



West Michigan Coastal Kayaker

PRESIDENT'S PADDLE

By Steve Adsmond

Symposium was Awesome!

As always, Lynn Dominquez did an outstanding job of chairing and coordinating Symposium! It all starts after the last Symposium and she organizes a whole group of volunteer staff and instructors who make it all happen. Lynn, we thank you and your family for making this a great Symposium for all. Great Job Lynn!

On Thursday late afternoon before Symposium, I picked up our Symposium Guest instructor Marsha Henson at the airport in Grand Rapids and headed back to Fremont with a loaner kayak from member Dottie Kasunic for Marsha to paddle. Thank you Dottie! Marsha stayed overnight at our house and our family all had a great time meeting her.

WMCKA Symposium instructors get a chance to play and learn together before Symposium begins, at the Instructor Update, so Friday morning Marsha and I headed to Duck Lake State Park on Lake Michigan. For several years Keith Wikle has coordinated this event, but wanted to take a year off this year, so I got a new experience that I will be forever grateful to have been a part of. Twelve of your Symposium Instructors who have spent a lot of their own time and financial commitment to become certified instructors through either the ACA or BCU, along with myself (non-certified), got together at the boat launch with Marsha and talked about what they wanted to do together. The group decided to paddle into the big lake and play and learn techniques in the surf together.



Instructor Pre-Symposium Training

Unless it is dead calm, all trips into Lake Michigan start with launching or landing through some waves and surf. This can make or break any trip, especially if you are on a trip with a loaded kayak or in cold water, or both. Learning on a nice sunny day with comfortable water temperatures is the best way to get some experience. I have avoided surf for fear of being dumped, but through the instruction of the group, I got a new appreciation and experience to be

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able to enjoy waves and surf. Either using a high or low brace to allow the wave to push your boat in a controlled ride, after you have decided to turn in either direction to an angle more parallel to the beach

from a perpendicular approach makes the wave do the work and results in a very fun ride on the wave. We all had some fun and Andrea Knepper stole the show by paddling backwards toward shore while a wave picked up her boat and stood it on end, before dumping into the surf and rolling back up! It was a great calendar photo op with no camera to capture the moment! After lunch we paddled in Duck Lake while the instructors shared games and techniques for teaching students to practice paddle strokes and skills that were taught at Symposium that make learning more fun for both kids and adults. Marsha did a great job as guest instructor and provided an excellent night program at Symposium to tell us all about her kayaking world along the coast of Georgia and at Tybee Island.

Look What I Built

By Tim Highfield

Here are a few photos of my [cedar strip kayak](#) project that I have finally completed after 1 1/2 years. It is a Georgian Bay designed by Rob Mack of Laughing Loons. The wood burning on the side was not planned but it's there to cover up the mistake of sanding thru the 1/4 cedar strip. This is my first time building a kayak and I have learned a lot.



It does float!!! It is very stable and paddles great. I have about 5 hours of paddling time in it so far. We plan on taking it this year to the North channel for about a week with my brother and friend. I hope to apply all the things that I have learned from the Memorial Day weekend.



Thanks and I will try to get some pics of my kayak on the water.

23rd Annual WMCKA Symposium . . . And a good time was had by all!

By Lynn Dominguez - Symposium Chair

The weather was warm, we dodged the storms, and Camp Pendalouan turned out their best to welcome WMCKA participants and staff back for the 23rd edition of our symposium. This year's guest speaker was Marsha Henson from Sea Kayak Georgia. She treated us to a wonderful tour of her special places to paddle in Georgia and also brought along a sample of her gorgeous artwork which was quickly snapped up by participants and staff alike. Lori Stegmier and I were very pleased to invite symposium participants to share our Pukaskwa National Park and Superior Highlands trip from last summer on Sunday evening followed by the DJ and food!

The entire weekend was packed with land and water classes. Joining our usual classes were some new opportunities for people to try. Ron Smith and Michael Gray brought in a fleet of Stand-up Paddle Boards (SUPs) to offer both basic and advanced classes. Ken Fink and Michael lead participants on an informational tour of the beach; discussing kayak design, limitations, advantages, and uses of various styles of boats. They ended at the demo beach where our vendors were kept very busy with participants trying out kayaks. We had a group of instructors demonstrate rescue techniques for recreational kayaks (those without bulkheads) to increase our understanding of how to help people who might get in trouble on the water. It is quite amazing how much water those little kayaks can hold and how difficult they are to rescue compared to sea kayaks with bulkheads! Kristen Dart put together a fun and challenging slate of relay race events for a large number of three person teams who competed for the coveted toilet plunger prizes! Fred McConkey pulled another fantastic design out of his hat for this year's t-shirt edition. If you missed it you will be able to check out the poster hung up in the dining hall at next year's symposium – May 24-27, 2013.

