



## American Whitewater

# Website Redesign and Development

### Contents

I.	Submission Timeline and Format.....	2
II.	Organization Overview.....	3
III.	Project Overview.....	3
IV.	Current Situation.....	4
V.	Project Requirements.....	5
VI.	Functional Requirements.....	6
VII.	Proposal Format.....	8
VIII.	Basis of Selection.....	9



## I. Submission Timeline and Format

- Thursday, Jan. 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012** RFP distributed
- Wednesday, Feb. 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012** deadline for firms to submit written questions
- Monday, Feb. 27<sup>th</sup>, 2012** all questions with written answers distributed to all interested firms
- Monday, Mar. 12<sup>th</sup>, 2012** deadline for submitting proposals

The RFP coordinator for this project is:

Jeff Paine  
American Whitewater  
P.O. Box 1540  
Cullowhee, NC 28723

Email: [jeff@americanwhitewater.org](mailto:jeff@americanwhitewater.org)

Submissions must be in the PDF format and delivered via e-mail to the RFP coordinator. All questions should be directed to the RFP coordinator. All submissions received after the due date will not be considered.

For ease of reference, each firm receiving this RFP is referred to as a “firm” and the firm selected to provide services for American Whitewater is referred to as the “selected firm.” This RFP states the instructions for submitting proposals, the procedure and criteria by which a firm may be selected.

## II. Organization Overview

Founded in 1954, American Whitewater (AW) is a national non-profit that works to protect whitewater rivers all throughout the United States. American Whitewater is well-known and highly regarded throughout the whitewater and conservation communities. American Whitewater's mission is "to conserve and restore America's whitewater resources and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely." Furthermore, American Whitewater is a membership organization representing a broad diversity of individual whitewater enthusiasts, river conservationists, and more than 100 local affiliate paddling clubs across America. The organization is the primary advocate for the preservation and protection of whitewater resources throughout the United States, and connects the interests of human-powered recreational river users with ecological and science-based data to achieve the goals within its mission.

## III. Project Overview

American Whitewater seeks an experienced firm to redesign [www.americanwhitewater.org](http://www.americanwhitewater.org) and implement technologies to meet the objectives outlined in this document. This will be a concept to completion production, from scoping to information architecture, design, development, deployment and support.

The purpose of the AW website is to inform users about the AW mission, conservation, safety, river information, and the AW river stewardship projects. It must also encourage user contributions: informational (river updates) and financial (memberships, donations) to support the AW mission. AW maintains a unique and comprehensive river database; this feature of the website is responsible for most site visits but does not significantly turn these visitors into those types of contributing users necessary for the organization's viability.

The redeveloped website should be easy to use and intuitive, organized around AW's river database, using the most popular website informational area to encourage users to participate in the fulfillment of other organizational goals.

The primary goals of the new website include:

- an internet presence that professionally represents the organization,
- provide users with up-to-date information about American Whitewater, the organization's projects and rivers,
- a site that is easily managed and maintained by non-programmers through a web-based interface,
- conversion of visitors to the river database into contributing users,
- encourage membership and provide necessary membership support services for members and staff,
- encourage donations and make doing so easy,
- administrative capability for website and managed data,
- retain information and information relationships from current website systems,
- allow for user contributions in specific areas

## Budget

American Whitewater's budget for this project is \$67,000 - \$86,000. Responses beyond this range should present a very compelling argument for the additional investment.

American Whitewater is a small non-profit with a similar budget. We honor our financial supporters and fiscal goals by carefully spending the funds we have been entrusted with. As such, we will be carefully vetting responses based on their reasonable pricing and high quality, amongst other features.

Additionally, as a small non-profit, our staff time is already focused on current projects. In light of this, responses should not presume to us AW staff time as an inexpensive way to implement features, transition data, etc.

## IV. Current Situation

The existing American Whitewater website is a collection of different functionalities and software systems which have evolved over a decade of development.

Almost all website traffic is centered on the river database, a resource of river gauge data and other public and exclusive information regarding rivers. The river gauge information is pulled programmatically from multiple external sources and stored locally for display by the river database. This and other information collected by American Whitewater staff and user contributors is an invaluable resource and must be carried over and continued in any new system. Currently user updates to the river information are complex and cumbersome. The next iteration of the website must provide simple and fast means for users to update river information and gauge data.

The current website is written in PHP using a custom application framework. Data is retrieved from multiple sources including PostgreSQL for river data and MySQL for user, store and other website information. Member information is stored in a remote eTapestry system. Some elements of the website are completely custom written, others are included software such as DocuWiki for content management and SquirrelCart/FormStack for the stores.

The river database portion of the website reads in river level data from multiple external sources and stores this information into the PostgreSQL database. It uses these collated values as a data source for the website and for an externally available API.

American Whitewater uses Authorize.net for credit card processing.

A detailed documentation of the existing website has been written by the current developer and will be made available to interested parties. We highly recommend reviewing this document for a thorough description of the existing website. This will yield a more mature and detailed understanding of capabilities requested in this document. Please e-mail the RFP coordinator for a copy of this document.

