

Guidelines for River Trip Organizers, Leaders and Participants

The need for an effective River Leader is based on the idea that a river trip is always safer when boaters are floating in an organized group rather than floating as individuals. River Leaders ensure that a group boaters as a cohesive unit rather than an assemblage of individuals who happen to be boating at the same time, in the same place.

Definition of Some Terms:

Trip Organizer: plans trip, sets dates & times, advertises trip, etc.

River Leader: leads the group on the river, assuming primary responsibility for group safety. Qualifications: Preferably, River Leaders should have previously paddled the run they are leading (at the same flow level). If not, they should be competent boating at the level of river difficulty expected on that run. If unsure, consider asking a competent boater to lead on the river. First Aid skills are encouraged.

(**Note:** Trip organizer and River Leader may be different people)

Trip Organizer and River Leader's Specific Tasks:

Organizing the trip (Trip Organizer):

- Decide which stretch of river to run, establish date, meeting time, and meeting place.
- Decide how many boats she/he feels are appropriate for the trip.
- Recommend a minimum of 3 boats.
- Inform potential boaters about the length of the run, the rating of the river, potential hazards.
- Defines nature of trip (i.e., focus on playing, surfing, focus on skill building, a "downriver trip," etc.).
- List equipment needed/required (including medical information card).
- Define skill-level needed for trip.
- Serves as point-of-contact about trip to ensure consistent information.

Leading the trip (Trip Organizer & Trip Leader):

- Inquire about experience of boaters she/he does not know personally. May refuse to have them on trip if she/he feels their skills are inadequate for the general difficulty of the river, or at least be ready for portages on difficult rapids.
- Should know current river level if possible, or at least if it's *runable by the least-experienced member(s) of the group*.
- On KCK Club trips, ensure that all non-members have signed liability forms - No Exceptions. On the river, stow the forms in a safe place (or leave them in vehicles).
- Ensure that all boaters have required personal safety equipment (helmets, PFDs, whistles, etc.) - *No Exceptions*.
- Takes charge at the meeting place to get cars/boats/boaters organized, organizes shuttle, and ensures those people have their keys.
- Keep group together and organized at the put-in; let all know there will be a riverside safety talk before anyone puts-in.
- Ensures that safety talk is done and there are no questions from participants.

Leading the trip (River leaders):

- Leader assumes greater responsibility for looking out for hazards, and primary responsibility for knowing upcoming rapids, and whether or not to scout, keeping group together, watching for people in trouble or at the limits of the inabilities, and/or assigning others to some of these functions.
- During downriver travel: leads rapids or specifically designates rapid leader. Gives appropriate river signals, holds in eddies to ensure all boats come through safely, ensures other boaters do not continue ahead of the group down river.
- During play: leader holds in eddies as safety/rescue boat while others play OR designates this specific task to another boater.
- Discourages unsafe boating.
- Keeps track of time; keeps group moving to reach take-out at the desired time. In an emergency,
- leader should be able to designate responsibilities to others for specific tasks - unless rescue
- leader has been previously designated.
- Determine what rescue gear is available and which boats have it.

Trip Participants should:

- Notify trip coordinator at least 3 days before the trip. Coordinator might cancel or change the trip if there is not enough interest in advance.
- Understand that your trip organizer/leader is not a professional guide.
- Be honest in describing your experience level. Do not get in over your head as you might jeopardize yourself and others.
- Not bring unexpected guests without talking with the trip organizer or leader.
- Introduce your approved guest to the paddle group - we welcome new friends and paddlers. All participants must sign a KCK waiver and give it to the trip organizer.
- Arrive on time with your equipment, food, and vehicle ready. This means having a full gas tank before meeting the group.
- Not assume someone will rescue you. Be prepared to self-rescue.
- Accept responsibility for your actions, including the effect on others. Be safety conscious.
- Contribute appropriately to the vehicle owner(s). A minimum of \$5.00 per passenger is recommended.
- Understand that if you are using someone else's equipment, you are expected to repair or replace it expeditiously if damaged or lost.
- Determine who your paddling buddy/partner is, stay within voice contact, and keep a "safety eye" out for each other during the trip.
- Never feel pressured by anyone or the group to run a particular rapid. Portage practice is good.
- SCOUT! When in doubt!