

QUADRA ISLAND OUTDOOR CLUB

PADDLING GUIDELINES

EXPECTATIONS OF ALL CLUB PADDLING TRIPS

- Shall be led by a trip coordinator who is a Club Member
- Shall always include a trip coordinator and a sweep paddler
- Shall always include a minimum of three boats
- Each paddler must supply their own appropriate kayak and gear, either owned, rented or borrowed.
- Every paddler will be compliant with Transport Canada regulations for the gear and equipment of the kayak, and for their personal gear.
- At least one person in the group will have a VHF radio and a radio operator's license
- Every paddler will wear a properly fitting PFD while on the water
- A sufficient number of spare paddles must be carried for the size of the group
- Trip schedule and planned route will be provided to at least one person who is NOT going on that trip
- The group will paddle in close contact regardless of conditions
- Trip coordinators do not act as guides nor as instructors on any Club trip
- Every effort will be made by all participants to avoid disturbing wildlife, on land, in the air, and on, in, and under the water.
- Landing sites will be left in the same or better condition.

LIMITATIONS ON PADDLING CONDITIONS

- No kayaking or paddling outing will proceed if the wind forecast for the day exceeds 15 knots. The accepted forecasters are Environment Canada marine weather and Windy.com
- It may be possible to find a trip substitution if the proposed change will provide a more sheltered environment from wind and fetch.
- Club paddling trips may take place on lakes, class 1 rivers, and in class 1 and 2 saltwater.
- The saltwater classifications are defined by The Sea Kayak Guides Alliance of BC as:
 - Class 1: Gentle tours in non-challenging protected waters with limited wind effect, little or no current, easy landings, and ready access to land based assistance.
 - Class 2: Tours in lightly populated areas with short crossings, moderate potential wind effects, gentle to moderate non-turbulent currents, easy to moderate landings and light surf beaches.

REQUIRED GEAR AND SAFETY EQUIPMENT

(Transport Canada Requirements (see link below))

FOR BOATS 6 METRES LONG AND LESS

- Personal Flotation Device (PFD) or lifejackets approved for use in Canada and a suitable size for each person. PFD must be worn and properly secured at all times when on the water.
- A buoyant heaving line at least 15 m. long (floating throwline or throwbag)
- A paddle for each boat

- A bailer or water pump to remove water attached under bungee cord or tied to the boat. A large sponge is also very helpful.
- A sound-signalling device – a waterproof whistle, attached to your PFD. Foghorn or airhorn as well are also acceptable.
- Navigation lights – are required between sundown and sunrise or in reduced visibility. Waterproof flashlight is acceptable.

TRANSPORT CANADA:

Sea Kayaking Safety Guide: *highly recommended*

<http://www.tc.gc.ca/publications/en/tp14726/pdf/hr/tp14726e.pdf>

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED/REQUIRED GEAR AND EQUIPMENT

- Spray skirt
- Paddle float for self-rescue
- Binoculars
- Compass, GPS
- First aid kit
- Paddle tether
- Dry bags
- Adequate deck rigging to facilitate assisted rescue in case of capsize
- Clothing appropriate for conditions. Wool and quick-dry are recommended in layers; avoid cotton. Splash coat, rain gear, paddle jacket or wet suit may be necessary.
- water-tolerant, protective footwear
- Sufficient water and food
- Sunglasses, with strap, sun lotion, and hat
- Cell phone
- Fire starter
- Change of clothing in a dry bag

RESPONSIBILITIES OF PADDLING TRIP PARTICIPANTS

Quadra Outdoor Club kayak trip guidelines for a **fun, safe, and legal** trip:

BE LEGAL:

Transport Canada Safe Boating Guide is available online at:

<http://www.tc.gc.ca/media/documents/marinesafety/TP-511e.pdf>

The equipment requirements are listed on page 15, but do read the whole thing.

BE SAFE:

Be self sufficient

Being self sufficient means being **capable, knowledgeable, and equipped** so that you can stay out of trouble and deal with unexpected difficulties. Participating in a trip which is beyond your ability puts you and the group at risk.

