

Minutes for February 13, 2016, Sea Kayak Summit

Hosted by Tacoma Sea Kayak branch at the Tacoma Mountaineers Clubhouse

Moderator: Chris Williams (Seattle)

This year's Summit Chairman: Charlie Michel (Tacoma)

Lunch/snacks: Robbie Courts (Tacoma) – Money for food donated by The Mountaineers

Secretary: Beth Owen (Tacoma)

Wordsmith: Kim Ahrens (Seattle)

Attendees:

Tacoma: Charlie Michel, Beth Owen, Michael Everett, Alison Reinbold, Tom Harrigan

Seattle: Brian High, George Swapp, Pat Carney, Kym Ahrens, Karen McFarland

Olympia: Henry Romer, Will Greenough, Dan Halsey, Karen Hook, John Dunlap

Everett: Bill Coady, Janet Putz

Kitsap: No attendees

1) Introductory comments: Chris W presented stats about the number of kayak trips/leaders as well as kayak course/clinics registrations over last 6 years. The trend is upward. Also compared trip offerings from branch to branch over last 6 years. He will send that info to each branch. We suggested separating out the Basic kayak course from the other course/clinics for evaluating registration over the years. We suspect the increase in courses/clinics is due to additional Intermediate Kayak Course offerings. We would like to also see how many new members take our courses each year.

2) Old Business:

- a) Do we want to increase the minimum standards for the number of required rescues in the Basic Sea Kayak Course to three (1 in pool and 2 in cold water)? Over the last year, there have been 3 incidents (one in Tacoma, two in Kitsap) during Basic Class where a student failed a wet exit and had to be helped out of their boat.

Approved wording to minimum standards, to focus on “effective and efficient wet exit (without assistance) and rescue performance” as Basic Class requirement, rather than a specific number of rescues being required. Try to identify individuals that are apprehensive, having trouble, and require them to do additional rescue training. Required wet exits to be done specifically without assistance, since it is a life and death issue.

- b) Discussion about requiring wet suits or dry suits: Olympia doesn't require either for their Basic Class or low level paddles. They feel it is too economically cumbersome to add that requirement, in addition to the new paddler having to purchase a kayak and other equipment. They also feel that if the students are not planning on wearing a dry suit, they need to practice in what they will wear. No action taken on this item.

- c) Requirement for flares: Charlie reviewed the Coast Guard requirements. Kayaks 16 feet or longer are required to have “visual distress signals” from sunset to sunrise only, and only in areas that are more than 2 miles from shore to shore. Visual Distress Signals include 3 non-expired flares or a specific electric visual distress signal. No requirement for day time paddling.

Approved two added changes to minimum standards:

- Under “Equipment”, added: “Flares as required by USGA – between sunset and sunrise, in locations where the path from the ocean has not yet narrowed to 2 nm.”
- Under “Ten Essentials, #8, Illumination (flashlight or headlamp) added: “including a white light sufficient to satisfy waterway regulations at night.”

- d) Seattle requested revisiting the issue of not allowing flotation during the 50-yard swim test, because they feel it’s unnecessary, since people will be wearing a PFD when paddling with us. There was also discussion about whether to require 25 versus 50 yards for the minimum swim test distance. The point of the swim test is to identify that a person has a basic comfort level and basic competence in the water.

Approved change to Minimum standards under Pool Instruction to strike “Without flotation” and changed 50 yards swim test to 25 yards.

3) Intermediate Sea Kayak Course:

- a) Agreed at last summit: This course is not a requirement or prerequisite for participation on paddles, leader discretion still required for trip participation, it’s separate from the trip leader path, and it’s not just a checklist for classes but also a measure of skill proficiency.

- b) Timeline to Complete Requirements:

Approved wording: “The following skills and classes must be completed within a five-year timespan. Classes or trip previously completed within the last two years qualify, as long as you can locate a leader with personal knowledge to validate your successful completion.”

- c) Course content:

Discussion about whether or not to require actually taking courses, versus just learning it by going on appropriate paddles.

Approved changes to “Course Content”: “The content of the Intermediate Sea Kayaker Course shall include full day training or equivalent experience, etc....”

