



## District 5 Southern Region Paddlecraft Program Shoreside Plan

Approved 2 Dec 17



**Background:** With the current popularity of Paddlecraft (Canoes, Kayaks, and Paddleboards) two significant problems have arisen that are causing a significant and growing concern in the boating safety community and to the US Coast Guard.

Paddlecraft are the fastest growing form of recreational boating in the United States. The Outdoor Industry Association reports that about 17.8 million people participated in some type of paddle sports activity getting out on the water more than 50,000 times daily. With over one hundred thousand paddlecraft being sold annually, the US Coast Guard anticipates that by 2020 as many as 47 million paddlers will be using paddlecraft for touring, physical exercise, fishing, hunting or other activities.

With an investment of just a few hundred dollars people can gain access to the nation's waterways and therein lies the root cause of the problems. Most of these paddlers lack experience. They overestimate their skill level and fail to properly assess environmental conditions. Worse yet, they often lack the proper safety equipment and the training needed to use that equipment properly to stay safe on the water. Consider as well, the potential for conflict as this multitude of paddlers interacts with all manner of motorboats, sailboats, and commercial vessels navigating the same nearshore waters.



The first problem is that the users of these craft are not required to take a boating safety course, and may think they can safely ply the waters that are also occupied by much larger craft. Many do not wear personal flotation devices (PFDs), and may not understand that if they fall in the water donning a PFD and recovering their craft is far from easy. The craft are small, often camouflaged or dark in color and are not easily seen in the normal channels where larger boats navigate. Also, new users get into trouble when they launch with an outgoing tide and easily go downstream, but cannot make way when they try to return. Taking a boating Safety Course addresses some of these issues but not all. Most Boating Courses have information about Personal Watercraft safety, but little or nothing covering Paddlecraft safety.

When paddle craft operators fall in the water sometimes the watercraft gets away from them by wind and/or tide. The craft are found drifting or washed up on shore, and the immediate concern is for their former occupants. This concern causes Public Safety Responders and the Coast Guard to launch Search and Rescue (SAR) efforts to locate the possible victims. Because these craft are not registered with the state, there is no way to trace the whereabouts of their owners. Significant resources are consumed and sometimes lives put at risk searching for the possible victims. The expense to the Coast Guard for SARs is sobering:

- An RBS Response Boat mission cost is approximately \$1,500 per hour.
- An H-65 Helicopter mission cost is \$8,088 per hour

- These costs do not include personnel costs for support and other labor.
- Many of these SARs are also supported by the Coast Guard Auxiliary.

## Mission Statement and Primary Goal

The Coast Guard Auxiliary, in every flotilla, should make a concerted effort to reach out further to Paddlers to inform and educate them on the possible perils associated with their sport, review the safety items they should carry with them, and provide them with identification labels, the “If Found” decals, for their craft so that if it is found, they (or their family) can be contacted to determine if they are safe.

## Resources

**Personnel:** Each flotilla normally has a Staff Officer for Public Affairs (PA), Vessel Examinations (VEs), Program Visitors (PVs), Public Education (PE), and Operations (OP) – each has an interface with the boating community and can be a resource for this program.

**Literature:** Paddlecraft Safety information is available on the Coast Guard Auxiliary website. Material that may be shared with the public is available at:

<http://wow.uscgaux.info/content.php?unit=RB-GROUP&category=paddle-craft-safety>

Material that may be used for member training is available at:

<http://wow.uscgaux.info/content.php?unit=RB-GROUP&category=auxpad-resources> Member log-in is required.

A small number of American Canoeing Association (ACA) brochures are available that can be reproduced locally. Currently, the primary brochure available from the Auxiliary National Supply Center (ANSC) is titled “Be Smart Be Safe Have Fun and is available in quantity. It is item number 4003a. Additional materials are forthcoming.