As usual the Symposium Planning Committee will now begin reviewing evaluations and considering changes

for next year's event (WMCKA's 24th!). All events of this size require considerable behind the scenes work by dedicated volunteers. I would like to take a moment to thank all of the planning committee members. Without their efforts we would not be able to put on the symposium. If you see any of the following people at WMCKA events this summer please thank them for their hard work: Kristen Dart, Barb and Margaret Fishback, Steve Adsmund, Bob and Kathy Burmania, Brenda Hennink, Carolyn White, Fred McConkey, Karl Geisel, Kenneth Nesbitt, Moni and Tom Franks, Rafael Dominguez, and Lori Stegmier.

Now is the time to put next year's symposium on your calendar – you won't want to miss it!

Kayakers Rescued on the Chicago River — Complete Story?

By Haris Subačius – President – Chicago Area Sea Kayakers Association

The following story titled "[Crews rescue 62 kayakers swamped in Chicago River during Storm](#)" appeared in the Chicago Tribune on July 1, 2012. The reporter, Erin Meyer, made it sound like an unprecedented event in kayaking history—has anyone ever heard of over 60 people needing rescue after a kayaking accident. Lively debates immediately sprung up on [CASKA](#) and [PCP](#) bulletin boards as well as several places on Facebook (see [CASKA](#) and Inland Seas, [Kayaking the Great Lakes](#)). The Tribune report surely made it sound like kayak vendors were negligent in their duty to their customers. Curiously, the perspective of the kayak vendors themselves was entirely absent from the story—a sure red flag for anyone looking for a complete account.

As a representative of Chicago's paddling community, one of CASKA's roles is to provide that community with information so that we can make educated safe choices when it comes to paddling. [Kayak Chicago](#) and [Water Riders](#) (mis-labeled as Waveriders in the Trib article) are two of the providers of kayak rentals,

tours and lessons for the Chicago paddling public. We reached out to them seeking their side of the story.

Attached you will find three incident reports provided to us by the Kayak Chicago staff. We were in touch with Water Riders and will publish their report on this blog as soon as it is available.

Let us know what you think, or if you have questions, or if additional information and reflection would be helpful.

Haris

Incident report

We started the day as normal.

Guides and staff arrived at work at 9am, to prepare for our morning Architectural History tour from 10am - 1pm. As always, radar was checked, nothing showed up on radar and it was predicted to be a nice day.

Participants for the tour were checked in and the day began as normal.

Participants were divided into three groups, Group 1 had 23 guests and three guides, group 2 had 23 guests and 3 guides, and group 3 had 12 guests and 2 guides.

All lead guides are ACA certified instructors, and our guide to participant ratio is 1-8.

At 10:00am, all participants start with an on-land orientation in kayaks, teaching paddle strokes, safety and rules of the river. Upon launching the kayaks, all guests are given a balance check, making sure they understand how to balance their boat.

Each group, then gathered on the water and was given another balance check and a recap on paddle strokes. Once the group was comfortable, we began the tour with a group, and the guides lead the group out.

Our Architectural History tour, is a narrated tour, stopping at different sites along the river to rest and tell stories of Chicago's history, architecture and the river.

Along the way, guides help guests refine paddle strokes and ensure that they are staying to the right, out of the way of all other boats. The lead guide is always the front of the group, and the sweep takes up the back, making sure no one falls behind. If the group is large enough for three guides, the 3rd guide is in the wing position, keeping all guests to their right.

At 12:03 pm, I noticed the sky becoming grey. I quickly left my meeting with our landlord and called our office to check radar. As I ran around the building to our office, our site manager was already on the phone, calling guides to get everyone off the water at the nearest emergency take out. Following our safety protocol, all guides are aware of every emergency take out on the Chicago River and evacuation plan in the event of an emergency or inclement weather. Our manual and guide training detail our emergency protocol and every guide is trained as to how to handle these situations.

