

2021 Sea Kayak Summit - Meeting Minutes

Date: Saturday, February 6, 2021

Time: 9am-1pm

Location: Zoom Meeting

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81989468318?pwd=UEg4bkFJQTcyUk8xaXVpZ2VhbEFCQT09>

Meeting ID: 819 8946 8318

Passcode: 351473

Dial by phone (not recommended): 253-215-8782

Attendance: Cathie Frizalone (EVE), Donna Garland (EVE), Doug Palm (EVE), Barney Bernhard (KIT), John Dulap (OLY), Will Greenough (OLY), Henry Romer (OLY), David Stoller (OLY), Duncan Cox (SEA), Laine Meadows (SEA), Felicia Wibowo (SEA), Tom Unger (SEA), Michael Everett (TAC), Charlie Michel (TAC), Teresa Ritter (TAC), Bill Ashby (Safety), Sara Ramsay (Staff)

9am - Meeting Open

- Welcome & Introductions
- Q&A on Branch Updates
 - Attendees should review Branch Updates in advance of the summit, all included at the foot of the agenda.
 - Question about Olympia Branch's agreement with the City of Olympia for use of kayaks.
 - A local store went out of business, city bought rental fleet, Olympia Sea Kayak Committee partnered with the city to offer their Basic course. City of Olympia is probably not able to partner outside of Olympia.
 - Branch holds some spots for folks interested to register through the city.
 - The city does a short 1-hr intro to kayaking that serves as a nice feeder to the Basic course.
 - Currently provide boats for open water day of class, could also possibly provide for student paddles if enough interest and availability.
 - City of Tacoma used to do something similar. Tacoma Sea Kayak Committee may look into similar partnership.

9:30am - Annual review of [Clubwide Activity Standards - Sea Kayaking](#).

- General section-by-section review.
- Specific items to review:

- Seattle voted to extend the 3 year window for last trip lead to retain leader status due to COVID-19. Are there any objections to this?
 - Update: Leaders must demonstrate skill maintenance by satisfactorily leading at least one trip, field trip, or clinic every three years, unless otherwise determined by the branch sea kayaking committee.
- Seattle updating to at least one mentored trip and one assessment trip. Both fit the category of a mentored trip per standards. Wanted people to know they could get as much mentorship as needed to feel ready.
- Can you be mentored by a leader from another branch? Consensus that folks are more interested in knowing who does the assessment. Get mentorship from broad range, have more focus on assessment.
 - Each committee decides what they're comfortable with.
 - Agreement that cross-pollination is helpful, encourage where appropriate.
- Mentor vs Assessment - Olympia and Tacoma weave assessment into a mentored trip.
- VHF Radio
 - Update: Marine VHF Radio
- Basic Sea Kayaking Course
 - Update: Weather for sea kayakers
- Discussion about the hours requirement for instruction. Tabled additional discussion for 2021 Courses in the next section of the meeting.
- Instructors:
 - Update: Approval from the course leader or their delegate to instruct.
- Tacoma plans to bring a proposal for a badge system for the Intermediate Course at a future meeting.
 - Action: If anyone is interested to support this sub-committee, reach out to Charlie and Michael.
 - John or someone from Olympia willing to support.
- [Here's a link to the updated activity standards](#). Sara will send to BLC for review and approval.

10am - COVID Operations

- 2021 Courses:
 - Discussion of available online training resources/materials.
 - Share plans for condensed and hybrid courses.
 - Several branches are moving pieces of their lecture content into outdoor field days.
 - Loop back to discussion of required instruction hours for Basic course:
 - Desire to remove hours, but concern to remove without adding more specific outcomes. Folks are condensing the course, no longer meeting times stated.
 - Transition to goals/outcomes, not hours met.
 - Working Group Established: Duncan, Esther (and/or Michael), Will, Laine, Linda Cooley, Bill Coady

