

# TRIP LEADER GUIDELINES

The purpose of the RMSKC is to promote an appreciation of the outdoors, environmental stewardship, and the sport of sea kayaking in a safe, friendly and respectful manner.

A Trip Leader is responsible for facilitating all aspects of the planning and execution of an RMSKC trip to fulfill these Club purposes.

## ACA INSURANCE CONSIDERATIONS FOR TRIP LEADERS

The RMSKC uses American Canoe Association insurance to protect our Trip Leaders, the Club's Steering Committee, and our Club members from liability for any mishap on a Club-sponsored trip. The ACA's Paddle America Club Insurance Program provides liability insurance coverage for properly-registered, on-water activities, and also provides coverage for off-water activities such as fundraisers, banquets, and meetings. However, ACA insurance is only in effect if the ACA procedures are followed. *The ACA provides no insurance coverage for individuals who are not part of an RMSKC club-sponsored paddle or group activity.*

The ACA's insurance program requires Paddle America Clubs to satisfy three requirements on the day of the activity:

1. The Club must conduct its activity in accordance with the ACA's Risk Management Requirements.
2. Every participant must have a current Waiver on file with the ACA (which our members will have because they cannot be RMSCK members unless they are members of ACA) or sign the *ACA Waiver and Release of Liability* form prior to participation in the program.
3. Every participant must be an ACA member in one of the following categories:
  - a. A current, valid *Annual Membership*, whether through the PAC, through another Club, or independently
  - b. An *Event Membership* purchased at the time of the activity, and lasting for the duration of that activity. Individual Event Memberships are \$5 per person.

## GENERAL RMSKC REQUIREMENTS FOR TRIP LEADERS

The *Trip Leader Guidelines* and the *Participant Guidelines* documents are designed to contain all of the ACA Risk Management requirements. Following the provisions of these documents ensures RMSKC activities are done in a safe and fair manner, and in compliance with ACA requirements which maintains our insurance in force. Trip Leaders have the full support of the Steering Committee in enforcing these required safety and insurance procedures.

The RMSKC policy for participation on our paddles is:

1. Day paddles are open to:
  - a. Current RMSKC members
  - b. Non-member guests (one time only) who pay a \$5.00 ACA event fee and sign an ACA Waiver
  - c. ACA members who are not in our club who provide proof of their current ACA membership (check the expiration date on their ACA card); they must also sign an ACA Waiver but do not need to pay the \$5.00 event fee.
2. Multi-day paddles are only open to RMSKC members whose membership in ACA is up-to-date; their ACA membership must be verified in advance of the beginning of the trip.

## SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS FOR PLANNING AN RMSKC TRIP

### I. BEGIN BY WORKING WITH THE RMSKC'S PADDLE COORDINATOR

1. Do you get the Steering Committee approval and hope you can raise interest in your trip or do you try to raise interest in your trip and then obtain SC approval? Both approaches are acceptable, it is up to you.
2. Send your trip information to the Paddle Coordinator who will submit it to the Steering Committee for approval. After the SC's approval, the Paddle Coordinator will add your trip to the RMSKC Calendar and submit it to the ACA per their requirements. See "Advertise Your Trip" below for the information to be provided to the Paddling Coordinator.
3. Do not incur any costs, such as camp site reservations or permits, until you know you have an approved trip and trip participants.

## II. NEXT, CONSIDER ALL THE TRIP'S LOGISTICS

A successful trip begins with good planning, just like a family vacation. Don't forget to draw upon the experience of past trip leaders to make sure you have considered everything and to check if there are any special requirements at your location.

1. **WHERE:**
  - a. Keep in mind the various conditions paddlers might face at the venue you have chosen:
    - i. Flat water: Water temperature, wind, carry or filter water, human waste requirements
    - ii. River: Put-in and take-out availability, water flow, class of whitewater requiring helmets, shuttle arrangements
    - iii. Coastal: Tides and currents, winds and weather; availability of potable water
  - b. Are permits needed for your trip? Plan ahead to allow enough time to obtain any venue-specific requirements such as camping permits, and to allow your participants to get their area maps and charts, and any site-required essentials like boat inspection stickers, fishing licenses, passports, human waste containers, or bear cans.
2. **WHEN:** As the trip leader you can make this decision. Another option is to consult members who have shown an interest in your trip and make a group decision.
3. **GROUP SIZE:** Do you need to limit the group due to houseboat requirements, campsite restrictions, or for group-management concerns? If there are more applicants than those considerations will allow, see the section below about having a drawing for the random selection of participants.
4. **PADDLE PLAN:** This information is critical, as it allows members to decide if a trip is for them.
  - a. Describe the venue conditions that you expect to encounter so a member can decide if he or she has the skills and experience for the paddle. (Also see "Skill Level" below.)
    - i. Aspects to include are the probable weather and water temperature, possible winds, surf, tides and currents, the class of a river if applicable, approximate number of miles a day you will paddle, necessity of rescue techniques, and kayak camping experience.
  - b. Describe your plans for each day's paddle: where and when you will launch, how far you plan to paddle, when you will return.
    - i. If it is a multi-day kayak camping trip, provide a general idea of each day's destination.
    - ii. Another option is to leave this open and make a group decision once you reach your destination. (Of course, leaders must always be open to changing plans based on current conditions at your paddle destination.)

