

Welcome to Ohio, the Non-Whitewater State!

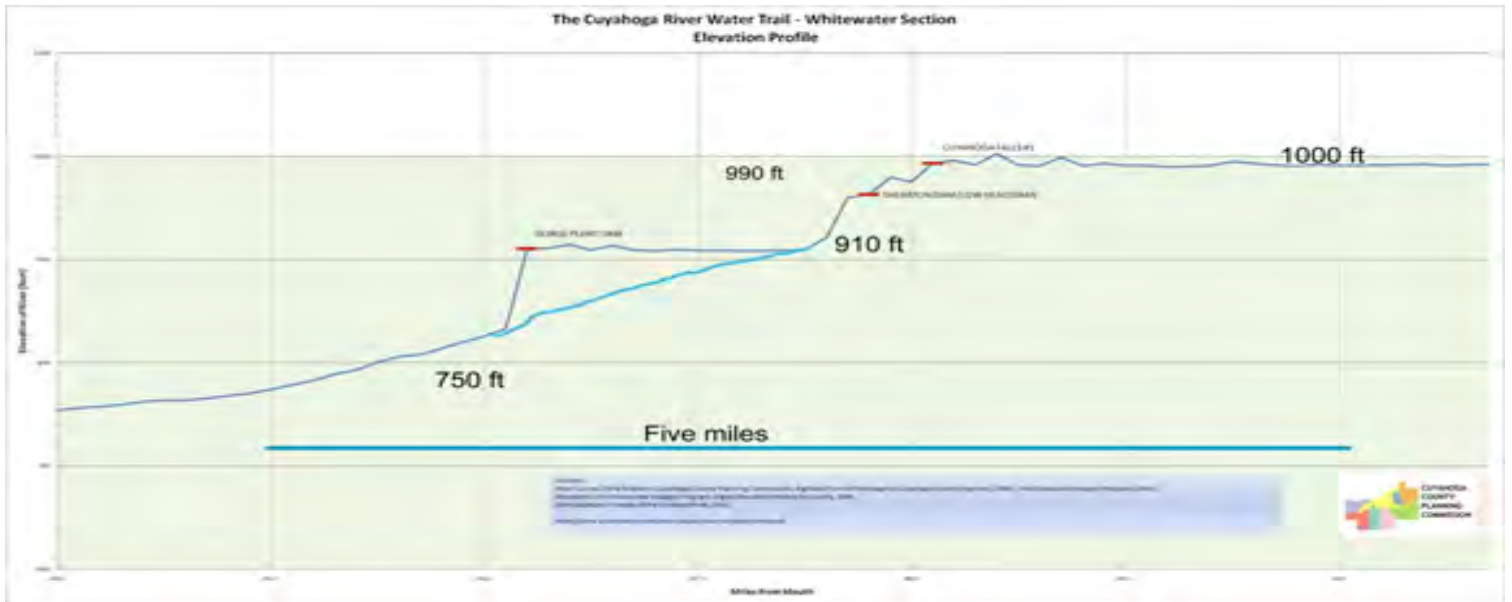
By Dave Hill

Everyone thinks that there's no whitewater in Ohio and the state is nothing but flat farmlands of corn and whatever else happens to be growing. It's just that stretch of land on the shuttle to paddle somewhere else. No one makes Ohio a paddling stop! But things are about to change one way or another.

The river that burned has an interesting past but a more productive future lies ahead.

We all know that the Cuyahoga flows some odd 100.7 miles through headwaters and National Park bottom lands, but it's not all flat. At that unique turning point where the river turns back north, it also has the steepest gradient. With an average drop of almost 50 feet per mile over several miles, this river definitely knows how to drop with style!

This write up is not about the Ohio Edison dam, it's about that old industrial section farther upstream. That rough and tumble section where early settlers tried to harness the river's power to product a wealth of goods for the growing economy.



The 2 lower dams in the above historic picture are no longer present and are now the location of both drops behind the Sheraton as shown in the 2 photos of paddlers.



