

## **A BASIC CANOE AND KAYAK RACE DIRECTOR'S MANUAL**

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## INTRODUCTION

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The intent of this canoe and kayak race directors manual is to provide helpful suggestions on how to prepare and run a paddle sport race. There are some new races on our racing calendar, and some of the new race directors have asked for a little assistance with how to set up registration, manage timing, and for 'how-tos' on other race related matters. For those of you who have been running races for a few years or even several years, we hope that this is also providing some useful information.

Rosemary and Priscilla have been race directors for a long time and are glad to short-cut the learning curve on race directing and make it easier and less stressful. Rosemary and Priscilla have collaborated on this piece and welcome any questions that we can answer regarding further clarification of the process of putting on a paddle sport flat-water or downriver race.

The starting place for a well-run race is to be sure that you have the time to commit to running a race, and that you plan as far ahead as possible – at least six months or just after your last race. A checklist is a great tool to have (at the end of appendix I) and if you can associate the checklist to a timeline to work towards race day – all the better!

Planning is the biggest piece of a successful race. Don't go it alone! Get a team and let's get started!

## LOCATION, PERMISSION, INSURANCE, RIVER PREPARATION AND OTHER RACE WORTHY NOTES

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**Location** is everything!

- Where is your starting line?
- Where is your finish line?
- Who owns this land?
- Is there adequate parking?
- Is there a safe put in and take out?
- Is there a good spot for timers with clear line of sight?

These are the first questions to begin with. You cannot start or end a race just anywhere. You need a site that will accommodate your paddlers, their vessels, spectators, and parking. You need an entry point into the river or body of water that is easily accessible and preferably without hills, poison ivy, or prickly briars! But most important.....

### **Permission**

- Who owns that land and will they allow you access?
- Do you need a permit to use this property (state or local parks, etc)?
- Do you need a certificate of insurance for the property in the event someone falls or gets injured?

Securing a good location and dealing with the above questions should be done as early as possible (6 months prior to the race if possible) especially if permits and insurance coverage for the site will be needed.

## ***Insurance***

We all think that accidents don't happen to us but the reality is they do. There are several sources for insurance for paddle sports (formal information can be found in the Appendix II): USCA, ACA, USACK or you can contact your local insurance agent to see if your organization can acquire an umbrella policy. All will require that you apply early and most won't cover you if you apply within the 30 day window of your event. Some will cover you for the year and multiple events (USCA). With some of the insurances you can guesstimate the number of entrants and then you finalize payment within a certain number of days after the event with the exact number of participants. **YOU MUST HAVE EACH PARTICIPANT SIGN AN INSURANCE WAIVER.** Parents/guardians must sign for those under the age of 18. Make this a priority in your planning. If you plan to use a city park, sometimes the city will have municipal insurance that will cover your event. In our increasingly litigious society, it is very strongly recommended that race insurance be purchased.

## ***River Preparation***

Let's talk about the body of water your paddlers will be using.

- How long, in miles, from the start to finish?
- How many portages, if any, are along the river?
- Is permission needed to utilize the portage or does the land owner just need to be notified of the event?
- Is your river safe by being clear of low hanging trees, fallen trees, trash and other debris?
- Are there splits in the river where one direction might deviate from the race course or make the race course longer?
- Are there elevated areas paddlers need to be able to navigate? Not big falls but drops in the river with rapids?
- Are there other hazards such as boulders and rocky areas?
- Are there water quality issues?
- Are there motorboat issues?
- For flat-water races, does the body of water allow for the set-up of a course that has interesting features, such as varied water depths, tactical features, and turning options such as abutments and buoys?

As the sponsor, you need to understand the above questions and your race course – visually know it but also for safety, know it well. Races that are exhaustingly long (would require paddlers to be on the water for hours) are not well received, unless you have decided to offer a marathon flat-water race that draws the endurance crowd. Races that are too short

(which should be advertised as sprints instead of races) aren't challenging enough. It's a fine balance but depending on the water levels, class of water, portages and other challenges, you want something that will bring out the crowds – not just elites and not just novices.

In your advertising and your entry form note the length of the race and the number of portages. Difficult and long portages attract a few, but not the majority.

Many of the NECKRA races have clean up events prior to their races. It is up to your organization, not NECKRA, to schedule these and ensure the safety of your race. The clean ups are sometimes on-shore as well as off-shore. Some of our NECKRA members have a sport referred to as “paddlers in canoes/kayaks – with chainsaws”. This is most definitely NOT for the inexperienced paddler! But your waterway must be clear of any dangers that exist. If you have a waterway that makes the race unsafe (not challenging or difficult – but truly a safety hazard) your paddlers will not come back the next time and you chance a very serious accident and liability. Schedule cleanups at least a month or two before your race understanding that several trips on the river or its banks might be necessary. Ropes, pulleys, come-alongs, chainsaws, axes and other tools are typically necessary.