5. **SKILL AND EXPERIENCE LEVEL REQUIRED:** This is another critical issue. A careful description of the necessary skill level allows members to decide if they have the ability and experience necessary for your trip.
  - a. Reasonable screening techniques should be used to ensure that participants have the skills necessary for the activity. Assessing potential applicants' skills is vital to creating a trip that is safe for all the participants.
    - i. What is the minimum skill levels for the paddle—beginner, intermediate, advanced?
    - ii. Does the paddle require any specific experience—kayak camping, whitewater, surf launch and landing?
  - b. Additional thoughts about participants' qualifications:
    - i. It is never justifiable to place participants in situations for which they are not prepared; it is not good for the participant's self-confidence and not good for the safety of the group.
    - ii. At the same time, the RMSKC wants to maintain a culture that recognizes and respects varying participant skill levels, when that can be done in a safe manner.
    - iii. Trip Leaders may require all participants to do a pre-paddle trip to evaluate their skill level. Pre-paddle practice sessions, or rescue sessions, are also warranted for some paddles.
    - iv. To avoid awkward situations, the Trip Leader should disclose skills and equipment requirements to potential participants before they travel to participate in an activity.
  - c. In summary: As the Trip Leader you are authorized to deny the participation of a member who does not have the requisite skills, experience or equipment for the trip. This is a safety issue, not a popularity issue. You must not worry about hurt feelings; it is dangerous to have people on a trip who can't handle the conditions to be encountered. If you have any doubts, check with the Paddle Coordinator or other members on the Steering Committee.
  
6. **REQUIRED GEAR FOR PARTICIPANTS:** Some of this seems obvious, but it is best to remind participants of almost everything, especially any out-of-the-ordinary gear. Remember, a paddler with inadequate equipment that struggles through the paddle will adversely impact the experience for everybody.
  - a. PFD, with a whistle for on-water communication
  - b. Cold and/or wet weather gear for the expected water and air temperature. See the *Cold Water Survival Chart* at the bottom of the *Participant Guidelines* document on the RMSKC web site: <http://www.rmskc.org/for-participants.html>
  - c. Boat gear for flat water: spare paddle, paddle float, bilge pump, painters, tow ropes

- d. Specialized gear for rivers (all boats need appropriate flotation if they don't have airtight bulkheads):
    - i. Class I:
      - a. Throw-ropes: groups of up to ten participants need two throw-ropes; more than ten participants requires one throw-rope for each five paddlers
    - ii. Class II:
      - a. Properly-fitting paddle helmet; bicycle helmets are not acceptable
      - b. Throw-ropes: groups of up to eight participants need two throw-ropes; more than eight participants requires one throw-rope for each four paddlers
  - e. Human waste disposal requirements [See the *Human Waste Disposal* document on the RMSKC web site.]
  - f. Food, with enough for unexpected extended time on the water
  - g. Food protection plans, if needed from bears or less dangerous camp pests
  - h. Water: how much is needed, will it be carried in the kayaks or available during the paddle, what purification methods will be used
  - i. Specialized camping gear: sand stakes, rain tarp, bug house, bear boxes, throw ropes for food storage from bears, etc.
7. **ADDITIONAL GEAR FOR TRIP LEADERS:** You or one of the trip's participants should have the following additional safety equipment:
- a. Tow system
  - b. GPS with back-up maps and a compass, depending on the venue
8. **FIRST AID AND EMERGENCY PLANS:** You need to plan for both medical and rescue emergencies, based on the isolation of the venue. Planning may be no more than knowing how to reach assistance if needed, such as the phone numbers of emergency responders or the location of rangers. Of course, paddles away from civilization require more involved preparation and sophisticated gear.
- a. It is a Trip Leader's responsibility to ascertain which emergency communication devices are necessary and who, among the participants, owns and can operate them. In extreme situations it is preferable to have back-up devices and power sources, and multiple people knowledgeable about them. Among the possibilities are:
    - i. GPS with back-up maps and a compass
    - ii. inReach® Global Satellite Technology (valuable on Lake Powell)
    - iii. Marine VHF radio (required on any ocean trip)
    - iv. Walkie-talkies
    - v. Satellite phone
    - vi. SPOT
    - vii. ELB

