



# SOUTHERN MAINE SEA KAYAKING NETWORK

February 2009

## 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

Reed Markley	President
Mike Charek	Treasurer
Fred Randall	Secretary
Peggy Bensinger	Board Member at Large
David Lay	Board Member at Large
Tom McKinney	Board Member at Large
Ed Lawson	Board Member at Large

### Newsletter Editors

Ed Lawson and David Lay

### Librarian

Lee Bumsted

## From the President's Desk

*Reed Markley*

The last club elections resulted in a new and invigorated Board. The Meeting Committee has scheduled a number of interesting meetings, which are listed elsewhere in the Newsletter and on the Event List on the website, [www.smskn.org](http://www.smskn.org). The February meeting was a presentation by Bob Arledge and Mike Marino on their paddle along the Maine coast last year. Please attend the Trip Planning meeting on April 16, to schedule a paddle to that place you have always wanted to visit. As part of the trip planning, there will be a discussion of the Leave No Trace (LNT) ethic, and how it affects paddlers. We could perhaps look into scheduling more point-to-point paddles, with the associated car spotting. There is an interest on the board to schedule some camping trips; one-night trips for beginners and longer ones for those with more experience. Help from experienced kayak campers would be welcome in coordinating these paddles.

Bob Arledge and David Lay have scheduled 3 pool sessions at the Bath YMCA, on April 25, May 2, and May 9. See the Event List for more details.

Ed Lawson, with the approval of the Board of Directors, has prepared and posted a survey designed to gather the opinions of the club members on a variety of subjects. The results of the survey will be used to focus the club's future activities in a manner that more closely responds to the desires of the membership. There is a link to the survey on the SMSKN website – [www.smskn.org](http://www.smskn.org). If you check of any of the items in question 7, please contact me at [president@smskn.org](mailto:president@smskn.org), or any of the officers listed on the Contact Us page on the SMSKN website – [www.smskn.org](http://www.smskn.org).

Tamsin Venn, the Editor of Atlantic Coastal Kayaker has agreed to post information about SMSKN in the Clubs/Organizations section in the back of Atlantic Coastal Kayaker. This will help publicize the club and give folks planning to visit Maine a contact point for paddling. This information should appear starting with the March 2009 issue of ACK.

The Membership meeting format has been changed to the following: call to order, welcome to old and new members, trip reports of paddles the previous month, a call for new trips to be announced and posted on the Event List, Library



discussion by Lee Bumsted regarding new books, a period of about 15-20 minutes of membership socializing with refreshments, and then the main presentation of the evening. This new format, especially the socializing, has been well received, and will continue.

I would like to try posting short trip reports on the SMSKN website. To that end, I would appreciate a brief text write-up and a few photos, in jpeg format, regarding club trips. The text should appropriately reference the photos, so they can be inserted into the write-up in the proper places.

If anyone has ideas for a meeting subject, or knows someone who goes on good trips who might be willing to present, please contact someone on the Board.

See you at the next meeting, and don't forget the pre-meeting dinner at 5:30 PM at Ricetta's.

Keep the open side up,  
Reed Markley  
SMSKN President

## Free NOAA Chart Viewer and Trip Planner

All NOAA charts are available for free from NOAA's website. The trick has been that software to view, manipulate, and print the charts from your computer has not been easy to find or inexpensive. However that is no longer the case. Rose Point Navigational Software offers as a free download a trial version of their product Coastal Explorer. The full version is sold for \$400 and appears to be worth the price for those who need the full version. The product is designed for recreational coastal sailors and boaters and has many features primarily of interest to coastal cruisers and, as expected, some of the advanced features are either non-functional or function for a limited time only in the free version. However the features of interest to most kayakers are fully and permanently functional as the trial version has no time limitation.

Once downloaded and installed, Coastal Explorer will prompt you to download the charts you want from the NOAA site. Once downloaded the charts are easily added to the program and you can view the charts in various scales, can scroll from one chart to the next seamlessly, can select segments, and can print them. The program also allows you to do trip planning by establishing routes with the course and mileage of each leg displayed on the chart. It will also create a table which shows for each leg the magnetic and true courses, distances, and estimated travel time based on the average speed you select. There are many other features and overall it is an impressive program. It can be downloaded by going to the following website:

<http://www.rosepointnav.com/CoastalExplorer/Trial/default.htm>

The download is 23Meg and it requires at least Win2000, but the hardware requirements are not high. When you download the NOAA charts you can select as many charts as you want. The NOAA server creates a single ZIP file for downloading which in turn can be used by Coastal Explorer without separately extracting the files. A set of all NOAA charts for Maine is around 80Megs. To review NOAA charts at home on your computer, to print out segments for a paddle, and to plan a trip, the trial version of Coastal Explorer is not only a great bargain (its free), but also a very powerful and useful tool.

