tons of debris to exit the auxiliary lock of the Meldahl Locks & Dam

