

Minutes for February 11, 2017, Sea Kayak Summit

Hosted by Seattle Sea Kayak branch at the Seattle Mountaineers Clubhouse

Moderator: Brian High, Seattle

2017 Summit Chair: Brian High

Lunch/snacks: Felicia Wibowo (Seattle) – Money for food donated by The Mountaineers

Minutes: Linda Cooley

Wordsmiths: George Swapp, Pat Carney, Charlie Michel, Sally Anderson, Brian High

Attendees:

Tacoma: Charlie Michel, Beth Owen, Michael Everett, Sally Anderson, Tom Harrigan

Seattle: Brian High, George Swapp, Pat Carney, Felicia Wibowo, Tom Unger

Olympia: Henry Romer, Dan Halsey, Brian Hollander, Andy Hix

Everett: Doug Palm, Tamber Pettes, Justin Sylvestal

Kitsap: Barney Bernhard

Mountaineer Staff rep: (None)

Safety (summarized from Beth Owen's Tacoma February meeting minutes):

For the purpose of continuing safety education, Beth Owen, Tacoma Branch, noted safety incidents:

- **Seattle Branch Paddle:** Mountaineers Boston Harbor paddle in October (was listed as SK II, and would go out in winds up to 10 kts, leisurely pace) – Had small craft advisory that day, was 15 mph by 10 am, 20 mph by 11 am with gusts to 30 mph and they still went out with inexperienced paddlers – capsizes occurred, difficult rescues, one paddler was taken back via motor boat.
Conclusion: Leader should not have gone out in conditions that were beyond what was listed on website, without personal knowledge of his paddlers' skill levels. It would have been wiser to have cancelled the trip or moved it to a more protected area.
- **Olympia:** Review of Mountaineers Squaxin paddle in December (listed as SK III, would go out in winds up to 10 kts, wind waves up to 1 ft, mod pace) – Small Craft/Gale advisory warnings for afternoon plus very cold (snow), by noon wind was 20 mph with gusts to 30 mph -- in the morning “group decision” to stick with the plan despite having inexperienced paddlers in the group—had multiple capsizes (at least 3, some simultaneously) and ineffective rescues (too long in the water) – had to eventually land at a beach, warm up at beach owner's home and call for help to get back to cars.
Conclusion: Leader should not have gone out in conditions that were beyond what was listed on website, without personal knowledge of his paddlers' skill levels. It would have been wiser to have cancelled the trip or moved it to a more protected area.
- **Tacoma:** Review of Commencement Bay paddle in December: One participant tripped and hit her head on a rock while carrying kayaks in on the beach for a break, plus sort-of near miss (by ½ mile) with tanker because of not checking in with VTC before making the final crossing. Ended up making the longest crossing at end of trip when participant was tired – next time, try

reversing the direction of paddle to have the crossing occur at the beginning of the paddle. **Remember that all of Commencement Bay is a shipping zone. In shipping lanes keep radios on shipping channel (14) or emergency channel (16) so they can contact you, if need be.**

- **Tacoma, Commencement Bay Triple Cross:** Conditions were about what was listed on website (winds up to 15 kts, waves up to 2 feet.) Expectation was that paddlers would self-assess based on listed conditions. Five people in attendance. All were asked in private if they were comfortable going out and said yes. The trip leader thought that the conditions would be a good chance to teach/practice some wind and wave techniques. One tipped over launching in surf, got help from the leader, and then capsized again 100 feet out when he was asked to perform a practice maneuver. Stamina was low, and the participant asked to go back in after the capsize, which the group did. The participant and his wife were assisted back to their cars, and the other 3 continued on the trip. Participant later told the leader that he wasn't comfortable with the conditions, but didn't want the trip to be cancelled so hadn't let the leader know. **Need to stress to all that they need to say if they are uncomfortable before getting in the water, and not be embarrassed to back out. The trip leader should clarify paddlers experience and level of comfort.**

Beth noted that Tacoma follows up with trip leaders when safety concerns arise. Brian suggested that we publish online safety guidelines and update trip leadership materials.

Discussion: Encourage a culture of speaking with trip leaders about mistakes they have made.

Add a question for leaders to ask participants, if they are using new/untested equipment for the first time.

When conditions change, leaders should use an abundance of caution, and only if they know the participants well, if contemplating a change in trip rating on the beach (some unqualified participants may not speak up). Rather, if conditions change at planned route an alternative route should be selected.

Place safety/culture guidelines on the web. Stress these aspects in basic sea kayaking class, and as part of our talking points with equivalency candidates.

2) Discuss if any organizational policies or procedures changed recently.

Policies

No changes to organizational policies or procedures were noted or discussed.

Kayak Roll Badge

The Olympia branch created a Rolling Badge.
Other branches were consulted and approved the badge language and principles.

<https://www.mountaineers.org/membership/badges/skill-badges/kayak-rolling>

Action: The badge has been administered at the Olympia Branch level, all branches agreed that the badge should be implemented program-wide and that the “draft” status of the badge should be removed. Each branch will decide who can approve the award of the badge, noting that it is simple to assess because the candidate can either roll or not.

Olympia will contact the Club to activate the badge.

Discussion of future badges possible topic for next summit. Coastal navigation badge, suggested. This badge is also awarded to the sailors, so it needs further evaluation to see if it is suitable in its present form.

Basic Sea Kayak Course Equivalency: (summarized from Brian High notes)

Brian reported on the Boot Camp Basic course that Seattle held June 24-26:

On June 24 - June 26 2016 the SK Seattle branch conducted a pilot course of Basic Sea Kayaking Equivalency Boot Camp.