It was clarified that it is not required to hold actual classes for each item in the content, but that individual branches can choose to hold paddles that allow people to gain experience in course content requirements. One exception to this is that Incident Management must be taken as a clinic.

d) Competencies to demonstrate:

Approved wording: "Exhibit comfort and control performing strokes, maneuvers, self- and assisted rescues in at least 15 kn sustained wind and 1.5 foot of waves." We picked 1.5 foot waves because we felt that it would be hard to consistently find 2 foot waves for the purpose of testing a candidate.

Approved wording: "Exhibit comfort and control performing strokes and maneuvers under tidal current conditions of at least 4 kn, crossing eddy-lines, ferry-gliding, and ferrying across a channel. Demonstrate comfort and control while eddy hopping up current."

Approved wording: "Execute comfort and control while launching and landing in a minimum of 2 ft. of surf."

Approved wording: "Explain the elements and purpose of courteous surf zone conduct and safety and behave accordingly."

Approved wording: "In a rock garden zone with wave sets and surge demonstrate the proper timing and technique to be able to safely navigate from safe zone to safe zone as well as self, assisted and team rescues."

Approved wording: "Demonstrate VHF Radio Skills including knowledge, regulations and ability to communicate such as summoning marine assistance and coordinate safe passage through vessel traffic."

Approved wording: "Demonstrate the ability to identify aids to navigation and landmarks, and navigate in a variety of conditions and settings such as through complex waterways, long open crossings, and shipping lanes."

Approved wording: "Be able to maintain the equivalent of a 3 kn average pace for a minimum of a 12 nm trip."

Approved wording: "Demonstrate the ability to roll in open water within three consecutive attempts." (This does not have to be done under adverse conditions.)

Approved wording: "Demonstrate the ability to effectively tow another paddler in a variety of conditions."

Approved wording: "Complete a minimum of three SK IV or higher Mountaineer trips, in a variety of conditions and locations."

e) Equipment to own:

Approved changing “student” to “candidate”

Approved ten essentials:

- First aid kit appropriate for trip conditions
- Emergency shelter or covering
- Waterproof light
- Signaling devices appropriate to the situation
- VHF radio
- Towing system appropriate to the expected conditions
- Spare paddle adequately secured to the deck as appropriate to the expected conditions

Context for the first aid kit requirement: initial suggestions included requiring extensive first aid courses – this was a compromise for a participant intermediate paddler, who is more than a beginning paddler but not necessarily a leader.

f) A volunteer time commitment requirement:

Approved wording: “Help teach in any of the Mountaineer branches’ sea kayak classes and/or perform approved volunteer Sea Kayak activities for a total of 40 hours.”

Context for requiring a specific number of volunteer hours is that in order for a paddler to learn Intermediate Sea Kayak skills through the Mountaineers, a lot of other volunteers have dedicated a lot of their own time to teaching them. It’s fair and necessary that the beneficiaries of this “pay it back” by donating volunteer hours directly to the Mountaineers Sea Kayak program. We felt that donating 40 hours over several years (the usual length of time required to complete the Intermediate Sea Kayak Course) would be very easy to accomplish.

g) Equivalency for Intermediate Sea Kayak Course

Discussed whether it was necessary to have an equivalency for this course, since it’s not a requirement to have an Intermediate Sea Kayak Course badge anyway. If someone has an ACA L4 or BCU 4* credential, then that is adequate training to go on SK IV or V paddles, without receiving additional certification from Mountaineers. If those people want to have an Intermediate Sea Kayak Course badge, then they need to demonstrate the skills required and complete the volunteer hours.

We approved eliminating the Equivalency option for the Intermediate Sea Kayak Course.

h) Leaders (Sign-off):

Approved wording: "Leaders who may sign off on a skill or course shall be approved by the individual branches."

g) Transitioning current Tacoma Intermediate Sea Kayak Course enrollees that come from other branches:

We approved sending email to those people and letting them know that their branch has set up, or will soon be setting up, an Intermediate Sea Kayak Course, and give them the option to stay with Tacoma or transfer back to their own branch.

