

# TRIP LEADER CHECKLIST

## RESPONSIBILITY:

The purpose of the RMSKC is to promote an appreciation of the outdoors, good environmental stewardship and the sport of sea kayaking in a safe, friendly and respectful manner. The Trip Leader is responsible for planning and executing a trip to fulfill the Club's purpose. While the Trip Leader may consult other Club members, other trip members, and outside resources, please remember the Trip Leader has the final say in deciding all trip issues.

## INSURANCE CONSIDERATIONS:

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 year-round 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's insurance program requires Paddle America Clubs to satisfy three requirements on the day of the activity:

- The Club must conduct its activity in accordance with the ACA's Risk Management Requirements
- Every participant must sign the ACA Waiver and Release of Liability form prior to participation in your program, or must have a current Waiver on file with the ACA
  - ACA Adult Waiver & Release of Liability, or
  - ACA Minor Waiver & Release of Liability (Under age 18 at the time of registration)
- Every participant must be an ACA member in one of the following categories:
  - A current, valid ACA annual membership, whether through the PAC, through another Club, or independently
  - An ACA introductory membership, either pre-existing or purchased at the time of the activity. The Club can sell these memberships to participants on the day of the activity for \$15. (information is found at the top of the ACA Waiver)
  - An Event Membership purchased at the time of the activity, and lasting for the duration of that activity. Individual Event Memberships are only \$5 per person.

Paddling Alone: The ACA's insurance covers group paddling activities only. The ACA provides no insurance coverage for individuals who are not paddling as part of a group activity.

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

Please remember, RMSKC policy for participation in 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 must 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 PAID RMSKC members; their membership must be verified in advance of the beginning of the trip.

### **DECIDING YOU WANT TO LEAD A TRIP:**

There is no magic in deciding to lead a trip. Perhaps there is a location you always wanted to paddle and you want some Club members to join you. Perhaps someone else has stated an interest in a location but is not up to the task of leading a trip. Perhaps the Club President guilts you into leading a trip. Whatever the reason, we are assuming you have decided to lead a trip. You can also decide to co-lead a trip where one person handles the logistics and another person handles the on-water leadership.

### **TRIP 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. Please refer to the Past Trips and Leaders document on the RMSKC web site.

1. **Where** – this has already been decided but you must keep in mind the venue and the various conditions paddlers might face – flat water; river – put in and take out, water flow, what class of whitewater, car shuttle; coastal – currents and tides; winds and weather everywhere; etc.
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. **Maps** – obtain maps, charts, books and other outside material.
4. **Group Size** – do you need to limit the group size? For example, the number of people a Lake Powell houseboat will accommodate.
5. **Travel** – what is the plan for traveling to and from the paddle? Caravans work well for multi-day paddles some distance away. Telling people when and where to be for the launch and leaving it up to each person to get him or herself there works well for local, one-day paddles. Sometimes it is best to use a combination of these two.
6. **Lodging** – what are your plans/options for lodging on the road and at the paddle? Motels and camping are the two most common modes of lodging, and both can be used at the same time to accommodate the wants and needs of all members.
7. **Paddling Plan** – this information is critical as it allows members to decide if this trip is for them.
  - a. Describe the paddle conditions that you reasonably expect to be incurred so that each member can decide if he/she has the skills/experience for the paddle.
  - 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.

