

- Scout any rapids that are not clearly and totally visible from the boat.
- Set up rescue below difficult rapids (i.e. pre-position someone with a throw bag below the rapid to assist a boater to shore in the event of a capsize and swim).
- Portage around any rapid you feel wary of or unprepared for. Never let pride or peer pressure affect your judgment.
- Pay attention to others. Let other boats clear any rapids or tight areas before you start your run.
- Raft occupants should recover anyone who falls out as quickly as possible.
- Whitewater paddlers playing in river features should yield to boats traveling downstream.

### Open Water

Along with basic safety practices, safely paddling on large lakes, bays, or the open ocean requires additional practices specific to these paddling environments.

- Pay attention to tidal currents, surf, waves, undertows, boat traffic, and in water obstructions.
- Be appropriately knowledgeable and practiced before paddling in waves or surf.
- Paddle to shore **before** wind and wave conditions exceed your comfort level.
- Make sure your boat has adequate floatation to permit self and assisted rescue.
- Possess the navigation skills needed to get to and from your destination. Fog can make route finding particularly difficult.
- Be practiced and proficient at self-rescue, re-entry, and assisted rescues.
- Make yourself visible to other boats, particularly in areas with motorboat and barge traffic, by wearing bright colors and keeping a sound signaling device available at all times.
- Maintain a safe distance from rocky shorelines.
- Always maintain a distance of 100 yards or more from large ships and barges so as not to require them to alter their course. Avoid marked channels when possible.

### V. Paddle Responsibly

Beyond safety, paddlers should act responsibly on and off the water. Poor behavior by some paddlers can adversely impact other paddlers through increased regulation and fees, limitations on access, conflicts with other user groups, and damage to the environment.



- Know and obey all rules and regulations.
- Never utilize private property without permission.
- Be courteous and polite when communicating with others.
- Avoid interfering with the recreational activities of others.
- Never engage in lewd or inappropriate behavior.
- Take care to avoid paddling near areas of heightened security.
- Never litter, and always pack out trash.
- Do not disturb wildlife.

### VI. References

For more information please contact the following organizations.

AMERICAN CANOE ASSOCIATION - [americancanoe.org](http://americancanoe.org)  
 NATIONAL SAFE BOATING COUNCIL - [safeboatingcouncil.org](http://safeboatingcouncil.org)  
 NAT. ASSOC. STATE BOATING LAW ADMINISTRATORS - [NASBLA.org](http://NASBLA.org)  
 US COAST GUARD OFFICE OF BOATING SAFETY - [uscgboating.org](http://uscgboating.org)  
 United States Power Squadrons - [usps.org](http://usps.org)

### Best Practices for Program Planners

Best Practices enable professionals to Plan and evaluate their efforts to ensure maximum effectiveness and gain support for their efforts from supervisors and external funding sources.



#### Best Practice - Planning

- Effective paddlesport programs plan for program evaluation in the initial stages of planning.
- Evaluation should be determined, implemented, and budgeted for in the planning stages.
- Determine a base line for the program
  - Which Audiences and why?
  - Community Safety?
  - One time Participants vs. Enthusiasts?
  - Ages of participants?
  - Level of participation (Casual? Racing? Tripping?)
- Effective paddlesport programs provide educational opportunities that are frequent and sustained over time.
- Effective paddlesport programs rely on experienced, well informed, prepared and ethical staff.
- Effective paddlesport programs involve stakeholders and partnerships at all levels of their development.
- Effective paddlesport programs include all audiences and are accessible to anyone with an interest in participating.

### Building Your Program

- Effective paddlesport programs are relevant to sponsors and to educators.
- Effective paddlesport programs align curricula with national and state educational standards when appropriate.
- Effective paddlesport programs recognize the critical role of ongoing professional development.
- Effective paddlesport programs support, engage in, and make use of scientific, social, educational, and other appropriate research.
- Effective paddlesport programs evaluate and use existing materials and resources before developing new ones.
- Effective paddlesport programs provide accurate and balanced information, incorporating many different perspectives.
- Effective paddlesport programs are experiential providing concrete, hands-on experience.
- Effective paddlesport programs are relevant to the everyday life of the learner.
- Effective paddlesport programs use multiple teaching methods to accommodate diverse learning styles.
- Effective paddlesport programs clearly address safety and other regulations, and reduce real risks to everyone involved.
- Effective paddlesport programs provide for the safety of all participants and instructors.
- In effective programs, Instructors are facilitators, not “transmitters.”



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**Best Practices for Paddlers and Paddlesport Programs**  
 Approved Feb 2, 2006 – ACA Safety Education and Instruction Council  
 Sam Fowlkes, Chair  
 Robin Pope, Vice Chair



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 Education. Stewardship.  
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