4) Basic Sea Kayak Course Equivalency:

a) Basic components:

- Join the Mountaineers first
- Submit an equivalency application form
- Pay \$25 fee
- Do one of three things: Provide documentation of course completion that meets or exceeds ours, or recent ACA L@ or BCU 2* certification, or demonstrate on-the-water skills, plus rudimentary knowledge of tides, currents, hypothermia and weather
- Go on a Mountaineers trip of at least 7 nm in length, including rescues

Approved wording: "2. Hold an ACA Level 2 or BCU Level 2* Sea Kayak paddler or instructor certification issued within the last two years."

Approved wording at the end of last paragraph on Notebook Page 23: "The applicant must successfully complete a club-sponsored SK II or III trip of at least seven miles in length, including demonstration of effective and efficient wet exits, self and assisted rescues with minimal instructor assistance. They must be subsequently be approved by the sponsoring committee."

b) Application for Basic Sea Kayak Equivalency:

Discussed wording under "Tell us about your kayak: Brand/model, Length, Does it have bulkheads or floatation at both ends, Does it have deck lines all the way around the deck of your kayak?"

Discussed wording to question #10: "Do you hold a recent BCU or ACA or other certification, either at the paddler or instructor level?"

Tacoma branch will work on the form further and try to develop one form that all the branches could use.

c) Discussed the Tacoma Equivalency Test procedures.

Discussed wording changes to end of Notebook Page 28: "(You may be required to wear a wet suit....)"

Discussed wording changes to top of notebook page 29: "go on a Sea Kayak paddle that is at least 7 nm long, including demonstration of effective and efficient wet exits, self and assisted rescues with minimal instructor assistance."

Kitsap already has an Equivalency Clinic listed on line (with rolling enrollment) for the purpose of providing a starting place for taking the Equivalency test (and not as a class to teach rescues, etc.) Tacoma will be soon doing the same.

5) Standardize fees/charges for courses/clinics across branches

It was discussed that there is considerable discrepancy among branches about what they charge, if anything, for courses and clinics. Henry discussed whether this should be decided at our committee level, or whether it should be at Mountaineers Central level. There may be more guidance coming from Mountaineers Central sometime in the future.

We approved an interim baseline fee schedule (the Basic Sea Kayak Course is not included in this baseline fee schedule):

<1 full day: \$0 (Example: 2-hour skill practice sessions)

1-day class: \$40

2-day class: \$80

3-day class: \$120

These baseline fees can be increased to compensate for additional expenses such as camping fees and instructor expenses/reimbursements.

Seattle reimburses volunteer instructors for some expenses, such as meals, camping fees, or ferry fees.

6) Next year's Sea Kayak Summit:

Date: Saturday, February 11, 2017

Location: Seattle

Hosted by: Seattle

7) Agenda Items for Next Year:

- Incident Management Clinic minimum standards
- Review how Intermediate Sea Kayak Course is going club wide – revisit any issues?

Sea Kayaking

Application

This standard applies to club-sponsored sea kayaking trips in saltwater or freshwater. This standard applies to any branch or committee that sponsors sea kayaking activities.

Trips

Sea Kayaking trips will be rated with the categories shown in the Appendix. -The rating must be available to participants when they sign up.

Equipment

The following equipment is required for any sea kayaking trip.

Sea Kayak Related Equipment – required of all

- Sea kayak with flotation in both ends
 - Flotation can be compartments separated from the cockpit by bulkheads or bags specifically designed to provide the kayak flotation. A sea sock is not adequate flotation without float bags.
 - Paddle
 - Bilge pump
 - Paddle float
 - Spray skirt
 - USCG approved PFD
 - Appropriate attire for the conditions
 - Whistle
- [Flares as required by the USCG – between sunset and sunrise, in locations where the path from the ocean has not yet narrowed to 2 nm](#)

Sea Kayaking Ten Essentials – required of all

1. Navigation (Chart and compass – deck or orienteering type)
2. Spare clothing in a dry bag
3. Water
4. Food
5. First aid supplies
6. Lighter or waterproof matches
7. Sun protection (sun screen, hat, sunglasses with retainer strap).
8. Illumination (flashlight or headlamp), [including a white light sufficient to satisfy waterway regulations at night.](#)
9. Emergency shelter appropriate for the trip (space blanket, tarp, or tent)
10. Repair kit appropriate for trip and gear

Required Equipment for Leaders

- Chart
- Tide and current data for the trip
- Waterproof watch

Required Equipment for the Party (carried by any person)

- Spare paddle
- Towing system
- Duct tape for boat repairs
- Pliers, screwdriver (Phillips and spade) and knife or “Leatherman” type tool
- Weather or VHF radio
- Toilet paper and plastic bag

Additional equipment may be required of all participants at the leader’s discretion.