- c. If it is a multi-day kayak camping trip then have a general idea of each day's destination.
  - d. One option is to leave this open and make a group decision once you reach your destination.
  - e. Always be open to changing plans based on current conditions at your paddle destination.
8. **Skill Level** – this is a critical issue as it allows members to decide if they have the skills and experience necessary for your trip.
- a. Trip Leaders are not trained, certified, or pre-qualified by the RMSKC with regard to their abilities as either kayakers or leaders. 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. Each Club member is responsible for his or her own personal welfare on a trip and for deciding if she/he has the skills/experience for the described trip. Please see the discussion of this point in the Participant Guidelines.
  - b. However, the RMSKC shall maintain a culture that recognizes and respects varying participant skill levels, and does not place participants in situations for which they are not prepared.
    - i. The Trip Leader should know the skill levels required for the activity she/he is organizing, and should use reasonable screening techniques to ensure that participants have the skills necessary for the activity. To avoid awkward situations, the Trip Leader should disclose skills requirements to potential participants before they travel to participate in an activity.
  - c. Do you require any minimum skill levels for the paddle – beginner, intermediate, advanced?
  - d. Do you require any experience for the paddle – kayak camping, whitewater?
  - e. As the Trip Leader you are authorized to say no to a member whom you feel does not have the requisite skills/experience for the trip.
  - f. This is a safety issue and not a win friends issue – don't worry about hurt feelings – it is dangerous to have people on the trip who can't handle the conditions to be encountered. Remember, **SAFETY FIRST**.
  - g. Trip Leaders may also require all participants to do a pre-paddle trip so that the Trip Leader can evaluate their skill level.
  - h. Consider
    - i. River class
    - ii. Long days of paddling – how many miles a day will you paddle
    - iii. High winds iv. Surf
    - v. Tides
    - vi. Current
    - vii. Rescue practice
    - viii. Kayak camping experience
    - ix. Weather
9. **Costs** – participants will want to know this to help decide if they will go.
- a. Provide your best estimate of the costs to be incurred on the trip.
  - b. Clarify with the group up front:
    - i. What costs are group costs
    - ii. How group costs will be split up
    - iii. What costs are individual costs
10. **Permits** – does your paddle location require any permits – such as river camping permits? Are you going out of country and is a passport required? Plan ahead to provide time to obtain the required permits.
11. **Required Gear** – while some of this may seem obvious, it is best to remind participants – remember, a paddler with inadequate gear that struggles through the paddle will adversely impact the experience for everybody.

- a. Whitewater
  - i. Class I Rapids: Fast moving water with riffles and small waves. Few obstructions, all obvious and easily missed with little training. Risk to swimmers is slight; self-rescue is easy.
  - ii. Class II Rapids (Novice): Straightforward rapids with wide, clear channels which are evident without scouting. Occasional maneuvering may be required, but rocks and medium-sized waves are easily missed by trained paddlers. Swimmers are seldom injured, and group assistance, while helpful, is seldom needed. (For example, Black Rocks rapids on the frequently paddled Loma to Westwater section of the Colorado River are rated Class II.)
  - iii. Class III (Intermediate): Rapids with moderate, irregular waves which may be difficult to avoid. Complex maneuvers in fast current and good boat control in tight passages or around ledges are often required; large waves or strainers may be present but are easily avoided. Strongeddies and powerful current effects can be found, particularly on large-volume rivers. Scouting is advisable for inexperienced parties. Injuries while swimming are rare; self-rescue is usually easy but group assistance may be required to avoid long swims. (Class III rapids are not usually attempted in sea kayaks.)
  
- b. Class I-II whitewater
  - i. Participants must wear properly-fitting paddling helmets (in class II and above). Bicycle helmets are not acceptable
  - ii. Participant must have an appropriate level of additional flotation in their boats for the venue
  - iii. For groups of up to 10 participants, there must be at least two (2) throw-ropes. For groups of more than 10 participants, there must be one (1) throw-rope for every five participants
  
- c. Class I-II whitewater
  - i. Participants must wear properly-fitting paddling helmets. Bicycle helmets are not acceptable.
  - ii. Participant must have an appropriate level of additional flotation in their boats for the venue
  - iii. Groups of up to eight (8) participants must carry at least two (2) throw ropes. Groups larger than eight (8) participants must carry at one (1) throw rope for every four (4) participants
  
- d. Spare paddle
  
- e. Whistle for on-water communication
  
- f. Human waste disposal – please see the Human Waste Disposal document on the RMSKC web site. g. Food
  
- h. Water
  
- i. Cold/wet weather gear for the expected water/air temperature – Please see the Cold Water Survival Chart at the bottom of the Participant Guidelines document on the RMSKC web site. Shorts, wet suit, dry suit?
  