- This group to follow-up with summit group sometime in early April.
 - Action: Sara to reach out to group to kick off discussion.
 - Esther has recorded content for lectures, folks can reach out to her for more information.
 - Felicia drawing on Principles of Instruction to make course more interaction.
 - Leave standards related to course as are for now, work on updates in coming months.
- Assisted Rescues
 - Proposal to remove specific language in Mountaineers COVID guidance.
 - Action: Removed.
 - Proposal to standardize on distanced rescue as shown in the [first video here](#).
 - Henry working on an alternate method.
 - Options available, don't need one method.
 - Nothing in standards or guidance restricting equivalency, up to committees and leaders to assess if they have folks comfortable to run. Not required to run, but nothing preventing them from happening.
 - Recommended to do the self-rescue first, because that is more difficult.

11am - BREAK

11:15am - Safety & Incidents

- Overview of incident reporting process with Bill Ashby, Safety Chair.
 - a. Safety will provide information to summit groups on a quarterly basis.
 - Action: Group asked Bill to overlay branch information.
 - b. No current venue for seeing/receiving incident reports.
 - c. Process should be:
 - Incident report is created; report is distributed to Safety Chair and Safety rep for branch, plus branch chair, plus staff.
 - Not sure if the committee chair automatically receives report.
 - Action: Bill will follow-up to see if committee chair is included and how they should be receiving this information.
 - Committees can engage with branch safety officer for more information about specific incidents
 - Are statistics useful, or just reports?
 - Process for committees or summit group to review reports for learning?
 - Question of anonymity in reporting. More value in following-up with folks if know who is involved, opportunity for more learning, but understand need for anonymity if sensitive topic/information, fear of retribution, etc.
 - Identify reports with lessons learned that need distribution for more immediate learning.
- Discuss the summit group's role in incident review.

- Additional Safety / Risk Management topics for consideration at subsequent Summits:
 - a. Providing trip leaders with “standard” tools to manage trip risk (such as pre-trip checklists)
 - b. Adding “Safety Tips” to web routes and places to share specific safety / risk considerations for specific trips (based on trip leader suggestions and potentially from incident reports)
 - Action: Charlie offered to work on these updates.
 - c. Creating a “Higher Risk Kayaking Activity” trip development and review process (aligned with Global Adventures and Climbing) to enable offering higher-end Kayak trips
 - Currently low interest in leading complex trips as club trips.
 - d. Engaging in outward-facing interactions with other paddling organizations with an intent of observing other organization “best practices” and adopting any that appear to align with Mountaineers Vision and Mission and volunteer ethic
 - Branches are already bringing in high-end instructors for updates on best practices
 - Opportunity to engage in online classes from external organizations/coaches (ex: British Canoeing, Body Boat Blade)
 - ACA offers an annual conference, is there value in The Mountaineers being represented at these events?

12pm - Other Business

- Proposal to create a Kayak Leader Emeritus badge.
 - The climbers created the [Climb Leader Emeritus](#) badge to recognize past leaders. It is a nice acknowledgement of a person’s past contribution.
 - Also possible avenue to bring folks back in. Account for past leadership on a profile.
 - Action: Group moves and approves creation of new badge. Sara to follow-up.
- Boater Education Legislation
 - Debrief of Feb 4 meeting with Rob Sendak, WA State Parks Boating Program Manager.
 - Both bills have been pulled from executive session.
 - Action: If you’re interested to support future work, contact Betsy Robblee. More information on SK Basecamp.

12:30pm - Wrap-Up

- Good of the order.
- Summarize action items.
- Schedule 2022 Summit Meeting.
 - Is there a branch host?
 - February 5, 2022 - Format TBD
 - Preference towards having another Zoom meeting.
 - Staff continue to facilitate.