Leaders

Leaders must be approved to lead trips by the sponsoring committee. Sponsoring committees must be satisfied that leaders of sea kayak trips have these qualifications:

Training

- Graduation from the Sea Kayak Course or Equivalency
- Completion of a leadership course or demonstration of leadership skills to the satisfaction of the sponsoring committee

Experience

- Participation in at least two club-sponsored sea kayaking trips
- Serving as a mentored leader on at least two trips (with a different mentor each time)

Leaders must demonstrate skill maintenance by satisfactorily leading at least one trip every three years.

Participants

Graduation from the Basic Sea Kayak Course or equivalency is a prerequisite for participating on a Sea Kayak trip. Current-year Basic Sea Kayak Course students may participate on trips after they have successfully completed all course field trips.

Participants are responsible for signing up only for trips that are within their capabilities, wearing suitable clothing, and carrying appropriate equipment including the ten essentials.

Courses

The content of the Basic Sea Kayaking Course shall include:

Off-water instruction (at least nine hours) covering:

- Equipment
- Charts and navigation
- Hypothermia
- Tides and currents
- Weather for [kayakers-kayaker](#)
- Leadership and followership including group dynamics
- Trips and the trip rating system
- Ergonomics, avoiding repetitive injuries, safe handling of heavy loads, shoulder protection
- Basic conservation principles as they apply to sea kayaking

Pool Instruction (at least two hours) covering:

- A swim check ~~without flotation~~ (participants must be able to swim 5025 yards)
- Wet exits
- Self- and assisted-rescue

Open-water Instruction (at least two six-hour days), covering:

- Launching and landing techniques
- Basic paddling strokes
- Use of required equipment
- Wet exits
- Self- and assisted-rescue

A sponsoring committee can substitute a club-sponsored sea kayak trip for one day of field trip instruction.

In order to graduate, Basic Sea Kayak Course students must demonstrate competence in the course content ~~and~~, especially the performance of effective and efficient wet exits (without instructor assistance) and rescues. Additionally, students must satisfactorily complete at least one club-sponsored sea kayak trip rated SK II or SK III that covers at least seven miles.-

Equivalency

Committees may grant course Basic Sea Kayaking equivalency ~~for~~ applicants who: submit have joined The Mountaineers, submitted an equivalency application, paid the then-prevailing equivalency fee, and satisfies any of items #1 through #3;

- 1. Documents in the application that shows that they have training or experience taken a sea kayaking course that meets or exceeds the requirements for course Basic Sea Kayaking Course graduation, and. A committee member must verify this information to their satisfaction.
- ~~Demonstrate, without instruction, a level of competency in sea kayaking knowledge and boat handling skills that is equivalent to that expected of a Basic Sea Kayak Course graduate, and~~
- ~~Based on the above criteria, receive approval by the sponsoring committee.~~
- 2. Provides evidence of holding an ACA Level 2 or BCU Level 2* BCU Sea Kayak paddler or instructor certification issued within the last two years.
- 3. Demonstrates, with only minimal coaching, the ability to perform a wet exit, a self-rescue, and both roles of an assisted rescue; the ability to paddle forward, backwards, stop, and turn the boat. The applicant is able to answer rudimentary questions in the areas of tides, currents, weather, and hypothermia.

After satisfying one of the three alternatives above, the branch representative should review with the applicant pertinent information contained in the Sea Kayaking minimum standard, how to sign up for a trip, and how trips are run. The applicant must successfully complete a club-sponsored SK II or III trip of at least seven miles in length, including demonstration of effective and efficient wet exits, and self and assisted rescues with minimal instructor assistance, and subsequently be approved by the sponsoring committee.

Instructors

Instructor qualifications are:

- Graduation (or equivalency) from the Basic Sea Kayaking Course -and
- Approval from the sponsoring committee to instruct.

First-time instructors should also participate in a train-the-trainer session coordinated by the lead instructor.

