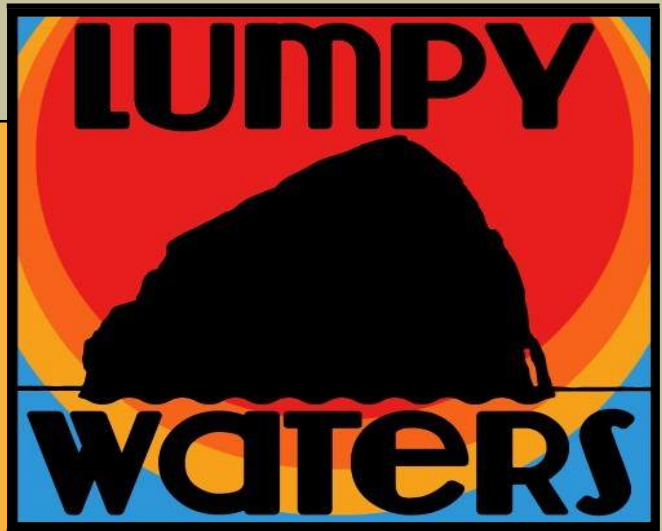


Lumpy Waters

Sea Kayak Symposium

EDITOR'S NOTE: Over the years, Andy McKenna, Marlene Pakish and Rich Ferguson have all emailed me about their experiences at this event. It's a famous learning opportunity, and I have no idea why their good accounts fell off my radar for so long.

Lumpy Waters is organized by Alder Creek Kayaks in Portland, and held where the waves are lumpy near Pacific City, Oregon. [The black image in their logo is Pacific City's famous Haystack Rock.]



Check the symposium's website for wonderful photos, information about previous years' coaching staffs and class offerings, and to register for Lumpy 2020: <http://lumpywaters.com/Lumpy/>

ANDY ON LUMPY WATERS, 2016: I'm a novice paddler, and not having been to a paddling symposium before, Lumpy Waters 2016 was amazing for me. I'm definitely going back next year. The whole experience, of the coaches, classes, presentations, food, and settings, was fantastic. I got to train with three of the coaches I wanted to learn from, and a few I had no opinion on before, but strongly admire now. Alder Creek really has something special going with Lumpy Waters.

I had the great fortune to get Mark Tozer as a coach in my first class and then got to chat with him and Helen Wilson at happy hour that night. They just moved to Lander, Wyoming (Mark is an avid climber) and they were surprised to hear that RMSKC exists. They are interested in coming to Denver to conduct clinics. Check out Helen and Mark's site: <https://www.greenlandorbust.org>

ANDY'S ACCOUNT OF LUMPY WATERS, 2017, ABBREVIATED VERSION:

- I came...down the Columbia River Gorge.
- I saw...really big surf conditions.
- I conquered...my overthinking the forward finishing roll.

LUMPY WATERS, 2017, ANDY'S NOVELLA VERSION: I have to first thank the good people of Wyoming, Utah, and Idaho for turning off the wind while I drove through your states on the outbound and return trip. Being able to travel 65 to 70mph for most of the trip made the drive so much better than in 2016 when I had to drive at 35mph or even pull over until the winds abated in many spots along Highways 80 and 84.

Last year I drove out on Thursday and finished the journey on late Friday morning, just in the nick of time, not well rested, and very nervous. This year I left on Wednesday morning. After a restful night in Pendleton, Oregon, I drove down the gorge into Portland. I stopped by the Alder Creek shop to use my \$50 gift certificate from the previous year and to check out spray skirts. Matt at the shop spent an hour with me on picking the right booties (NRS's Paddle Wetshoe) and selecting a new proper-fitting skirt so that I did not end up with gallons of water in my boat after edging and rolling.

I then drove the last two hours to Pacific City and checked in Thursday afternoon. I found Marlene Pakish and Julie Rekart setting up camp as I milled about the grounds waiting to check-in.

Five or six of us early birds were hanging around the clubhouse at check-in time and stepped up to assist the setup crew. Two of the helpers were Luke Rovner (<http://www.kayakhipster.com>) and his paddling buddy, Jorge. Luke's videos and articles have been part of my kayaking education.

I shared my cabin with J. Maxwell from NRS (he maintains the NRS web store and ran the NRS booth this year) and another cabin mate from last year, Alek W.



I had dinner at the Pelican Pub on Thursday night and watched the surf until sunset. It appeared to me that it was huuuge compared to the previous year. Also of note: Lumpy Waters is often marked by persistent rain, but 2017 had mostly sunny, warm days. This year I had two "Aha!" moments that were almost as big as Thursday's surf.



