



Elijah Mack surfs Rapid #11 on the Zambezi River in Zambia, Africa.

"It's a dream wave, a huge, perfect, overhead barreling wave — the kind people travel around the world to surf. — Evan Slater, editor of *Surfing Magazine*

Pick up the July issue of *Surfing Magazine* (on stands May 24) and you'll see some of the first pictures ever published of Rapid #11 in Mark Anders' 12-page story. Slater sent a whole crew to Zambia and caught the wave at just the right level, which only happens once or twice a year. Mack was there too.

"I found out about the wave on a website called playak.com about five years ago," he said. "It had a description, but it took me about two years to find a picture of it because there aren't very many. But once I saw it, I knew I had to go. It was just a matter of getting the money."

American Wave Machines, the only company that's made a wave machine capable of producing a standing wave, agreed to pay for his trip. And then the wait began for the river to get to the right level so that Rapid #11 actually comes in.

"I flew to Zambia on 24-hours notice," Mack said. He settled into a little hostel and waited for the water to get to the right level. The crew from *Surfing Magazine*, with their entourage of pro surfers, showed up. And they waited too.

Each day, the river rose a little bit and Rapid #11 got better and better until it was at its peak. From their little base camp down in the gorge beside the river, they surfed all day long.

"It was really the fulfillment of a dream for me," Mack said. "Because I had found out about it five years ago and finally I was there. And I'm with all these pro surfers, and I was like, yeah, I told you so."

To kayakers the Zambezi River is like Mecca. Big class 5 water. Evil pour-overs. Monster holes that'll keep you down for longer than you ever thought you could hold your breath. And the famous, huge, glassy green, perfectly barreling wave: Rapid #11.

But this isn't a story about kayakers. It's about surfers and one surfer in particular who's made it part of his life's mission to promote and advance a rapidly growing niche in the sport — river surfing.

A few years ago Elijah Mack founded the World River Surfing Association (see *EW* cover story, 7/22/04) and began searching for stationary waves throughout the Northwest. Since then, he's surfed on more than 30 river waves.

Under the right conditions (flow and river topography), standing waves form on rivers. At high water (not now) you can walk over the Knickerbocker Bike Footbridge upstream from Alton Baker Park and on river left, you'll see one. Some are amazing spots to stop and play because if you can get onto the wave, the good ones will keep you there. Kayakers like to surf on standing river waves and practice tricks with names like cartwheels, blunts and loops.

In the past few years, the standing river waves have grown more popular with surfers too. On the irrigation canals in Central Oregon (where it's illegal to kayak or surf, by the way) the line of people waiting to get onto the Deschutes Market Wave, a clean, glassy, 3-

foot wave, is often an even split between kayakers and surfers. Certain waves on the McKenzie and the Willamette are popular too.

Most river waves are tiny compared to the ones in the ocean. "Typically river surfing doesn't work for our magazine," said Evan Slater, editor of *Surfing Magazine*. "The wave looks horrible, just waist-high whitewater. We're not interested in photographing that or running it."

But Rapid #11 is different. "It's a dream wave," he said. "A huge, perfect, overhead barreling wave — the kind people travel around the world to surf. If anything's going to make river surfing legitimate, it's this wave. It looks like an Indonesian reef pass. I've never seen anything close to that in river surfing."

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