

Topic:

## River Features

QC-1203

Resource:

[River  
Glossary](#)

**Basics:** River features are developed as the river erodes through soil and geologic strata and modified by natural and manmade debris that enter the river. Water flow is modified as it passes around or through obstructions creating various features that compel and challenge paddlers.

**Question:** *What is a strainer?*

**Answer:** A strainer is a dangerous feature formed when a log or tree falls into the river. It can trap and drown a paddler or a swimmer. Strainers are often encountered on outside bends where the bank is being eroded by the river. A tree that tips into the water but does not detach is called a “sweeper”.

**Question:** What is a keeper?

**Answer:** A keeper forms as fast moving water flows over a large drop, rock or dam. Down pouring water forms a deep hole that induces surface water from downstream to flow upstream into the hole. This water escapes the hole near the bottom of the river. If large enough, boats and swimmers can get trapped in this hole or hydraulic. If they tip over they may drown before they escape the submerged flow. The most dangerous keepers are found below low-head dams because they bridge the entire river flow.

**Advanced Concepts:** You may want to get more information on the following:

- What do “downstream V’s” tell me about river flow?
- Is it safe to play in a wave train?
- How can I find and enter an eddy where it is safe to rest?
- How can I safely surf a hydraulic?

*For more information contact*

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