## Dress for Success

*Suzanne Hutchinson*

*NE Kokatat Representative, P&H Team Paddler, and BCU Level 1 Coach*

Rain, wind, ice and snow to mid-summer blue-sky days with barely a breath of wind. Both extremes require planning to be prepared for the conditions.

Preparation begins before you even get to the beach and assures that you arrive with the right choices of paddling clothing. I use a layering approach to paddling and buy pieces that are able to do double duty. Let's start at the top. Choose a close fitting wicking first layer. Choose one with a high UPF (ultraviolet protection factor). Have two: one a short sleeve, one a long. Next piece is a wicking insulating piece. Fit should be close but need not be tight. This can be worn in addition to the first layer. Top that off with a paddling jacket and let's move on to the pants.

At times when paddling in the south, I have been known to wear paddling shorts of wicking material but paddling in New England on the ocean, I rarely paddle with less than a pair of Surfskin shorts. These are lighter than neoprene but are water and wind resistant and keep your bottom from getting soggy. Include a pair of splash pants to keep wind/water off when you are chilled and you have extended your time in which you can wear your shorts. If it gets too cold for shorts/splash pants, move on to a pair of Surfskin pants or Neoprene pants for the next step. Throw the splash pants on before you move on to the next level of protection.

At all times, be prepared with a hat, a scull cap, and neoprene hood. All of these can be added at any time if you are chilled and will help you to warm up.

The next level of protection here is varied and there are many permutations:

- Farmer Jane with the two top layers and the paddling jacket for splash protection.
- Farmer Jane insulating top and a dry top.
- Semi Dry paddling suit with insulating tops and pants.
- Dry Suit with the insulating tops and pants.

So, now that you have amassed a selection of clothes, now what? My method is to store an assortment of clothes in a

waterproof duffel. This gets thrown in the car on each paddling outing. Having choices at the launch is the best way to assure the right dress for the day. Choose from the bag and then ask yourself if you are ready to go for a swim, to have a round of rescue practice, or to play around rolling. If you can say yes, then you are adequately dressed. If not, add another layer from the bag until you know you would be OK swimming. That's when you can say that you are dressed for success!

## Navigation and Weather Books

Often a bad day on the water is the result of being at the wrong place at the wrong time. With a little study of navigation, tides, currents and weather, it is possible to greatly increase the chances of being at the right place at the right time. While GPS units and the plethora of weather forecasts on the web and on VHF radio suggest an understanding of navigation and weather basics are no longer particularly important skills for the kayaker, electronics fail, batteries die, and no weather forecast will be specific to the little patch of water we cover in a day's paddle. To be safe and to have the best chance of a good day on the water, these remain good skills to have and practice.

The winter provides a time to study these topics and fortunately there are several good books on navigation specifically written for kayakers. The following are some which you may find useful.

1. Fundamentals of Kayak Navigation, David Burch. Now in its third edition, it is anything but a book of fundamentals. To some it is the "Bible" and to others it is an obtuse tome. Certainly a complete reference book for the studious.
2. Sea Kayak Navigation, Franco Ferrero. Now in its second edition and a standard textbook for the BCU navigation classes this is a UK centric book, but it is compact and clear book that tells you what you need to know and more.
3. Simple Kayak Navigation, Ray Killen. This short book covers more than the basics and includes good material on trip planning for long crossings. It is clear, direct, and well illustrated.
4. Sea Kayak Navigation Simplified, Lee Moyer. The smallest of the books listed, it is what its title suggests. The basics are covered and good practical advice for handling various navigational issues which avoid the techniques and complexity of calculating crossing times and ferry angles.

These books provide a good introduction to understanding the large weather systems which ultimately impact kayakers at the local level as well as providing information on how to predict weather locally.

1. Reading Weather, Jim Woodmency. A small pocket sized book the provides a good deal of information to help understand and predict weather. The lack of photographs of cloud types makes it not as helpful as it could be.
2. Onboard Weather Handbook, Chis Tibbs. Written for sailors, this relatively small book is filled with illustrations and photographs of cloud types. These and the text which is direct and concise which makes its comprehensive coverage easy to grasp. It has several sections specifically directed at various US waters as well as helpful information on how to predict weather for trip planning and while on the water.