- **capable** -- physically and mentally, trained, and experienced. Every club paddler needs to be able to paddle approximately 4 km/hour in benign conditions. Everyone needs to stay current with self-rescue practice. Acquiring Level 1 Paddle Canada Certification, from the Paddle Canada Sea Kayak Program, is encouraged.

- **knowledgeable** -- about what to do, what not to do, what can go wrong and what to do then, about the location and the weather. Know your skill level. Know the risks. Plan ahead. Be aware.
- **equipped** -- with suitable clothing, food, water and other supplies, in addition to the safety and navigation equipment.

Membership is not an entitlement to participate in every trip. To participate in a trip which is "challenging" or "strenuous" or any multi-day trip, you must have previously taken a "moderate" paddle with the Club, demonstrate adequate fitness, paddling skills and have appropriate equipment. It is compulsory to demonstrate the ability to re-enter a kayak by assisted-rescue or self-rescue before participating in a multiple-day kayaking trip. The trip coordinator's decision about participation on a trip is final.

For day-trips, all kayaks must have adequate flotation in case of a capsize. For multi-day trips, all kayak must be "sea kayaks" with bulkheads and well sealing hatch covers. On all trips, spray skirts must be worn if conditions warrant it.

BE AWARE

Watch out for your buddies. There is additional safety in a group, as long as everyone in the group watches out for each other.

- Stay in sight and signalling distance of each other; faster kayakers don't leave the slower ones behind
- Know who the sweep is in order to keep aware of how spread out you are
- count kayaks often
- Keep close enough together to be able to reach a kayaker in trouble quickly. How close is close enough depends on conditions and the strengths of all the kayakers. No one wants to have to herd cats.

Pre-Trip

- Confirm with trip co-ordinator your intent to participate in the trip; see the trip schedule for confirmation deadline
- It is strongly recommended that you share with the trip coordinator information about any medical condition that you have that could affect your participation on a trip. If you have a condition that could result in your not being able to communicate with the trip coordinator, you **MUST** have information about that condition in an envelope in your pack or drybag, as well as contact information.
- Confirm with co-ordinator
 - The trip route, distance, and duration to ensure it is within your abilities
 - The meeting place, date and time
- Check weather to ensure conditions will be within your comfort level and club guidelines
- Dress for the weather; bring extra clothes
- Pack enough food and water, and some extra
- Ensure that a person who is NOT going on the trip is aware of your participation in the trip, and has a description of your kayak

Pre-Launch

- Sign the trip sign-up sheet
- Assist in moving kayaks from land to water
- Introduce self to other participants

- Ensure that you are aware of the trip route; expected weather, winds, tides and currents; group signals; who is paddling lead and sweep

During the Trip

- Wear your properly fitted and secured PFD at all times while on the water
- Be aware of the trip co-coordinator's and sweep's responsibilities, and cooperate with him/her with respect to the safety and comfort of all group members
- Ensure that any landing sites are left in the same or better condition
- Stay within signalling distance of other group members
- Be prepared to form a pod for crossings and when deemed necessary by the trip co-ordinator
- If a rescue becomes necessary, and you are not involved, raft up with all other group members; seek a sheltered area if needed while waiting for the rescue to be completed
- Advise trip co-ordinator of any discomfort or difficulty you experience that is affecting your performance, or of any concerns that relate to the safety or comfort of the other participants

Trip Conclusion

- Assist in moving kayaks to land, and onto vehicles if possible

RESPONSIBILITIES OF TRIP COORDINATORS

Trip coordinators are not guides and do not assume responsibility for the skill level of any trip participant. Trip coordinators have agreed to arrange and organize a paddling trip. Each participant is expected to be aware of their own abilities and limitations, and be responsible for their own safety.

Responsibilities of Trip Coordinator include:

Trip planning to include

- Knowledge of, and/or awareness of
 - Predicted weather
 - Route including potential hazards
 - Applicable tides and currents
- Obtaining appropriate marine charts if required
- Plan alternative if possible if conditions are unfavourable for original trip

Pre-Trip

- Advise someone who is NOT going on the trip about the trip plan
- Confirm lead (if not self) and sweep paddlers
- Carry emergency phone numbers of nearest emergency contacts (Air-Sea Rescue, Coast Guard, RCMP) and/or be licensed to, and carry, a VHF radio
- The trip coordinator or someone on the trip needs to have a VHF radio.
- Advise participants as soon as possible if it becomes necessary to cancel the trip

Pre-Launch with ALL participating paddlers present

- It is **essential** that all participants sign the waiver before taking a trip. Club members will have already signed the waiver, but non-members have probably not signed. Ensure that anyone who is not a Club member has signed or signs the waiver before beginning a trip.

