

Water Sports Information and Leader Guidelines

This document includes information and guidelines that are unique to Water Sport activities and include the following sections:

- 1. Additional Guidelines for Water Sport Activity Leaders**
- 2. Difficulty Levels for FFOFC Water Sport Activities**
- 3. Preparing for a FFOFC Paddling Trip**

1. Additional Guidelines for Water Sport Activity Leaders

These guidelines for leaders of water sport activities are to supplement the event leader guidelines that apply to all FFOFC activities and address the unique safety issues associated with water sports.

- Plan the trip:
 - Scout the trip within the month leading up to the trip. Check access area to make sure there are no closures or other factors that would cause the trip to be cancelled or modified. Check parking and access permits required at the venue. Make sure that the scouting trip follows the same route as will be followed during the paddling event especially if the trip is a river trip. If scouting is impractical because of distance to destination, it is critical that all paddlers have the skill to deal with any hazard that can reasonably be expected. The lead needs to assess what the hazards could be and to interview those that would like to participate to determine if they have the required skills. In general river trips present greater risks than flat water trips and the trip leader needs to take this into consideration when planning these trips to ensure people have adequate skills for the river float considered.
 - Prepare a short description of the trip for the club calendar that includes a brief summary of the trip, potential hazards, the difficulty level of the paddle, and any information that is unique to the trip. Provide the leader's name, phone number, and e-mail address.
 - Maintain a list of participants and assignment of club boats on a first-come-first-served basis.
 - Wind can be a significant problem, particular in the spring. When winds are expected to be higher than 15 mph, the leader should give serious consideration to rescheduling or canceling the trip. The same is true of high water levels in rivers when they are unusually high or nearing flood stage.
- Make arrangements for the club boat trailer to be pulled.
 - Recruit someone to pull the trailer if you do not feel comfortable with pulling the trailer or if your vehicle is not set up to pull the trailer.
 - Load required kayaks and canoes on trailer. If unsure about how to safely secure the boats contact the water sports chairman for help.
 - Load Personal Floatation Devices (PDF; life jackets) requested by participants.
 - Make sure throw rope, first aid kit, and radios are taken to the paddle site.
 - Load paddles for every club boat and one or two extra paddles.
- Hooking up the trailer and loading the boats.(The following items should be done every time the trailers are used)
 - The club's use of the storage lot is based on the good will of the owners as well as the tenant, Richland Industrial Inc. We should respect the tenant's right to control the property. Make sure to keep gates closed and keep Richland Industrial informed about what we are doing while on the property. The low inner fence is provided to keep the owners dogs in the yard. Be sure to close the gate while you are in the yard and open it and close it again when you leave.

- Pickup trailer at storage yard during normal business hours or contact the water sport chairman if you need access after hours when the yard is locked.
- The trailers require a 2” ball and a four pin electrical connector.
- Check the trailer lights to make sure that all running lights, turn signals, and break light are in working condition.
- Connect safety chains to vehicle.
- Check the tires, including the spare, for proper inflation (30 psi for the large trailer and 60 psi for the small trailer).
- Make sure the lug wrench and crescent wrench are in the trailer.
- Load all club kayaks that will be required for the trip and double check them to make sure they are firmly tied to the trailer and loose ends of straps or ropes are tied down so they do not flap during travel. After a few miles stop and recheck to kayaks to ensure that they are still tightly attached.
- Make sure padlocks on the trailer are accounted for.
- **Whoever pulls the trailer is ultimately responsible for the load no matter who tied the kayaks on the trailer. If the driver is not satisfied with the way the boats are tied on it is the driver’s responsibility to see that they are tied on to his or her satisfaction.**
- Prior to launch
 - Review the trip itinerary, hazards, organizational issues (such as: car shuttles, paddling groups, and who is leading and who will act as the sweep)
 - Review universal paddle, hand, and whistle signals with the group.
 - Review how to respond if a paddler goes in the water.
 - Ensure that everyone is wearing life jacket properly (fully zipped, etc.)
 - Confirm estimated trip time based on current river and weather expectations.
 - Make final go/no-go decision based on all factors.
 - Provide basic kayaking instruction for any member who has never kayaked before. Instruction should include adjustment of the seat and foot pegs, how to get in and out of the kayak, basic kayaking strokes, and how to deal with hazards that are possible during the paddle.
- At the take-out point
 - Account for all paddlers
 - Account for equipment and ensure that it is properly secured for the return trip.
 - Turn two-way radios off.
- Return trailer
 - Return all equipment to the location where it was found before the trip. Boats can remain on the trailer after the trip but straps and ropes used to secure the boats on the trailer should be loosened so the boats are not deformed. (The boats will retain a set in the deformed position when left in the sun)
 - Park the trailer in the same location it was in prior to the trip.
 - Notify the water sports chairman if any of the equipment needs maintenance following the trip.

2. Difficulty Levels for FFOFC Water Sport Activities

The FFOFC Water Sports schedules a number of kayaking/canoeing activities each year for the enjoyment of members. As an aid to potential participants the following levels have been adopted to indicate the level of skill and experience a person should have in order to participate in the activity. These are general guidelines and are intended to give the participants a better idea of what they are likely to encounter on any given trip. A river trip should be regarded as a common adventure by all participants. Participants share the responsibility for the conduct of the trip, and each participant is individually responsible for judging his or her own capabilities and for his or her own safety as the trip progresses. Participants are encouraged to discuss concerns with the trip leader.