### ***Other Race Worthy Notes***

Racing classes are required in order to establish groupings of like paddlers. Canoes and kayaks are always separate classes. In addition you have:

#### *Downriver Racing Classes*

- Short kayak (< 13'2 feet) versus long kayak (> 13'2 feet)
- Racing canoes versus recreational canoes
- Single vessels versus tandem vessels (this is both canoe and kayak)

If you expect more 'recreational' participants than racing participants and you don't mind giving away a lot of awards you can add to this with:

- Adult/child teams
- Women's classes versus men's classes are typical for both canoe and kayak
- Mixed gender teams or tandem men vs. tandem women
- Masters classes (typically over the age 40 or senior class if over 50. Most races offer one or the other classification, not both.)
- Youth tandem team (both paddlers are youth and typically between the age of 15 and 18)

Be careful as to having too many classes. You have to track this. Later we will discuss awards. Each class will expect that the top 3 receive an award and this can become expensive.

The flatwater classes are very different from down river classes.

*Flatwater Racing Classes*

- C-1 man racing (one man in a canoe)
- C-1 woman racing (one woman in a canoe)
- C-2 men racing (two men in a canoe)
- C-2 women racing (two women in a canoe)
- C-2 mixed racing (one man and one woman in a canoe)
- C-2 adult/youth racing or recreational (one adult and one child under 18 in a canoe)
- C-2 rec (two adult paddlers in a recreational canoe. Depending on turnout, this class can be expanded for C-2 rec women, men, mixed)
- K-1 man unlimited (one man in a fast kayak, such as Olympic of surfski)
- K-1 woman unlimited (one woman in a fast kayak, as above)
- K-1 man touring (one man in a slower kayak such as a seekayak)
- K-1 woman (one woman in a slower kayak, as above)
- K-1 youth, boy or girl (one youngster in a kayak)
- K-2 men, women or mixed (two people in a kayak, depending on turnout)

Additionally, masters classes (40 +) or seniors classes (50+) may be offered for any of the adult classes, depending on turnout. Race directors are free to offer as many or as few classes as they would like to offer. The nature of the prizes you wish to offer may dictate the expansiveness of the class offerings. See the New England Canoe and Kayak Racing Association website ([www.neckra.org](http://www.neckra.org)) for Points Series information, including handicaps. The information on this website may also prove useful in the creation of your racing classes.

## SUPPLIES, PUBLICITY AND SPONSORS

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### *Supplies*

Here is a checklist of commonly needed race supplies. Depending on location and events prior to or after the race, your supply list may be a little different. For instance, a flatwater race would not use throw bags but a downriver race should require them.

- Tables and chairs for the volunteers are a must especially for those who are working registration.
- Awnings and tents with good tie downs are needed to shade people (timers, registration) as well as protect them from the elements (rain, snow, sleet).
- Have an ample number of insurance forms, registration forms and pens (that write well!) to complete the forms. You may also want to put out some clip boards.
- A board to post finish times is needed. This could be as simple as cardboard or a white board.
- If you're using a laptop for timing do you have power?
- Throw bags for your down river safety team are a very wise investment.
- First aid kits are always needed!
- Porta potties are welcome at both the start and finish line!!
- Signs on the road/driveway to direct racers to the site.
- Cash box, duct tape, provision for waste paper and trash.
- Bullhorn
- Stopwatches (notice this is plural – more than 1) and extra batteries
- 3-ring binder with tabs (see explanation under registration) or laptop (printer optional)
- A stack of blank race numbers cut from white contact paper. Contact paper with a pull-off adhesive backing, comes 18" wide. Cut numbers 9" x 7" for perfect sizing – not too small so as to write numbers legible and have them visible from the shore, and not too big so that part of the number is in the water and subject to peeling off. You should have some pre-numbered prior to registration as assigning the numbers at registration can take time away from other things.
- Several extra fat black, permanent magic markers for writing race numbers. Sharpies work well too.

- Course map
- Water and refreshments are a welcome treat for the racers and volunteers, even if it is from a food truck.

Race organizers are not responsible for providing paddlers with any equipment such as vessels, paddles, PFD, or helmets. Check with your local canoe and kayak shop to inquire as to rental opportunities and possible discounts for those participating in your race and then pass that information on in your advertising. Do not rent vessels on behalf of your participants as this does become your liability. Some organizations do provide equipment to their safety crews, especially if you are putting two rescue people in a canoe that requires more safety equipment than the participants have.