- j. Camping gear
  
- k. Paddle float
  
- l. Bilge pump
  
- m. Painters
  
- n. Tow ropes
  
- o. Throw ropes on rivers
  
- p. Protected Coastal Waters
  - i. Participants must outfit their boats with additional flotation appropriate for the venue
  - ii. Participants must have a minimum of one bilge pump or bailer for every two (2) boats
  
- q. Unprotected Coastal Waters
  - i. Participants must outfit their boats with additional flotation appropriate for the venue.
  - ii. Each participant boat must have a bilge pump or bailer. Each kayak must have a paddle float.

- iii. Activity leaders must have the following additional equipment and know how to use it:
  1. Marine VHF Radio (minimum of one per group)
  2. Tow system
  3. Rescue sling
  4. Map & compass
12. **First Aid and Emergencies** – last but not least you need to plan for first aid and emergencies, both medical and rescue.
  - a. Develop a float plan and leave it with the Paddling Coordinator or another member of the Steering Committee who is not paddling with you.
  - b. Make sure you have a plan for dealing with emergencies – medical and safety (rescue).
    - i. Find out if anybody has a medical condition for which you need to be aware
    - ii. Discuss with them what needs to be done under various conditions
  - c. Include a first aid kit in your gear.
  - d. Identify if any participants have formal first aid training.
  - e. Be aware that medical help will be needed for major medical emergencies.
  - f. Planning may be no more than knowing how to reach assistance if needed – phone numbers, rangers, quick exit from the paddle, etc.
  - g. Planning will be more involved for paddles away from civilization such as Lake Powell or Glacier Bay Alaska.
  - h. Consider an emergency signal – satellite phone, SPOT, etc.

**SUBMIT TRIP TO PADDLING COORDINATOR:**

1. Which comes first the chicken or the egg – do you get the SC 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. Do not incur any costs, such as camp site reservations or permits, until you know you have a trip
3. Send your trip information to the Paddling Coordinator who will submit it to the Steering Committee for approval. The Paddling Coordinator will also add your trip to the RMSKC Calendar and submit it to the ACA per their requirements. See Advertise the Trip below for the information to be provided to the Paddling Coordinator.

**ADVERTISE THE TRIP:**

1. Include selected logistics from above.
2. As the Trip Leader you are the captain of the ship.
3. Some trips are limited as to the number that can participate. For example, Lake Powell Houseboat trips are limited to 12 people as that is the maximum number of people allowed on the houseboat. For limited number trips, the Trip Leader shall use the following selection process.
  - a. This applies only to trips that are limited to the number that can go.

- b. The trip leader and co-leader, if there is one, will advertise the trip as usual including all the information needed so that people will know what is involved and whether their skill level and experience meet the trip requirements.
  - c. In the trip advertisement, the trip leader will state how many slots are available and set a reasonable date (usually a week) for all interested members to respond.
  - d. 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.
  - e. 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 set aside and another name will be drawn to fill the last open slot.
  - f. 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.
  - g. The trip leader still reserves the right to exclude a selected member if the trip leader decides a member does not have the skills or experience required for the trip.
  - h. The Paddle Coordinator is always available to offer assistance or answer questions from the trip leader or members.
4. The Trip Leader can say no to a member if s/he feels someone just isn't right for the trip.
- a. Should be based on their paddling skills and willingness to follow your decisions/directions.
  - b. Should not be based on personal feelings toward a member.
  - c. Input from all paddlers about individual skill levels is always welcome but the final say of who goes or not is left up to the Trip Leader. Then each member has to decide whether they want to go on a trip given the makeup of the group.
    - i. Consider this scenario. A gives input he is not comfortable going on a trip with B. At the same time B gives input he is not comfortable going on a trip with A. Both done independently so that neither one 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 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. So, it is best if the Trip Leader uses the same criteria for allowing participants and then each participant has to make his/her own decision.
5. Verify everyone is authorized to be on the trip.
- a. The Paddle Coordinator will send you the current roster of paid members, the RMSKC membership form and the ACA Waiver and Release of Liability forms (adult and minor) – contact the Paddling Coordinator if you don't receive these.
  - b. Only paid members can go on a multi-day paddle – verify to the roster.
    - i. If non-members want to go on the trip remind them they must submit their RMSKC Membership Application Form, ACA Waiver and Release of Liability Form (adult or minor), and dues to you or the Membership Coordinator two (2) weeks before the trip starts
  - c. Non-members can go on day paddle events but they have to sign the ACA waiver and pay the \$5 fee.
  - d. See information in the Insurance Considerations section above.
  - e. Print a reasonable number of copies of the RMSKC Membership Application Form, ACA Waiver and Release of Liability Form (adult or minor) and take them with you to the paddle in case a non-member shows up.
6. Group Management – once you have your group identified you can work with them for any trip planning or pre-trip shake-down paddling you want to do.