There are several web resources that are good sources of info. Not only are NOAA charts available as free downloads on the Web, but so are many books published by NOAA. Chart 1 which explains chart symbols and the Coastal Pilot which has a wealth of information useful to kayakers are available as PDF files which can be viewed or sections printed. These can be downloaded from: <http://www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/mcd/chartno1.htm> <http://www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/nsd/cpdownload.htm>

Besides the marine and land forecasts, the websites for the Gray NOAA station provide other resources that are useful when applying what is learned from the book previously discussed. For example:

1. A variety of graphical models of the weather: <http://www.erh.noaa.gov/gyx/wxgraphix5.html>
2. A view of the national synoptic chart: <http://www.erh.noaa.gov/gyx/wxgraphix5.html>
3. A report which shows what the forecasters are thinking the weather will be and why: <http://www.erh.noaa.gov/displayprod.php?product=PWMAFDGYX&versions=10>

This is a good site from NOAA for finding out what is happening on a national scale which helps understand what the weather will be in a few days: [http://www.weather.gov/outlook\\_tab.php](http://www.weather.gov/outlook_tab.php)

For similar information about Downeast, the NOAA Caribou website has similar information: <http://www.erh.noaa.gov/er/car/>

## Great Wass and Mistake Island

Until you have paddled in this area, it is difficult to appreciate how different and spectacular it is compared to the coast of Maine further south. It is true Downeast both off and on shore and a trip to the area is definitely worthwhile. The following trip description provides a full day's paddle that highlights many of the features in the area while staying in the somewhat protected area between Great Wass and Head Harbor Island. It is an area of austere

granite ledges and islands with almost boreal arctic feel about them. Given the remoteness, the cold water, high tides, strong currents, and potential for big seas; it is important to give the area respect when planning a trip and deciding when to launch and where to go. In short, it is well to be prepared and to be self-reliant. With the right conditions, it is a wondrous place to paddle.

The best places to start are either the town dock on Beals Island or the town park on Beals Island. For a small group, adequate parking can be found in both locations. Using the town dock means travel through Pig's Gut which is a very narrow passage used by fisherman, but it is also passes along a scenic fishing village. From the town park you launch directly onto a more open area and avoid potential close traffic with fishing boats. From either launch site, the first leg of the trip is to paddle easterly toward Head Harbor Island amongst the many small ledges and islands in the area. Once near the island, turn starboard and wander about the ledges and small island as you head to Little Harwood Island. Along the way you are likely to see many, many seals hauled out depending upon the season and tide. From Little Harwood Island, turn easterly toward Crow Point which is at the head of an enchanting area between Head Harbor Island and Steele Harbor Island called the Cow's Yard and a wonderful area to explore.



Moose Peak Light

If conditions seem suitable, you can go through the Cow's yard and out Head Harbor to follow the exposed coastline of Steele Harbor Island to Mistake Island. On this exposed coastline even a modest swell can create large surges on the

ledges so care is warranted. In additions, the chart indicates tide rips also form in this area. As you paddle in this area you will have spectacular granite ledges on one side and open ocean on the other. Soon the Moose Peak Light will come into view which is another impressive sight. Before reaching Mistake island, turn westerly to paddle along the large granite ledges of the Main Channel Way until you reach the end of Knight Island.

To visit the Moose Peak Light, you round Knight Island and paddle down its southerly side until you reach Mistake island and a bar between the islands which makes a nice landing area. You will see a board walk from an old boathouse which goes the length of Mistake Island to the light. There are great views along the boardwalk and at the light. Odds are you can scan the surrounding waters from the light and see no other vessels of any kind or at most a fishing boat or two.

If conditions are not suitable, you can retrace your steps from the Cow Yard and use more protected waters to reach Mistake Island keeping in mind "protected waters" is a relative term in this area. If conditions might develop beyond what you wish to paddle in, then returning to Beals by retracing your steps or going further up the bay until you can cross to Great Wass before continuing to Beals is an option. Otherwise, from Mistake island you can wander through the ledges surrounding Water Island and cross the Mudhole Channel to a very nice, protected large pocket beach next to Little Cape Point on Great Wass island. This makes for a great lunch stop as the views are stunning, and you can look for the remains of a whale skeleton about 200 meters down the beach slightly above the high tide level.



Main Channel Way and Knight Island

If you have the tides right, the remainder of the trip should be a fast ride back to Beals Island along the spectacular shore of Great Wass Island. Places to explore on the return include the Mudhole and the aquaculture pens for raising Atlantic Salmon.

Altogether this paddle provides a good introduction to the area without getting as exposed as a trip to Halifax Island would be which is another great destination when combined with a circumnavigation of Roque Island. While this paddle is only around eleven miles, it may seem longer due to the varied scenery and remoteness.

For a description of a trip in this general area with photographs visit:

<http://www.touringkayaks.com/blog2/2008/10/make-no-mistake-kayak-trip-around-steel.html>.

## Event List

### **3/19/2009 Thursday Membership Meeting: Incident Management Forum**

The March membership meeting will be held in the Falmouth Library meeting room. The speaker will be John Carmody who will discuss Incident Management. How do you respond when things go awry when you're sea kayaking? What equipment do you have available to help you and your paddling partners?

