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# TRIP COORDINATOR GUIDE

NORTHWEST VOYAGEURS

CANOE AND KAYAK CLUB

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

**NORTHWEST VOYAGEURS CANOE AND KAYAK CLUB**

**TRIP COORDINATORS GUIDE**

**(2012)**

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## **Section 1. INTRODUCTION**

This information is intended as a guide to assist members in leading or organizing an enjoyable and safe paddling experience. Many of the ideas have come from NWV trip leaders over the years, and we are very grateful for their assistance. The Club Executive is always receptive to new suggestions or ideas on improving the content of this manual. Additional information can be found in the Members Handbook and Policy Manual.

## **Section 2. Leaders and/or Coordinators**

### **2.1. Leaders:**

- I am comfortable to paddle at a skill level at or above that the trip requires
- I am able to read water one level above that the trip requires
- I have knowledge about the river or lake to be paddled
- I have an awareness of the hazards and necessary precautions in paddling; e.g., if there are still ice floes, hypothermia is likely, recognize the effects of wind, etc.
- I have a basic knowledge of first aid.
- For longer trips, or trips in more isolated areas, or in level 3 or above, ensure that there will be someone on the trip who has completed a water rescue course
- I am able to use the throw bag
- For longer trips, I am able to read maps enough to be able to coordinate current position with a point on the map.
- I am able to lead all participants in basic safety overview including basic river signals
- I am able to ascertain the level of participants

### **2.2 Coordinators:**

- I am willing & able to ensure that all necessary spots are filled, eg first aid, river rescue, leader, optional - gps/map
- I am able to organize various aspects of a trip eg; schedule, shuttle etc
- I am willing to collect emergency contacts from all participants

## **Section 3. PRE-TRIP PREPARATION**

### **3.1 River Research**

\_\_\_ Determine put-in / take-out points, including alternatives. If there is a sudden change in the weather, or other emergency, you may wish to shorten the trip. It is better to have too short a trip in poor weather than a long one.

\_\_\_ Check that access is available if it goes through private land.

If using campsites or park access, check if the booking procedures are required, or any fees.

\_\_\_ Determine approximate distances and driving times from Edmonton to the river, and the shuttle.

For current flow rates go to [www.environment.alberta.ca/apps/basins](http://www.environment.alberta.ca/apps/basins) is your source for stream warnings and advisories.

\_\_\_ Estimate the river distances and/or paddling times from camps or other information available. For overnight trips, look for indications of suitable campsites at appropriate paddling distances.

It is sometimes useful to know sources of help in case you require assistance during your trip (Ranger Stations, RCMP, farm houses etc).

If going on a long, remote trip, you may wish to inform the local RCMP of your plans.

### **3.2 Float Plan**

\_\_\_ Set in place determined

\_\_\_ Set in Time determined

\_\_\_ Take out place determined

\_\_\_ Take out time estimated

\_\_\_ Names & phone# of people registered

\_\_\_ Written copy given to a reliable contact/s.

### **3.3 Group Equipment/ Packing**

Depending on the type of trip, the following equipment may be useful to have with the group, but not necessarily by every participant:

\_\_\_ First Aid Kit - #3 Occupational Health Kit

\_\_\_ Rescue Knife

\_\_\_ Boat repair kit

\_\_\_ Epoxy kit

\_\_\_ Duct tape

\_\_\_ Maps - Waterproof or in waterproof bags

\_\_\_ Cellphone (if you know that there is reception in the area where you will be going)

\_\_\_ Spot or sat phone

- \_\_\_ Personal locator beacon recommended for extended wilderness trips
- \_\_\_ Compass
- \_\_\_ GPS (optional) with floatation & lanyard
- \_\_\_ Survey tape (bright tape for rescue marking)
- \_\_\_ Axe/hatchet
- \_\_\_ Saw
- \_\_\_ Multi tool
- \_\_\_ Large tarp
- \_\_\_ Rope
- \_\_\_ Wrench / pliers / vice grips
- \_\_\_ Selection of screws and bolts
- \_\_\_ Wire
- \_\_\_ Adhesives (epoxy, etc)
- \_\_\_ Cable Ties
- \_\_\_ Hose Clamps
- \_\_\_ Sandpaper
- \_\_\_ File
- \_\_\_ Sharpening stone
- \_\_\_ Sewing supplies
- \_\_\_ Fabric repair/adhesives
- \_\_\_ Spare nuts & bolts, including seat bolts