- b. Identify any participants who have formal first aid training.
  - c. Develop a **detailed** float plan and have every member leave a copy with their emergency contact person.
  - d. Check to make sure that each member has their *Emergency Medical Information* with their contact person's information in their PFD. A basic template for this information may be found on the website.
  - e. Ask privately if anybody has a medical condition of which you need to be aware; discuss with them what needs to be done under various conditions.
  - f. Decide which medical conditions and their required responses need to be made known to the whole group so they will be ready to respond helpfully.
  - g. Include a first aid kit in your gear; for a longer trip, coordinate what each member is carrying for first aid, what it looks like and where they store it.
  - h. Consider taking an emergency signaling device—satellite phone, SPOT, etc.
9. **COSTS:** Participants will want to know this to help them decide if they will go; provide your best estimate of the costs to be incurred on the trip.
- a. Clarify what costs are group costs, how they will be split up, what will need to be paid in advance, and what the refund policy will be.
10. **TRAVEL CONSIDERATIONS AND LODGING:** What is the plan for traveling to and from the paddle?
- a. Telling people when and where to be for the launch and leaving it up to them to get there is usually all that's needed for local, one-day paddles.
  - b. Caravanning works well for multi-day paddles some distance away, especially when transportation issues arise along the way. Sometimes it is best to use a combination of these two.
  - c. What are your options for lodging on the road and at the paddle? Who will make those arrangements?

### III. ADVERTISE YOUR TRIP

- 1. Include the most important information from the list of the Trip's Logistics above.
- 2. Clarify how members will be selected for the trip. First, review the required skill level [See #5 in the Logistics section above]. Then, if necessary, describe the following random method for selecting members for trips that must limit the number of participants:
  - a. The trip leader will state how many slots are available and set a reasonable date (at least a week) for interested members to respond.

- b. After this date, if the number of interested members exceeds the specified limit of participants, the trip leader will draw names to select who goes. This will give all interested members an equal chance of being selected.
- c. Couples who wish to go on the trip together will have their names on one piece of paper. If drawn, they will receive two slots on the roster. If they are drawn last and would exceed the trip limit, their names will be put first on the wait-list and another name will be drawn to fill the last open slot.
- d. Those members not selected will go on a wait list, also in the order of the draw, in case a selected member has to drop out.
- e. It is understood that the trip leader has the right to later exclude members selected in the drawing if he or she decides they do not have the skills, experience or equipment required for the trip.

#### **IV. SELECT YOUR PARTICIPANTS**

1. The Trip Leader can exclude any member if she or he feels someone isn't right for the trip.
  - a. These decisions should be based on their paddling skills, equipment and willingness to follow the trip leader's decisions or directions.
  - b. These decisions should not be based on personal feelings toward a member.
  - c. A Trip Leader may consider input from other paddlers about an individual's skill level, but the final say of who goes or not is left to the leader. Then each member can decide whether they want to go on a trip given the makeup of the group.
    - i. Consider this scenario: Paddle A gives input he is not comfortable going on a trip with Paddler B. At the same time B gives input he is not comfortable going on a trip with A. Both were done independently so that neither is aware of the other's input. The Trip Leader feels both are qualified for the trip. The Trip Leader should not be put in a position of choosing one over the other. If that were done it might come down to factors other than a paddler's being qualified for the trip, such as the Trip Leader's level of friendship with one over the other; this would be inappropriate criteria for choosing members for a Club trip. Therefore, the Trip Leader must use uniform criteria for allowing participants and then each participant has to make his or her own decision.
2. Verify everyone's membership status (especially their ACA renewal) to confirm that they are able to participate in the Club paddle by using the current roster of members that the Paddle Coordinator will email you.
  - a. Remind any non-members who want to go on an overnight trip that they must verify their membership in ACA and submit their RMSKC Membership Application Form, ACA Waiver and Release of Liability form and their RMSKC dues to the Membership Coordinator two weeks before the trip starts.
  - b. Non-members can go on day paddle events but they must to sign an ACA waiver and pay a \$5 fee. ACA members who are not RMSKC members must present a current ACA card and sign a waiver, but they do not need to pay the \$5 fee.

- c. For day trips, print a reasonable number of copies of the *ACA Waiver and Release of Liability* forms (adult or minor) and take them with you in the event a non-member shows up.

#### **V. INVOLVE YOUR TRIP PARTICIPANTS AND FACILITATE GROUP COMMUNICATION**

1. Once you have your group identified, work with them on any trip planning or any necessary pre-trip shake-down paddling.
2. Ask your trip members to read the *Participant Guidelines* document on the RMSKC website.
3. They should be specifically reminded that:
  - a. RMSKC Trip Leaders are not trained, certified, or pre-qualified by the RMSKC with regard to their abilities as either kayakers or leaders.
  - b. Accepting a member for a trip in no way is a certification by the Trip Leader or the RMSKC that a member is qualified for a trip.
  - c. Each member is responsible for his or her own personal welfare on a trip and for deciding if she or he has the skills, experience, or endurance for the described trip.
4. It is helpful to get the cell phone numbers of all members, especially if you plan to caravan to the location.

