



SOUTHERN MAINE SEA KAYAKING NETWORK

February 2004

Mission Statement

The Southern Maine Sea Kayaking Network is an association of paddlers interested in connecting with others who enjoy the sport of sea kayaking. Our purpose is to promote safe and responsible practices, and, at the same time, to have fun.

Southern Maine Sea Kayaking Network
P.O. Box 4794
Portland, ME 04112
www.smskn.org

Officers

Michael Charek	President
Dorry Shaw	Treasurer
Jayne Engel	Secretary
Sandra Hodge	Board Member at Large
Reed Markley	Board Member at Large
Susan Payne	Board Member at Large
John Ropes	Board Member at Large

Newsletter Editor

David Lay

Membership Committee

Reed Markley	Chairman, Database Mgr.
Susan Payne	
David Lay	

President's Notes

By Mike Charek

With a long national presidential election campaign stretching out over the months ahead, it is nice to know that the SMSKN board elections are behind us. I'm looking forward to serving as President. Bob Arledge has done a stellar job as President over the past two years, as well as serving in other capacities on the Board for several years

before that. Several other past board members deserve recognition as well after long and faithful terms of office: Lee Bumsted is retiring as Secretary, and David Boyle and Bob Collins are stepping down from their At Large seats.

We have seated a very capable new Board: Dorry Shaw is staying on as Treasurer, Jayne Engel is the new Secretary, Susan Payne is staying on as Member at Large along with new Members at Large Reed Markley, Sandra Hodge, and John Ropes. David Lay, although retired from the Board, will assume the duties of Newsletter Editor.

Reed Markley is also the new Chair of the Membership Committee, and will be assisted by Membership Committee members Susan Payne and David Lay. They will be managing the membership lists and handling new and renewal applications for membership, and making sure that process runs smoothly.

We have an exciting array of membership programs already scheduled and more in the works. We hope you can attend the meetings, classes, and workshops to learn something new about our sport, or to work on improving your paddling skills. April 22 is our all-important trip planning meeting, and is really at the heart of what we do as an organization. Please come with your own trip ideas and a readiness to organize paddling trips during the upcoming season.

Here's looking forward to a great year. Please let me know if you have any suggestions about programs or other club activities. Remember, we're an organization of volunteers, and we all need to work together to make things happen.

Membership

The Membership Committee has been working to update all membership submissions into the data base. Included in this newsletter is our current list of members for your use. If you are not listed, but think you should have been, please contact Reed Markley (rmarkley@ctel.net). If your membership has expired and you would like to continue being a member, please complete the form at the end of the newsletter and mail it with your dues to the club address so that we may include you. Please also let us know of any

others that you may be aware of who may have been dropped from the list unintentionally.

Please note that the newsletter address label now includes your membership expiration date after your name. The date shown is what the Network database currently has recorded. Again, if this date does not appear to be correct, please contact Reed Markley. See below for the current list of members.

Newsletter

David Lay is the new editor of the newsletter, having accepted the position to permit the former editor to focus upon his new duties as president of the Network. If you have any stories, announcements or pictures you would like to submit for inclusion in the SMSKN newsletter, you can contact David at his email address drlay@gte.net. Please help make the newsletter interesting by sharing your experiences and insights!

Warm Air, Cold Water and You

Jon Cons, ACA Coastal Kayaking Instructor, retired

Over the years, kayakers and especially ocean paddlers have tried to establish guidelines as to when to wear wetsuits or drysuits. It would be nice to have a hard and fast rule which would tell us when we are safe not wearing these tight, bulky and restrictive garments. It would be nicer still if there were a formula which we could plug numbers into from a weather forecast and have a good safety predictor. This is where the "100 degree" rule came from. This rule basically says that if the air temperature and water temperature combined add up to less than 100 degrees, you should be wearing clothing which provide warmth in case of immersion (read wetsuits or drysuits with sufficient insulating clothing underneath.) This is, in fact, sort of true, but like many rules of thumb, it does not tell us all we need to know, especially in this part of the world where the ocean is notoriously slow to warm up and, even in August, does not get very warm.

Consider a condition we encounter every spring. The temperature breaks into the 60's for the first time in months and we get the boats out. The water temperature however is still about 42. The 100 degree rule says we don't need a wetsuit. Now, what if the unexpected arises and we find ourselves in the water? How safe would we be? How long could we last in 42 degree water without any protective clothing to speak of? Would we be able to get back into our boats? Here are a few depressing facts:

1. Depending on whose study you read, water conducts heat away from our bodies 5-9 times as fast as air of the same temperature.
2. In many cold water fatalities, the cause of death is drowning. These victims simply do not live long enough to develop hypothermia. They die from a syndrome known as cold shock in which the sudden exposure to extreme cold triggers a gasp reflex which, if the victim's head is under water, floods the lungs with cold water which then can lead to cardiac arrest. Hypothermia only occurs if the capsized victim avoids cold shock and then stays cold for a sufficient time.
3. The risk of both cold shock and hypothermia are greatly reduced by wearing garments which provide insulation while the victim is immersed as well as maintaining the victim's head above water.