- [Link to 2022 meeting.](#)

1pm - Meeting Close

Branch Reports

Everett

1. Highlights from past year's programming.
 - a. The EMSK had to cancel it's annual Basic Sea Kayaking course, typically conducted over four weeks in spring and limited to 20 students. We were able to complete two out of the four scheduled activities we had posted on The Mountaineers site. We managed to conduct one in-person meeting before the pandemic was declared, and one sparsely attended Zoom meeting in early December.
2. Notable changes/additions to upcoming programming.
 - a. We are looking into the feasibility of putting on a shorter version of the basic course, possibly three 6 to 8 hour days. Our usual course includes four 3 hour evening classroom sessions, one 3 hour pool session, and one 6-8 hour open water session on a lake in late summer or early fall. Other changes might include doing the pool session work in a lake, conducting the first day course overview and lecture via Zoom, and conducting all other classroom training either on the beach or on the water.
3. Challenges that would benefit from collaboration with (or input from) other branches.
 - a. Agreement on methods and/or best practices for teaching assisted rescues in the age of COVID-19. Sharing of online training resources (e.g. manuals, how-to-guides, videos, etc).
4. Successes that may benefit other branches.
 - a. Nothing to report.

Kitsap

1. Highlights from past year's programming.
 - a. Our Basic Sea Kayaking Course scheduled for Memorial Day Weekend on the Mountaineers website, for up to 8 persons, had to be canceled due to the state wide restrictions.
2. Notable changes for upcoming programming.
 - a. We have several Mountaineer members who have approached us with sea kayaking experience. They have taken sea kayaking courses in the past, they are interested in achieving Basic Equivalency, but need to refine their rescue skills due to not being out on the water much last year. We are planning on working

with these folks, as well as others who are interested from the different SK groups in our area to bring more paddlers into the Mountaineers.

3. Challenges that might benefit from collaboration (input from other branches).
 - a. Sharing agreed upon methods and/or best practices and resources for teaching assisted rescues in the COVID-19 environment.
 - b. We are eager to offer a safe form of equivalency but we are restricted in our ability to evaluate an assisted rescue with non-household members, due to Covid. Is there branch-wide agreement on how to do/or defer assisted rescues? Can equivalency be granted if the candidate can demonstrate solo re-entries, rolls, cowboy, etc?
4. Successes that may benefit other branches.
 - a. Nothing to report.

Olympia

Olympia Branch Sea Kayak Committee Report - 2020
John Dunlap, Chair

To refresh my memory, I reviewed the past year's committee agendas. March, 2020 was our last "normal" meeting. After that, every agenda is mainly devoted to adjusting to changing Covid rules and discussing what we would not be doing this year – same as everyone!

Covid-19 Impacts:

- Since our Rolling class ended in Feb, 2020, we have cancelled all subsequent courses and clinics.
- Branch led trips/activities were significantly down but many trips were still led.
- Branch and SK Committee picnics and social gatherings all cancelled.

Accomplishments:

- We managed to lead all of our weekly Wednesday night "drop-in" paddles, although to comply with club covid rules we did require sign-ups in advance this year. These paddles are a core part of our program, and we feel continuing them helped keep our SK community cohesive and connected.
- At least 4 new leaders approved.
- At least 1 basic equivalence approved.
- 2 Rolling Badges awarded.
- Substantially revised and approved Oly SK Policies and Procedures document.
- Welcomed the contributions of several new SK committee members. I suspect all committees appreciate the importance of the voices, thoughts, and energy that new volunteers bring.

Going Forward:

- Basic Class – Covid gave us the impetus to implement an intensive, smaller course that can be offered more than once per year. Our committee has been discussing this change for the last couple of years. Our Basic Course committee has recently listed a six student course to be mostly held over a long weekend, June 11 – 13. We may add students if covid rules allow. Our hope is to offer a second course later in the summer.
- We continue our successful partnership with the City of Olympia, primarily for our Basic Course but hopefully for other offerings as well. Kayak rentals are almost unavailable within practical distance of Olympia. The City provides us, without charge, their complete fleet of sea kayaks. Our committee runs the course. Both organizations can register students.
- Equivalence – Olympia continues to feel comfortable offering basic course equivalence. We regard this process as an evaluation that the applicant meets/exceeds the requirements to graduate our Basic Course. Most of our equivalence applicants far exceed this modest standard. We do not feel that demonstration of assisted rescues is at all an impossibility under covid rules or good sense. There are many mitigation approaches available.
- Pool Availability – Before covid, and almost certainly after restrictions are eased, Olympia continues to face a dearth of pool facilities willing or affordable for kayak groups. Our last Rolling course was held at a local senior assisted living facility. One month later, no one was permitted to even visit this facility!