### ***Publicity***

If no one knows your event exists....no one will come! The NECKRA newsletter (on-line publication) and website provide information to a group of experienced and dedicated paddlers but there may be others interested in participating. Posters and articles in your local papers and TV stations are great starts but in today's world its social media that gets it out there too.

Your small local newspapers can be a great way to not only get your participants but find volunteers. Be creative about your volunteer needs and mention specific needs. Posters at canoe and kayak shops are also a great way to get the information out or leave entry forms with them. The 'big box' sporting goods stores will also have areas for local events. Create an event on Facebook and be sure you leave the event open for people to share with others. Twitter is great and any TV or radio calendars are great places for advertising. If you are connected to a watershed, paddle club or other organization related to your body of water, connect with them for both participants and volunteers. Does the area have a tourism office? Be creative – there are many options for advertising and publicity.

Make sure your publicity has all the pertinent information: date, time, place, cost, where do they go “for more information”, who they can contact for questions, and finally give a good description of the event: Whitewater Canoe and Kayak Race – 12 miles of fast moving class II water. Two easy portages and one moderate portage exist.....the more information you can include the better. (See an example in the appendix).

The NECKRA racing calendar is put together in the fall. The race packet is finalized in early December, and printed in January. To be included, contact the NECKRA President the fall prior to your race. [www.NECKRA.org](http://www.NECKRA.org) and look under Board and Committee Members.

## ***Sponsors***

A race can be a costly event when we start adding up awards, insurance, and other incidentals. If you charge too much for your race, participation will be weak. If you charge too little, then you don't cover your cost. Look for sponsorship to help. Start with those in the business: canoe and kayak shops, sporting goods stores. Spread out from here to local businesses and organizations. Write a letter telling them why their dollars are needed. Ensure you promote your sponsors on your advertising, web site, at the pre-race meeting. Some sponsors might even want to set up tents to promote themselves. Most important – send them a thank you letter after your event with the highlights (number of participants, fastest time ever).

Shy away from gift certificate donations from local businesses unless you can use it for the race. It's of no use to a paddler who lives 100+ miles away to receive a \$15 gift certificate to the local diner. Chances are it won't be used but you might use it to provide coffee and donuts or sandwiches to your volunteers. One race receives apples and granola bars from their local grocer. A credit union in MA gives cases of bottled water with their logo on the bottles. These are great handouts for volunteers and racers and it saves you money.

See if your sponsor wants to enter a boat (themselves or employees). Dangle the carrot by stating that \$100 donation allows them to enter 2 participants at no cost. For \$250 you'll post their logo on the finish line and in your advertising. Be creative – be bold – but don't go broke!

Sponsors can give you more than money. The Blackstone River Watershed Association receives a donation annually from an organization called Alternatives (Alternatives offers residential and vocational services to people with developmental or psychiatric disabilities throughout Central Massachusetts). The donation from Alternatives is a 10 passenger van and the driver for 4 hours. The van is invaluable as it takes paddlers back to the starting line so they can retrieve their vehicles after the race. The van makes several trips in the 4 hour window but the driver gets praises from her passengers, and free lunch and a t-shirt from the watershed. The Watershed gives back to this sponsor by helping out with their fundraising events. It's all about helping one another and promoting your events.

## ORGANIZATION OF VOLUNTEERS

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Volunteers are the life line of the race! From planning to the cleanup after the race, you will need a dedicated crew. This can sometimes be the hardest part but here's a run-down of what you need:

- Registration people (3-4 at minimum)
- Timers (more discussion in the Timing section)
- Cleanup, pre-race and post-race; on land and on water (includes folks to set out and retrieve start/finish signs and any other buoys)
- Safety, both land and water
- Food/T-shirt or others to cover tables with wares for sale or for your organizations information
- If you have a parking lot where drop offs occur or space is tight have a parking attendant or two as well.

A pre-race meeting with your volunteers is recommended to ensure they understand their responsibilities, meet the others they will be working with, and in some cases see where they will physically be stationed and what will be expected of them. The pre-race meeting needs to be done a few weeks in advance (in case they chicken out and you need to re-organize or find new blood!). Some races (downriver) have volunteers who are stationed at portages and may or may not be there alone. In situations like this provide the volunteers with a small cooler of water and snacks and tell them to bring a good book and chair if there location tends to be slow (this would be for a long race where the person will be waiting awhile for the first boat). Also portage volunteers need to understand where they are directing people to and when they can leave their post (after the sweeper comes in). You can also have them count participants to ensure everyone has come through.

The better the expectations are set and the more information you can provide volunteers (and some snack incentives or a free t-shirt work too), the happier and more engaged they will be. They'll return next year and the learning curve lessens each time! Having experienced timers is extremely helpful!