Intermediate Sea Kayaker Course

Candidates must have completed the Basic Sea Kayaking Course or been granted equivalency. They must be approved to graduate by the sponsoring committee. Sponsoring committees must be satisfied that candidates have completed the course requirements. The content of the Intermediate Sea Kayaking Course includes training, competency demonstration, requires equipment ownership, and a volunteer commitment as follows:

Timeline to Complete Requirements

The following courses and competencies must be completed within a five year timespan. Classes or trips previously completed within the last two years qualify, as long as you can locate a leader with personal knowledge to validate your successful completion.

Course Content

The content of the Intermediate Sea Kayaker Course shall include full-day training or equivalent experience in SK-IV (or higher) conditions on the following topics.

- Kayaking in Wind & Waves
- Kayaking in Tidal Currents
- Kayaking in a Coastal Surf Zone
- Kayaking in a Coastal Rock Garden
- Sea Kayaking Incident Management
- Sea Kayaking Navigation (in any SK conditions)

Competency Demonstration

In order to graduate, Intermediate Sea Kayaker Course students must demonstrate competence in the course content. Specifically, while completing the course activities the student must:

- Exhibit comfort and control performing strokes, maneuvers, self- and assisted rescues in at least 15kt of sustained wind and 1.5ft of waves.
- Exhibit comfort and control performing strokes and maneuvers under tidal current conditions of at least 4kt, including crossing eddy-lines, ferry-gliding, and ferrying across a channel. Demonstrate comfort and control while eddy hopping up-current.
- Demonstrate comfort and control while launching and landing in a minimum of 2ft of surf.
- Explain the elements and purpose of courteous surf zone conduct and safety and behave accordingly.
- In a rock garden zone with wave sets and surge, demonstrate the proper timing and technique to be able to safely navigate from safe zone to safe zone as well as perform self, assisted, and team rescues.
- Demonstrate VHF radio skills, including knowledge of regulations and the ability to communicate in scenarios such as the summoning of marine assistance and the coordination of safe passage through areas of vessel traffic such as shipping lanes.
- Demonstrate the ability to identify aids to navigation and landmarks, and navigate in a variety of conditions and settings, such as through complex waterways, long open crossings, and shipping lanes.
- Be able to maintain the equivalent of a 3kt average pace for a minimum of a 12nm trip.
- Demonstrate the ability to roll in open water within three consecutive attempts.
- Demonstrate the ability to effectively tow another paddler in a variety of conditions.

- Complete a minimum of three SK IV or higher Mountaineers trips in a variety of conditions and locations.

Equipment Requirements

The candidate must carry the following equipment in addition to The Mountaineers Sea Kayaking Ten Essentials:

- First aid kit appropriate for trip conditions
- Emergency shelter or covering
- Waterproof light
- Signaling devices appropriate to the situation
- VHF radio
- Towing system appropriate to the expected conditions
- Spare paddle adequately secured to the deck as appropriate to the expected conditions

Volunteer Requirements

- Help teach in any of The Mountaineer branches' sea kayak classes and/or perform approved volunteer Sea Kayak activities for a combined total of at least 40 hours.

Leaders (sign-off)

Leaders who may sign off on a skill or course shall be approved by the individual branches.

Related Club Policies and Standards

None at this time.

Comparable Standards

- American Canoe Association (www.americancanoe.org) Level 4 Skills Assessment
- British Canoe Union Level 4* Skills Assessment
- ACA Guidelines for Safe Coastal Kayaking
- ACA Coastal (Sea) Kayak Curriculum