Nestucca Bay, southeast of Pacific City

FRIDAY CLASS: After a great night's sleep and an easy-going morning of stretching, I joined my fellow paddlers at the clubhouse for the traditional chanting ("We want lumpy!") and pre-class meeting.

I took the *Rolling Checkup* class for pointers on improving my layback rolls and with hopes of getting the feedback I needed to get a reliable forward finishing roll for rough water.

My coaches were Calvin Croll from the Body Boat Blade in Washington, and Ben Fontenot from Savannah Canoe and Kayak in Georgia. With two coaches for eight student we all received plenty of individual attention. Our venue was the brisk Nestucca Bay, so even with my drysuit and neoprene cap on, when I was upside down I had plenty of motivation to join the realm of the air breathers again.

I ditched my Greenland paddle for my skimpy Werner Tybee for the rolling practice, as the buoyancy and surface area of a GP really does make rolling easier. With specific feedback from Calvin and Ben I had two useful takeaways from this rolling class:

Aha! #1: I was not using my hips. I was not driving with a leg. I was using my hips and both legs as one unit to manipulate the boat. What I observed about my body, with feedback from the coaches, was that I had the technique fine on layback rolls and edging, but was inconsistently using hips and legs together when performing forward finishing rolls. Special thanks to Ben and Calvin for both emphasizing that point.

I was able to complete a somewhat sloppy forward roll on both sides if a coach was standing at my bow. I paddled a few boat lengths away I failed the forward finishing roll every time. I would get this roll if I would keep myself out of the way.

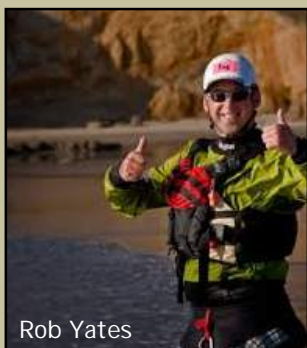
FRIDAY NIGHT: Good food and beer! Somehow I managed to control myself this year and did not overeat or imbibe too much—Saturday morning last year was a little rough for me (and others). Ninkasi Brewing had two taps flowing until late in the evening. The Alder Creek crew also found some Bota boxes of wine that appeared during happy hour. Happy hour snacks included cheeses, crackers, veggies, and pickled goodies; dinner was a taco/burrito bar that never seemed to run out. The Coast Guard gave their presentation like the year before, and I learned a few things that I missed last year about the boats and other craft they use. I caught up with a few coaches from last year, met a few new people, and retired at a reasonable hour.

SATURDAY CLASS: I got up at 6AM, ambled down to the beach to watch for a while, grabbed a coffee and spotted Bill Vonnegut going over tide and weather info for his classes that day. Then I walked back to the clubhouse and ate breakfast. After breakfast I returned to the cabin, suited up, and joined the pre-class meeting.

I was enrolled in the all-day *Developing a Dynamic Roll* class and had hoped to have Bill Vonnegut as a coach; I'd watched him run the surf portion of the class last year and it looked like a blast. I will wait until next year and take the *Rock Gardening* class with Bill.



This year I had four fantastic coaches: seven students + four coaches = wow! The lead coach was Rob Yates. Marlene had him on Friday for her first class. I knew nothing about Rob, but when he looked at me in my drysuit and instructed me with a delightful English accent, "Andy, get undressed!" I knew I would like training with him.



Rob Yates

He has a gift for humorous understatement. I came ready to paddle, but did not know that the first 90 minutes of class would be dry and then we would be in a pool the rest of day.

Supporting coaches were Ethan Boswell, Amanda Cantal, and John (whose-last-name-I-never-learned). Ethan is a whitewater fanatic who is also competent in long boats and brought great energy and tips to the class. John brought good info for breathing exercises, as well as timely, calm, and focused advice on body positions during our pool time. Amanda was lead coach for the *Paddling on the Edge and Beyond* class I took last year and I was delighted to work with her again.

The class started in the clubhouse. We went through introductions and all stated our goals for the day. The coaches offered their backgrounds, too. Then we did a brainstorming exercise, offering one or two words about how we wanted to feel about kayaking after this class. The common words were joy, confidence, competent, happy, relaxed, and comfortable. Rob emphasized these points about the class:

1. The surf was probably WAY too big for our class and would present us with more Survival Opportunities than Learning Opportunities.
2. That this class would be a class like no other we'd taken.

