

CPA Paddler Profile ~ Chris Beckman

Interview by Rick Wiebush



Chris Beckman paddling near the Harbor of Refuge Light, Delaware Breakwater, located off of Cape Henlopen, Delaware
Photograph by Patti Nash

Name: Chris Beckman

Lives in: Rehoboth Beach, Delaware

Real job: Field work for a civil engineering firm, a.k.a., the fishing inspector

Member of a Piracy? Been thinking of starting Buccaneers of the Beach, but that would require organizing and that's not what Buccaneers do.

Paddling Buddies: There are so many great paddlers that I've been lucky enough to paddle with, seems there is always someone coming over to Cape Henlopen to paddle with. We have a core group of Delmarva Paddlers that meets almost every weekend to paddle somewhere.

Number years paddling: A very long time. Bought my first row boat at 12 years old with money from my paper route.

How did you get involved in kayaking? Canoeing was getting hard on my knees plus I wanted to use a double ended paddle. Saw a kit at Chesapeake Light Craft I liked and sold my '56 Willys to buy it.

How did you learn to sea kayak? Mitch Mitchell at Coastal Kayaks along with the many instructors, including Jenny Plummer-Welker and Greg Welker, at the Delmarva Paddlers Retreat. Plus I took every opportunity to paddle with more experienced paddlers anywhere I could.

Any formal training or ACA/BCU certifications: Several ACA courses but no certifications that I've kept current. Mitch tried and has used me as a water dummy in his classes, so I guess that makes me a certified dummy.

Boat usually paddled: CLC North Bay XL

Type paddle used: Greenland. Isn't a Euro some sort of currency on the other side of the pond?

Do you do any other type of paddling besides sea kayaking: I still canoe occasionally and would love to row more.

My knees are too shot to even think of using a SUP (standup paddleboard). **Do you regularly do any other outdoor activities:** I work outside daily.

How often do you paddle in summer? Almost weekly. **Do any winter paddling?**

Sometimes if the paddling group is right. **Go to pool sessions?** Not anymore. We used to go to St. Joe's in Philly.

Favorite local paddling location: Delaware Bay, Cape Henlopen, along the Atlantic Coast, Ocean City, Assateague, and the Rock Hall-Chestertown area. **Favorite non-local location:** Potomac outside of DC, Round Valley Reservoir in North West Jersey, any place in Florida.

Best paddling trip/experience ever and why: Over the past 15 years - The Delmarva Paddlers' Retreat each October, which I now help run along with Robin Snow and the many wonderful volunteers. As far as a one-off trip, that would have to be the Circumnavigation of Manhattan in 2006. I grew up in that area and had taken the Circle Line tour many times as a kid. It was definitely a neat experience to do it by kayak. About six of us stayed at my sister's condo just outside the city and did it with Jerry and Steve's group. The weather was perfect, as was the camaraderie.

Scariest/most dangerous trip/experience and why: Off of Cape Henlopen. I had just built my CLC NBXL, and it did not have a skeg. My doctor called me and said he and his brother were paddling out to the white lighthouse and would I join them. I never checked tides, wind or anything, just trusted him. It turned out that it was at the change of tides from low to high and that coupled with a 15 knot wind and the long fetch down the Delaware River made for some seriously challenging conditions. The standing waves were taller than my paddle, and the wind was such that I didn't really want to try to turn around until we made it to the shelter of the breakwater. And then we turned around and came back. My strokes were all corrective sweeps on the windward side both ways.

Bucket list trips: To cross the Delaware Bay, paddle the Thames in London, and see the fireworks in DC from the Potomac.

Three things you like most about paddling? The people, the places, and the peacefulness. **What do you like about CPA?** I know when a CPAer is on a trip with me, they have had at least some training in rescues and group paddling skills and usually very prepared. They also usually have plenty of extra snacks with them.

One thing other people find interesting about you: My beer cooler!