All guides are equipped with marine radios, a long tow line, and a short contact tow on their rescue PFD. All guides also carry cell phones, bilge pumps and paddle floats, first aid kits, and a spare paddle. All guides use sea kayaks, spray skirts and high angle paddles to allow for quick response, sprinting and efficient rescues.

As I got geared up to head to our motorized rescue boats, our land staff was already assisting group 1, out of their kayaks and back on land. Group 1 was all accounted for and off the water. Myself and another lead guide, jumped into two separate rescue boats and motored down the river to assist groups 2 & 3 to get everyone off the water.

Incident report (cont.)

As we motored down the backside of Goose Island the storm hit. We approached the southern tip of Goose Island, to find 5 capsized kayaks in the water. I checked on each kayak, and was radioed by our guides on the water that all five boats in the water were blown off of the dock, due to high winds. No one was in the kayaks when they blew off the docks into the water. I checked in with my guides to confirm that all of our guests were off the water in groups 2 & 3. They confirmed and said that all guests were safe on land, and they had brought everyone back to the dock and got them off the water.

During this time, the Chicago Marine Unit was picking up a family of renters that had rented two tandem kayaks from Wateriders. They were picked up at Erie park by the Marine Unit and brought on board because there were two children involved. I was told that there was a total of 3 kayaks from Kayak Chicago's tour that capsized when the winds hit. They were immediately T-rescued by our guides and escorted to the dock. None of Kayak Chicago's guests were assisted in any way by the Chicago Marine unit or Chicago Fire Department both of which were on the scene in their boats.

Wateriders also had a group on the water, when the storm hit. I cannot speak for Wateriders, as to how many of their guest capsized but, in the incident reports written by my guides, they state that they rescued several of Wateriders' guests. One of our guides stated that he was assisting a woman with a T-rescue and the Chicago Fire Department yelled to the woman and instructed her to let go of the kayak and swim to the sea wall so she could climb out on a rusty broken ladder.

After being told that everyone was accounted for and safe on land, we motored towards group 3

whom I had spoken to by radio and confirmed that everyone was safe and on-land. NO ONE capsized in group 3 and all were off the water and safe when the storm hit.

As I motored to the confluence, I was in radio contact with our lead guide who was assisting the Marine Unit in rescuing two of Wateriders' renters downtown. The Marine Unit had Wateriders' guests on board and our lead guide was towing one of Wateriders tandem kayaks back to the dock. I took over the tow and we motored back to the dock at the East Bank Club where the rest of group 3 was waiting with our other guide.

With everyone safe and accounted for, we put the group in cabs to get back to our river location. I was told that two of the people on land were Wateriders guests so I put them in my boat and motored them back up to Wateriders dock. The guides in group 3 stayed behind to daisy chain the kayaks and tow them back with rescue boat 2.

When I arrived back at Wateriders dock, where group 2 was, I was greeted by the Chicago Fire Department Chief, who wanted to speak to me to confirm that everyone was off the water. I confirmed, after all three of our guides had already confirmed with him. My confirmation was not good enough for him and he asked me to generate a roster of all participants on the tour. We called back to our office and had the site Manager text the list of guest names to our phones as well as the officer's phone. The Marine Unit called in for a CTA bus to take all guest back to our river location office.

I docked my boat at Wateriders dock and ran out front to see the bus off. I was greeted by several officers who were so nervous that they were shaking while trying to radio their boss. This was well after the incident was over. Many of the police commended our guides for an incredible job in getting our groups off the water.

Incident report (cont.)

was then told by the lieutenant that myself and the owner of Wateriders needed to come back to the Marine Unit station to be cited. When I asked why, they said we will talk about it in the office. I then asked permission to finish taking care of our situation so we could get all of our boats back to the office and greet our guest upon arrival back at our office. He said that was fine. We collected our gear, and towed the kayaks back to our location.

Upon my return all the guests had already arrived back and were checked in and accounted for by our land crew, who again confirmed that all guest arrived back safely.

Once I had gathered my things, I jumped in my truck to drive to the Marine station.