### **CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE PADDLE ITSELF**

You have selected a paddle location, put together all the logistics, advertised the trip and identified a group to go on the trip. Now it is time to paddle and have fun.

1. Although you have just covered all the above topics it is still a good idea to review that material one more time to make sure you haven't overlooked anything.
2. Remind yourself, and your trip participants if it's necessary, that the Trip Leader is the final word on all aspects of the paddle and has to make decisions that are in the best interest of the group.
  - a. The RMSKC wants everybody to have fun and enjoy the paddle.
  - b. But more importantly, the RMSKC want participants to be safe.
  - c. Trip Leaders may make decisions to change or cancel paddle plans as warranted by conditions. You may obtain input from all participants but a paddle trip is not a democracy; the Trip Leader makes the final decisions.
  - d. If a participant is not cooperating as part of the team, the Trip Leader must speak to him or her and try to resolve the situation.



3. If it's a day trip, use the current Membership Roster to verify all participants are Club members. Non-members must complete the required *ACA Waiver* and pay the required fee before being permitted to join the paddle.
  
4. Pre-launch review with the participants :
  - a. Verify that each participant has a PDF and adequate food and water.
  - b. Ask to be informed privately about health issues.
  - c. Inventory the appropriate safety equipment and who is carrying it.
  - d. Identify who has first aid kits.
  - e. Remind participants that alcohol is not allowed during the paddle.
  - f. Review the Paddle Plan. If necessary, make last minute venue changes due to weather and or water conditions; advise the non-paddling people with whom you left your float plan of the changes.
  - g. Prepare the group for the challenges of communicating effectively when wind and water sounds make hearing others difficult. Remind participants to locate their whistles, and review the relevant hand and whistle signals before the paddle begins.
  - h. Discuss the importance of paddling as a group. Designate someone in whom you have confidence as the sweep paddler to make sure slow paddlers are not left behind.
    - i. Attempt to make faster paddlers slow down; impress on them the necessity of looking back every five minutes.
    - ii. Consider breaking into two groups: fast and not so fast and designate a lead paddler and sweep for the second group.
    - iii. Confirm the route of each group.
    - iv. Agree upon a return time.
  
5. Launch and have fun.
  - a. Continue to evaluate conditions while on the water.
  - b. Set a reasonable pace so everyone can stay together.
  - c. Adjust the pace and/or the route as required by conditions.
  - d. Recognize when group members are tired or having difficulty and adjust the group's pace accordingly.
  - e. Turn the party back short of the trip's objective if the weather conditions or group members' conditions require such action. Remember: SAFETY is the most important aspect of any paddling.
  - f. Take breaks as needed to encourage members to stay well-hydrated and eat enough food to maintain their energy levels.
  - g. Require that participants obey all land, water, campsite and trail regulations, and that the surrounding areas are left in as good of condition as found.
  - h. Model "Leave a Place Better than You Found It" by taking a bag for trash and using it.
  
6. End the paddle and send everybody home or back to camp.

## AFTER THE PADDLE

1. Routine tasks: Submit the final trip roster, and any ACA waiver forms and money to the Paddling Coordinator within ten days after the paddle.
2. In case of an injury or property damage:
  - a. The Trip Leader must report all injuries requiring medical attention to the ACA National Office within seven days using the ACA Incident/Accident Report form. Submit this form to the Paddling Coordinator upon returning home so that it can be sent to the ACA within the required seven days.
  - b. In case of a serious injury, the Trip Leader shall immediately notify the insurance company (American Specialty) by calling 1-800-245-2744. American Specialty will answer calls to this number 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The Trip Leader shall also submit the ACA Incident/Accident Report form to the Paddling Coordinator and inform him or her of the call to the insurance company.
  - c. The Trip Leader must report all property damage resulting from an ACA-insured activity to the ACA National Office within seven days of the activity using the ACA Incident/Accident Report form. Submit this form to the Paddling Coordinator upon returning home so that it can be sent to the ACA within the required seven days.
3. Write a trip report (or draft one of the participants to write it) and submit it to the Publications Editor, with photos, so that other club members can enjoy learning about your trip.

### RMSKC WEB RESOURCES:

- *Participant Guidelines*
- *Past Trips and Leaders* (This needs to be up-to-date; list it in an easy-to-find location or put a link to it in this document.)
- *Human Waste Disposal* (This needs to be added this to the website; it may need to be rewritten; another possibility would be to link to articles that have been in past publications.)
- *Emergency Medical Information Form* (This needs to be put on the website in a down-loadable form.)