- Note: A trip participant does not have to be a Club member if s/he is taking a day-trip as a trial (free) or if s/he is a guest (\$5 for a day-trip). A guest may only take two day-trips per season. A participant on a multi-day trip must be a member.
- Have everyone sign the trip sign-up sheet. Leave the sign-up sheet in a vehicle at the launch site and return it to the Club Exec on your return. Please have a copy of the waiver, the trip sign-up sheet and an Incident Report form with you, available from the webpage.
- Make introductions if needed
- Endeavour to ensure that only paddlers who are properly skilled and equipped participate in the trip
- Identify and introduce lead paddler (if not trip coordinator) and sweep paddler; confirm their role responsibility to the group
- Outline route including level of difficulty; any planned landings; crossing requiring pod formation; meal/bathroom breaks; possible and known hazards; areas of special interest; predicted weather, tides, currents as appropriate for the trip
- Review use of communication signals within group including whistle, raised paddle, radio (See Paddling Trip Guidelines)
- Review emergency and rescue procedures as per Club's Paddling Trip Guidelines

On the Water

- Endeavour to keep the group within signalling distance of each other
- Set a comfortable pace
- Ensure that any landing sites are left in the same or better condition
- Ensure that sweep is in, and stays in, position
- Ensure that group forms a pod for long crossings, crossings involving ferry or other significant boat traffic
- Modify trip if needed according to wind, weather, paddling skill levels
- If there is an accident, complete the Incident Report form and return it to the Exec

Post Trip:

- The trip coordinator should submit a brief trip report, describing the highlights of the outing. Ideally the report will include photos, not necessarily taken by the coordinator.

If something goes wrong:

- In the event of an illness, injury or capsize the coordinator will facilitate an emergency response. The group will remain together and every assistance will be given to the person in difficulty, without jeopardizing the safety of those in the group.
- Where necessary, a call for help on salt water would be made by VHF radio, but cell phone calls may also be used where practical.
- If the emergency arises from one or more people in the water and there is a problem getting them back into their boats, that call will be made **immediately** especially in salt water.
- **It is essential that the group stay together to help those in need and not separate. Everyone is more vulnerable alone.**

Post Incident Communication:

- In the case of a serious injury, the coordinator will complete an Incident Report for FMCBC.

- The executive of the Club will be notified.
- A discussion will take place about the event to examine whether errors were made and what lessons can be learned.
- There will be **no** communication with the media.

ADDITIONAL SAFETY INFORMATION

SIGNALLING WHEN ON THE WATER

- Paddle
 - Vertical: come together, raft up
 - Horizontal held above head: STOP – Attention!
 - Held at shoulder level and pointing – LOOK - something of interest
- Whistle
 - Series of short blasts: come together, raft up
 - One loud blast: STOP and look – Attention!

RESCUES

- Participants not involved in the rescue should raft up and seek a nearby sheltered area if necessary
- The Rescuer should follow the instructions of those assisting in the rescue
- Preventing hypothermia should be the prime consideration when making further decisions