He was spot-on with both points. We spent the rest of the day in the pool messing about in boats with a lunch break at noon and regular five-minute review sessions in the hot tub.

Rob started our pool time by having us carry a collection of five whitewater boats (yes, those things) to the pool. He then gave us a background talk on breathing and asked us to recall a favorite nursery rhyme or childhood song, and coached us through Hawaiian-inspired breathing exercises for about 20 minutes. My asthma practically vanished when I was on the coast, so I was able to get some benefit from these exercises. (I've been doing them since I returned, but they are a bit more difficult at altitude and with whatever-it-is in Colorado that keeps my lungs gummed up.)

Then we got water time floating and holding our breath while singing a favorite nursery rhyme or children's song in our head, trying for longer and longer repetitions. We all made progress. We all also had big grins as Rob, Amanda, John, and Ethan visited with us, assured us, encouraged us, and kept us laughing.

After a hot tub review session we then got into the white water boats, unskirted, and flipped over, repeating the "breath holding with a song in your head" exercise. All of us regressed: I went from about 40 seconds to 15 seconds, and my fellow students had the same experience. We regrouped and discussed the experience, concluding that the main issue was our own attitudes/outlook/mindset when we were in the boat vs. out of it.

Then we got back in the pool and we were instructed to just play in the boats, unskirted and often swamped. Just play, goof off, have fun, try new things. At some point, while capsized and running low on air, I tried to carp for air, swung my body around, flapped my hand downwards and hand-rolled my swamped WW boat, a Dagger Mamba 8.6. I was stunned, and the cheers that went up from my coaches and classmates were almost as loud as the ecstatic whoop I let out once I was upright. I got it, the joy! I tried the hand-roll again four times and failed, but nothing could dampen the feeling I had inside. All of us were making progress, inspiring each other, and the happiness was downright contagious. As we were wrapping up for lunch Rob came over to me and told me, "Keep that hand-roll right here! Just hold it there," gesturing to my heart.

During lunch, Rob and Amanda went down to the beach to observe the surf. Rob concluded we would stay in the pool, as the waves were "bleeping huge," while Amanda was on the fence. I appreciated her confidence, but I was grateful for Rob's caution.

When we returned from lunch we resumed our play, but this time we had to use the paddles (kayak, canoe, and SUP), but as toys, not paddles. If we did anything formal, like a roll we got kicked out of the water. We spent an hour or so goofing around and learning more about manipulating our boats with our bodies. It was just pure play. After another five-minute hot tub break we got down to business, with boats, skirts, and sometimes paddles. For 30 minutes we did this drill: Skirt up and capsize sans paddle, swim the boat to a helper a few feet away, and then use their offered arm to initiate a roll. This exercise boosted everyone's confidence. You could see it on everyone's faces and in their boat handling.

With my Tybee paddle I executed my layback roll in the Mamba and other WW boats without trouble, but the hand roll and a forward finishing roll eluded me. Amanda observed my inconsistent rolling attempts and asked me

what was going on. After a few more slowed down attempts I realized I was actually forgetting where I was in relation to the boat when I tried to execute a forward finishing roll or hand roll without a paddle.

So when it was not my turn in a boat she had me perform an exercise that required visualization. I rolled my imaginary boat. She had me float on my back with legs and arms in a neutral paddling position, then I would roll my legs and hips over slowly, like they were in a boat that was capsized. Then I would turn my face into the water, relax a bit, then spin my legs and hips over and let my head follow last. After 15 minutes of playing with this on both sides, in various orientations from being on my back to being upside down, I got back in a boat and hand rolled it on my right side again. Successive attempts failed in ways ranging from pathetic to humorous. I kept chatting at Amanda verbalizing what I was doing wrong, or what I needed to do right; then Rob came over.

He stopped me and asked, "If you had an off button, where would it be?" I was flummoxed. After stammering and wondering for nearly a minute about what he was asking, I asked what he meant. He said I needed to turn off my brain and just do it, and repeated the question. So I pointed to the middle of my forehead and he poked it. Then he said, "There, now try again," and I almost made it, pulling my head up a few moments too soon, but excited by the lesson that was slowly sinking into my thick skull since Friday afternoon. I got out of the boat and resumed my "boatless roll" exercises, because they are actually just plain fun to do. Did I mention that I could not stop smiling?