<https://www.mountaineers.org/about/branches-committees/seattle-branch/committees/seattle-sea-kayaking-committee/course-templates/fast-track-basic-sea-kayak-course-seattle/fast-track-basic-sea-kayaking-course-seattle-2016>)

The course was limited to 6 participants. The course consisted of 3 hrs class room, and 2 full days (8:00 to 4:00) on the water.

The first day was held at Lake Sammamish (fresh water) and the 2nd day at Golden Garden (salt water).

We accepted registered students to participate in the course based on their kayaking experience and references they listed in the application form.

<https://www.mountaineers.org/about/branches-committees/seattle-branch/committees/seattle-sea-kayaking-committee/committee-materials/fast-track-sk-equivalency>)

The 3 hour class room session starts with a quiz with materials that they should have read.

Course materials are posted on the website

<https://www.mountaineers.org/about/branches-committees/seattle-branch/committees/seattle-sea-kayaking-committee/course-templates/fast-track-basic-sea-kayak-course-seattle/course-materials>)

Navigation, Tides and Current topics were covered very little and we suggest participants to take a separate course/clinics for these subjects.

The rest of the hours were used for clothing and immersion wear (showed examples), what to expect on day 1 and 2

The first day on the water started with introduction to paddling gear (kayak, paddle, paddle float, pump, PFD, etc) suit up and swim test. Followed by demo of self-rescue and participants self-rescue, demo of assisted rescue and participants assisted rescue, followed by strokes and maneuvers after lunch.

2nd day on the water was a trip from Golden Garden to Discovery Park. Weather (wind, waves and fog) and signaling was covered before launching. It was a windy day. Participants were expected to use the strokes and maneuvers learned on the first day. During lunch we covered hypothermia. After lunch participants successfully demonstrated at least one self and one assisted rescue. Most of the participants did more than once.

Results and feedback

- Application form needs refinement (emphasizing the SK experience in a SINGLE kayak not double).
- Participants who were not ready for the course, dropped out on the first full day where exercises were done on fresh water.
- More structured reimbursement of course fee, because:
We need time to accept waitlisted students when somebody cancels the course at the last minute.
- Need to develop a policy for those who dropped out on the first day, how much or should we reimburse the course fee?
- 1st day on the water we need 1/1 instructors/students during the self and assisted rescues.
2nd day on the water 1/2 instructors/students is adequate.
- Seattle invited to send around the curriculum for comment

Intent:

- Keep the number of participants small.
- Offer the course with more frequency in the summer.
- Have a better video of lectures when basic SK class is taking place which can be used both for fast track and basic SK course.
- Have more Navigation, Tides and Currents clinics/seminars.

Other Equivalency items

- **Action: Recommended policy change** – The equivalency student paddle, of 7 nm, should be conducted by/with the sponsoring branch and not the “club”- Change to minimum standard wording required. Action: Brian
- Completion of equivalency earns student the basic SK badge. There is no Equivalency Badge. Action: Charlie to make wording change on website (done).
- Discussion of a refresher single day course for those who have had a gap in their paddling

Trip Leadership

Agreed: to proposed to change of wording on SK minimum standard leadership. Action: Brian to submit agreed changes to staff at The Mountaineers for adoption.

Action: Trip Template change-to list maximum conditions that may be encountered during paddle. (Done).

Action: Tacoma has a leadership course with written materials. Charlie agreed to put the materials on the Mountaineers website and send out a notice. They are located here: [Home](#) / [Volunteers](#) / [Leader Resources](#) / [Shared Activity Resources](#) / [Sea Kayaking](#) / Sea Kayaking Summit Notes and Materials

Discussion:

Chris Williams created a Shared Resources location last year on The Mountaineers website-branches are invited to upload criteria and materials that they wish to share. Charlie has already created branch folders, and will send around a note later describing its use.

Agreed: Discussion of an intermediate leader badge. Tacoma agreed to develop an Intermediate Leader badge and share the criteria with the other branches

Consensus that, in general, people should lead trips that are no more advanced than one level below their own kayaking ability.

Consensus: there is not a need to update the minimum leadership requirement at this time. Tacoma will share both SKII-III and SKIV-VI leadership requirements and this can be a topic of discussion for next year's summit.

First Aid/Wilderness First Aid/Sea kayaking first aid-there is an interest and need. The development of a kayak specific curriculum was discussed. This training could be part of the progressive SK training.

Progressive Sea Kayaking Education (15 min.)

- Olympia/Henry Romer introduced the topic of progressive SK education and training. Suggest SK petition the program center for a similar effort to what the climbers have where there is an organized planned process
- Provide a combined activity group, resources and assistance in education training, skill development, etc.

Course Fees

The 2016 SK Summit agreed upon the following interim fee schedule but not all leaders/instructors charged these fees due to the offering being less than full day class and that some instructors were not aware of the agreed fee guidelines.

Agreed: each branch may decide upon their own fee schedule. A fee of \$40. is suggested as a guideline

Course Standardization

Discussion of standardization of SK courses. Especially Incident Management (IM) Tacoma offers IM. Olympia/Tacoma branches offered to draft a curriculum and propose it to the group.

Miscellaneous updates

Tacoma received \$4,000 to use for leader training from Mountaineers and will use it to send its volunteer leaders to Body, Boat, Blade's multi-day leadership class or other leadership training.

Wrap-Up

Intermediate course status-Tacoma continues to offer and certify. Olympia's course is online with enrollees and the certifying authorities are listed as "instructors". Seattle has a draft course online but it is not live. Kitsap has one enrolled and one completion.

2018 SK Summit

Date: Saturday, February 10, 2018

Location: Tacoma

Hosted by: Olympia

Agenda Items for Next Year:

Incident Management Clinic minimum standards

Course standards

Review how Intermediate Sea Kayak Course is going club-wide – revisit any issues?

Discuss leadership course, maintenance requirements, and leader mentoring

Navigation badge

Other badges