WILDLIFE VIEWING

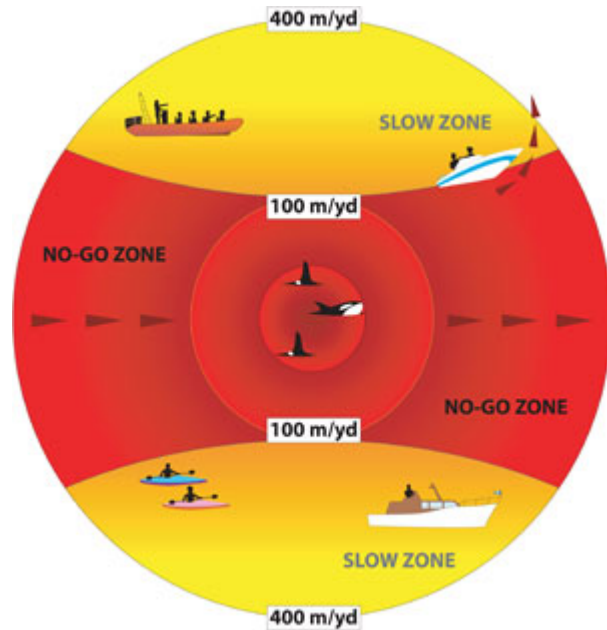
The following guidelines have been adapted largely from DFO sources for Kayak paddlers:

SEALS AND SEA LIONS

CETACEANS AND DOLPHINS

WHALE WATCHING

- **BE CAUTIOUS and COURTEOUS:** approach areas of known or suspected marine wildlife activity with extreme caution. Look in all directions before planning your approach or departure.
- **SLOW DOWN:** reduce speed when within 400 metres/yards of the nearest whale. Avoid abrupt course changes.
- **KEEP CLEAR** of the whales' path. If whales are approaching you, cautiously move out of the way.
- **DO NOT** approach whales from the front or from behind. Always approach and depart whales from the side, moving in a direction parallel to the direction of the whales.
- **DO NOT** approach or position your vessel closer than 100 metres/yards to any whale.
- **STAY** on the OFFSHORE side of the whales when they are traveling close to shore.
- **LIMIT** your viewing time to a recommended maximum of 30 minutes. This will minimize the cumulative impact of many vessels and give consideration to other viewers.
- **DO NOT** swim with, touch or feed marine wildlife.



PORPOISES AND DOLPHINS

- Should dolphins or porpoises choose to ride the bow wave of your vessel, avoid sudden course changes. Hold course and speed or reduce speed gradually.

SEALS, SEA LIONS, BIRDS ON LAND

To some marine life, kayaks have the appearance of sea lions, and can create panic in a seal colony or provoke real sea lions. Be especially cautious around seal colonies from February to June, pupping season (depending on latitude). Panicked seals will clamber over each other, and their pups, in their desperation to escape into the ocean.

- AVOID HAVING KAYAKS FACING WILDLIFE DIRECTLY; stay parallel , approach from the side
- BE CAUTIOUS AND QUIET when around haul-outs and bird colonies, especially during breeding, nesting and pupping seasons (generally May to September). Do not talk or make any unnecessary noise or movement
- REDUCE SPEED, pass slowly without stopping
- STAY 100 metres/yards away from any marine mammals or birds
- PAY ATTENTION and move away, slowly and cautiously, at the first sign of disturbance or agitation.
- DO NOT disturb, move, feed or touch any marine wildlife, including seal pups. If you are concerned about a potentially sick or stranded animal, contact the Vancouver Aquarium 604-659-3400

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

<http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-gp/species-especes/mammals-mammiferes/view-observer-eng.htm>

MARINE MAMMAL VIEWING GUIDELINES

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According to the Protected Resource Division of the NOAA Fisheries Service, harassment of a seal occurs when “your behavior changes their behavior.”

It is common for seals to haul out on land for rest, temperature regulation, social interaction or to avoid predators. Rest is something that seals are not able to achieve when they are continuously approached, and exhaustion makes them vulnerable to predators and illness. NOAA recommends a minimum safe viewing distance of at least 50 metres.

Other important guidelines are never attempt to feed seals, keep noise to a minimum, and always keep pets on a leash when approaching a haul-out area.

Some warning signs that your presence is causing a seal unnecessary stress include movement back into the water, increased vocalization, or disturbance from a normal resting position – for example, if it lifts its head and stretches its neck to watch you. It is important to remember that seals are wild animals and, although they may look adorable, if they feel threatened they can bite you or your pet.

For those interested in additional information, NOAA has published a complete set of seal watching facts and guideline that provides an excellent resource for responsible viewing. To find it, search “NERO seal watching guidelines PDF” on Google:

<http://www.nero.noaa.gov/Protected/mmp/stories/sealwatchingjan2013.pdf>