## SAFETY

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There are several items to discuss in this section and there are differences between flatwater and downriver.

### ***Downriver Safety***

This is fast moving water in some, if not all parts of the river. The items below should not be considered “optional”. They should be mandatory. Many downriver races will exclude or remove participants if these rules are not followed. The key: you must have your rules clearly defined on your registration form and advertising. You must VERBALLY reinforce this at your pre-race safety meeting and you must check each and every paddler who enters your river for proper equipment. Failure to do so that results in an accident is your responsibility.

1. Set an age limit if you feel that you have a lot of class II water and above. There are some experienced 6 year olds out there who paddle with their parents each week, but you need a hard and fast rule. This is not the type of course to take an inexperienced child to ‘learn’ on. Your age and experience rule should be in writing on your registration form and your advertising. At registration don’t hesitate to ask the child, not the parent, “have you paddled often?”. Kids will tell you their experiences or you’ll spot their fear.
2. Kayakers are normally required to wear helmets – but again, you must state that. Recreational paddlers will not know this so make it clear. Some kayakers who don’t have ‘all the right gear’ will show up with football helmets or motorcycle helmets. Does it protect the head? Yes. Is it allowed? Yes.
3. PFDs are ALWAYS required to be worn. A PFD in the vessel is not enough especially in canoes where a tip over can wash the PFD away quickly. PFDs must be worn at all times! If you have an incident and the participant is not wearing their floatation device your insurance can deny coverage and you can open yourself and your organization up to legal impacts.
4. Drinking should not be tolerated. Many participants might be out there for fun but let’s think safety - drinking should not be tolerated. Again, your insurance may deny coverage if an injured paddler is found to have been drinking. A no tolerance statement should be on your advertising and your entry form. Save the beer for AFTER the race.
5. You have the right (and again put this in writing in your registration form) to deny someone participation to your race if you feel they are incapable or intoxicated. BUT....

I once thought that a particular ‘older’ couple wouldn’t be able to handle a long race with many portages. What a mistake! I went over to the couple and said hello and welcomed them to the race. I then asked “so what other events do you paddle”? Well

this couple is amazing – they paddle multiple times a week and they are experienced enough to know their limit. It would have been mud in my face had I turned them away. On the other hand I've told parents of small children to come back when the child had some experience with white water (or water in general). Don't let your race be the training ground for small children.

Pets are great! And some pets are seaworthy beings. What will you do if someone wants to race with their Labrador Retriever? The answer....we don't have an answer for that! There are several races where dogs participate (there is no special class for them) and it's ok. If you fear for the animal ask questions. Some paddlers have taken their pets on many runs so the animal is experienced but unfortunately we can't ask the pet!

### *Safety Crew*

Depending on how long your race is and what classes of water you should have adequate safety coverage.

1. Onshore – spotters should be placed where the white water or rough and dangerous spots are. Volunteers should be outfitted with either 2 way radios or cellphones and a list of who to call for help. Spotters should also be placed at portages and should be counting participants to ensure everyone has made it safely to that point. Onshore safety should be asking everyone if they are ok to continue. It is not unusual for an inexperienced paddler to be over their physical capability or limit, and sometimes if asked they will remove themselves from competition. If a spotter is concerned about a particular participant they should notify the sweeper or those in safety boats to keep an eye on that particular person.
2. Sweepers and safety boats are also required. Safety boats can be placed at rapids and other danger spots. The sweep boat(s) are the last to leave and follow the participants to ensure that no participant falls behind or is unaccounted for. The on-water safety crew should also have cellphones or two way radios. The sweeper should NEVER pass a participant unless they are going to assist another paddler. Safety boats can be placed after 1/3 or 1/2 of your participants have left the starting line so that the sweeper isn't so far behind. You are responsible for the safety of your participants.
3. Some towns or districts will require you to have emergency service vehicles on call. This is a cost to your organization but if you don't follow the rules of the towns in which you pass they will cause problems for you the next time you attempt to have an event. Always notify your local town officials and law enforcement for any laws/rules that you may not be aware of.

Paddle clubs and recreational paddlers are always willing to assist in safety – any excuse to be in the water is great for them. But you must reach out early and follow up to ensure you have adequate coverage.

## *Safety Meeting*

Before your participants enter the water you ***must*** have a race safety meeting. Verbally explain the rules and review the course emphasizing the hazard areas (a map is great for this). Have your safety crew walk through the crowd at this time to ensure everyone has their PFD, helmets (kayakers) and ensure that the participants look able and prepared. Have the safety crew look at the vessels going out: do they look safe or are they held together with duct tape? Are there beer cans in the vessels? Safety is your responsibility – take it seriously. This is your event and you have the right to turn people away if you have a concern.