Once at the station, I was told that the Owner of Wateriders was already there and left. I was sat down and told that the reason we were being cited was for negligence. I then produced our procedural manual, and outlined for all three officers our weather contingency plan, emergency protocol, and emergency take outs. They were not interested in the fact that our guides followed our Emergency protocol to the T. They would not even look at our Manual to show proof of our emergency plan that was followed. I told the officers that I was extremely proud of my guides for getting our guests off the water and safe on land. The officer said that, regardless of anything, we were negligent because we put guests on the water with an approaching storm. When I told them, that we were not aware of inclement weather until 12:03pm, which is just after the Chicago forecast was broadcasted, he told me that I should have known that the storms were building and approaching. I stated that I was not

in my office watching radar because, when we checked in the morning, radar was clear and it was a beautiful sunny day. He said, that doesn't matter, I should have known. He then left the room to go talk to his boss. When he was out, I was told that the only reason we were being cited was that someone has to be held responsible due to the amount of resources that were used. I told them, that we didn't call in for help and we had our group under control.

When the officer came back in the room, he said, I want to give you the benefit of the doubt and because the Chicago warning wasn't issued until noon, he would not cite us. He then said, however the national weather service issued a warning somewhere at 11:00am. When I asked him when they were made aware he didn't answer.

I wanted to ask him, if they knew ahead of time, why they were not out on the river getting people off the water. However, I decided not to. I later found out that the national weather service didn't issue the warning until after 11:30am.

After 30 minutes of defending myself and our guides, he stated, "so you do not think that this citation is warranted." I told him no. He changed his tone to become nice and friendly and said, well this is my opinion, and I am entitled to my opinion. I was then forced to sign the citation, after being told that it does not mean anything and I can contest it in court. He then walked me out and shook my hand, and said "Thank you."

I left, and headed back to the office. When I arrived, I was met by my land manager who had the news up on the computer. The reports given by the Marine Unit and CFD stated that they rescued over 62 kayakers from the water and pulled out over 30 who had capsized.

Incident report (cont.)

This is a complete fabrication of the story. In fact, none of Kayak Chicago's guests were rescued by anyone from the Marine Unit or Fire Department. Our guides took care of our guests, making sure they were safe and off the water, and then assisted everyone else from Wateriders group. Wateriders staff was on the dock and they were helping people out of their kayaks, not the Marine Unit or CFD. I know that there were a couple people that were pulled out by the Marine Unit, but none of those, were Kayak Chicago Guests.

Once I saw the news release, I began to get calls from the media looking for a statement and interviews. I accepted and had several phone interviews telling our side of the story as to what really happened.

After the first interview, I called the Marine Unit to try and understand why they would fabricate such an outrageous statement and I was told that the morning crew had already gone home for the day and there was no one that was involved that was still there. I explained to the officer that I was receiving interview requests and he told me that I should keep my mouth shut and not say anything and consult my lawyer. I asked him why and he stated that I should not talk to the media. With that, I then proceeded to accept every phone interview and on-camera interview so that we could get the real story out.

Since then, my interviews have been taken out of context and changed to fit what the media thinks makes for a good story.

I am truly appalled that the Marine unit and the Chicago Fire Department are taking credit for all of the rescues and make it sound as if there were over 30 people capsized and swimming in the river. They made the situation sound 10 times worse than it actually was. They never even made mention of the fact that our guides did the majority of the rescues. I was also told by my

land manager that one of the Officers came into the office and complimented our staff and guides for a great job on the river today. The Officer then said, my shirt is wet, can I have one of your Kayak Chicago shirts. He was given a shirt. This Officer then reported later that we did nothing wrong.

I will say, that I am very happy that we have the resources available to us, in the time of an emergency, and was happy that they were there to help but I cannot believe that they are blaming the situation on us for not being able to get our groups off the water in time. The original predictions for the storm were expected to hit at 1:30pm, which would have given us ample time to get off the water, 30 minutes before it was projected to hit Chicago. The storm, was moving so fast that it arrived almost an hour before it was supposed to. Unfortunately, due to the design of the Chicago River being constructed of concrete walls, there are only so many take-outs that are accessible by kayak.

What have we learned from this event?

It is now standard a policy that we keep radar up on the office computer at all times and check it every half hour even on a beautiful, sunny days.

I learned what a media frenzy can do and that I cannot even trust the word of those that are supposed to protect us.