Tacoma

Leadership

Five new trip leaders approved in 2020.

Equivalency

All equivalency again suspended because of severe COVID spiking. Prior to that, we developed a methodology change that we were comfortable using (but had not yet put to the test). It could be that as the vaccine rolls out there will be a “window” when that approach may again be suitable. I have attached it to the back of this Update.

Sponsoring Higher-Risk Trips and clinics

In November 2020, with COVID spiking and hospitals filling, the Committee elected to dial down on trips. We voted to suspend indefinitely sponsoring any trips or clinics where a helmet would normally be required (basically, surf and rock gardening). One trip on the books was cancelled as a result.

Virtual Clinics & Courses

We put on several First Aid Kits for Kayakers clinics, Kayak Repairs and Modifications clinic, and revamped the Basic Sea Kayaking Course classroom curriculum for virtual use (contact Esther Ladwig). The pilot virtual Navigation course results/learnings are at the end of this report.

Tacoma Program Center re-lamp

Several branch members participated in work parties and the entire program center has now been converted to 100% LED lighting.

Routes and Places Enhancements

Tacoma and Seattle branch members worked with Jeff Bowman, staff at The Mountaineers, to clean up many route places and consolidate- a project Staff started a couple of years ago. There are now more “umbrella” route-places, with all our favorite individual trips subservient to that. This economizes on listing information on things like launch points. See [“San Juan Islands from Anacortes”](#) as an example. Dan Ritter and Linda Cooley helped in this effort.

Enhancing Search Engine Optimization

Jeff Bowman, Dan Ritter, and I worked on an effort to get our website to come up on page one of anyone searching for “kayaking Puget Sound” or “Kayaking <geographic place in our areas we paddle>”. Rationale: we want to show up on the first page for someone searching the web to learn sea kayaking or looking for a club to paddle with. We have not been on page one. Jeff recommended we endeavor to include key search words in our trip listings, route/places, trip reports, and any blogs we write. Here is what we came up with for key words.

- Kayak (or kayaking)
- Body of water- Puget Sound, Straits of Juan de Fuca, coast, Canada
- Nearest geographic city- Tacoma, Seattle, Gig Harbor, etc
- Paddle

These key words were included in the subtitle for the route/places. Writing Trip Reports is another great way for Google to “find” us.

Surf Zone and Beyond

This combination of training and trips on the coast at Hobuck Beach has been delayed until Sept 8-12th, assuming the Makkah tribe opens.

Pilot Navigation Course, COVID-19 Compliant

Tacoma Branch and Felica from Seattle ran this course as a pilot (Dec 12-13, 2020) in that we only took 4 students (plus two supplemental participants). This was quite a challenge doing virtually. I had intended to do breakout rooms, but never did. Here are my conclusions on a Virtual Nav Class.

- To run a larger class size, and thus use breakout rooms, assistants would have to be far more switched on and up to speed compared to in-person classroom. When you are in a breakout room, assistants are on their own! They cannot just wander back to the lead instructor to check on something. Therefore, a train-the-trainer session on the exercises would be critical for a class size exceeding six. Otherwise, stick to a maximum of six students and forget using breakout rooms.
- In Tacoma, we adopted the Body Boat Blade recommendation (as taught in the six-day Leadership class) to use a hand-held compass for chart work involving bearings instead

of a gridded protractor, rolling ruler, or parallel rulers. This technique is not well known amongst our current Tacoma cadre of assistants as we have not taught this way other than in Tacoma Nav 2019. (even then, I'm not sure assistants were up to speed on it). I do believe this is the best compass-to-chart / chart-to-compass technique, with the gridded protractor method a close second. Focus for a train the trainer session would be imperative. However, I have created a self-study training package that would get people up to speed ahead of time (hopefully). The pilot student group recommended that I send this mini-training package out to students ahead of time, which is why I created it in the first place. It could work well for the assistants also and would be a pre-requisite for current Tacoma method of compass to chart work.

