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“ROCK THE BOAT” WINS PEOPLE’S CHOICE AWARD AT WILD & SCENIC FILM FESTIVAL

Nevada City, Calif. — Director Thea Mercouffer was honored with the People’s Choice award for her new film, *Rock the Boat* — featuring controversial events surrounding the Los Angeles River — at the 10th annual Wild & Scenic Film Festival, held January 13-15, 2012. The festival, which this year presented 117 films, draws top filmmakers, celebrities, leading activists, social innovators and well-known world adventurers.

Rock the Boat is a fun, high-energy and ultimately moving documentary that follows the 2008 unlikely tale of a group’s 51-mile boating expedition down the notorious Los Angeles River. The waterway was channelized by the Army Corps of Engineers to prevent flooding in Los Angeles. In an absurd act of civil disobedience, the group – led by local satirical writer George Wolfe – boated down the fenced-in waterway, hoping to have the EPA declare it navigable, so that it could gain protection under the Clean Water Act.

Wild & Scenic’s Creative Director Shana Maziarz says audiences love *Rock the Boat* because “it tells the story of one man’s ordinary relationship with an extraordinary river. Given the circumstances of the LA River, George Wolfe’s simple act of boating the LA River becomes a political movement that leads to changes in federal policy and opens up public access to the long-neglected waterway. This film tells the story with wit and aplomb, sheds light on the ridiculous, and reminds us that we all have the power to do what we know is right.”

The policy change referred to here is the July 7, 2010 classification of the Los Angeles River as a navigable river, making it eligible for federal protection and for funding under the Clean Water Act. The Los Angeles Times quotes U.S. EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson: "This is a watershed as important as any other. So we are going to build a federal partnership to empower communities like yours. We want the L.A. River to demonstrate how urban waterways across the country can serve as assets in building stronger neighborhoods, attracting new businesses and creating new jobs."

Since that time, LA has also become one of seven cities chosen for a pilot project to revitalize polluted urban waterways. The program is called the Urban Waters Federal Partnership and it works with President Barack Obama’s America’s Great Outdoors initiative.

WSFF is the first festival at which *Rock the Boat* has screened. Says director Thea Mercouffer: “I’m thrilled at the reaction to the film on our first showing, particularly at such a respected festival. I can’t wait to share it with audiences everywhere, and to use it as an educational tool via schools and libraries.”

“**What a delightful film!**” praises acclaimed PBS Author/Filmmaker/Producer (Affluenza) John de Graaf. “At a time when the messages of so many documentaries are decidedly pessimistic, *Rock the Boat* offers a positive and inspiring story of a small group of committed people whose actions, playful and smart, are forcing the government to clean up and restore the LA River. This funny, informative film moves at a clip and leaves viewers drying their eyes, standing to cheer, and ready to hit the streets (or rivers) to save something else. **Don’t miss it! Five stars out of five!**”

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For more information about the documentary *Rock the Boat* or to see a trailer, go to:

http://wsff.festivalgenius.com/2012/films/rocktheboat_theamercouffer_wsff2012

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Rock the Boat / Cinema T: Thea Mercouffer, 310-383-8763, <http://www.rocktheboatfilm.com>

Thea Mercouffer is an award-winning actor and filmmaker living in Venice, CA. Cinema T is her production company.

At the Wild & Scenic Film Festival, filmgoers are transformed into a congregation of committed activists, dedicated to saving our increasingly threatened planet. Environmental and adventure films illustrate the Earth’s beauty, the challenges facing our planet, and the work communities are doing to protect the environment. Through these films, Wild & Scenic both informs people about the state of the world and inspires them to take action. Wild & Scenic’s “Film Festival On Tour” may be coming to your own community. To find out more, see:

<http://www.wildandscenicfilmfestival.org/on-tour/host-a-venue/>

Related/referenced links:

<http://www.epa.gov/region9/mediacenter/LA-river/>

<http://articles.latimes.com/2010/jul/08/local/la-me-Compton-Creek-20100708>

<http://www.lariverexpeditions.com>

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