John Carmody will lead us in an interactive session on incident management. Please come ready to share experiences, good ones and especially those not so good. John would also like us to each bring our most favorite pieces of gear (excluding kayaks, paddles, spray skirts and PFD's). This discussion will give us an opportunity to learn from each other as well as from John, who is a BCU Aspirant Level 5 Sea Coach and a partner in Sea Cliff Kayakers in Boothbay.

SMSKN has an excellent lending library of kayaking-related books and videos available at every meeting for SMSKN members to check out. Come and browse our titles new and old!

As usual, some of us will be stopping at [Ricetta's Pizzeria](#) at 5:30 pm for dinner before the meeting; please join us. Ricetta's is in the Shops at Falmouth Village shopping center (look for Staples).

The [Falmouth Memorial Library](#), where we are meeting, is at the corner of Depot & Lunt Roads, about 100 yards west of Ricetta's.

### **4/16/2009 Thursday Membership Meeting**

The April membership meeting will be held in the Falmouth Library meeting room. The meeting topic will be announced later.

### **4/25/2009 Saturday Pool Session**

Once again SMSKN is having its spring pool sessions at the Bath YMCA. This is your opportunity to practice (or learn) a wet exit, assisted reentry, paddle float reentry, roll, reentry and roll and generally become comfortable being in and out of your boat. There is usually a good deal of peer coaching at these sessions. If you are having trouble with some skill,

ask around and somebody will probably be able to give you a hand.

See website for a map to the YMCA. The hours are 14:00 to 16:00; you should plan on being there at 13:30 to unload your boat, clean it out and carry it into the pool. Please make sure your boat is thoroughly cleaned. Clean under the seat, the underside of the deck, anyplace where dirt or debris can hide. We will have a hose hooked up by the front door of the YMCA. The Bath YMCA has been very good to us, but every year we manage to leave dirt in their pool. Please make sure we don't do it again this year.

The cost structure is \$10 for the boat and \$10 for each person. For example: one person with one boat will be \$20; two people and one boat will be \$30, and one person with eight boats will be \$90. Our goal is to collect only the rent we are charged.

To sign up, email David Lay at [drlay@drlay.net](mailto:drlay@drlay.net) or phone him at (207) 829-4747. David will tell you where to send the check. The sessions are limited to 12 boats. Your place in a pool session is not reserved until David has your money. If you have any questions, and are not too particular about the quality the answers, you can email Bob Arledge at [bob@arledge.cc](mailto:bob@arledge.cc) or call at (207) 415-1567.

Generally after the pool session, the survivors go out and get a bite to eat. There are a couple options, [Mae's Place Cafe](#) and [Beale Street Barbeque](#).

### **5/2/2009 Saturday Pool Session**

See Pool Session information noted above for 4/25.

### **5/9/2009 Saturday Pool Session**

See Pool Session information noted above for 4/25.





# Southern Maine Sea Kayaking Network

## Paddling Tips

When loading your kayak, keep slightly more weight in the rear hatch than the front hatch. A bow that is heavier than the stern will make for a kayak that's difficult to control.

A wet kayak will slide much more easily on kayak saddles than a dry one.

Beware of using your cockpit cover while transporting your kayak on the top of your car or truck. The wind can sometimes blow a cover off, so use a strap to assure it stays put.

Use the off-season time to check and maintain any metal fittings on your boat. The metal will gradually corrode from the salt water without regular maintenance. Rinse any steel items after each paddle.

Practice rolling and wet exits in a pool or in a warm pond before going out on the sea. You need the ability to get out of your kayak while upside down. Practice getting back in your boat as well.

When nearing land, look for breaking waves far from shore. They usually indicate a rock just below the surface.

On an overnight trip, take a weather radio. The weather can change quickly and the weather service can often give you the advance warning you need to get back to shore before it's too late, or to know that it is too risky to try.

For easier navigation, mark your chart with lines parallel to magnetic north. Know how to use a compass.

When you're ready to try Eskimo rolling, use a paddle float in the early stages until you're more comfortable with rolling and ready to try it without the paddle float assistance. Break the sequence of moves into segments and practice each before trying to put the sequence together.

A paddle float can double as a pillow on overnight trips.

Carry a gallon of fresh water in your vehicle and use it to wash the salt water from your kayak before loading it up onto your rack.

Try a pair of wool socks inside Gore-Tex oversocks for toasty warm feet in the spring or autumn.

Use a glow-stick mounted on your shoulder or hat to be seen during night paddling.

A 5 liter wine bag in a box can have a second life as a flexible water container. When the wine is gone, take the bag out of the box, rinse it out; and make a cloth cover with a handle for it. If you use dark-colored cloth, the container can be heated if left in the sun.