



South Suburban
PARKS AND RECREATION

SPWG Safety Signage Program

December 2016

SPWG Safety Signage Program

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Summary of Research

Interviews with individuals were conducted June 8-July 15, 2016 among professionals to whom safety will be an important component of the success of recently-completed South Platte River in-channel enhancements. Interviewees included representatives of the South Platte Working Group (SPWG); South Suburban park rangers; law enforcement and rescue professionals; and outfitters who plan to serve and engage South Platte River floaters and waders. We also solicited input from environmental educators and a leader in nearby Golden, Colorado about actions they have taken in response to the tremendous success of their whitewater park. Finally, we reached out to members of the River Management Society and received numerous examples of relevant examples of signage produced to encourage river trip preparedness and on-water awareness.

Target Audience

This recommendation focuses on individuals who our interviewees believe will be frequent users of the river, as it becomes known as a popular recreational destination:

- Primary: males, 12-35 years
- Secondary: men and women 25-40 year-old boaters or rafters accompanied by guides
- Tertiary (as new river access areas increase usage): families with young children

Interviewees believe the level of awareness of river safety will vary quite a bit from River Run Park downstream to Denver. Rafting customers, surfers and kayakers use proper equipment and are able to negotiate rapids themselves, or will be traveling with knowledgeable professionals. Conversely, riverside residents' level of swimming skills will likely be at or lower than the national average of just over 50%.

Importance of Signage

Providers of input were very supportive of signage as a means to inform visitors a) how best to prepare for their river experience, and b) what to do in the event of a safety emergency. Comments about the effectiveness of site-based signs included, "At least a few will be educated, and signs will help people think twice. If people go in groups some of them will think about what they read."

Interviews, review of river safety signage from across the nation, and the experience of our expert panel shaped principles helped shape the creative development process, resulting in the following guidance:

- Keep the message and language simple;
- Assume readers know nothing about river safety;
- Provide in-depth information only where people may stop and linger;
- Avoid 'death and destruction' messaging that intends to scare people without context; and
- Avoid standardized symbols if they don't 'read' quickly.

Enforcement Considerations

The State of Colorado allows law enforcement departments to close the river to individual floating in tubes when the river is too high. Since the river has not run for an entire season with its renovated drops, ‘low hazard,’ ‘should not be taken lightly’ and ‘off limits for tubing’ thresholds should be discussed and established prior to the Spring, 2017 runoff. If it is not possible to establish these at this time due to seasonal flow constraints, consider establishing conservative thresholds for Year I (2017) that can be evaluated and adjusted for Year II.

Note regarding a regulatory item whose consideration falls outside the scope of this project: State watercraft rules include those that do not apply to river use. “Tubes” refer to recreational equipment used when being pulled by a speedboat on flat or open water; and individuals over twelve years old must carry a life vest/pfd “in their boat” and there is no requirement to wear one. As river recreation such as that which will soon be accommodated and promoted on the South Platte River grows, non-power boat dominated state legislation should be considered.

Enforcement Considerations

Following are the messages whose understanding should enable individuals to enjoy the river safely:

- 1) Wear a life vest (pfd).
- 2) Know the river conditions.
- 3) Avoid impairment.
- 4) Enjoy the river with friends (i.e., not alone).
- 5) Know your geographic location to assist your need to address an emergency.

On Site Messaging

Two types of on-site signs can provide a ‘one, two punch’ reinforcement approach to communicating these important points.

- I. **Explanation of Best Practices** - “Know Before You Go”
 - Where** - Parking and staging area where group leaders, parents and interested members of peer groups can learn valuable information and rationale for the signs they will see on their way to the river.
 - What** - Explanation of Best Practices are ‘long’ versions of the five important messages. They will likely be read by parents with families, group leaders and others in positions of responsibility while they are staging (changing clothes, waiting for a vehicle shuttle to take place, etc.). They are not our primary target audience but those who can influence them.
 - How** – Communications tactics for the extended versions of the five key messages are:
 - Be positive and do not use the word ‘Don’t’.
 - Use active verbs.
 - Address the audience in second person singular or plural.