Level I

These activities are designed for people with little or no kayaking experience and will most likely be held on lakes or reservoirs where the water has little or no current. These trips will be 1 to 3 hours on the water and the longer trips will usually include a shore break during the activity. A person should be able to get into and out of a kayak without assistance from others and be able to sit in the kayak for the period of time involved.

Level II

Activities that are classified as Level II involve rivers that have moving water with riffles and small waves. There are few obstructions, all obvious and easily missed with little training. Risk to those that tip over is slight; self-rescue or assisted-rescue is easy. In addition to the capabilities described for Level I trip, participants should have the ability to execute forward, reverse, and sweep paddle strokes and be capable of controlling the direction of the boat. Participants should have completed training on how each member of the group should react when an unexpected event occurs. Trips lengths will be from 2 to 5 hours on the water with a shore break during the trip. Assisted and self- rescue knowledge is desirable.

Level III

These trips are for people with paddling experience. Level III trips are on rivers that contain straightforward rapids with wide, clear channels which are evident without scouting or are slow moving rivers that contain strainers (brush, fallen trees, bridge pilings, undercut rocks or anything else which allows river current to sweep through and pin boats and boaters against the obstacle). Occasional maneuvering may be required, but rocks and medium-sized waves are easily missed by trained paddlers. A boater that overturns is seldom injured and group assistance, while helpful, may not be needed. A swimmer may spend some time in the water before rescue can be accomplished due to current and shore access. Rapids at the upper end of this difficulty range are designated "White Water Class II". In addition to the capabilities described for Level II activities, participants should have the capability to perform basic kayaking/canoeing strokes plus turning and steering strokes such as bracing, draw, rudder, and "J" strokes. Participants should have the ability to identify eddies and understand the hazards associated with turning into and out of eddies. Participants should have completed training on how each member of the group should react when an unexpected event occurs and training in self and assisted rescue. These trips can involve sitting in boats for several hours before a shore break is possible for the group.

3. Preparing for a FFOFC Paddling Trip

- Look forward to having a great day on the water.
- Dress for the activity:
 - Your feet will most likely get wet. Water shoes, Teva's, Crocs, etc. are good choices. If you don't have anything of this type you should wear footwear that you don't mind getting wet.
 - Wear as little cotton clothing as possible. It is very hard to dry cotton clothing when it gets wet. It also provides no warmth once it is wet (think hypothermia, even in mid-summer). Cotton clothing also gets heavy when wet and makes re-entering your boat from deep water difficult. Fleece and other synthetics will dry more quickly and provides some warmth even after they have become wet. Don't go out and buy a new wardrobe but wear as little cotton as you can.
 - Bring a dry change of clothes. We seldom have people get wet but it is definitely nice to have dry clothes if you should get wet. A dry bag is the best way to keep these extra clothes dry during the trip but a tightly closed plastic bag, with no holes, will work fine.
 - If you have a Personal Floatation Device (life jacket) that fits you snugly, you should bring it with you. The club requires that anyone going on a FFOFC paddling trip must wear a PFD. While the FFOFC owns a few PFDs, the selection is limited and it is sometimes difficult to get a proper fit. If you plan to use a FFOFC PFD you should let the trip leader know that you will need to use a club PFD. It is very important that the PFD be worn tightly. In the unlikely chance of ending up in the water, a loose fitting PDF will not support you properly and it will make recovery (getting back in the boat or getting back to shore) more difficult.
- Some of the FFOFC trips involve up to three hours of paddling before there is an on-shore break. There is not much room in a kayak or canoe to get up and stretch your legs so you should select trips that are within your ability to sit and paddle for the full time between breaks. It is always possible to explore the possibility of a shorter version of the trip with the trip leader.
- Most problems occur when we are getting into and getting out of the kayaks or canoes. These are times when you should be especially careful and be sure to ask the trip leader if you need help.
- If you have little or no kayaking or canoeing experience let the trip leader know that you need a little extra help. Kayaking and canoeing with FFOF does not require many skills but the trip leader can help you with basic skills that will allow you to have enjoyable trip.
- Sun screen should be used because the direct sun and its reflection off the water can cook you like a chicken on a spit. Biting insects can sometimes be a problem on shore but they tend to be less of a problem once we are on the water. If you are unsure about the need for insect repellent, talk to the trip leader.

- Bring something to drink. Bottled water fastens nicely under the bungee cords on the decks of the kayaks. Some folks also enjoy bringing a snack to enjoy along the way. Longer trips often involve a lunch break on shore. Food should be sealed in a waterproof bag or container (soggy sandwiches are the pits). Small ($\approx 12'' \times 8'' \times 5''$ or smaller) soft side coolers can also be nice on warm days. Always plan to pack out what you pack in.
- Helping with unloading and loading boats and equipment at the paddle site will help you understand the equipment better and will allow all of us to spend more time on the water and less time preparing for and finishing a paddle.
- Go at a pace that is comfortable for you. If you find the trip is more taxing than you expected, let the leader know and in most cases the leader will find a way to shorten the trip for you. We want these trips to be fun, not an ordeal.
- All trips are subject to last minute changes due to weather conditions. In most cases the trip will be rescheduled for another day but there have been some cases in the past when the trip was cancelled rather than rescheduled.
- If weather or water conditions deteriorate during the paddle, the trip will be cancelled if possible.
- The club's objective is for all of us to have a fun and safe paddling experience.