

PADDLE TRIP SAFETY FOR WAKE

Kayaking is a sport that involves taking risks to some degree, and good judgment plays a key role in ensuring your personal safety and enjoyment. This document is meant to advise WAKE members of the philosophy behind WAKE paddle outings and is not intended to dictate a formal set of rules. WAKE believes that these guidelines represent a relatively safe way to kayak, and they're based on much practical experience from fellow sea kayakers.

Personal Responsibility

- First and foremost, every participant is individually responsible for his/her own safety. Paddlers need to use their own best judgment, and *never* blindly follow someone into a situation in which you are unsure or feel endangered.
- Be aware and sure of your own skills. Don't be afraid to drop out of the trip. Research the paddle ahead of time, and don't hesitate to ask questions beforehand and during the paddle.
- Be prepared to take care of yourself. Being assisted when in trouble can't always happen, even if all participants have the best intentions to do so. In difficult conditions, the possibility of this should be anticipated and considered an *inherent risk* of sea kayaking.
- Know and understand the proposed trip. Rely on your own knowledge and research. The Trip Initiator may only be someone who wanted to do a particular trip; don't assume he/she is an "expert." Bring whatever you feel you need to be comfortable for the area being paddled.
- Always assume that conditions can change for the worse. Be prepared with equipment suitable for adverse conditions. Be overjoyed when conditions turn better instead!
- Be sure you have the appropriate equipment and that everything is in working order. If you don't know what you need, ASK!
- Remember that the Coast Guard *requires* an approved PFD and a whistle.

The Trip Initiator

- The Trip Initiator is the organizer not a tour guide. Tour Guides are in business and are responsible for customer safety. WAKE paddles are *cooperative* in nature, and the initiator is no more responsible for group safety than any other individual in the group.
- The Trip Initiator may choose to be as organized or disorganized as he/she wishes. Feel free to talk with him/her ahead of time about this, and if you don't like the format, don't go. Try initiating your own paddle trip instead.
- It is vital to understand that the Trip Initiator is not responsible for evaluating paddlers' abilities, but they do have the right to refuse participation to anyone who is unprepared. Participants should evaluate their own skills and be realistic about them.