Recommended Text for South Platte Safety Signage – Long Versions of Key Messages

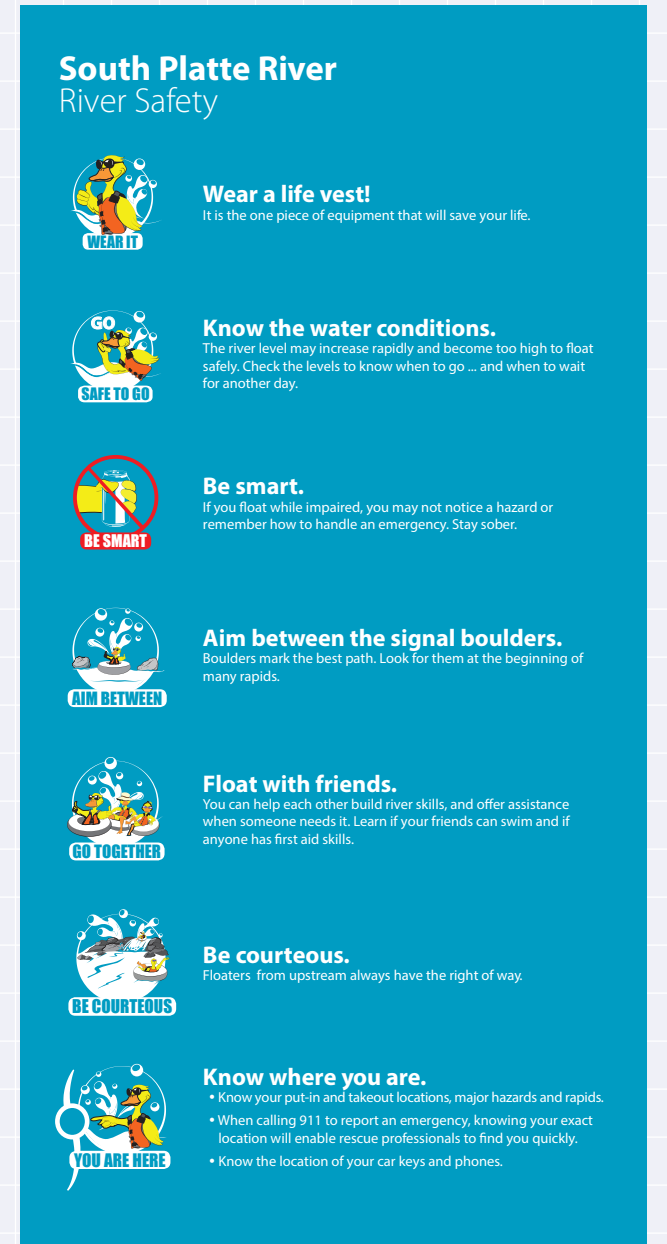
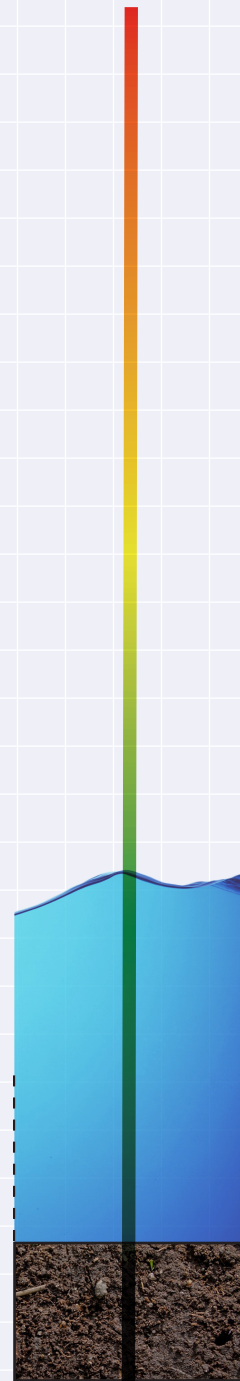
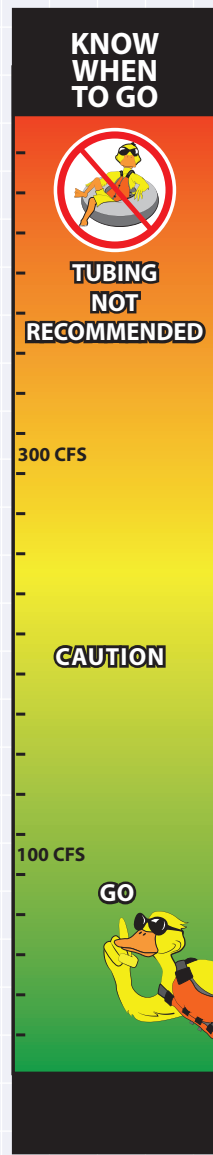
Wear a life vest:	It is the one piece of equipment that will save your life.
Know the water conditions:	The river level may increase rapidly and can become too high to float safely. Check the levels to know when to go ... and when to wait for another day.
Be smart:	If you float while impaired, you may not notice a hazard or remember how to handle an emergency. Stay sober.
Aim between the signal boulders:	Boulders mark the best path, look for them at the beginning of many rapids.
Float with friends:	Having at least three people to be sure someone can call for help if needed! Know how many are in your group; who knows the river; who can swim; and who has first aid skills.
Be courteous:	Floaters from upstream always have the right of way.
Know where you are:	Know your put-in and takeout locations and notable hazards and rapids. When calling 911 to report an emergency, knowing your exact location will enable rescue professionals to find you quickly. Know the location of your car keys and phones.