Rookie Drop

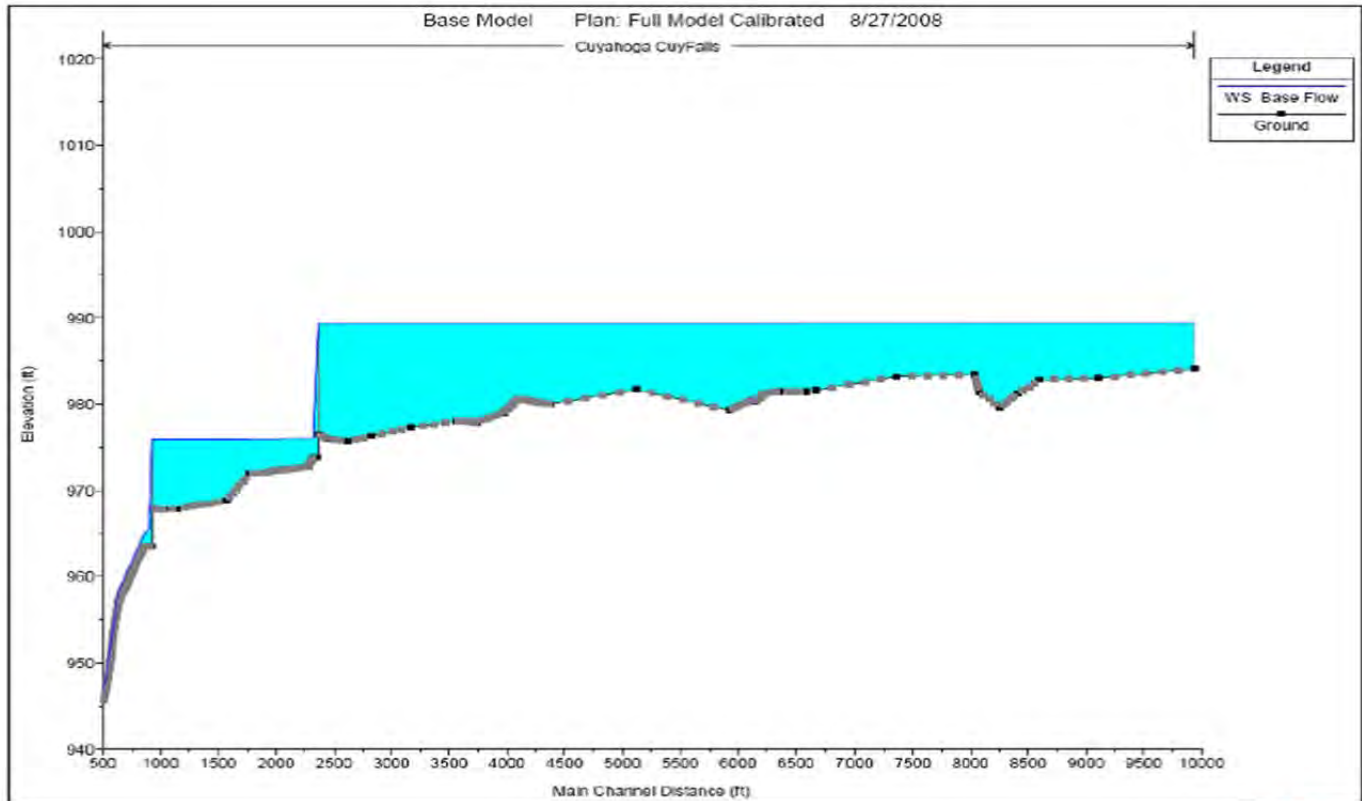
The upper 2 dams in the historic photo are the current Sheraton and LaFever dams.



Right Boof Line on the Last Drop

Things in the Upper Gorge are about to change for those 2 upper dams at the Sheraton and LaFever sites. In the Nov 27th article of the [Falls News Press](#) the City of Cuyahoga Falls announced that 2 low head dams will be removed in 2012. The Ohio EPA is moving forward with support of this project and information on the project scope, schedule and funding sources can be found at the EPA [website](#).

So what does this mean to paddlers, well..... That gradient shown in the first picture is about to become free flowing in those upper reaches. As shown in the BBCM figure, the removal of these 2 dams will eliminate about 35 feet of vertical structures and should open up about 1 mile of new whitewater between the old railroad bridge (near Bailey Road) and the Sheraton dam.



No one really knows what lies below the river surface but some research projects have presented their findings for what the riverbed features may look like. These include the [thesis paper](#) on the sediments behind the upper LaFever dam pool. This paper presented the isopleth figure on next page which outlines the riverbed surface based upon probing activities.

This figure shows that gradient should increase from the Rt 8 overpass (blank spot on figure) and become channelized along the right bank before dropping over a natural ledge (below the LaFever dam structure?).