- a. Direct all participants to read the Participant Guidelines on the RMSKC web site – all participants need to be aware of this document and what is expected of them.
- b. Communication – it is helpful to get the email and cell phone numbers of all members, especially if you plan to caravan to the location.
- c. Answer any questions anybody has.
- d. Keep in touch as the trip develops and plans change.

## THE PADDLE:

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 go on the paddle and have fun.

1. Although you have just covered all the above topics it is still a good idea to review the above material one more time to make sure you haven't overlooked anything.
2. The Trip Leader is responsible for facilitating all aspects of the trip to support the purpose of the RMSKC – to promote an appreciation of the outdoors, good environmental stewardship and the sport of **sea kayaking in a safe, friendly and respectful manner**.
3. RMSKC members are adults and responsible for getting themselves to the paddle location on time, and home after the paddle.
4. 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 first and foremost the RMSKC want participants to be safe.
  - c. Trip Leaders have to make decisions to change or cancel paddle plans as warranted by conditions – obtain input from all participants but a paddle trip is not a democracy – the Trip Leader makes the final decision.
  - d. If a participant is not cooperating as part of the team, the Trip Leader must speak to him/her and try to resolve the situation.
5. At the put-in - use the current Membership Roster to verify all participants are Club members – non-members must complete the required forms and pay the required dues before being permitted to join the paddle.
6. Pre-launch review –
  - a. Inventory the appropriate safety equipment and who is carrying it.
  - b. Identify who has first aid kits.
  - c. Each participant has adequate food and water.
  - d. Alcohol is not allowed during the paddle.
  - e. Expected paddling conditions for the day.
  - f. Paddle plan – if necessary, make last minute venue changes due to weather and/or water conditions; advise the non-paddling person with whom you left your float plan if the changes are made before the day of the trip.
  - 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 hand and whistle signals before the paddle begins.
  - h. Required gear

- i. Maps
  - j. Paddle as a group – Yeah, right. This usually breaks down within a quarter mile of the launch.
    - i. Designate someone in whom you have confidence as the sweep paddler to make sure slow paddlers are not left behind
    - ii. Try to make faster paddlers slow down; at least guilt them into looking back every now and then
    - iii. Consider breaking into two groups – fast and not so fast
      - 1. Designate a lead paddler and sweep for the second group
      - 2. Confirm the route of each group
      - 3. Agree upon a return time
7. Launch the paddle 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 – recognize when group members are tired or having difficulty and adjust the group’s pace accordingly.
  - d. Turn the party back short of the trip’s objective if weather conditions or group members’ conditions require such action – remember, **SAFETY FIRST**.
  - e. Encourage members to stay well-hydrated and eat enough food to maintain their energy levels – take breaks as needed.
  - f. 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.
8. End the paddle and send everybody home or back to camp.

**AFTER THE PADDLE:**

- 1. Submit the final trip roster, RMSKC membership forms, ACA waiver forms and money to the Paddling Coordinator within 10 days after returning home.
- 2. Injuries – the Trip Leader must report all injuries requiring medical attention to the ACA National Office **within seven (7) 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 (7) days.
- 3. 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 (if calling after hours, follow the instructions for emergency claims reporting). The Trip Leader shall also submit the ACA Incident/Accident Report Form to the Paddling Coordinator and inform him/her of the call to the insurance company.
- 4. Property Damage – the Trip Leader must report all property damage resulting from an ACA-insured activity to the ACA National Office **within seven (7) 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 (7) days.
- 5. Write a trip report (or draft one of the participants to write it) and submit it to the Editor.

**RMSKC WEB RESOURCES:**

- Trip Leader Checklist
- Participant Guidelines
- Past Trips and Leaders
- Human Waste Disposal
- ACA Waiver and Release of Liability Form (adult and minor)