Individual Key Message Signs

WEAR IT: Wear a life vest (pfd) | AIM BETWEEN: Aim between the signal boulders | GO TOGETHER: Enjoy the river with friends | BE COURTEOUS: Be courteous and give right of way | BE SMART: Avoid impairment

RECOMMENDED SIGNAGE FAMILY



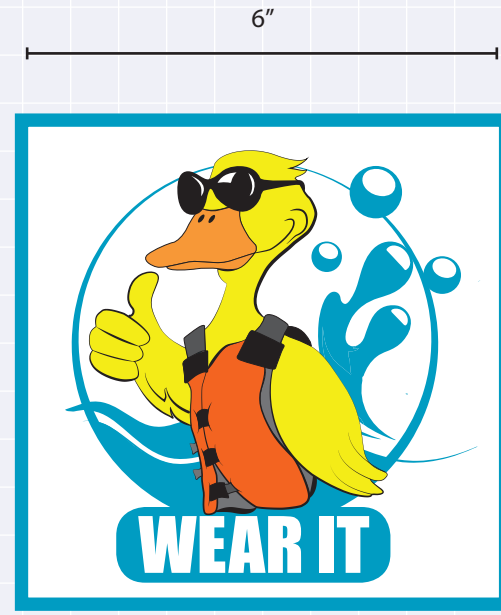
Knowledge Signs

KNOW WHERE YOU ARE: River map with location reference of put-ins and local major streets

KNOW THE WATER CONDITIONS: Ornamental flow rate sign for on bank viewing. Accompanying pole/stick for instream for actual flow rates

CAUTION: Warning sign for hazardous conditions with optional LED display for actual flow rates

RECOMMENDED SIGNAGE FAMILY



Each message sign should be 6"x6" when mounted to 8" wide post.



Blue color to match the Mary Carter Greenway Signage and Wayfinding Project.

PMS 7459
CMYK Color: C 76, M6, Y8, K15

Artwork is 4 color process graphic prints.

Enameled aluminum cap to match the Mary Carter Greenway Signage and Wayfinding Project

Be Courteous sign only to be used at specified locations. Currently only at River Run Park put-in.

8" Square steel post to match the Mary Carter Greenway Signage and Wayfinding Project.

4'-8"

8"

