

Chesapeake Paddler



Publication of the Chesapeake Paddlers Association, Inc. Volume 18, Issue 6

September 2008



2007 Chesapeake Paddlers Association Annual Meeting
photo by Ralph Heimlich

As usual, we will order some pizza for the attendees of the meeting, but if you want to show off your culinary expertise or just want to stop by the grocery store on the way, we encourage you to bring a side dish or dessert to add to the food.

While the Annual Meeting is a while away, NOW is the time to consider nominations for the CPA Committee and other chairs. Current nominations are on [page 5](#) and candidates "stump speeches" will be in the October issue. Also come prepared to raise and discuss any issues regarding CPA action from the past year, or issues expected to emerge in the near future. Lastly, come prepared to eat food and meet great people who love to paddle.

CPA Elections and Annual Meeting

This year our Annual Meeting will be in College Park, MD, on Sunday, November 2nd. Our club annual meeting is indoors this year, a change from last year's *al fresco* event at the Blackburn's house. We will also have a pre-meeting paddle from the Bladensburg Marina on the Anacostia River. Don't forget to join us for this event as we discuss relevant club issues and vote in new officers for 2009. Specific directions will be available in the next issue and online.



2007 Annual Meeting Paddle on Rhode River
photo by Ralph Heimlich



Before the Storm (Laurel and Kevin Brown, Ralph Heimlich, Brent Cogswell, Jim Zawlocki, Suzanne Farace, Michael D. Cohn, Melissa Boyle, and Lois Wyatt) *photo by Mark Woodside*

Black Skies Over St George Island

By Mark Woodside

On Saturday, August 2, I met ten eager kayakers at 9:00 AM eagerly awaiting our launch next to the St. George Island County public boat ramps. Holding up our launch was a looming swath of dark grey clouds lumbering across the northern sky, skirting our intended kayak route. Flashes of lightning immediately followed by cracks of thunder sent us back to our vehicles as the sky opened up with a down pour. Sitting in my car reminded me of Jim Zawlocki's previous day's email that weather would be a factor on today's paddle. Predicted stormy weather was expected to occur late in the afternoon (yeah, like 9 AM). All the same, signs of a blue sky to the west permitted us to launch about 90 minutes late. Some thirty minutes past the last rolling clap of thunder.

(Continued on page 4)

St. George Island *(Continued from page 1)*

The launch site, with parking, is situated off Piney Point Rd, Route 249 at the base of the bridge prior to going over onto St. George Island. The park draws a consistent crowd taking advantage of the off shore fishing and crabbing opportunities. This paddle site has a range of protected open water, bird activity, and a lack of motorboat activity, except right around the launch and the channel between St. George and the peninsula. I scheduled this paddle because the route paralleled the last leg of the 35th annual Governor's Cup Regatta, (www.smcm.edu/govcup). The 17th century replica Dove sailing ship, moored out in the St. Mary's River, (www.bayweekly.com/year99/issue7_37/life7_37.html) marks the race finish line. The regatta commenced the night before up in Annapolis, and would conclude, winds permitting, at St. Mary's College. The initial trip plan was for a 6 mile paddle up St. Mary's River to the end of the race. A phone call back to my wife while it was raining noted that Doppler radar expected another storm at 1:00 PM. (Note to self; ask for a more definitive location next time.)

I made the decision to launch at 10:30, limiting the paddle to a circumnavigation of St. George Island. Lois Wyatt took the lead reluctantly (I'm not *fast* enough!), after being volunteered, while Brent Cogswell provided sweep duties in his new and awesome Laughing Loon Star Fire, (<http://www.laughingloon.com/firestar.html>) cedar strip baidarka. Jim was out in his new yellow Fathom Kayak by Eddyline. It is a sleek kayak with the standard hatch covers found with other leading manufacturers as opposed to the leak-prone 5-year old Eddyline Falcon that I paddle. A light wind blew as we started out. Brent, Ralph Heimlich, Laurel and Kevin Brown each paddled with their traditional Greenland handcrafted art work paddles. Lois, Melissa Boyle, Suzanne Farace, Jim Zawlocki Michael Cohn and I kept up with them using our conventional Euro paddles. The group was so quiet out on the water one couldn't help notice that everyone's paddle strokes were perfect: There were no paddle splashes from the entire group! Laurel and Kevin just returned from a week-long camping and paddle on Lake Huron, Canada. They loved the trip, which expanded their knowledge and experience on and off the water with the support of their paddle guides.



Ralph Heimlich sizes up his sail capability photo by Mark Woodside

As we neared the point where the St. Mary's River and the Potomac River merge, a large standing fish trap extended out several hundred feet from the shore. You can kayak single file between the boulders lining the shore and the wooden stakes holding up the net or you can paddle the long way around. Louis led us around the net, but not before we had to slow her down a bit. Seems she and Jim were engaged in conversation, completely unaware of just how fast they were going relative to the rest of the group. Going the long way round revealed quite a sight. Usually you can't see much in these fish traps, but this one was swarming with small (about 12" wide) Cow nose rays and fish splashing around. Moments earlier, the wooden poles above the water hosted a wide assortment of sea gulls, cormorants and Herons, all seeking an easy meal of fish caught in the net. The wind in our face, the turbulent wave action increased as we paddled out from the protective cove.

Once at the point, waves splashed over our bows in rhythmic succession. Suzanne pointed out that there were some short waves mixed in with the rolling waves, causing our kayaks to slam down on the water as the waves passed by. A camp ground located at the point was busy with activity of swimmers and people fishing. We were far enough off shore

to avoid snagging any far flung fishing line. Once fully into the Potomac River the slight wind shifted to our backs. Ralph dropped back to launch his newly constructed kayak sail (not enough wind to keep up with the group). The rest of the group were riding the waves making decent forward speed.

We pulled back into the launch site logging 6.1 nautical miles sometime around 1 PM. So much for the predicted 1 PM storm. Michael, Lois and Jim opted to resume paddling after they ate their lunch. According to him "We paddled for 7 more miles up the St. Mary's river. The Skates were all around by the pine trees at the turn to the river. I took some close ups of a bald eagle in a tree. We paddled by the trees on the left and stopped at a nice beach with shade. We headed back to the launch. The breeze stopped and it was very hot on the paddle back. We packed up our boats and left without any thunderstorm activity."

The clear weather and by-now flat water was a clear motivator. Brent, Suzanne, Ralph, Laurel, Kevin and I gave into to the local Sea Food House, (Evans) before heading home.



Laurel Brown and Mike Cohn on the Beach photo by Jim Zawlocki