

**BAYOU HAYSTACKERS PADDLING CLUB/ACA
SAFETY GUIDELINES AND INSURANCE
(SANCTIONING) REQUIREMENTS
RECREATION PADDLING (CRUISING)**

Safety guidelines are, for the most part, simply a matter of common sense and reflect procedures you probably now follow as a matter of routine. Insurance requirements are not routine but are, unfortunately, necessary. Both are set forth here in an effort to set minimum safety standards and provide a risk management tool including minimum eligibility requirements for the use of ACA insurance. It is also hoped that the guidelines will provide useful for experienced paddlers who are new to the role of trip leader.

In order to qualify as an American Canoe Association sanction cruise, the following guidelines must be observed. (Since cruises cover a wide range of water conditions, the trip leader is expected to use his/her judgment in exercising flexibility within the following guidelines.)

In order to be eligible for sanctioning, a cruise must appear on a published schedule which is distributed to club membership.

Each sanctioned cruise shall be under the direction of a designated trip leader or co-leaders, at least one of whom shall be a governing or associate member of the ACA. All participants must sign ACA approved release forms.

The trip leader(s) should be familiar with the trip route, and to the extent possible, the existing water conditions, the equipment and the abilities of participants. He/she shall inform participants of the expected difficulty and the skill levels needed for the trip. He/she shall ask that anyone with poor swimming ability or medical problems which could effect performance to identify themselves to him/her prior to launch.

The trip leader has the authority to cancel or relocate the trip should conditions dictate. He/she has the responsibility for making certain that all participants have signed a proper waiver before the trip. The leader(s) shall indicate that the individual participant alone is responsible for determining the suitability of the activity given the participant's skill, physical condition and preferences.

Lead and sweep boats should be designated. The lead paddler should be familiar with the route to be paddled. Both lead and sweep should carry safety equipment appropriate to the trip. (Throw ropes and first aid kits are recommended as a minimum.)

In the case of obstacles such as strainers or technical stretches of water which, in the leader's judgment, may tax the abilities of less skilled paddlers safety boats may be assigned to the location until all paddlers have passed.

Coast Guard approved life vests (PFD's) must be worn by all non-swimmers and by all participants in trips involving swiftwater, whitewater or ocean travel. Their use is encouraged on all outings and the trip leader is empowered to mandate their use. It is the duty of the participant to see that he/she is properly outfitted. If trips are planned on cold water or in bad weather, appropriate protective gear may be required.*

The leader should set a maximum group size so that the group can be managed easily. The actual number should be based on participant skills and water conditions expected. The leader is encouraged to find sufficiently skilled backup to support the group. Where possible, inexperienced paddlers should be teamed with more experienced ones.

No alcoholic beverages should be consumed before or during the trip. If transportation is provided, designated drivers shall not consume any alcohol whatsoever.

The trip leader or his/her designee shall be responsible for making a detailed written report of any incidents involving injury during the trip and submitting a copy of the report to the ACA national office (address below).

The trip leader has the responsibility for forwarding a list of trip participants to the ACA national office within 5 days of the completion of the trip. Mail list to:

American Canoe Association
7432 Alban Station Blvd.
Suite B-226
Springfield, VA 22150.

NOTE: Sanctioning is not available for cruises on water classified as Class V or higher. Class IV requires that a special exemption be granted by the divisional and national Recreational Paddling chairs.

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- *A PFD must be worn by anyone participating in a Bayou Haystackers Paddling Club cruise*