Front View

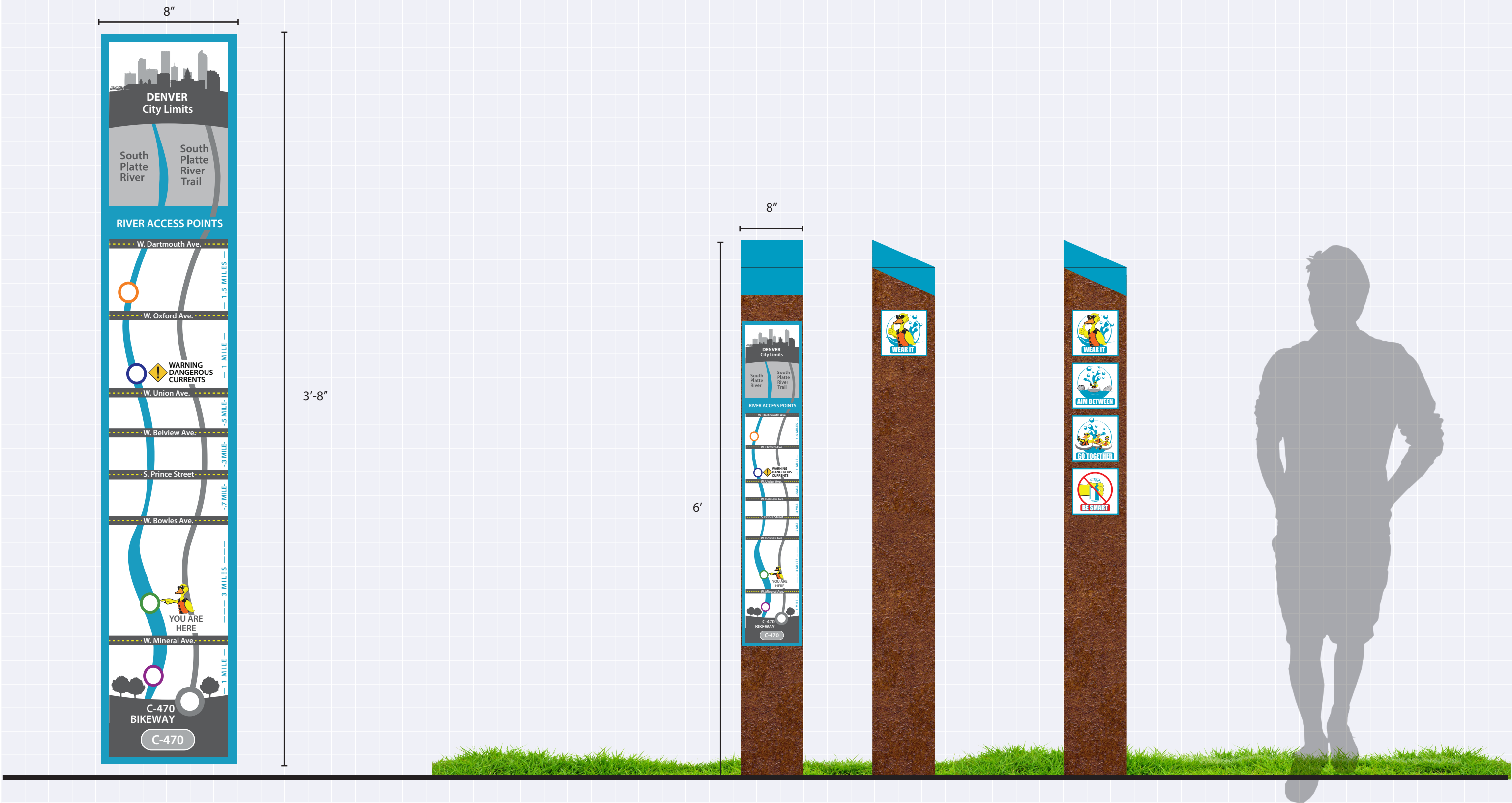
Side View

6'

