

Trip Leading Tips and Tricks

Based on a wide-ranging discussion thread on the listserve about some recent paddles, Todd Angerhofer started a new topic on the Forums under the "General" topic. Here's what Todd and others learned from that discussion, in no particular order:

1. When a trip has a goal like making a particular distance in a particular amount of time, make sure everyone knows what that means in terms of speed, and that everyone has an idea as to whether they will meet that goal. Decide ahead of time what you are going to do if someone drops behind (mandatory tow or bail, or slow the group down)
2. Pre-planned bail points are good to have.
3. Ground support is great for challenging paddles.
4. Communicate, communicate, communicate.
5. When large groups divide naturally into subgroups, decide as a group whether that's okay for the paddle you are on. If it's okay, make sure everyone knows who is in what subgroup, and what each subgroup intends to do (e.g., paddle along a shoreline; take the shortest straight course; bail at a certain designated bail point).
6. Minimize subgroups (it's easier for other vessels to track a few groups of people than a lot of individual paddlers).
7. Subgroups should be at least three people.
8. Test your gear ahead of time (e.g. do your hatch covers seal?).
9. VHF radio is a great tool to have available. It can also be entertaining on opening day of Rockfish season (KIPP-1).
10. Periodically regroup to discuss pace, subgrouping, track, people's condition.
11. Verify that your trip is rated correctly for distance, speed and skill required (open water, surf...). Recognize that "Intermediate", as the top rating, covers a lot of conditions.
12. Properly screen participants to make sure they meet the ability level for the trip. If they can't keep up or do the mileage, they impact the enjoyment of the whole group.
13. If participants "well exceed" the intended speed of the trip, ensure they will either stay with the group or plan for a fast group with sufficient leadership for both the fast and slow group.
14. Participants screen trip leaders to make sure you are comfortable with their leadership, skill, and planning. Recognize you are always responsible for yourself.
15. Limit the number of participants to a manageable level. Have sufficient skilled (trip leader qualified) paddlers for a proper ratio (6:1? 8:1?). How many can you deal with effectively at once?
16. Check tide tables, weather forecasts and if possible get local knowledge. This applies to leaders AND participants.
17. Have an alternate plan if conditions don't allow the original plan to be conducted safely.
18. Know the signs of hypothermia and hyperthermia. Watch for it and have others watch you.



Assateague Island, May 2006 *photo by Ralph Heimlich*

Check for more at <http://www.cpakayaker.com/forums/viewtopic.php?t=1624>



On the beach at St. Clements Island, where the Calvert colonists first landed in 1635. Bill Dodge is threatening to make this the last year he leads this trip.

See http://www.cpakayaker.com/events.html?event_id=330 *photo by Ralph Heimlich*



Marshall Woodruff gives Susan Williamson a good start on KIPP-4
photo by Anne Culver