Chicago weather is extremely un-predictable. We have cancelled numerous tours this season, and over the 13 years that we have been in business, due to the possibility of a potential storm that could possibly hit Chicago. Nine times out of 10 times the storm either dissipates or changes course and never hits Chicago.

Once again, I am extremely proud of our guides as to how they handled the situation. They followed our standard safety procedures and were able to get all of our guests off the water to safety.

Incident report (cont.)

In the end, the fact that everyone is safe and no one was injured is what matters most.

This is the first, and only incident, we have ever had in the 13 years that we have been guiding tours and teaching classes in Chicago.

Dave Olson 7/2/2012

Lime Island Trip Update

By Louise Flory

Twenty WMCKA paddlers are going on the Lime Island trip on July 13-15. Lime Island is located on the Michigan Upper Peninsula eastern border with Ontario. This trip involves paddling to the island, hauling everything needed for the weekend, and staying at Michigan's newest state park. The highlight is the extremely close proximity to the shipping lane that is the ship's path to the Sault Ste. Marie locks that connect Lake Huron to Lake Superior. The group consists of 15 adults and five kids, not counting adults that act like kids! We hope for good weather and a fun time. At this time the trip is full.

UPCOMING PADDLES

Paddles on the WMCKA Web site

Remember that the events marked with an asterisk (*) are non-WMCKA sponsored events.

Calendar

July 13-15: Lime Island Weekend

Sept. 14-16: End-O-Summer Weekend

Oct 5-7: WMCKA Annual Meeting, Mesick

For location, cost, and equipment requirements, please see the Events Page at www.wmcka.org

Camping Reservations for Annual Meeting Weekend

By Karl Geisel

Get your camping site reservations for the WMCKA Annual Meeting, held October 5-7, 2012, at Northern Exposure Campground in Mesick, Michigan. There are sites reserved for WMCKA members under the name "Kenneth N/WMCKA". WMCKA members need to call to pay for one of the "Kenneth N/WMCKA" reserved campsites. If reservations are not paid for ASAP, the sites may be made available for the general public. This is Northern Exposure's big Halloween weekend, and the campground is already sold out. Please call soon to put your name on one of these sites for this fun weekend. Lots still available for WMCKA members are 77- 79, 88 - 92, 95 - 98, & 103 as of this posting. Make sure you get a site in the "Woodyworld East" section of the campground where WMCKA will be gathering.

End Of Summer Paddle Update Sept 14-16, 2012

By Karl Geisel

The following announcement has just been posted to the National Parks Service [Platte River Campground Reservations](http://www.nps.gov/slbe/planyourvisit/platterivercamp.htm) page (<http://www.nps.gov/slbe/planyourvisit/platterivercamp.htm>).

Hurry and make your reservations for a campsite while they are still available.

The construction originally scheduled to begin after Labor Day in Platte River Campground has been cancelled, and reservations will now be available through the month of September. Reservations will officially re-open starting Sunday, July 8, 2012. For more information, please visit the [online reservation website](#), or call the campground at 231-325-5881.

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Submissions

Articles, photos, trip reports, announcements for trips or any other materials related to kayaking are welcome for submission. Electronic media (plain text or MS-Word format) is preferred. Materials are subject to editing

Send to: wmcka.news@Yahoo.com
Submissions due by 15th of the previous month

FOR SALE

Betsie Bay Recluse

Fiberglass, white. Betsie Bay Greenlander paddle, black neoprene spray skirt, Lotus Designs kayaking PFD, yellow w/reflective markings. All for \$1,200. 231-924-3719. adsmund@comcast.net.

Seaward Chinook

Red over white. Ideal for larger body-size beginners or intermediate paddlers who are looking for comfort, rock-solid stability with expedition capacity. Has been stored in insulated garage when not in use. \$1,750.00.

Composition - Thermoformed ABS plastic.

Length: 17'

Width: 24"

Weight: 56 lbs.

Features include: Quick-release rescue straps; Enhanced thigh braces; Reflective deck lines; Sealed bulk heads; Stern keel guard; Recessed deck fittings; Full shock cord rigging; Locking/towing hook; Two-part attached hatch covers; Seadog adjustable foot pedals; Rudder deployment system "slider" is more like a skeg control than a rudder's usual deck-top pull cord; Cockpit cover; and Jell-filled seat/backrest pad.

Contact: Jim Jorgensen at
616-897-8464