Optional*
Front View

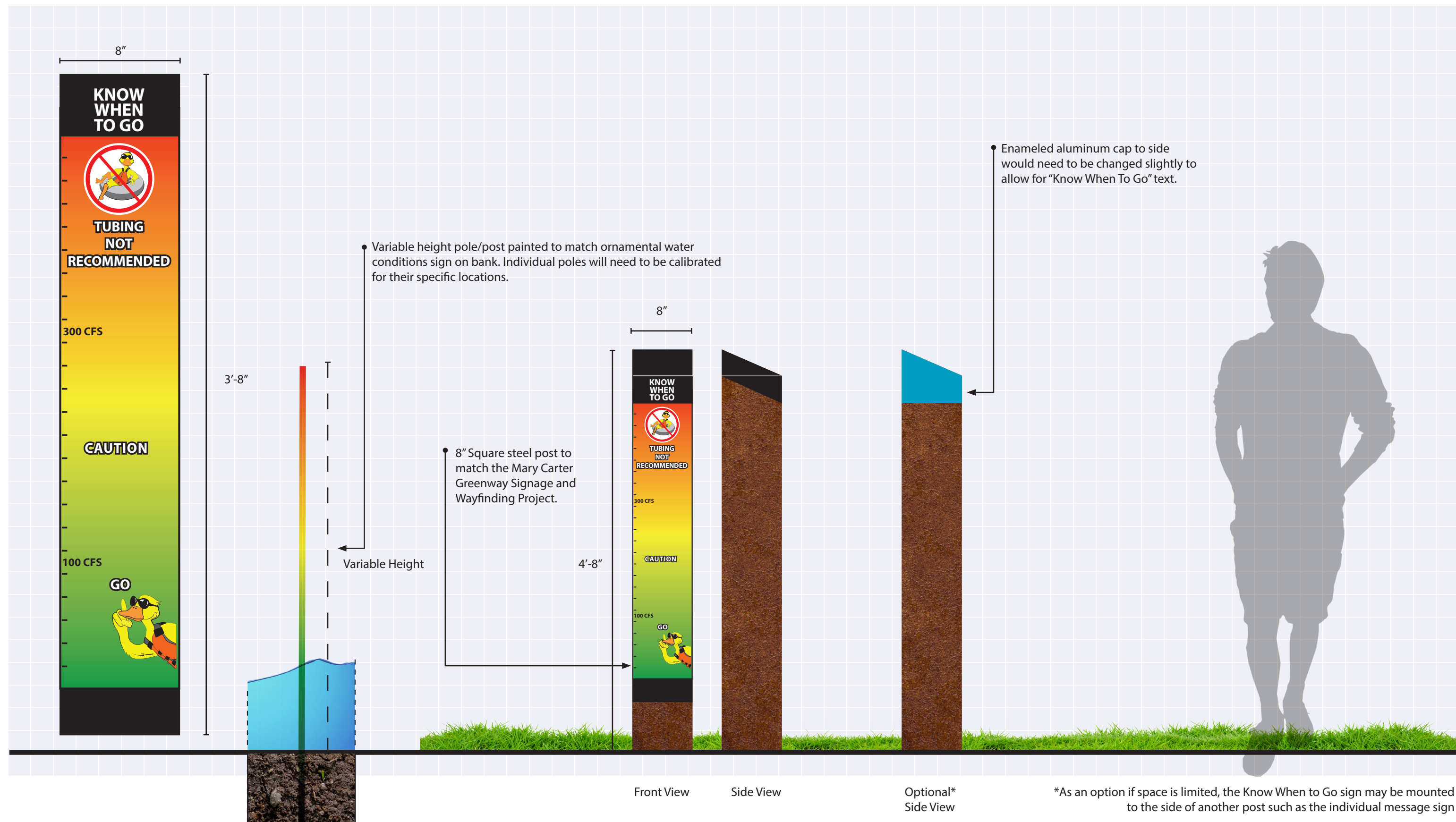
*If individual posts are not possible, then an optional single post with all signs stacked is an option. Taller 6' post is recommended for this approach.