**Individuals are responsible for their own equipment so that each person is self sufficient and does not become a burden to his fellow paddlers, especially for canoe camping**

### **3.4 Personal Equipment/Packing**

Each person on the trip has to have the following

- \_\_\_ One lifejacket or PFD to be worn by each participant while on the water
- \_\_\_ Pea-less whistle
- \_\_\_ A well fitted helmet when on class 3 or above waters
- \_\_\_ A paddle
- \_\_\_ Water bottle, extra water
- \_\_\_ Health Insurance Cards
- \_\_\_ A waterproof day pack with an extra set of dry clothing, fleece sweater/jacket, toque, socks, towels, jackets/windbreakers/rain gear, sun screen/lotions/insect repellants, toiletries including your own toilet paper
- \_\_\_ footwear, secure on feet, with good grips, that will get wet
- \_\_\_ Snacks/lunch/food
- \_\_\_ Sun Hat/toque, unless you are in +3 water, then Helmets are mandatory
- \_\_\_ Paddling gloves
- \_\_\_ Wet/dry suit depending on weather/if required by weather/water conditions
- \_\_\_ Knife
- \_\_\_ Trowel & toilet paper

For overnight and longer trips, all the above plus:

- Tent
- Sleeping pad
- Sleeping bag/blankets
- Water purification system
- Waterproof Toiletries bag with all your personal stuff, deodorant, tooth brush, comb, etc.
- Towel
- if you are on medication, bring them
- enough food for the duration of the trip plus enough extra for a day or two
- Shoes for campsite
- Clothes (NO Cotton), including short & long pants, short & long sleeved shirt, pjs,
- extra socks,
- Bathing suit
- Toque, mitts

Optional

- Camp Chair
- Flashlight or headlight, especially if paddling in the mountains where it does get dark in the summer
- Camera (with plenty of batteries)
- Pen & Paper, Journals, books
- Fishing gear (including the license)
- Hammock

### **3.5 Food & Relating Equipment/Packing**

For overnight and longer trips, consider whether you are doing group cooking or individual. What you need will depend on your dietary requirements and styles. It can be as simple as a single multi-purpose pot to a gourmet outfitted kitchen. The list below is a general list. Please modify to suit your needs.

- Stove and fuel
- Pots
- Pans
- fire grate
- Waterproof matches, lighters, fire starters
- Water purification system
- Kettle/ Coffee Pot
- Plates, bowls, mugs
- Cutlery
- sharp knives
- Wooden spoons, spatulas, veggie peelers, whisks, lifters, ladles, etc

- \_\_\_ Can Opener if you are bringing canned goods
- \_\_\_ Cutting board
- \_\_\_ Dish soap
- \_\_\_ Dish Pans
- \_\_\_ Dish cloths, tea towels
- \_\_\_ Scouring pads, scrubbies
- \_\_\_ Oven mitts
- \_\_\_ last but not least, food barrels full of food

### **3.5 Boat Equipment/Packing**

Each boat has to have the following equipment:

- \_\_\_ an extra paddle
- \_\_\_ a bailer or manual bilge pump & sponge
- \_\_\_ one buoyant heaving line - minimum 15 meters (throw bag)
- \_\_\_ a pea-less whistle or other sound-signaling appliance
- \_\_\_ watertight flashlight or three pyrotechnic distress signals if the craft is to be operated after sunset or before sunrise or in periods of restricted visibility
- \_\_\_ magnetic compass if the craft is to operated out of sight of navigation markers.
- \_\_\_ tie-downs to secure any equipment that is not being used
- \_\_\_ Boat Repair kit

### **3.5 Trip Leader's Equipment**

A trip leader is required to have the following equipment:

- \_\_\_ Rescue kit including rescue knife, ropes, carabiners, prussic loop/s)
- \_\_\_ First aid kit packed in a waterproof case with the following contents:
  - \_\_\_ an up-to-date first aid manual or up-to-date first aid instructions
  - \_\_\_ 48 doses of analgesic medication of a non-narcotic type
  - \_\_\_ six safety pins pr one roll of adhesive first aid tape
  - \_\_\_ one pair of bandage scissors or safety scissors
  - \_\_\_ one resuscitation face shield
  - \_\_\_ two pairs of examination gloves
  - \_\_\_ 10 applications of antiseptic preparations
  - \_\_\_ 12 applications of burn preparations
  - \_\_\_ 20 adhesive plasters in assorted sizes
  - \_\_\_ 4 m of elastic bandage
  - \_\_\_ two sterile gauze compresses
  - \_\_\_ two triangular bandages
  - \_\_\_ a waterproof list of the contents
- \_\_\_ If the water temperature is less than 15 degrees centigrade, (basic Alberta water), equipment must be immediately available or that procedures established to protect the participants from the effects of hypothermia or cold shock resulting from swamping, capsizing or falling overboard.

## **Section 4 PARTICIPANT EVALUATION**

When prospective paddlers sign on for a trip, the Trip Coordinator should be able to give information, discuss the type of trip, and any requirements. By conducting the conversation and questions in a tactful and friendly manner, you should be able to assess their ability for the river conditions. You need to explain that the safety of the whole group must always be considered. The following are some of the items of information that you may require to evaluate their suitability for the trip, particularly if you do not know the individuals well.

### **4.1 Participants**

\_\_\_\_ Note their full name, phone number and address, so that you may contact them again, particularly if plans change.

\_\_\_\_ Ensure that they are indeed members of the club for insurance purposes.

\_\_\_\_ Ask if they have signed a waiver form, and if not, explain about the necessity to do this before the trip. This is necessary to avoid claims against members of the club. Failure to sign the form and have it properly witnessed, may mean that they will not be allowed on the trip.

\_\_\_\_ Parents must sign for their children if under the age of 18.

### **4.2 Equipment**

\_\_\_\_ Find out what type of boat they will be paddling; if paddling tandem, do they have a partner, or do they need one? You may have to make suggestions, but you are under no obligation to find one.

\_\_\_\_ Ask about their vehicles, and whether they can take more than one boat. Explain about car shuttles.

\_\_\_\_ Talk about equipment which they are planning to bring or may be required, especially any specific needs e.g. helmets, flotation, throw bags, etc. so they do not arrive at the river with inadequate equipment.

Explain what rental equipment is available from the club, or from other sources.

### **4.3 Skill Evaluation**

Depending on the type of trip and your requirements, find out about the following:

\_\_\_\_ Recent paddling experience (e.g. local rivers, lakes).

\_\_\_\_ Do they know and understand the river rating system, especially with reference to the current trip?

\_\_\_\_ Are they familiar with eddy turns, ferries, back ferries, river hazards and rescue techniques?

\_\_\_\_ Have they experience with capsizes, and self rescue?

\_\_\_\_ Have they taken any courses, and what was covered?

\_\_\_\_ Have they paddled with other members?

\_\_\_\_ If you do not know the paddlers and are unsure about their abilities, you may want to call

them back when you know how strong a group you have. Alternatively, suggest that they try a different trip, or one of the courses.

\_\_\_ If it is a canoe camping trip, do they have experience in wilderness camping?

Trip Information

\_\_\_ Discuss the type of trip and what they could expect and the logistics involved.

Describe the meeting place, which should be easily found, with sufficient parking.

Occasionally, it is more convenient to meet at a recognizable location such as a gas station and go in convoy from that location, especially on poorly defined forestry roads. Give a description of your vehicle and boat, so that they can recognize you.

\_\_\_ Give a meeting time, the estimated distance and the time taken to drive there from Edmonton.

\_\_\_ Give them an idea of the estimated shuttle time/distance, is that they will have enough fuel.

\_\_\_ Provide information on camping facilities and fees, if known.

\_\_\_ Describe what the river is expected to be like, with highlights and hazards.

## **Section 5 ON THE TRIP**

### **5.1 Vehicle Shuttle**

The shuttle should be planned so that the required space for people and equipment is available, as well the type of boats and how they will be carried.

If there is a tow vehicle in the group, you may want to consider the club boat trailer.