Paddlers must understand that if there is a mishap it is their responsibility to assist a paddler in need. When they get to the finish, adjustments to time should be made. Safety is first and good sportsmanship always wins. If a paddler is reported to have passed by a person in need and not asked if assistance was needed the paddler can be given a DNQ finish for unsportsmanlike conduct. Specify this at your race meeting.

Be sure that some of your volunteers know basic first aid. We all like a safe race, but sometimes accidents happen. Make a list of the safety considerations and equipment and be sure you speak to each at your pre-race safety team meeting. Point out/introduce your safety team to the entrants and spectators. Some races provide orange or yellow vests to the safety volunteers so that participants and spectators know how to spot them.

## *Flatwater Safety*

There are safety considerations for flatwater races. They are not extensive, but they are important.

- Hold a pre-race meeting where the PFD policy is made clear, the course is explained and the racers are alerted to any hazards. See the NECKRA website ([www.NECKRA.org](http://www.NECKRA.org)) for Best Race Director Practices.
- PFDs should be worn by all paddlers under age 11 according to the US Coast Guard, unless otherwise specified by state law. Adults should wear PFDs in the early spring and late fall, per state laws and weather/water conditions (please check the laws in the state you are racing as each is different). Each adult paddler must have a readily available Coast Guard approved PFD in the boat if the PFD is not worn (that's one per person...not one per boat). Race directors may specify PFD use for older children, which is not a bad idea. The USCA requires that all boats have a pea-less whistle either in the boat or on the PFD of the paddler(s) for use in case of emergency. This is a very good idea.
- At the pre-race meeting, it should be made clear that during the course of the race, if any paddler indicates that she/he needs assistance, the other paddlers are obliged to provide this assistance.
- Race directors are strongly urged to take thunderstorm/lightning warnings into considerations before starting a race, and delay the start of the race. If such a storm

occurs during a race, following the instructions from the pre-race meeting, paddlers should get off the river immediately.

- Race directors should have a system for accounting for all racers, to be certain that everyone is off the course before the timers leave the finish line.

## Race Day Registration (and Pre-Registration)

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Many races allow for pre-registration in order to get a guesstimate of how many participants they will have. Rosemary finds that only the diehards who want the number 1 on their vessel register early. It does give you some cash flow though if you are in dire need. Pre-registration may be used as a promotion if, for example, a free T-shirt is given to the first 50 to register. And, those who are pre-registered help speed up the registration line (slightly) on race day. The information in the next sections could be used by any type of race.

### *Downriver Registration*

Before race day determine:

- How are you numbering your entrants? Most use class and then start with number 1 (C1, C2, etc. More will be discussed below)
- What side of the boat does the number need to be on so it can be easily read by the timers at the finish line?

Registration forms should ask for the following information:

- Full name
- Address
- Age (Age is used for Points Series tabulations.)
- Phone (optional)
- Emergency contact (optional)
- Racing class – list the class and ask for entrants to circle one or check a box
- If under 18 have a place for the parent or guardian to sign their permission. When in doubt of age – ask for ID.
- Hand out the insurance waiver at this time as well and ensure it is filled out properly.
- For tandem canoes and kayaks, one registration form is filled out by both racers. See Appendix I for examples of registration forms.

Registration can be massive confusion so try to create a setting where one table is handing out forms and explaining what's needed. Have more than 1 person there. The registration tables should be set up under a tent or shelter. Have a separate table with plenty of pens for people to fill out the forms. Have a third table where one person reviews the forms for completeness and one person handles money. Trust us – you need to have this streamlined in order to eliminate chaos! If a three table scenario doesn't work because of space limitations then a two table system also works well. The first table has a pile of the registration forms, a can of pens, and a pile of the insurance forms. Racers fill out these forms before proceeding to the second table.

As you receive your entry forms start logging in or creating your chart with the participants and their race numbers for purposes of timing. Separate your entry forms and insurance waivers as your turn around time to mail your waivers into the insurance agent is short.

Insurance forms ask the racer to print their name and address and then sign. Children fill out a separate form (or their parents do) and the parent/adult, signs the waiver. Each adult signs a separate waiver.

We find that having a canoe and kayak expert within a close range of the registration table also helps to take on many of the questions first timers might have about equipment, classes, or the body of water.

### *Flatwater Registration*

Many flat water races use the two table registration method. The first table has all of the forms, pens, etc. The second table has three chairs for the volunteers, placed behind it. The first registration person takes the registration and insurance forms, and copies the racer's name into the 3-ring binder registration book or computer program. (See below explanation for the 3-ring binder and computer registration systems.)