After another hot tub break Rob announced he would finally teach us to roll with the roll known as an "upsies". After our laughter subsided he squeezed into a Dagger Axiom and repeatedly demonstrated a simple, clean, forward finishing roll. No flare, no pizzazz, something like a C-to-C and a Storm Roll, with a clean forward finish, paddle somewhat deep, body leaning forward, head down, arms ready to paddle. He said, "That's your combat roll." He reemphasized the risks of layback rolls in rough water, stressing the forward finish as the safest, especially in surf. Then he had us all try.

So I tried with Amanda at my bow...and failed. Rob came over and handed me his Werner paddle (a Powerhouse I think; it was huge). I then started chattering about what I did wrong again and Rob poked my forehead. I stopped midsentence. Then I looked at him and Amanda, setup on my left side, and executed my forward finishing roll, coming up close to my front deck with my arms and paddle ready to stroke forward. Then I shouted out, "YEEESSSS," grinning from ear to ear. Then I grabbed my little Tybee paddle, looked at Rob again and then executed the roll four or five more times, took a long breath, and did it on the other side four more times, finishing with a whoop and a great big, "YEAH," both fists punching skyward!

Aha! #2: I was stopping myself by overthinking the roll. With all the technical practice and positive feedback from coaches that I had great lower body technique with legs and hips, I had to get my own analysis out of the way and just do the roll. I started each roll fine; I had to let myself finish, too. I was stopping mid-roll, thinking about my body and hand positions.

Other students celebrated their successes and cheering on our classmates. We all were rolling the whitewater boats by the end of the session.

We hit the hot tub again and after reviewing how we all felt and considering how big the surf was, agreed to the in-pool side-surfing exercise. Two long ropes are attached to the bow and stern of a boat. The boat is positioned along the short edge of the pool with the paddler skirted up and holding their paddle. The coaches stand along the side of the pool, holding the ends of the ropes, slightly forward of the paddler, and then start walking/jogging towards the other end of the pool. The idea is to either brace so you don't capsize, OR execute continuous rolls as if you are getting side-surfed by a head-high broken wave and are getting rolled forwards.

When the coaches reach the other end of the pool, they pause and then reverse direction, requiring you to practice your rolls and braces on your other side. We all got our turn. We all succeeded and failed. We all laughed and cheered. Some of us took more turns. I went through the ringer four times, trying different boats.

It was fantastic. I ended up swimming when I tried the Liquid Logic BRAAAP boat, as the toggles are surprisingly close to the cockpit and I could not execute a layback or a forward roll as my paddle kept catching in the ropes—another lesson learned—I now know what that feels like. On my final run I pulled off four rolls on the way down and three rolls on the way back before losing my left-hand grip on my paddle. I climbed out of the pool, tired and joyful.



We then wrapped up with a final hot tub session, reviewed our achievements, shared some disbelief as some of us did not know rolling whitewater boats was harder than sea kayaks, laughed more, cleaned up our gear, and headed back for happy hour and dinner.

Back at the clubhouse I found Julie sitting alone in a chair in some distress. She had done side-surfing in her *Fear to Fun* class and had the misfortune of rolling shoreward as her boat came up to the sand and caught the keel. Her left shoulder got compressed and she was feeling a lot of pain from it. The first aid person had paid her a visit already and Marlene was getting ibuprofen for her. She also got iced up not too much later.

SATURDAY NIGHT: Dinner was another great meal of pasta and pizza from Doryland Pizza, with plenty of yummy salads and snacks, Ninkasi Brewing's two taps, and mixing with fellow paddlers. Jamie Sharp's presentations about paddling a tandem sea kayak down the Grand Canyon trip and his adventure paddle around Svalbard [an archipelago between mainland Norway and the North Pole] were engaging and amusing, and got plenty of laughs and "WOWs". Check it out: <http://svalbard.worldwildadventure.com/>

Another presentation was from a pair of paddlers who spoke last year about their two weeks paddling in Antarctica. This year they presented a paddling resource website that provides multiple layers for trip planning and communication, including nautical charts, tide info, Google maps, weather, winds, launch sites, and more. This is like a bigger brother of the BASK Trip Planner application. It looks promising.



The group tent at Lumpy Waters

After the presentations I mingled with a few coaches and students; chatted coaching techniques, handling dumb questions, dealing with allergies and asthma, and the benefits of local honey with Jeff Laxier of Liquid Fusion: <https://liquidfusionkayak.com/jefflaxier>

SUNDAY MORNING: Before breakfast I checked my class assignment for the day (*Dynamic H₂O Skills and Maneuvers* with Dennis Pennell and Jennifer Yearley), changed the dressing on a second-degree burn I'd gotten the day before and concluded that wearing a dry-suit would be painful and bathing my wrist in the waters of Netarts Bay would be courting serious infection and a long recovery sans paddling. I considered an alternate class plan and opted for safety. I met with Dennis and Jennifer and bowed out of my last class.