Consider availability of non-paddling friends who are prepared to drive vehicles for the shuttle.

Consider hired drivers for exceptionally long shuttles and share the costs between all participants.

Sharing expenses might be considered for those participants who use their vehicles for very lengthy shuttles.

If the shuttle allows, you may wish to leave a vehicle near the mid-point of the reach. This will allow you to shorten the trip in case of bad weather or some unforeseen circumstance.

Just before commencing the shuttle, make sure that everyone is present.

Ensure that all the vehicles start before departing. If you are in a remote area, it is advisable to leave as a group, to assist each other in case of trouble.

### **5.2 Trip Briefing**

\_\_\_ While people are getting ready, do a quick visual check of their equipment. Ensure its' security and accessibility, with rope ends secured.

\_\_\_ Make sure everyone has a pfd/life jacket & helmet if necessary, and that they are indeed wearing them properly.

\_\_\_ When everyone is assembled and ready to set off, ask the group members to introduce themselves, so that they know each other's names. Extend a welcome to new members and encourage them to ask questions.

\_\_\_ Brief them on the trip. Leave room for questions, explanations and a few laughs.

\_\_\_ Brief them on the characteristics of this paddle. Review dangers, unusual situations and

points of interest

\_\_\_\_ Designate your lead and sweep boats: These should be your most experienced people. If they are not sure of their responsibilities, explain them.

\_\_\_\_ Review the rules of the river/lake, and the river signals

\_\_\_\_ Remind people that they the final decision themselves as to whether they will run any rapids or line/portage around them. Stress that there is no shame in deciding to portage. Ask if they have concerns.

\_\_\_\_ If you have new or unfamiliar members in your group, review basic rescue procedures. If the situation warrants it, designate a rescue coordinator, (preferably not the sweep), and inform the group that he will require a rescue if required. Each paddler should understand that he is to do what he safely can, if in a position to do so. Make sure that everyone knows who has the first aid kits.

\_\_\_\_ Do not hesitate to set a policy on alcohol, etc., for safety reasons

Note: As the trip leader/coordinator, you have the right to reject any participant for any reason, but this should be used with discretion. Explain your reasons fairly. He/she should not be allowed to jeopardize the safety of the group.

\_\_\_\_ Finally, make sure all the drivers have their keys. It is too easy to leave them behind when changing into paddling gear.

### 5.3 On the River

The trip coordinator should become aware of the participants' abilities as quickly as soon as possible, so that he can make appropriate decisions as the trip progresses. Some suggestions are:

\_\_\_\_ A warm-up practice at or near the put-in is useful to make an initial assessment.

\_\_\_\_ If the group is very large, it should be broken up into more than one group, provided that there are enough experienced people to do so.

\_\_\_\_ Each group should have an experienced lead canoe and sweep canoe and rescue capabilities.

\_\_\_\_ The coordinator should adjust the pace of the group as necessary. If there is a need to pick up the pace due to time/distance constraints and one canoe is unable to keep up, it may be necessary to change partners to pair off stronger paddlers with weaker ones. Play boaters may have to adjust their practice time.

\_\_\_\_ Stop occasionally to allow everyone to stretch legs. Kayakers, in particular, find it difficult to paddle lone distances sections with out stretching. If there are children in the group, stops might have to be more frequent.

\_\_\_\_ Keep in touch with the general feelings of the group, especially if they are getting cold, consider stopping and warming up by a fire, rather than pushing on and risking an accident.

\_\_\_\_ If there have been swimmers, watch for symptoms of hypothermia, or swap partners if the canoeists have dumped. If they are cold, they will be more inclined to dump again. If the sweeps have dumped, move them into the centre of the group, where they can be watched and appoint someone else as sweep. Scout areas with which the group may be uncomfortable.

Different water levels can change the character of the river dramatically from when it was last paddled and log jams, in particular, come and go. It also gives you a chance to observe people's

reactions, or discuss any problems or questions.

\_\_\_ As leader and/or coordinator, get in the habit of not only reading the water, but also the banks. Large broken rocks on shore, especially if they go into water's edge, may indicate an approaching ledge or rough water. Sharp banks on one side can warn you of abrupt turns, strong eddies or good fishing holes. Steep banks on both sides, especially rock cut, may indicate very fast or whitewater ahead. In such places, it may not be easy to pull out, so be cautious.