The second registration person sets the forms in a box and takes the race fee. The third registration person makes the race number on the pre-cut contact paper. Pre-registered racers check to see that their name is recorded, hand in their insurance form, and receive their number. Inform every racer which side of the boat their number should be placed.

### 3-ring binder/computer program system

**It is essential for the successful organization and timing of a flatwater race, that the letter/number system be used for race numbers.**

Each class is assigned a letter. A 3-ring binder with dividers with tabs, or an Excel file, is set up before race day. For the manual binder system, a page is set up for each class, with the name and letter of the class at the top. The tab on the divider page is marked for the class. The page for each class has a column running on the left for the letter/number of each boat in the class. For example: if A is the letter for C-1 man (one man in a singles canoe), the page for this class will have a column to the left for A-1, A-2, A-3 and so on. Next to each letter/number is the name of the racer or names of the racing team. To the right of the names is a column for Time. Next to that is a column for Adjusted Time.

**A Man, C-1**

<b>Number placed on boat</b>	<b>Racers Name</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Adjusted Time</b>
A1	John Smith	time from start	time minus time after first start (if the class is in a later start)
A2	James Doe		
A3	Howard Hughes		

If an Excel file is used, it is set up exactly as a manual system, using a letter to designate each class, and number to indicate the number of the boat in the class. Warning: If letters are not used to indicate the class, and racers are just assigned running numbers, there is no way at the end of the race to quickly figure out who is first, second, third, in any of the classes. The letter/number system is essential for successful race organization, and all kinds of messes have been created by race directors who have not used the letter/number system.

Downriver spreadsheets use a start time and end time column with a calculated time column as well in the event questions are asked.

## TIMING

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This is truly the most important part of the race! Paddlers – in particular those who race weekly – are the most competitive people AND every second for them counts!! You need to ensure you have several watches or time devices in the event batteries give out. Also ensure that all devices are in sync. How many people you need to time is truly based on several factors that will be defined below. Each timer should also have a specific task and stay to that task.

### ***Downriver***

A few things prior to how to time though:

- When you set up registration all numbers assigned to boats need to have been recorded.
- Do NOT try to look these numbers up as the boats come in. When timing boats at the finish line just write down the time and number. Have someone else then do the calculation of time or after the race enter the information into a spreadsheet or some other method of calculating.
- Have double checks in the entire process in the event you are challenged about the time.
- Each timer should have their own timing device. Someone needs to record this information as paddlers depart and arrive. The timers need to be uninterrupted and have their attention on the race details.

If your race is long enough that the timers (yes – at least 2 people) can get from start to finish before the first paddler comes in, then one set of timers is enough but.....based on how you start, you might need two sets of timers. Here's why:

- If you are going to start your race by individual – one person at a time – then have two sets of timers; one set at the starting line and one set at the finish line. Starting individually doesn't always allow the timers to get to the finish before the first paddler comes through if you have some fast paddlers. Never under estimate the racing paddlers!
- Mass starts – one set of timers should be enough to do a sendoff and get to the finish line. For mass starts you need a wide area for a starting line so that there aren't any fights for the front line. Paddlers will thin out as they move through the race course.
- Race class starts – these sometimes mandate multiple timers but sometimes not. When starting by class you need to ensure that you have ample time to get one class off but then get the next class staged to go, and leave somewhere between 1-3 minutes after the prior class. Think about how many classes you have and if you did 3 minutes apart – even 5 minutes apart – could your timers get to the finish line in

time. When starting by class the group **MUST** leave together. Multiple classes can be grouped if they can easily fit in the starting area but no individual should start in a class other than their own. If a racer starts out of class their time is disqualified.

### ***Flatwater***

As virtually all flatwater races have the same start and finish (except for a very few marathon races which are not the subject of our manual) timing is somewhat different from the downriver protocol.