## V. Project Requirements

The following are overall requirements for this project:

### **Intuitive and easy to navigate website**

The website should undergo significant redesign and reorganization. The design should be visually appealing, have a unified look and feel and provide easy navigation throughout. As most users are interested in the river database, this should be the central component of the website. Users should be funneled towards important areas of the website such as membership and donations from the river database. All content that may be associated to a river should be associated, and be made available via a river's main page.

### **Modern web design**

Website should be developed utilizing modern web design and standards, compatible with modern browsers while providing graceful degradation for older browsers (not including IE6). Website URLs should predominantly be clean URLs. This design should be mobile device friendly for news, river information and other reasonable areas.

### **Increased goal conversion**

The website requires new information architecture to shape traffic towards the promotion of the goals of the American Whitewater website. The existing website concentrates traffic at the river database but fails to convert that traffic to other areas. The new website should use this interest to guide users towards user registration, membership, donations and stewardship projects.

### **User driven information**

It is not possible for American Whitewater staff to maintain all river information therefore these areas of content greatly benefit from user contributions. Users should be allowed to contribute updates to some areas of the website while limiting the potential for vandalism. The existing website has a "StreamTeam" which is a selection of users chosen to have special access to manage rivers/regions.

### **Data source consolidation**

The existing website makes use of multiple databases and different e-commerce software packages. The new website should reduce the number of databases and software systems used in the present website, consolidating around commonly used software platforms and a single database.

### **Data relationships**

The current website allows the inter-relating of the managed content. We have found this functionality useful especially concerning the rivers, projects, articles and media. Most managed components of the website should be relatable and existing links preserved. Existing relationships should be preserved.

### **Retention of existing information**

Much of the value in the American Whitewater information systems is the existing collected data. This data and its relationships must be retained in any new web system. Existing valuable URLs should be 301 redirected to their new location.

## VI. Functional Requirements

### Accident Database

A database of user contributed safety reports is available on the American Whitewater website. Users should be able to contribute accident reports which must be screened by a staff member before publicly visible. This element will most likely require a specialized sub-search involving location-based searching.

### Calendar

The calendar needs to display river release schedules. This area must be updatable by staff and designated users.

### CMS

The website should have a simple inclusive content management system allowing non-developer staff members the ability to create, edit and remove web site pages. The CMS should allow for the upload and use of different media in a page. Existing website pages must be migrated to the new website. Pages should allow for structural intra-relating and relationships with other managed content. AW must be able to maintain full editorial control of content without dependence on outside contractors.

### Document Management System

This system should allow staff and select users the ability to manage and share binary files via the website. Documents in the existing shared system will need to be brought over into any new system; existing relationships between the documents and other website elements must be preserved.

### Journals

The website must maintain the archives of the American Whitewater journal. The journal is the official magazine of American Whitewater. Members in good standing are allowed access to more recent issues. It would be beneficial if there was some means for public submission of articles for consideration.

### Media

AW hosts media (images, videos) associated with rivers and other elements of the website. We would like to see future media contributions to be able to come via third party hosts (Vimeo, YouTube etc) for videos and potentially images from other sources. This is to eliminate the hosting burden, encourage the social sharing of media and take advantage of media already posted elsewhere on the web.

### Membership

Users must be able to purchase, renew and gift memberships on the website. Members must be able to manage their membership information on the website. Auto-renew should be an option when purchasing or renewing a membership. Also, the ability to pay via payment plans for larger (\$250+) memberships. Updates to membership should reflect on the website in real time. Member information is currently stored at eTapestry, as such, all member functionality will require the use of their API to modify and access member data. We are also open to proposals which would bring all member management internally to the new web system.

### News/Articles

These content elements should be able to be featured on the homepage of the website. They will also need to have embedded media and be associable to other content (rivers, projects, etc). These items should share the same management attributes as any CMS web page.

## Projects

As a vital part of their outreach communications, AW highlights their stewardship projects on the website. These should be searchable on a location and river basis. These items should share the same management attributes as any CMS web page and be associable with other content.

## River Database

American Whitewater's National River Database is an important resource for whitewater enthusiasts. This unique collection of river information and water flow tracking is the main draw of the AW website. We expect a good amount of project time to be spent on this area of the website.

While it is the "national" river database, there are some international rivers included. Rivers are organized by state and region. River levels are available from multiple sources; the new site must develop systems to import this data from the external sources on a regular basis, or present an argument for using the current system. Users should also be allowed to provide quick visual report of a river gauge level, timestamped and with that user's name.

We would also like to see an increase in the use of visualization: richer graphs, maps to display river information/gauge locations and maps as part of a location radius based search. Geo-spatial information is available for the rivers. Location of user should be automatically detected where possible. There should be a specialized sub-search on the site for rivers and river gauges.

Registered users should be able to save their favorite rivers/gauges for quick information access. Each river should have some area for user discussion. Elements of social media should be brought in where appropriate.

The river database is especially popular with users on mobile device browsers. This area of the website must be made well usable for mobile devices or a mobile specific alternative must be built.

