

Of Rules, Regulations and Non-Member Capsizes

by Harv Mastalir



**Overnight and extended trips are open only to current RMSKC members who have signed a current Release of Liability Form.
Day paddles at local reservoirs are open to visitors and guests.**

A non-member capsized on a recent club trip has raised concern for safety issues on our club paddles. We have a prominently placed rule that excludes non-members from overnight trips. This rule has been put in place for the safety of all people involved.

It is important that each individual on every overnight trip has evaluated their ability to successfully complete the trip. Each member has also signed a liability form that states quite clearly that the individual member understands that they are taking responsibility for their own safety.

Any non-member paddler has not gone through this evaluation process and acknowledgement of responsibility and puts at risk *all* the members in the club. As a club we will have to decide on a system to minimize this type of problem. We will be looking at this and other issues at a general club meeting Saturday, January 27th. We invite all members to attend this meeting.

Another RMSKC paddling season has come and gone and its time to look back over the season and take stock. There were memories made, many that will last a lifetime. New friendships and the sharing of experiences. New places. Personal goals fulfilled. These are the things trips are made of.

When the club first became active, back in 1994, we were a small group where everyone knew everyone else and we were aware of each others' skill levels. One of our concerns was to keep the club as free from organization and rules as possible. The executive committee was formed as a loose group who could form a general consensus, so that no one person would have to bear the responsibility of making group decisions. The core issues facing this group consisted of things such as how often the news letter should be published, how much dues should be etc., but mostly we just wanted to go on trips with like minded people who, through the club, were now friends.

For better or worse, the club is much different now. We now have approximately 120 memberships, representing about 180 members. It is all but impossible to know everyone. It also takes more organization. From experiences gained on our trips we have even had to make rules. Such is the nature of success. What few

General Club Meeting

January 27, 2001

7 p.m.

Tom Kinsella &

Donna Nedde

713 W. Belmont Dr. Littleton

Pizza and Beverages
Provided

rules we have are the result of some experience on a trip, usually where personal or group safety was an issue. Keeping with our historic tradition, we have tried to keep rules to a minimum.

I suppose our club mimics the society at large; there are always those few who don't think the rules apply to them. Such was the case on a recent club trip. In short, a club member invited two non-members with no experience on an overnight trip that was advertised as NOT for first time paddlers. Due to their lack of experience, one of the non-members capsized, abandoning both boat and paddle to make it to shore, leaving recovery to the rest of the group. The end result, fortunately, was only a wet and cold paddler, but it was a graphic demonstration of why that rule was made in the first place!

This member would probably argue that he told the trip coordinator that his friends were coming on the trip, and that it must have been alright because he wasn't told he couldn't do it. This puts our trip coordinators in the position of having to be policemen. They volunteer their time and effort so the rest of us get to go on exciting trips and we turn around and put them in uncomfortable and compromising situations.

I don't think this is how we want to thank our trip coordinators. A little self-discipline in following our few and simple rules would work much better.

I see the club entering a new era. We have outgrown our 'group of friends' organization and mentality, and must now face the realities of our coming of age and our success. New layers of organization will have to define responsibilities of members and give rights and responsibilities to trip coordinators. There are other issues to face as well. To this end, there will be an open meeting (actually, all of our meetings are open) to discuss and resolve some of these issues. All of you are invited to a general meeting, Saturday, January 27th, 7:00 p.m. I urge all interested members to attend. We are interested in feedback from the group at large. This is your club and we want to make it the best that it can be.