I retreated to my cabin to pack and decided to catch the tail end of the morning meeting. I made it in time for the morning chant ("We love lumpy!") and announcements. Then Paul Kuthe, the ringleader as it were, announced

that they were going to present the annual award for Most Enthusiastic Student. Last year I had three classes with last year's winner, Becky, and she deserved it. She had this delightfully infectious, positive personality that inspired everyone around her. I was completely shocked when Paul announced my name and called me up front to receive the award. My coaches unanimously voted for me, and Suzie Elle also heaped on praise for my efforts the first day with unloading the Alder Creek vans, mentioning me being on my knees stacking and organizing cheese, lunch meats, bacon and sausage into the main fridge.

As part of my award I received a Sweet Protection Strutter helmet. Compared to my Shred Ready Fullcut, the Strutter is an order of magnitude more comfortable and looks pretty cool, too.



Another part of my award was an appropriately sized Wonder Woman onesie costume, cape included. The final part of my award involved me donning both articles, ascending a picnic table, and posing for the crowd. I still laugh out loud every time I think about that moment. I think several people captured it on video, but only this copy has surfaced: https://www.facebook.com/Lumpywaters/videos/1969188669964918/?hc_ref=ARRuuRj-YZkPn6RaHNpy-GUpew9YodkkYTIr0eAeG73in6FsX0IT367FaS1dNFZWmnw



I kept the outfit on for about half an hour until everyone had departed for their final classes. I checked in with Marlene and Julie, bid them safe travels, and started the long drive back to Colorado. I don't think I stopped smiling until I had been back home and working for a few days.

Like in an earlier article¹, I once again found that infrequent or absent practice really does adversely affect safety training. I've had a few complete First Aid classes in the last three decades, but the last one was five years ago. I knew I needed to cool the burn I'd gotten on my wrist, but I made two mistakes:

1. I waited too long.
2. I used ice, which usually makes things worse because it causes vasoconstriction and impedes healing.

Fortunately I avoided infection and the skin fully healed over the burn. I'm ready to get wet again while the lakes are still soft or the pools are open. I've already booked my spot for next year and I will be ready to get out into the rough stuff.

Lumpy Waters' coaches have a broad background. Rob and Amanda were my favorites this year. Rob Yates was a professional kayaker. He was a freestyler, then took up sea kayaking and then kept doing both. He is now on his second or third life and career as a coaching professional and adventure sports business owner: <http://robert-yates.com/business-coaching/> and <https://seattleadventuresports.com/>

Amanda Cantal has a background in mental health, on top of her kayaking and wilderness leadership credentials: <https://aldercreek.com/about-us/staff-profiles/amanda-cantal/>

Special mention is due Ben Fontenot and his wooden paddle business: <http://www.bfpaddles.com>

¹ Andy's article about doing CPR after a incident on the Poudre is in the 25-2b issue of *The NEWS*, Summer, 2017

EDITOR'S NOTE: Rich Ferguson went to Lumpy Waters shortly after the RMSKC trip to Lewis and Shoshone Lakes in Yellowstone the summer of 2018. He sent this report as soon as he got back to Colorado. I'm sorry it didn't get published earlier.

RICHARD'S ACCOUNT, LUMPY WATERS 2018:

On Thursday, October 11, 2018, I flew to Portland, rented a car, and drove to Pacific City on the coast. It's a resort town with a haystack rock offshore and a nice beach that's a popular surf spot.

The weather was sunny, the waves small, and the forecast was more of the same. This was unusually good weather for Lumpy. However, the water is always cold; dry suits are not optional.