The website currently supplies a River Database API. AW would prefer to have some means for programmatic access to the River Database in the next version of the website. Backward compatibility is not required. Any new implementation of the API must use some method for authentication and not be available for unapproved users.

## Search

Website should have a simple and standardized search with a text-box able to search site-wide, such as a Google custom search. Search should capture items like current and past articles, public documents, photos, river descriptions, gauges, gauge descriptions, projects, journal contents and static pages. The river and accident databases require specialized sub-searches on location and other unique parameters.

## Store

The e-commerce store must be secure and capable of handling physical products, event tickets, etc. Staff should be able to set pricing and modify store contents.

Special consideration needs to be given to the critical functions of purchasing / renewing a membership, making a donation and purchasing a gift membership. We are open to proposals that house these functions within the store or separate them appropriately out. Also, due to the current low utilization of the store, we are especially open to solutions that propose product sales via a third party store/provider.

Membership purchases should automatically be reflected in a member's account status. Users should be able to set membership to auto-renew status and update their credit card information as it changes or expires.

## Syndication

Syndicated feeds should be made available for specific rivers, regions and news/articles.

## Usage Tracking

The site should use Google Analytics for usage tracking. Metrics should be included in the new website that tracks conversions from the river database to other site goals.

## Users

Existing user accounts must be ported to any new system. While old-style login names will still work, new users should be logging in using their e-mail address as their login. The website should be able to display to users different messages based on membership status to encourage membership/renewal. Users must be able to self-manage their personal information.

## VII. Proposal Format

Proposals should include information outlined in this section:

1. Describe in detail the firm's proposal to address the requirements outlined in this RFP.
2. Provide a timeline for the completion of the project outlined in this RFP.
3. Provide a brief history of the firm and its experience providing services for organizations such as American Whitewater.
4. Document examples of the firm's experience in designing/developing similar functionality to each of the project requirements.
5. List the project team (including programmers and designers) and short biographies of each team member. Indicate any portions of the work, if any, which will be sub-contracted and to whom.
6. Provide a list of the firm's clients comparable to AW indicating the length of service of each account. Include contact name, telephone number and website URL. A minimum of three references that may speak to projects of similar size and scope is requested.
7. Describe the project process and methodology including sample deliverables from past projects of similar size and scope.
8. Explain methodology for demonstrating to and training AW in use of new website.
9. Describe the fee structure and how AW will be charged. The costs involved may be categorized separately as redesign, implementation costs, maintenance costs, and software licensing costs. Also include the firm's plan for post-deployment maintenance, support and upgrades including hourly rates for services. The price you quote should be inclusive, if your price excludes certain fees or charges you must provide a detailed list of excluded fees with a complete explanation of the nature of those fees.

10. If hosting services may be provided, clearly identify cost as well as description of the hosting platform, uptime, server location, data backup and integrity plan.
11. Document choice of content management system; if proprietary, firm is expected to explain reasons this choice is superior to non-proprietary systems. Proposal should address migration of content from existing website to proposed CMS.
12. Document experience illustrating expertise in:
  - content management systems
  - geo-location and visual map integrations
  - database redesign and migration
  - providing design services for non-profit organizations and associations
  - developing/deploying content management systems with custom components which allow for association self-management
  - integrating e-commerce solutions
  - developing services using third party APIs
  - web services development
13. Document proposed approach to:
  - Handling membership information internally or externally (eTapestry)
  - Allowing users to collaborate on some areas of the website (river database, accident database, etc.) while limiting potential for vandalism.
  - Handling existing stored media and future included media from social media sharing websites.
14. Proposal must contain signature of a duly authorized officer or agent of the company submitting the proposal.

### **III. Basis of Selection**

American Whitewater is seeking the most comprehensive proposal from qualified firms for fulfilling these objectives. Firms are expected to show a demonstrative capability of this type of work.

AW will evaluate proposals and, if a firm is to be selected, select the firm on the basis of:

1. The firm's plan to achieve the goals stated in this RFP in a comprehensive manner.
2. The firm's experience, examples of work, qualifications and successes in providing similar services.
3. The firm's references from international and national organizations, large non-profit organizations, and other clients comparable to AW.
4. The firm's pricing and timeline.
5. The quality of the proposal, responsiveness to requirements and adequacy of information provided.
6. The firm's plan for hosting, post-deployment maintenance, support and upgrades and rates for these services.

AW prefers open source software and non-proprietary content management systems. Responses proposing a proprietary Content Management System will be considered but must provide a compelling argument comparing against open sourced systems.

All proposals of a pre-existing CMS must provide examples of expertise in using that product. These examples must include the integration of unique custom content for which no pre-developed solution exists.



Submission of a response to this RFP does not bind American Whitewater to engage the firm to provide the requested services. The firm is solely responsible for the costs it incurs in responding to this request for proposal.

American Whitewater will negotiate contract terms upon selection. All contracts are subject to review by AW legal counsel, and a project will be awarded upon signing of an agreement or contract, which outlines terms, scope, budget and other necessary items.