So, a more enlightened approach to cold water safety would be to consider the water temperature as the crucial factor or, as someone once said: "Dress for the water temperature. Get wet to cool off." If we actually did that, fatalities would drop dramatically, however most of us don't care to wear hooded, diving weight full wetsuits to paddle in July in calm sheltered waters. So what should we do?

Chances are, if you are reading this newsletter, you have some idea of your level of paddling, self-rescue, and group rescue skills. (Please don't depend on someone else to rescue you.) You also are developing some idea of what conditions might be like from descriptions of the trip, the weather forecast, SMSKN guidelines, etc. Now, factoring all these things into your own personal equation, your decision process would be something like this:

1. How cold is the water?
2. What do the weather, and the trip description if any, tell me about the possibility of someone with my kayaking ability going into the water.
3. How reliable is my roll? Have I practiced rolling or self rescue in the conditions I am likely to be paddling in? Recently?
4. Have I paddled this boat long enough to be thoroughly at home in it? How fast can I get back into my boat and empty the water out of it, given the conditions. How far will we be from the nearest possible landing places? And lastly,
5. What effect will the air temperature have on my ability to get warm again if I get wet?

After considering these points, consider what layers of protective clothing you have and deliberately err on the side of being too warm. In Northern New England, thinking about all these factors will probably have you wearing immersion protection considerably beyond the "100 degree" predictor. Remember, kayaking is a water sport. If you are getting too hot, I bet you can figure out a way of cooling off.

GUIDELINES FOR ASSIGNING THE LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY FOR SMSKN TRIPS

RATING	NOVICE 0	BEGINNER 1	INTERMEDIATE 2	ADVANCED 3	EXTREME 4
DISTANCE, NAUTICAL MILES PER DAY	< 2	< 6	< 15	< 25	> 25
DISTANCE FROM SHELTER/LANDING NAUTICAL MILES	< 1/4	< 1/2	< 1	< 3	> 3
WAVE HEIGHT, FEET (WAVES, NOT SWELLS)	< 1/2	< 1	< 3	< 6	> 6
PACE, KNOTS	< 2	2 - 2.5	2.5 - 3	3 - 4	> 4
TIME BETWEEN BREAKS, HOURS	< 1/2	< 1	< 2	< 5	> 6

These guidelines are intended to make the rating of SMSKN trips more uniform among trip coordinators. They are intended to avoid having paddlers finding themselves on trips that have demands beyond their capabilities; this creates a threat to safety. Safety is of paramount importance, but the guidelines are also useful to establish some minimums for trips. For example, a trip intended for advanced paddlers should not be planned for a pace of two knots. This can create boring conditions.

Obviously the condition with the highest rating should generally determine the rating of the trip; however, the boundaries between ratings are not rigid. For example, if you are planning a trip on a calm, sheltered lake in late August, at a gentle pace, but you want to go 16 nautical miles, there is no reason the trip should not be classified as an intermediate trip. It would be a good idea to let people know that the trip is a little long for the classification, but there is no need to dissuade intermediate paddlers from participating. The most important safety tool in kayaking is good judgment.

The most critical criterion for safety is wave height, and it is the one that is the least predictable. It is never possible to be certain that conditions will not be worse than the guidelines for a rating level. You have to deal with probability. If there is a significant chance that the conditions will be worse than the guidelines or if there is a slight possibility that the conditions will be a lot worse than the guidelines, you should upgrade the rating.

In most cases it is the waves that pose the threat, not the wind. This is the reason that wave height is used in these guidelines rather than wind speed. Exposure to the wind, fetch for waves to build, time of year and time of day are all things that can affect the potential for large wind-generated waves and are things to be considered in rating a trip. As the day of the trip approaches, weather forecasts begin to have pertinence to the probability that conditions will be within the limits for the classification of the trip. The day before and the day of the trip, weather buoy data becomes also becomes pertinent. At this point if the probability that wave conditions will exceed the rating of the trip, the rating should be upgraded or the trip relocated. A trip can be relocated to a place where sheltering conditions compensate for stronger winds.

Another thing about waves to consider is their steepness. A breaking one-foot wave is a greater threat than an eight foot swell. Swells with long periods gently lift you up and down without any tendency to tip you over. Of course the energy in these swells can become dangerous if you paddle into shallow water where the waves slow down and build up. For the wave height criterion in these guidelines, it is assumed that the waves are steep.