- There will need to be three or four people involved with timing. Before the start of the race and based on the number of racers and the types of boats represented, the number of starts will be determined. If there are few boats, a mass start can occur. If, however, there are lots of boats and the start line is not wide enough to accommodate everyone, providing a fair start for all, two or more starts will be set up. Typically, all racing kayaks start together. The next start is tandem canoes. Single canoes start next, and the last start is recreational canoes and kayaks. This last start is often for a shorter distance than the racing class starts. Additional starts may be designated, but it gets complicated. Fewer starts represent fewer headaches. Drafting between classes is permitted, but it is the objective of the race director to ensure a fair start for everyone, and that slower, recreational boats are not overwhelmed by faster boats that are often racing in packs.
- Be sure to announce the starts and write down the intervals between starts. Commonly, 1 minute is allowed between starts, which mean that all racers should be ready to race following the on-water pre-race meeting.
- The person who does the pre-race meeting usually is the starter, using a bullhorn or whistle. Each group of boats in a start is lined up so that no one is significantly ahead of anyone else. Call back boats if there is start line hedging. In current, set up a buoyed pre-starting line and then call the racers to the start line just before the bullhorn/whistle goes off. This helps to control for “rolling starts”. Two stop watches are started exactly together with the start noise. Be careful to start each group exactly in accordance with your planned interval.
- The three people who are doing timing have the following task division:
  - One person will be the spotter, and look up from the finish line as boats near, and call out the number of the boat.
  - Another person will then write down the number on a lined sheet of paper (use more than one sheet of paper), being careful to get the order correct. Group finishes are difficult. The third person calls out the finish time, for the second person to write after their boat number. (If you can scratch down a name in addition to a number, every now and again, it helps in the off-chance that there is confusion after the end of the race.) Times are recorded to the second, and sometimes to the partial second, when there is a group finish. Call to the racers in the event of a group finish where the timers are not absolutely sure who finished first or second or whatever. The racers will know! If using a stopwatch

that has a paper printer, a fourth person can stand with the others, and punch the stopwatch as every racer crosses the finish line. This will produce a running list of the times of finishers which can then be matched with the boat numbers. A printer stopwatch is great, but one must be sure that the batteries are fresh. There must always be back-up timing.

After the race, when all racers are accounted for, the timers will record the times of each competitor on the sheets in the 3-ring binder or on the Excel spread sheet. If there is quite a long time between the finishers, someone can take the first timing sheets and start to record in the binder or on the spreadsheet. This speeds up the results calculations. The completed binder sheets can then be posted on the results board with duck tape, or the printed sheets can be posted. It is a good idea to post results before the awards ceremony, so that racers can check out their times, and any discrepancies can be discussed with the timers before the awards.

To make the point again, it is crucial that the time for each racer is correct. For someone who has traveled far and raced for all they are worth, they should and do expect correct times.

## RESULTS/AWARDS

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As soon as a paddler is finished with the race all they care about is how fast they were and where they finished in their class. This is where your timers need protection. Unless the race is completely finished try posting times/results away from the timers so that they are not distracted by participants for this information. Turning away from the task at hand for one question could jeopardize someone else's time.

Results can be posted in a couple of ways for downriver:

- By class with the participants in order of finish
- Overall with race class and participant number noted
- Having a chart drawn out by class and filling the chart in as the race is taking place allows you and the participants the ability to see how many participants have finished and how many are still left on the water. Also your participants are busy watching for their number to be posted and they aren't pestering the timers!

Results for flatwater are always posted by class.

### *Awards*

Awards are typically handed out to the top 3 in each racing class. The race director might want to consider calling out the names of every participant in a class, with their time, even though not everyone might receive an award. More than anything else, racers appreciate acknowledgement by their peers that they tried their hardest. Having each name called up gives the group of paddlers the opportunity to give a hand to everyone. Many flatwater races give some award to every participant. You should build the awards into your race fee structure. If food is provided for all racers, and their families/friends, build this cost into your fee structure as well. Here is where sponsorship is a blessing!

Awards can be ribbons, trophies, plaques, monetary awards or whatever your group can afford. Many races have a limited budget and go for ribbons. Go with what you can truly afford. If your race reaches a milestone (5, 10, 15 years) splurge that year but don't break your budget over this.

## SUGGESTED AFTER-RACE GATHERING

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Canoe and kayak racing in New England is really an opportunity for paddle sport racers of many stripes to come together to race and to socialize with each other. A race is a gathering for great sports competition and for enjoying the company of ones like-minded friends. It's a great way to learn to race better, smarter, and a great place to meet new paddlers. Paddlers will travel considerable distances to race, and generally appreciate the opportunity to hang around after a race, and just enjoy each other's company for a while.

If you can arrange for an after-race gathering, this is great. It does not have to be elaborate or expensive. Having beverages and fruit or other snacks and some shade is plenty. Some race directors arrange a barbecue or some other kind of feed, and build the cost into the race fee. Others have food vendors available and each is responsible for their own. Whatever can be done, is appreciated, and enhances the sense of community, which is an important part of canoe and kayak racing.

Keep reading – we aren't done yet!

## POSTING OF RESULTS ON NECKRA PADDLERSCONNECTION

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The point has been made in earlier sections that racers are intensely interested in their race times and the race times of their fellow competitors. They like to have time to study everyone's race times. People who cannot make a particular race enjoy seeing the results of the race they missed posted on PaddlersConnection and the NECKRA website.