- The on-water session went well, other than it was cold/wet and hard for people wearing masks/glasses to see clearly doing on-beach exercises. Would be better in spring, but during COVID / mask wearing people should bring cloths to wipe eyewear. We spent much more time on the beach (before launching) than in the past doing Lines of Position and Compass bearing work, to reinforce the afore-mentioned compass to chart technique.

While this course is best taught in a classroom for in-person, I would consider doing it COVID-19-compliant if there were enough demand including from other branches. I would hope other branch leaders would be willing to familiarize themselves ahead of time and help if participant numbers exceed six.

Tacoma Branch Protocol for Handling Equivalency Rescue Demonstrations under COVID
Socially distanced paired rescue demonstrations may be included as part of the Equivalency process. The rescuer should wear a face covering and rescues should be done by members of a joint household, when possible.

Tacoma-specific protocol

1. During the equivalency interview process, quiz the candidate specifically about their rescue experience. Ask when the last time was that they practiced. Ensure the candidate knows the expectations, including the condition laid out in number 5. Have the candidate verbalize an assisted rescue.
2. If the candidate has a cohabitating kayaking partner or close friend with whom they are comfortable to NOT socially distance, they should be the partner for the two-person rescue.
3. [Share the video](#) of socially distant rescues. They will need to use this technique if they do not bring their own partner for the T rescue.
4. Conduct the rescue demos in shallow water such that the candidate can easily get to shore in case of failure.
5. The self-rescue must be demonstrated competently before moving to the assisted rescue.

Seattle

Submitted by Tom Unger, Chair

Highlights from past year's programming.

Like everyone else, our basic class was cancelled along with PDW, roll class, and other clinics. Trips were not lead.

In the spring of 2020 we rewrote our charter. We then held elections according to charter. Running unopposed I was elected and became new chair in October.

I decided to focus on

1. Improve communication and transparency
2. Increase leadership of trips
3. Increase education for paddlers and leaders

I created a mailing list at groups.io. We were one of the few branches that did not have such a mailing list. We had no way to contact people in our community. We now have 100 people on the mailing list. We purchased a subscription to groups.io and created sub-groups for committee, SK Leader, and basic class sub committee communication.

We approved 4 new leaders (who had been in process) and re-activated a past leader.

Since this is not the time to travel very far or engage in challenging trip, I create local, low-logistics trips with an emphasis on conditioning. We now have a "conditioning series" clinic. These are mostly done on lake Union or Lake Washington and have good signup from a modest set of paddlers

We formed a sub-committee to plan a basic class for the time of COVID. In addition to making the class COVID safe, we are trying to make it more engaging by replacing lecture with on-the-water delivery of information, while meeting minimum standards. We plan to offer this in the spring.

Our budget plan, written in summer of 2020, anticipated lower revenue from the basic class and planned to replace this with more, small paddling skills clinics. I've taught two forward strokes clinics with good signup but my 3rd has had little sign up. First "sweeps and edging" clinic does have good sign up.

Community building is going slowly. It is difficult to tell if this is due to lack of interest or reasonable caution about participating in group activity's during the time of COVID-19. Certainly there are people, many of our leaders, who are choosing to sit this out.

Notable changes/additions to upcoming programming.

We re-wrote our SK leader policy. One significant change is that “two mentored” paddlers has been replaced with “one or more mentored paddles” and “one assessment paddle”. This indicates that candidate leaders can get as much mentoring as they wish and separates assessment from mentorship.

Our best thought for existing leader development is through mentorship. However, as stated, this has been a year of limited leader engagement.

Challenges that would benefit from collaboration with (or input from) other branches.

Assisted rescue remains an on-going point of discussion. I’ve submitted a proposed agenda item.

No one in Seattle volunteered to organize PDW. There is no plan for PDW this year.