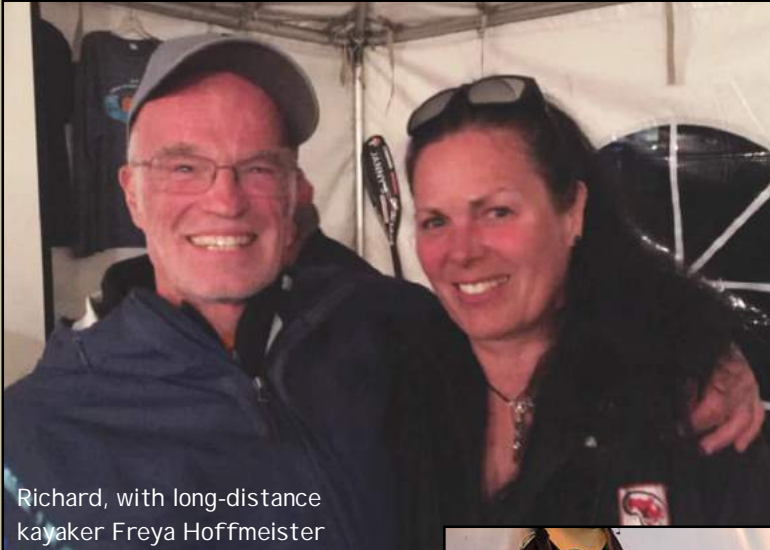
I had dinner at the Brewpub, and sat next to a guy from Denver, who had been coming to Lumpy Waters for years. He believes that there is no bad weather, just inappropriate clothing.



Pacific City Beach
by Richard Ferguson

On Saturday, my morning class was led by Don Cheyette, *Paddling on the Edge and Beyond*. I managed to swim during some of the bracing practice, no surprise.

The afternoon class was *Fear to Fun in the Surf*, led by Sev Piper. I learned some things, mostly that I had a lot to learn. I got fairly physically beat up. For some reason, I kept having trouble releasing the spray skirt on my rental boat when I swam, which was frightening.



Richard, with long-distance kayaker Freya Hoffmeister

It is hard to imagine getting even OK at surfing, let alone good, when you live 1000 miles from the coast. I probably will not pursue surfing. However, it seems like a lack of surfing skill would limit you in coastal travel.

That night Freya Hoffmeister gave a talk on her solo circumnavigation of South America. She does her trips in pieces, a few months at a time. She almost died at least once, including a storm at Cape Horn that tried to blow her to Antarctica, and she camped in some fairly nasty places.

Freya keeps a lanyard connecting her with her boat, which she thinks is more critical than a life jacket; as a solo paddler, she cannot afford to be separated from her boat. She uses no paper charts, just three GPS units.

She is currently paddling several months a year on a multi-year circumnavigation of North America. She shops at supermarkets! I do, too¹ and could not resist getting a photo with her.



Kokatat's raffle pile

What was my favorite part? The two expedition talks, and I won a dry bag and map case in the raffle.

Is Lumpy Waters worth the trip? Yes, for those who aspire to surf and tour on the coast. Most classes have several instructors. Lumpy Waters is one of the premier sea kayak events in North America, and well worth considering.

Would I go to Lumpy Waters again? Probably not. I will never get enough practice to really learn to surf and, because I am not very physically flexible, kayak lessons are frustrating for me. The instructors ask me to do things that I am unable to do. But I want to thank Andy McKenna for his encouragement and support, without which I would never have considered Lumpy Waters.

¹ Read Richard's article about kayak camping meals that are readily available at any supermarket in the 26-2b issue of *The Mountain Paddler*, Fall 2018

LUMPY WATERS, 2019

CHRIS DUVAL: I took all surfing classes except for one rough water rescue class. They were all awesome. The two teachers I remember were Bill Vonnegut and James Manke. They were both superb.

ANDY: On Friday I took *Boat Control in Conditions* with Sean Morley and Barry Walstead. Saturday morning I started in *Rough Water Rescues* with Bill Vonnegut and Bob Nash, but had to drop out after fifteen minutes because I got motion sickness. Bob escorted me back to the put-in.



Chris surfing his TideRace Xplore

After that I changed my track from rough water to calm water classes and I joined *Boat Control Tour* with Jennifer Yearly, and on Sunday morning, *Fun and Balance Games* with Helen Wilson.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Thanks to Andrew Romanelli, Lumpy Waters' Program Director, for his help. Most of the photos in this article were used with permission from Alder Creek Kayak & Canoe, with some taken by RMSKC members Marlene Pakish, Rich Ferguson and Andy McKenna; the ones on the next page are by Chris Duval.



Aerial view of participants on the beach at Pacific City

PACIFIC CITY'S HAYSTACK ROCK



The Haystack Rock in these photos, near Pacific City, is almost a mile offshore.

There's another Haystack Rock on the Oregon coast, at Cannon Beach. People think it's bigger, but it only looks that way because it's much closer to the shore.



Photos on this page by Chris Duval