**Commented [U1]:** The ACA no longer prints any brochures and none are available EXCEPT the three identified on the CGAUX Recreational Boating Safety page. The “Be Smart!-Be Safe-Have Fun brochure is available from ANSC as Item 4003a

Paddle Safe! Have Fun! – 10 ways to Paddle Safely Available at:

[http://bdept.cgaux.org/misc\\_docs/BROCHURE\\_PADDLE\\_SAFE\\_HAVE\\_FUN\\_rs.pdf](http://bdept.cgaux.org/misc_docs/BROCHURE_PADDLE_SAFE_HAVE_FUN_rs.pdf)

Paddlers Safety Checklist – Guide to Planning, Etiquette, Navigating different waters, and equipping. Available at:

[http://bdept.cgaux.org/misc\\_docs/brochure\\_paddlers\\_safety\\_checklist.pdf](http://bdept.cgaux.org/misc_docs/brochure_paddlers_safety_checklist.pdf)

Rules of the Road – What Paddlers Need to Know A brief review of Navigation Rules most applicable to Paddlers available at: [http://wow.uscgaux.info/Uploads\\_wow/II/RB-GROUP/BROCHURE\\_rules\\_of\\_the\\_road\\_\\_3\\_rs.pdf](http://wow.uscgaux.info/Uploads_wow/II/RB-GROUP/BROCHURE_rules_of_the_road__3_rs.pdf)

A Paddler’s Guide to Safety PowerPoint Presentation – USCG Aux and ACA presentation, with Instructors Guide. The course and the Instructor’s Guide are available at:

<http://wow.uscgaux.info/content.php?unit=RB-GROUP&category=auxpad-resources>:

The above resources can be viewed and downloaded from the SHR Dropbox at the following URL: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/1egbxw29rxo67g9/AAB5cxSiiWo2XltYMScEnJQya?dl=0>

Many other resources are accessible via the Auxiliary Page at <http://auxbdeptwiki.cgaux.org/index.php?title=Paddlesports>

**Watercraft Identification Stickers:** These stick on If Found – Contact ID labels, filled out with a waterproof pen, are essential to determining the safety of an owner or user when a watercraft is found drifting or washed up. They can be obtained from the following source(s):



1. Appropriate State Agency
2. USCG Auxiliary via FSO-MA, available from ANSC as item number 2004A. Flotillas may order **50** per quarter.

## **Responsibilities: Recommended assignments for Flotilla Staff Officers**

Flotilla Commanders should assign duties as they see appropriate, and may appoint a special assistant for Paddlecraft to manage the overall program within the Flotilla, or assign this duty to the FSO-PA. The following are recommended additional duties for Flotilla Staff Officers:

**Assign a Flotilla Paddlecraft Program Manager.** Because this effort is a Recreational Boating Safety (RBS) Outreach Mission which requires the efforts of multiple Staff Officers to reach out to the Paddlecraft Community, it is recommended that the Vice Flotilla Commander be the Flotilla Paddlecraft Program Manager with the overall responsibility of managing the program within the flotilla and providing feedback to the Flotilla Commander and the Sector Coordinator for Paddlecraft Safety.

### **Vice Flotilla Commander Responsibility:**

- Interact with appropriate state agency to discuss ways that the Flotilla and the agency can work together in their AOR.
- Prepare outreach notices and activity reports monthly to Sector Paddlecraft Coordinator on activities planned and completed.
- Use experiences to include suggestions and ideas for improving the program.
- Reach out to local American Canoeing Association (ACA) paddler groups.

### **FSO-PA Responsibility:**

- Acquire brochures and Watercraft "If Found" decals and markers for use by flotilla members.
- Set up PA booths at sites where Paddlers launch. Include pertinent ACA brochures listed above.

**FSO-PV Responsibility:** Visit sellers of Paddlecraft to provide brochures and If Found – Contact stickers – get sales staff informed and ask that they discuss safety issues with buyers and put If Found - Contact stickers on their purchases.

**FSO-PE Responsibility:** Ensure every boating safety class has a presentation on Paddlecraft safety to educate not only Paddlers, but also power boaters of the safety hazards and issues. Download and utilize the PowerPoint presentation *Guide to Paddling Safety* on the drop box listed above. Provide Paddlecraft brochures and If Found – Contact stickers for students.

**FSO-VE Responsibility:** Visit areas where Paddlers launch, discuss safety issues with owners, provide brochures, perform Paddlecraft Vessel Safety Checks, and ensure If Found - Contact decals are available for use.

**FSO-OP Responsibility:**

- Ensure that all OPFACS have Paddlecraft brochures and If Found - Contact stickers to pass out and advise Boat Crews to discuss the reasons for applying a sticker with Paddlers encountered on patrols.
- Identify Paddlers in the Flotilla and ensure they are prepared to interact with other Paddlers on the water, providing brochures and If Found - Contact stickers.
- Assist in identifying locations on the water where Paddlers launch and recover.

**Flotilla Responsibility:** At each Flotilla Meeting, discuss actions taken by staff and lessons learned in reaching Paddlers to foster continuous improvement in this vital RBS mission.

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