



# *Trip Leader Manual Chapter 3: Safety Guidelines*

## Section 4: Guidelines for Whitewater & Flatwater Boating

# Planning the Trip



- See Chapter 4 Policies for Whitewater Boating Policy concerning non-members.
- Be familiar with the waterway to be paddled, or have someone along who is, or be sure to carefully scout each rapid.
- Know and respect the difficulty classification of the river and how water levels and weather conditions affect this.

## *Planning the Trip continued*



- Boating trips need to have enough experienced boaters to provide safety for the group.
- The number required depends on the experience and skills of the paddlers and the water involved.
- As a guideline, think 3 boats capable of helping if someone is swimming.

# At the Start



- If your trip is going out of state, try to have participants sign the liability release/waiver in Ohio.
- Conduct a group orientation; include information about river etiquette, regrouping and safety.
- Be aware of the effects of cold water and weather extremes and be prepared to take appropriate action.

## *At the Start continued*



- Helmets are recommended when on or near the water. They are ***mandatory*** for closed boaters on swift moving water and all others on class III rapids and above, and when conditions warrant, like rocky areas.
- Assign a lead and sweep boat as necessary. Verbalize this to all participants.
- Be sure boats are appropriate for the type of water to be paddled and are properly outfitted.

## *At the Start continued*



- Bring along first aid and rescue equipment. Know how to use them and make their location known to all participants.
- Participants should be familiar with AWA Universal River Signals.
- In Ohio, look for boat registrations. The fine for unlicensed boats was \$95.00 in 2007.

# During the trip



Be sure that everyone understands that, despite the mutually supportive group structure described here, individual paddlers are ultimately responsible for their own safety and must assume responsibility for their decisions. Decisions such as, but not limited to:

# *Individual decisions continued*



- The decision to participate on any trip.
- This includes an evaluation of the expected difficulty of the trip under the conditions existing at the time of the put-in.
- The selection of appropriate equipment.
- The decision to scout any rapid, and to run or portage according to their best judgment.





## *Individual decisions continued*

- Other members of the group may offer advice but paddlers should resist pressure from anyone to paddle beyond their skills.
- It is the individual's responsibility to decide whether to pass up any walk out or take out opportunity.
- The leader should be sure struggling participants know their options.

# *Individual decisions continued*



All trip participants should constantly evaluate their own and their group's safety, voicing their concerns when appropriate and following what they believe to be the best course of action.

- The leader should facilitate this.
- Paddlers are encouraged to speak with anyone whose actions on the water are dangerous, whether they are part of the group or not.

# *During the trip continued*



- The leader should make it as easy as possible for paddlers to share ideas and concerns, and also for a participant to make the decision to not paddle “today” or “this stretch.”
- Never boat alone.
- Participants should be encouraged to keep track of the boat behind them and communicate concerns with the rest of the group.
- Keep the group together but not so close as to be a hazard.

# *During the trip continued*



In the water when you didn't mean to be?

- Swim aggressively for the boat, nearest shore, throw rope, eddy or place of safety.
- If near your boat, stay at the upstream end and try to get in or on the boat.
- Do not grab a kayak or canoe until the paddler directs you to. Be sure to follow their directions.
- Kick! Be an active participant in your rescue! Keep your feet up!

# *During the trip continued*



- Do not attempt to rescue another paddler unless you are qualified to do so, and can do it without undue risk to yourself or others.
- Be aware of, and on the look-out for hazards such as strainers, waterfalls, dams and high rapids.
- Anyone who swims three times in one day warrants an evaluation as to whether they need to be removed from the experience.

# *During the trip continued*



- At rest stops, remind participants to keep PFD's and helmets on until they are seated.
- On the Yough, no one runs Dimple Rock without having seen it at least once
- A Liability release is required on all Equipment rentals.



This concludes the Boating Guidelines  
Section