DETAILS - Individual Message Signs

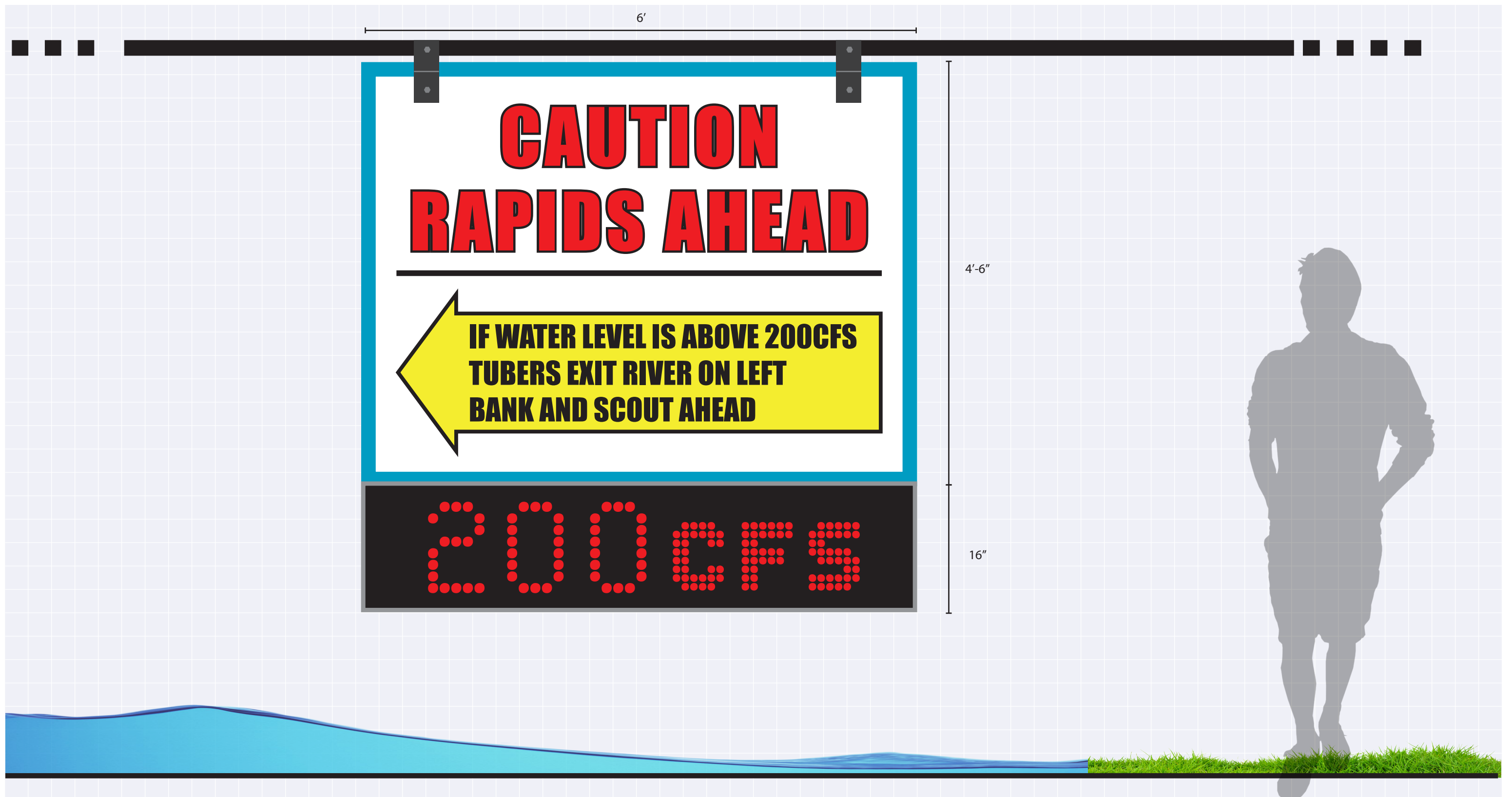


*If space is limited and individual message signs can not be on their own individual post or own combined post, then on the side of the map is an option.

DETAILS - River Map Signs



DETAILS - Water Conditions Sign



Large caution sign to be mounted hanging from bridge/overpass.
LED Sign can is very low power display, can be solar powered.