Appendix: Sea Kayak Trip Ratings

| Rating Factors | Trip Rating | | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|--|---|--|
| | SK I | SK II | SK III | SK IV | SK V | SK VI |
| <p>Geography (Fetch is defined as the unobstructed distance that the wind can blow over the water and build up waves). nm = nautical miles</p> | In areas protected from waves by nearby landforms in case of wind. | Fetch less than 10 nm unless it is generally possible to land and walk out. -Crossings less than ½ nm except for very protected trips. | Crossings up to 2 nm wide and/or fetches longer than 10 nm. | Crossings up to 5 nm. | Crossings more than 5 nm, but less than 3 hours' paddling time at the speed listed with the trip. Exposed ocean coasts are included when precautions are taken. | Trips combining a long fetch with stretches where safe landing may be difficult or impossible for most of a day. |
| <p>Hydraulics (Expected en route) kt = knot</p> | Insignificant currents | Max. Predicted current up to one kt. | Max. Predicted currents up to two kt. | Predicted currents may be more than 2 kt, but less than slowest paddler's top speed. | Currents may be faster than group can paddle against. | Exposure to hazards at any other levels taken to extremes. |
| <p>Routes</p> | Day trip near shore. | Either has protection or intermittent places to get out. | May involve crossing eddy lines and tide rips. | May cross <i>strong</i> eddy lines, tide rips and upswellings. | May include landing and launching in surf. | Exposure to hazards at any other levels taken to extremes. |
| <p>Acceptable Conditions (no guarantees)</p> | Calm | Generally try to avoid choppy water and/or winds above 10 kt. | Generally will not start out in whitecaps, but be prepared for paddling into waves large enough to wash over the deck, and be comfortable paddling in at least 10 kt winds. | May include steep waves and swells. Be comfortable paddling in 15 kt winds. | For groups prepared to <i>knowingly</i> set out in rough weather, whitecaps, and fast currents. | May only be negotiable with favorable conditions. -Kayak rescues may not be possible. |

| Minimum Clubwide Standards | | The Mountaineers | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| <p>Skills and Conditions (The skills and experience required are cumulative with ascending levels.)</p> | <p>Ability to swim.— Except with leader’s permission: (a) previous experience is required on trips more than 5 nm; and (b) previous practice capsizing and wet exiting (or be willing to learn how before the trip).</p> | <p>Participants must have practiced assisted sea kayak rescue techniques.</p> | <p>Conditions may require bracing skills.— Previous group and self-rescue practice (both as rescuer and rescuee).</p> | <p>Conditions may require anticipatory leaning, reflexive bracing, stern rudder with paddle, and the ability to read moving water.— Familiarity with charts and navigation.</p> | <p>Trip members must have tested their skills in rough conditions, know their limits, and be self-reliant in the event of separation from the group.— The ability to Eskimo roll is highly recommended as conditions can make sea kayak rescues difficult.— Rescue practice with the kayak and equipment used on this trip.</p> | <p>Extensive experience and skill including kayak surfing and rolling are required.</p> |

| <u>Rating Factors</u> | <u>Trip Rating</u> | | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|--|---|---|
| | <u>SK I</u> | <u>SK II</u> | <u>SK III</u> | <u>SK IV</u> | <u>SK V</u> | <u>SK VI</u> |
| <u>Skills and Conditions</u> (The skills and experience required are cumulative with ascending levels.) | <u>Ability to swim. Except with leader's permission: (a) previous experience is required on trips more than 5 nm: and (b) previous practice capsizing and wet exiting (or be willing to learn how before the trip).</u> | <u>Participants must have practiced assisted sea kayak rescue techniques.</u> | <u>Conditions may require bracing skills. Previous group and self-rescue practice (both as rescuer and rescuee).</u> | <u>Conditions may require anticipatory leaning, reflexive bracing, stern rudder with paddle, and the ability to read moving water. Familiarity with charts and navigation.</u> | <u>Trip members must have tested their skills in rough conditions, know their limits, and be self-reliant in the event of separation from the group. The ability to Eskimo roll is highly recommended as conditions can make sea kayak rescues difficult. Rescue practice with the kayak and equipment used on this trip.</u> | <u>Extensive experience and skill including kayak surfing and rolling are required.</u> |

The rating system is a general guide; the highest rating of any factor is usually used to rate the trip.

Plus or minus signs can be used to further differentiate the levels. -For example, a minus sign could be used for a trip which technically gets a given level, but is on the easy side of that level. -An asterisk designates training trips open to paddlers new to that level.- The distance to be paddled and the expected paddling speed should be listed, but do not affect the trip level.

Due to extra risk, the following factors increase the trip rating ½ level:

- Water temperatures less than 55 degree Fahrenheit, unless participants bring wetsuits or drysuits to wear.
- A slightly faster current or longer crossing when all other conditions meet the criteria of a stated trip.
- Overnight or longer trips, unless an alternative (such as hiking out or being picked up by a support boat) is available.
-