

Whale Foundation  
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Last spring I wrote an article in this quarterly with the idea of starting an organization to assist boatman. That article and concept of the Whale Foundation was essentially a brainstorm of ideas based on conversations with concerned members of our community. The response has been very encouraging. Many of you have expressed an interest in this project and a willingness to help or provide your services. It is very much appreciated. Between the last article and this update was a very busy river season. It seems the only extracurricular thing I get done during the season is my laundry. No excuse, just a note on reality. The winter is here and the ball is rolling again. Here is the latest: Bob Grusy, Bill Karls and I have been communicating, and attempting to divide up priorities and tasks. The Whale Foundation has received some money and we are in the process of setting up accounts. What is the first priority? To set up a mental health awareness and assistance network.

Our immediate goal is to compile a resource directory so individuals can anonymously obtain information on issues such as depression, substance abuse, and other topics. The directory would include national and regional organizations who distribute information via phone, mail, or the internet. Packets of information will also be available through the Whale Foundation. In addition, the directory would establish a network of phone numbers and contacts for those individuals who want more information, or may want to see a counselor. This will be set up so the individual's anonymity is upheld. We don't want to know who's using these services, we just want them to be utilized. We have had a number of mental health professionals volunteer their services to get this going.

Another idea with potential is a mentorship program. Perhaps there are those within our community who have gone through some of these issues and are willing to share their experience with their peers? Please contact us if this interests you.

Next steps include raising more money, establishing a Whale Foundation advisory committee, setting up the mailing and counseling services, and after that setting up the next set of potentially positive goals (career counseling network, financial planning network, etc.).

What can you do? Get in touch with us. I know damn well that there are a lot of people in this community that have much more intelligence and energy than I do, so let's get after it.

So much has happened in the last couple of years. The river business is changing and those of us who are in it need to evolve as well. Some of what has occurred has been good, while other things such as losing some of our good friends has not. Yet the memory of those fine folks can inspire us to achieve something great for the future. Here is an opportunity to get involved and make something happen.

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