DETAILS - Caution Sign

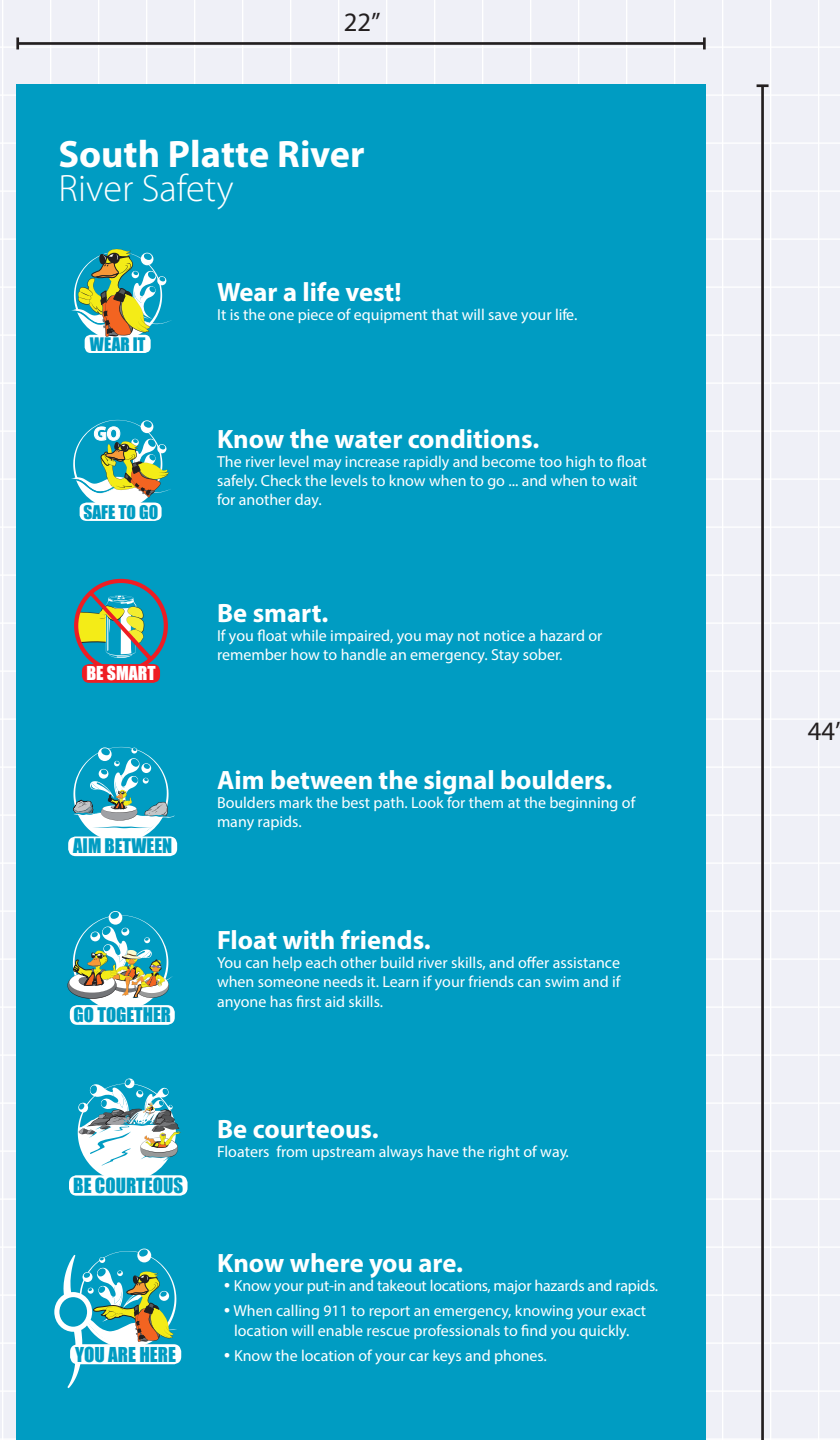
Long Form Key Messages sign to replace existing River Safety Regulations sign in existing Kiosk.



Blue color to match the Mary Carter Greenway Signage and Wayfinding Project.

PMS 7459
CMYK Color: C 76, M6, Y8, K15

Artwork is 4 color process graphic prints.



DETAILS - Long Form Key Messages for Kiosk

Share the Message of River Safety

Our ‘know before you go’ approach to river safety can serve our friends and neighbors in many ways. Brand it: always refer to the SPWG Safety Signage Program in the same way, along with the duck icon to maintain its authority and protect its intellectual property.

Online

Websites – Ask these organizations to post graphics and long form SPWG Safety Signage Program text:

- Parks and recreation departments;
- Neighborhood communities adjacent to and near the river; and
- Organizations that organize trips - church and youth groups, outdoor activity clubs.

Social Media – Utilize networks that are used with the most enthusiasm:

- Pulse posts in season, quiet all winter to maintain novelty.
- Host online campaigns, such as a contest to name the duck.
- Encourage videos and photos taken with our safe tubing friends.

Fliers and Brochures

Produce branded outreach materials to use, such as:

- Information kiosks and as parks department handouts,;
- Kids’ “business cards” in classrooms to bring home; and
- Premiums featuring our river safety friends.

Broadcast

Create events that the media will cover:

- Kickoff celebrations, ribbon cuttings;
- River safety anticipation of springtime runoff; and/or
- Announcement of duck naming contest winners.

Up Close and Personal

Speak to residents about stories that reinforce the safety messages.

- Visit with students in classrooms.
- Ignite flash events such as a safety rope toss that rewards accuracy with donated river prizes!
- Identify a contact for more information on river safety. If you don’t know one, reach out to your local paddling club, outfitter or college outdoor program for expertise and assistance.

