



KRISTEN McDONALD

Tibetan monk and dog

about 50,000 people, most of them from ethnic minority hill tribes. It would also endanger the area's biodiversity from fish to birds.

A portion of the Salween runs through a UNESCO designated "World Heritage Site" called Three Parallel Rivers. UNESCO calls the site an "epicenter of Chinese biodiversity." UNESCO warned the Chinese government that if the dam construction continues, the area will be added to the "List of World Heritage in Danger."

China has recently switched to a system of environmental reviews, similar to that used here in the U.S. This means that environmental assessments should be available to the public, unless there are "state secrets" involved, says McDonald. Because the Salween is a "transboundary river," it may be harder to get copies of the reviews done on the four dams already underway.

McDonald, who grew up in Oregon rafting rivers with her parents, says that unless the dams are stopped, "the river heritage of China is going to disappear."

Winn and McDonald plan to continue to "actually take people there and get the message across," she says. They are eager to bring people from government officials to the media and show them what McDonald calls, "The transformative power of being in a wild place for eight days."

The fact that that wild place has what McDonald calls "big and bouncy" rapids and "huge waves" doesn't hurt either for these environmentalists and adventure-seekers who want to persuade the people from Eugene to China to save their rivers.

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To experience rafting in the wilds of Tibet and China in the Year of the Rat, go to www.lastdescents.com for a list of upcoming trips. Or contact Travis Winn at traviswinn@lastdescents.com. For more information on saving the rivers of China and Tibet go to www.chinariversproject.org



ANTON GRIESSBACH

Schoolchildren in the town of Sadêng



MATT FIELDS JOHNSON

2008: A Year of Living Dangerously

Outdoor pursuits at the cusp of apocalypse

"Four More Years." We may be seeing this slogan on bumper stickers a lot in 2008, more due to celestial calendars and futurist paranoia than presidential campaigns. That's because, by nearly every measurement, 2012 will be momentous. NASA data suggests the poles may reverse (sooner than later). The ancient Mayans predicted the return of Quetzalcoatl, their god of destiny. Some geologists believe oil extractions will peak and 2012 will inaugurate a "dark age" of frequent blackouts and brownouts. And Christian evangelists believe the Second Coming is near (or *nearish*).

Eager as we are for the apocalypse (see: Y2k; see: 9/11), the hype may inevitably lead to new forms of risk-taking: thrills, chills and apocalypse tourism. The idea is: See and do now what you probably won't be able to see and do in four years (at least not fast and cheap). For example, visit polar bears in their natural habitat, climb Mount Kilimanjaro's glaciers or raft wild rivers in Tibet. But there are ways to accomplish such feats without speeding up these area's destruction (see cover story).

Enter Trip Jennings, a local thrill-seeker and co-owner of the Epicocity Project, an outdoor media company bent on protecting natural areas, who has a personal goal to run what he calls the "Triple Crown" of Oregon waterfalls (Metlako on Eagle Creek and Koosah

Epicocity videographer Brian Eustis runs a waterfall in Papua New Guinea as villagers look on.

and Sahalie on the McKenzie River) in a kayak. He's scored the first two but has yet to attempt Sahalie. Getting slightly philosophical, Jennings describes his plummet down 101-foot tall Metlako as "incredibly liberating," saying he "felt more free than any other time [he could] remember." But it is his international exploits that led *National Geographic Adventure* (NGA) magazine to name him a 2008 Adventurer of the Year for his team's first descent down the Pandi River on remote New Britain Island off the coast of Papua New Guinea. Jennings has said (in an interview posted on NGA's website)

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that the goal in traveling to these fragile areas for "exploration and adventure" is to "motivate westerners to reduce [their] footprint wherever possible." Basically: skip the five-star resorts and pack light.

When asked to offer his advice for those explorers who have the urge to experience a part of the planet that, for lack of better words, are due for damnation, he was quick to note that Oregonians are "incredibly lucky" with the "lifetimes of adventures here in Oregon." But even those adventures won't be the same after "all the trees we'll cut by 2012," Jennings says. For close-to-home jaunts, Jennings points to the Rogue, Illinois and Salmon river watersheds. While you're at it, you could also hike the Pacific Crest Trail and climb Oregon's volcanoes, he says. (Because who knows when those are going to blow.) Internationally, it seems that rafting or kayaking rivers that are due for hydroelectric dams is your best bet, and Jennings suggests the While Nile (Uganda), the Futaleufu (Chile) and "any free flowing rivers" in China. But that's assuming you can still reach these areas in the first place.

As oil prices continue to climb and carbon-offsetting your sky miles fails to curb the root problem of consumption, intrepid explorers are increasingly powering these adventures with their own two feet. For 2008, Jennings is planning a speaking tour and kayaking trip across the U.S. How will he get around? By bike, of course. — Chuck Adams



COURTESY OF EPICOCITY

Trip Jennings runs 100+foot Metlako Falls in the Columbia River Gorge

Here are some other dangerous (and snarky) pursuits to consider:

Drive to the coast on logging roads Best to take a dirt bike on this trek, as many roads are now gated, and will require maneuverability. Just bring a map and compass, as half the fun is trying not to initiate a statewide search-and-rescue operation.

Practice disaster tourism When disaster strikes — a Cascade volcano blows its top, for instance — it is very important you are on the scene, ready to take dramatic, print-ready digital images. Bring a hard hat, as rocks thrown at you by disaster victims may be a hazard.

Going on vacation next November If you're a believer of the 2012 hype, then you've got plenty of doomsday candidates willing to make your hypothesis a reality. Take Mitt Romney or Rudy Guiliani, for example. Absentee ballots are a gamble with worse odds than Russian roulette. Best to be at your home address and vote in November — in person.