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# SOUTHERN MAINE SEA KAYAKING NETWORK

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September 2006

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## 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.*

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**Southern Maine Sea Kayaking Network**  
**P.O. Box 4794**  
**Portland, ME 04112**  
**[www.smskn.org](http://www.smskn.org)**

### Officers

Ted Davis	President
David Lay	Treasurer
Jayne Leiner	Secretary
Sandra Hodge	Board Member at Large
Sarah Knock	Board Member at Large
Reed Markley	Board Member at Large
Jon Swan	Board Member at Large

### Newsletter Editor

David Lay

### Membership Committee

Reed Markley	Chairman, Database Mgr.
Susan Payne	
David Lay	

### Librarian

Lee Bumsted

## President's Notes

*Ted Davis*

I had the pleasure of being one of the paddlers that made the Port Clyde trip in July. Tina Madore, the trip organizer, did a great job in getting us together for a six-mile jaunt to the beach on Burnt Island. Sitting in a group, we enjoyed our lunch and sparkling conversation with Eric Risch, Larry Guros, Diane Blackwell, Jon Doody, Peggy Bensingler, David Lay and many others. Just a great paddle!

On the return trip Tina demonstrated a one-arm roll. If you have never witnessed this maneuver previously, it is just amazing. I have trouble getting upright with two arms, a PFD, a paddle and a facemask.

Our intrepid travelers, Bob Arledge and David Boyle returned from Canada into Maine more recently. Dave and Bob will give a slide show and talk, of their adventures of kayaking in Southern Newfoundland, for our October 19<sup>th</sup> meeting. We are looking forward to this meeting for Dave's ever-present camera to have captured the flavor, beauty and adventure of Croatia and Australia.

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## Network Activities

We need help with Network activities, and are looking for volunteers. If you would like to see the Network continue to organize the level of events and services all now enjoy, please pitch in. We will need several new Board volunteers to keep things going through next year, and it would be great if participants could share the effort now in order assure continuity. Pitch in!



## **Southern Maine Sea Kayaking Network**

### **Trip Coordinator's Responsibilities:**

1. Set date, pre-paddle meeting time, place, difficulty level, route for paddle, and likely paddle duration (Float Plan). Notify members by posting on the Website.
2. Receive calls from interested members and keep participant list with contact phone numbers.
3. Confirm that late forecasts for weather, wind, and wave conditions are consistent with planned difficulty level, and if not, revise difficulty level, revise Float Plan, or cancel paddle.
4. Meet participants for pre-paddle meeting and seek consensus on the float plan. Leave a copy of float plan in car. Encourage identification of any special concerns by any participant.
5. Remind everyone that trip safety is everyone's responsibility and encourage all to look after one another and to paddle together. Ask participants to notify others of any changes in their own intentions and of any difficulties.
6. Have everyone sign the SMSKN Waiver of Liability form and leave them in your car. After the trip the forms should be sent to the SMSKN Secretary to be filed.

### **Paddler's Responsibilities:**

1. Understand and accept that SMSKN has no pre-qualification criteria of any kind for participants, and that anyone who has volunteered to help on a paddle may be less experienced than you. SMSKN events are every member's opportunity to learn!
2. Let the trip coordinator know you intend to participate and share your phone number with the coordinator to permit communication of trip changes. If weather conditions are questionable, confirm trip status with trip leader prior to leaving home.
3. Practice wet exits and rescues prior to paddling. Know that you can get back into your boat on your own.
4. Know your limits! Be responsible for yourself. It is each paddler's decision to go or not go on any paddle based upon his or her evaluation of the conditions of the day and his or her abilities. Do not assume that someone else will be able to save you when you get in trouble. Do not follow where you are not comfortable going.
5. Let other paddlers know of any limiting health conditions or other concerns that you may have.
6. File a Float Plan. Let someone at home know where you are going, and when you are to be back so that if you are not back when expected, help may be sought.
7. Arrive at paddle meeting place with time to prepare prior to the meeting.
8. Arrive with ocean-ready kayak, spray skirt, PFD, paddles, suitable clothing, sunscreen, food, water, chart, compass, flares, paddle float, pump, etc.
9. Know where you are at all times on the water. Know where you plan to go. Know how to get back.
10. Stay with the group. Everyone is safer when paddling with others. Help each other stay safe.
11. Keep track of other paddlers; let the rest of the group know if someone is falling behind.
12. Keep watch for hazards including changes in weather, waves, other boats, etc.
13. Help others in need of assistance to the extent possible when needed. Anyone's life may depend upon the help of a friend if conditions change unexpectedly.

## 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.