



# SOUTHERN MAINE SEA KAYAKING NETWORK

May 2007

## 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](http://www.smskn.org)**

### Officers

Ted Davis	President
David Lay	Treasurer
Amy Schrag	Secretary
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Sarah Knock	Board Member at Large
Reed Markley	Board Member at Large
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### Newsletter Editor

David Lay

### Membership Committee

Reed Markley	Chairman, Database Mgr.
Susan Payne	
David Lay	

### Librarian

Lee Bumsted

## Safe Paddling

Summer is just a few weeks away, and the water temperature is slowly rising. Get together with other members for paddles in protected areas until the water is warmer if you have not got the gear to protect you should you be immersed in very cold water. Post your trips on the website to find friends to paddle with.

There has been a lot of attention to the early season drowning death of a kayaker. We all need to be aware of the danger of being overturned into cold water. Check out the links on the website to find out water temperatures and dress appropriately. Watch the wind forecast online or listen to your weather radio/VHF to assure that you have current information as you head out. Change your plans to avoid the danger of large waves and difficult conditions should the weather forecast predict winds over 10 or 15 knots, depending upon your abilities. If you find yourself on the water when the wind changes, look for shelter behind an island or on land. Raft up with your trip companions and signal for help if you do not think you can manage.

You can check out helpful safety information online at [www.marinerkayaks.com](http://www.marinerkayaks.com) under the "manuals" menu.

## Upcoming Events

Watch for Fred Randall's meeting presentation on his latest passion for building Greenland canvas skin kayaks on June 21 at our regular meeting!

## Reflections from The Cockpit

*Wayne Horodowich*

"Run Back To The Barn Attitude"

After leading groups formally and informally for over thirty-five years I have witnessed an interesting phenomenon that I have called "Run back to the barn" or "Escaping from the wilderness". On day trips it occurs near the end of the day. On a multi-day trip it usually occurs on the last day. The feeling is "we will be out of the wilderness today". I have seen this feeling change certain



behaviors. Storing of equipment is not as careful. Certain precautions for keeping dry are not followed. Some believe they will not need the equipment tomorrow, so why bother. I know they are not thinking about a change of itinerary due to an emergency, which means they may be out another night or even longer. As a side note, it is always good to have some extra "cup of soup" and hot chocolate packets for those unexpected delays on multi-day trips.

Early in my mountaineering career I was out with my buddy and our ascent got snowed out. We decided to head out back to trailhead. We believed we could make trailhead and then drive out to home or at least a warm motel room that day. Instead of taking certain precautions and following the trail (which was being snowed over) we decided to follow a stream out to the trailhead. We made it out as we thought, but our boots were soaking wet, as were our clothes. No big deal because we were in the car and the heater was keeping us warm as we changed into traveling clothes. However, what if we could not have made it to the car? I thought about that on the ride home. I would have been stuck out in a snowstorm with very wet equipment, which is not a good situation. In addition, the speed at which we were going down the slippery streambed was not what I would call a cautious pace. There were a number of slips and falls (the reason for more wet gear.) We were focused on getting out.

From that early experience I realized a simple truth, "Your trip is not over until you are home and you have properly cleaned, dried and stored your gear." When we decided to abort our ascent I mentally believed my trip was over. I think our mind changes gears when we think the trip is over. When we scrambled down the stream my only focus was to get to the car. I could have taken a different path with a slower pace and I still would have gotten to the car. I would have been much drier and I would have had time to enjoy the experience of being out there.

During my years of guiding kayakers, I have regularly seen a change of focus and a burst of energy as a group gets closer to its destination. Unfortunately not everyone gets that surge or need to accelerate to the take out, which adds to the difficulty of keeping a group together. In organized groups where I am guiding I have developed my own group guidelines to keep the group together until the end. However, in many club trips and unguided group trips I see this "run back to the barn" attitude separate members in the group. On a few club outings I witnessed a couple of members back at the parking lot fully dressed in street clothes with their kayaks on the car when the rest of the group landed. I am one who believes there are greater combined resources if the group stays together rather than stretched out over a mile or more. There are times when it is appropriate to split a group if the plan is well thought out. However, most groups separate without a plan.

If one adopts the attitude that "Your trip is not over until you are home and you have properly cleaned, dried and stored your gear", I believe it changes the trip experience. I

remember I told my wife Hadley I was going to drop in on the local club practice session. She asked if the practice session was all day. I told her the practice time on the water was only a few hours but it is going to be an all day experience. Once off of the water we had the traditional lunch at Daddy-O's where we told lies of our great paddling adventures and also solved the world's problems. If you also add the forty five-minute drive home to the one-hour gear clean up it made the few hours on the water a full day experience. Since I knew the time commitment up front I approached the day with a different attitude as compared to thinking I was going paddling for a few hours.

Another reason I raise concern for the run back to the barn attitude is the lack of attention that occurs when one is focused on getting to the destination. When one is focused on the destination there may be neglect in other areas.

Possible areas of neglect:

Rest of the group (as mentioned above)

Nutrition & fluid replacement

Sunscreen re-application.

Surrounding conditions (especially from behind)

Over-use injuries

Changing clothing as needed for the conditions

Nature calls

The scenery

The route (once I saw a paddler pass by their landing beach)

Not having reserve energy if an emergency occurred (used up sprinting back)

At the end of the day, when we are usually finishing our paddle, we are nearest our greatest fatigue point. In addition, my experience has shown me winds are stronger in the afternoon which adds to my fatigue factor. This should not be the time I am neglecting myself or my surroundings. This is when my awareness should have a wide angle rather than a narrow focus.

I think this is an excellent topic to bring up at club meeting to see if the group has experienced this attitude on past trips. If yes, does the group want to do anything about it? You may have paddling partners that take off at the end of the day when you near the destination. You should ask yourself if they would be able to help you if you had a problem. There are times when one needs to be focused. However, you may be running back to the barn and not realizing it. Once I adopted my trip is not over until I am home and I have properly cleaned, dried and stored my gear attitude, my awareness on the way back increased significantly. An added benefit is well-maintained equipment that lasts a lot longer. Maybe this is just another way of saying, "Take time to stop and smell the kelp."





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