



## **NOC Graduates Second Class of Elite Master Guides**

### *Innovative Program Invests \$80k in Skills Training for Company's Top River Leaders*

**Bryson City, N.C. (July 2, 2014)**—This May, 20 of Nantahala Outdoor Center's (NOC) top river guides completed NOC's exclusive skills development and advanced search and rescue course, NOC Master Guide Training. Unparalleled in the outfitting industry, the program requires candidates to earn River Rescue Professional certification from Rescue 3 International, a SOLO Wilderness First Responder certification, Leave No Trace Trainer certification, and Darkness to Light certification.

In total, this intensive course requires 15 days of hard-skills development, and it represents a \$4k investment in each of NOC's top guides. Participating guides are hand-selected by company management, paid to participate in the program, provided free meals and lodging during the course, and they also receive nearly \$1k in new, cutting-edge river rescue equipment.

The 2014 class brings the total number of NOC Master Guides to 45, or less than 5% of the company's guide staff. Beyond hard skills, Master Guide candidates also experience holistic leadership development training including facilitated group workshops led by current and former NOC staff that focus on topics including risk management, natural resource conservation, interpretive best practices, and the psychology of the guest experience. Guest lecturers included Western Carolina University's Dr. Windy Gordon, four-time Higgins & Langley-winner and director of NOC's Search and Rescue Program Chief Tim Rogers, and former NOC Vice President and current American Whitewater Executive Director Mark Singleton.

Graduating Master Guides return to all seven of the company's river outposts to encourage and mentor other guides. Master Guides serve as peer leaders throughout the company, ensuring high-quality performance both on and off the river.

NOC CEO Sutton Bacon explains, "Since 1972 NOC has been home to the best guides and instructors in the whitewater industry. Now NOC boasts a training and development program that rivals any in the outdoor industry, not just whitewater. Alongside other recent initiatives such as hosting world championship events, developing the next generation of competitive American paddlers and adding best-in-class search and rescue instruction, the Master Guide program demonstrates the type of innovative leadership that can only come from NOC."

NOC's 2014 Master Guide program was made possible through the generous support of presenting sponsors Kokatat and NRS, as well as Astral and Immersion Research.