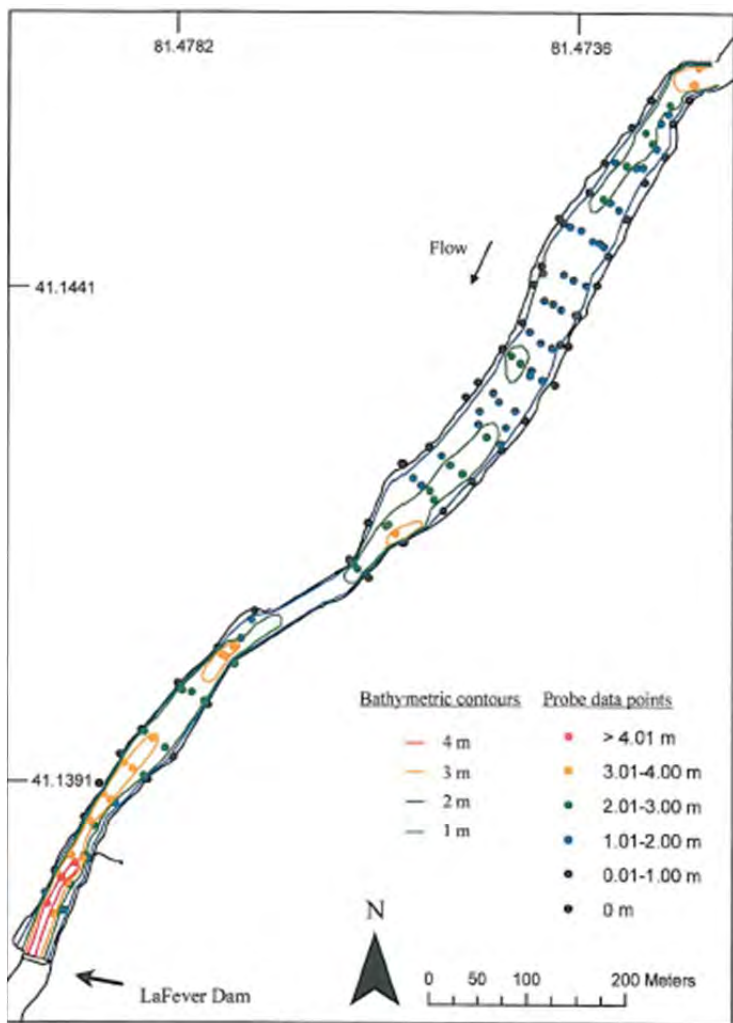
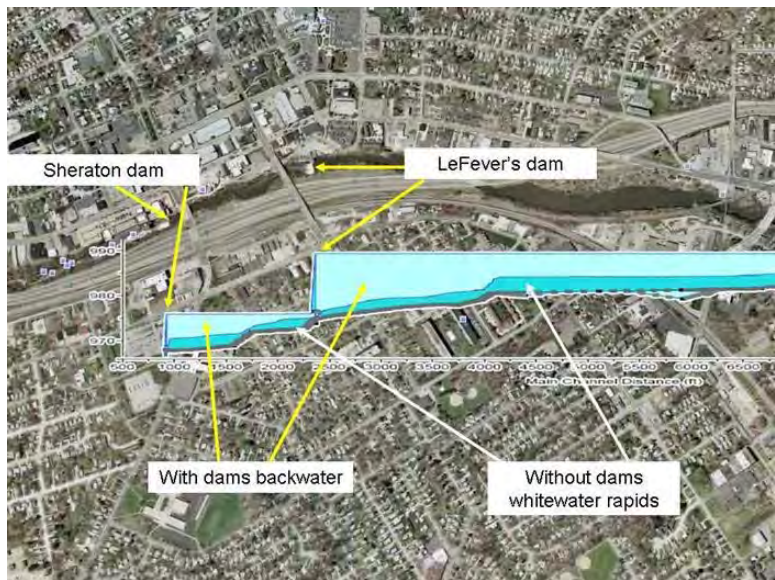


Figure 47. Bathymetry map of the LaFever dam pool. River boundaries were obtained from Summit County Geographic Information Services (SCGIS) et al. (2000).

Then there is this overlay of data from various sources which presents a similar story.



The bottom line is that there will be new whitewater opportunities in downtown Cuyahoga Falls as early as fall 2012.

Considering that the festival site ([Falls River Square](#)) is immediately adjacent to the Sheraton dam pool the potential for accidents will be elevated and public education regarding swift water will be required. After all, whitewater is not common in Ohio and we should ensure this new access is not threatened.



Scouting the runout below the last drop behind the Sheraton Suites.