#### **5.4 Running Rapids**

Some advantages of joining a club are that a group provides safety and a learning experience plus it brings people together who can share ideas and the less experienced can learn from the more experienced. Some people like the experience, while others prefer to take life on the river at a more leisurely fashion. Respect an individual's right to decide for what to try, without pressure. Before deciding to run a rapid, you may wish to consider some of the following, in light of the river difficulty and a paddler's skill level.

Consider the time of day. Will there be enough daylight left for a rescue, dry-out, and to reach your destination?

\_\_\_ After scouting the rapid, discuss the real hazards – sweepers, keepers, log jams etc, identify the clearest and safest passage, and eddy resting places.

\_\_\_ Ask if anyone has any questions or concerns regarding the run.

If you feel that there are members in the group who may participate an unwanted rescue, do not hesitate to ask them to line or portage their boat. More experienced paddlers could walk back and paddle their boat for them.

\_\_\_ If there is some hesitation in the group, try to avoid peer pressure. You may want to set an example by portaging yourself. If you feel that the overall strength of the group and rescue skills are not up to the situation, it should be lines or portaged.

\_\_\_ If rescue stations are required, set them up prior to the run, so that everyone knows what to do. This may include bringing a boat to the bottom of the run. Have experienced paddlers go through first, so that you have the manpower and equipment standing by for the later boats. It shows the other paddlers the desired line to follow and what to expect.

Make sure any swimmers have the opportunity to get warm before proceeding. When warming wet people by the fire, remove wet clothes first, as water evaporates from the clothes, it draws heat from the body, cooling the person further.

#### **In case of an accident See 7.3**

\_\_\_ After running the rapid, make sure that everyone is accounted for before proceeding

<http://artsontheave.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Kaleido-Program-2012-web.pdf>

## **Section 6 AFTER THE TRIP**

### **6.1 At the End of the Day**

\_\_\_\_\_ Everyone should have all their gear and leave nothing behind.

\_\_\_\_\_ Be certain that everyone knows the way home and they have no problem starting their vehicles.

\_\_\_\_\_ Return in convoy if you think that there might be any difficulty with muddy access roads and if the way is difficult to find. Remember that the shuttle vehicle has to be retrieved and on its way home.

### **6.2 Trip Report**

The newsletter editor would like a description of the trip written while it is still fresh in your mind. You could also delegate someone else to write the trip report. Other information that might be useful for the club records is:

Potential hazards and locations of rapids, when not generally known.

Incidents, humorous or otherwise.

Interesting observations, geographical, historical or wildlife.

Access or shuttle problems.

## **Section 7 SAFETY AND RISK MANAGEMENT**

**See also Members Handbook, Section 4 for River Hazards, Self Rescue and rescue of others.**

### **7.1 Dealing with an Accident**

If you are going to be doing a lot of serious paddling, it is strongly advised that you take a CPR and/or first aid course, so that you will be a bit better prepared.

\_\_\_\_\_ Determine the extent of the injuries. Carry out first aid procedures. Remove wet clothing. If possible, keep the victim warm to prevent shock and hypothermia.

\_\_\_\_\_ For serious incidents, appoint someone to keep notes, i.e. document with times as this assists later medical treatment.

\_\_\_\_\_ If you have cell phone with coverage, spot or a sat phone, call for help. Having a GPS so that you can give accurate coordinates greatly helps the rescuers to reach you quickly.

\_\_\_\_\_ If a jet-boat appears, flag them down and ask them to notify the authorities and request assistance.

\_\_\_\_\_ if serious, and no contact can be made with the outside world, the most experienced first-aiders should stay with the victim while the most physically fit and capable of wilderness walk/paddle go for help.

## **7.2 Risk Management.**

Risk management is a way of minimizing the risk of preventable injury, accidents or loss by taking steps to identify, measure, and control risks. The NWV endeavor to manage risk in several ways:

\_\_\_ We try to identify potential dangers and therefore reduce risks by our practices on the river. This manual gives you a number of suggestions which focus on taking steps of prevention. e.g. pre-trip planning, rules of the river, etc.

\_\_\_ We recognize that some risk is desirable because it adds to the excitement of a paddle adventure, and that there are inherent dangers, particularly in whitewater.

\_\_\_ The membership fee of the NWV also grants members coverage under the club's liability insurance policy, in the event they are sued because of an incident on the river. But the waiver form must be completed properly and witnessed before the trip.

\_\_\_ Certain risks can have serious consequences, and occur relatively frequently. These should be avoided if at all possible (e.g. log jams).

\_\_\_ Other risks can be reduced, and with proper preparation and practice, and depending on circumstances, can be taken as calculated risks. The following gives a summary of the most important and frequent risks and suggestions for dealing with them:

### **7.3.1 Hypothermia**

Occurrence: Frequent. Severity: High.

In Alberta, rivers are often extremely cold. Your body loses heat in water 20 times faster than in air. This can quickly develop into a dangerous or even life threatening situation.

Avoid: Excessive or prolonged swimming and always carry a warm dry change of clothes and be dressed appropriately, e.g. wear a wetsuit.

Action:

\_\_\_ Remove the person from the water as quickly but safely as possible

\_\_\_ Remove wet clothes

\_\_\_ Wrap in warm clothes and use external heat (fire, warm body), and give hot drinks.

\_\_\_ Watch for signs of hypothermia (uncontrolled shivering, uncoordinated, etc) in anyone at risk.

### **7.3.2 Sweepers & log jams**

Occurrence: Frequent. Severity: High.

If caught in a sweeper or log-jam, the water goes through it, but you are caught. Potential for drowning is high.

Avoid: Choose a course well clear of the hazard.

Action:

- Assess the situation; usually best to approach from downstream.
- Never risk a second life
- Organize and execute rescue procedures
- If the person needs immediate help to avoid drowning, stabilize first if possible.

### **7.3.3. Pinning**

Occurrence: Rare. Severity: High.

A paddler can become pinned inside his boat while submerged or upside down. Potential for drowning is high.

Avoid: Access your skills & course chosen

Action:

- Assess the situation; usually best to approach from downstream
- Never risk a second life
- Organize and execute rescue procedures

### **7.3.4 Holes/ Keepers**

Occurrence: Rare. Severity: High

Low head dams can have extremely dangerous keepers. Other holes/keepers can be fun play spots, but will depend on the paddlers' experience.

Avoid: Dams at all costs; practice skills in keepers which are not life threatening.

Action:

- Stay with your boat, if possible; it is more buoyant than you are; if you become separated, your boat can be a danger to you.
- Paddle or swim out of the hole if possible; you may have to swim under water to where the water is not re-circulating
- Use throw bags or tag lines for rescue.
- Rescue boats must avoid being sucked into the hole as well.

### **7.3.5 Wilderness survival**

Occurrence: Rare. Severity: High.

Can be a concern, particularly in wilderness trips.

Reduce: Carry adequate gear, maps, compass, GPS, cell phones or spot or sat phones, extra batteries, etc.

Action:

\_\_\_ Understand survival techniques, and use common sense

### **7.3.6 Skill level insufficient**

Occurrence: Frequent. Severity: Moderate

People often misjudge their own abilities, which can easily lead to accidents. If the rescue strength of the group is weak, this can compound the problems.

Reduce: Understand the strengths and weaknesses of the group and plan accordingly. It is better to err on the side of safety.

### **7.3.7. Bruises, sprains, etc.**

Occurrence: Frequent. Severity: Low.

Reduce: Learn first Aid and carry First Aid kits.

### **7.3.8. Swimming in Rapids**

Occurrence: Frequent. Severity: Low.

Reduce: Ensure paddlers know basic rescue procedures.

Action:

\_\_\_ Scout the river if the group needs to study the situation.

\_\_\_ Portaging is always an acceptable alternative.

### **7.3.9. Equipment inadequate**

Occurrence: Frequent. Severity: Low.

Reduce:

\_\_\_ See Equipment list & contents

Action: Take precautions to keep from losing important equipment, e.g. lifejackets, helmets, paddles, first aid and survival kits.

**TAKE CARE & HAVE FUN**