If a race is in the NECKRA Points series ***results must be posted within a day or two of the race*** so that points can be tabulated and kept up-to-date. If a race director can post the race results the evening of the race they will be adored! Next day is good too. Not so much every day results postings are delayed. A race director might consider asking the least exhausted race volunteer to plan on posting results.

Post complete results by class, with full names and accurate times on PaddlersConnection. If you are not already a member of this paddler e-group, go to [www.NECKRA.org](http://www.NECKRA.org) and you will find the instructions for becoming a member.

Alternatively, if you do not wish to be on this e-group, you should contact the NECKRA points tabulator for Downriver or Flatwater, or the NECKRA President. This can be found on the NECKRA website under Board and Committee Members.

Remember to also post results in your local newspaper sport sections. The New England Newspapers Association maintains contact information for all newspapers in our area. <http://www.nenpa.com/story/new-england-newspapers>

## APPENDIX I

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**Example of a flatwater race registration form: this form is used for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Canoe and Kayak Race that is put on by Priscilla and Terje Reinertsen.**

### 4<sup>th</sup> of July Canoe and Kayak Race

July 4 Contoocook, NH **Registration:** 9:30 – 10:45 Start Time: 11:00 Distance: 5 miles, all classes

Course: Upstream to a buoy, just above the yellow farm, and back. Downstream to a buoy just below finish line. Turn and finish upstream between the shore and the finish buoy.

**Name, address, age** (Age necessary for Points Series tabulation.)

Paddler 1. \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Paddler 2 \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

**Classes:** circle one; we will make classes as appropriate so that peers race with peers.

#### Recreational

C-2 Women

C-2 Men

C-2 Mixed

C-2 Adult/Youth (16 yrs. or under & 30 yrs. or older)

Other: Please talk with us. We are happy to make additional classes.

#### Racing

C-2 Women C-2 Masters, Mixed K-1 Open (Unlimited)

C-2 Men C-1 Woman K-2

C-2 Mixed C-1 Man Other: Please talk

C-2 Adult/Youth C-1 Master Woman with us.

C-2 Masters, Women C-1 Master Man

C-2 Masters, Men K-1 Touring

This is a downriver 2 page (double sided) entry form



**Blackstone River Watershed Association**  
**35<sup>th</sup> Annual Canoe & Kayak Race**  
508-278-520    291 Oak Street, Uxbridge, MA 01569    info@thebrwa.org  
**SATURDAY, MAY 21, 2011**

This is a 12 mile race for all classes with the starting line in South Grafton. The finish line is at River Bend Farm, Uxbridge, MA. If water levels are excessive, the BRWA reserves the right to change the location of the finish line and the length of the race. All racers will be notified of any changes as the race nears. Points for the NECKRA and the New England Downriver Championship series will be awarded for all classes. After the race there will be food, music, an award ceremony, as well as other family activities.

**WARNING: This race is NOT for inexperienced paddlers. There are 4 portages. This is not the same as lake or pond paddling!**

Registration is at the starting line between 9:30 and 10:30 a.m. – no registrants accepted after 10:30 a.m.

Race starts at **11:00 a.m.** sharp. Paddlers must be in the river by 10:45 a.m.

Starting Location: Route 122A (53 Main Street, South Grafton, MA), north of the Blackstone River bridge in South Grafton, MA across from the old Fisherville Mill site (there is no mill – it burned down!)

You have the option of pre-registering by mail and receiving a free T-Shirt if your registration is received by April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2011.



**Registration Form    Tear this form off at the line above and fill out both sides.**

Paddler # 1 \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_  
State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Email \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Adult \$20.00  
\_\_\_\_\_ Youth \$15.00  
\_\_\_\_\_ T-shirt M L XL XXL

Paddler #2 \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_  
State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Email \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Adult \$20.00  
\_\_\_\_\_ Youth \$15.00  
\_\_\_\_\_ T-shirt M L XL XXL

\* Please provide email so we can alert you of changes or important information!!!!

\_\_\_\_\_ If you are interested in shuttle service from the finish line to your starting point, please check here.

## Rules and Regulations

- Entrants must be over 10 years of age in order to participate. Entrants between 10-15 years of age MUST paddle with a guardian 21 or older. 16-18 may paddle tandem with another in that age bracket. A legal guardian MUST be available at the starting line and finish line and MUST sign the insurance form.
  - Paddlers must wear a USCG-approved personal flotation device (PFD) at all times on the river. Anyone observed not wearing a PFD during the race will be disqualified. Helmets are not required. Paddlers must provide their own equipment.
  - Spotters and safety crews will remove anyone from the race not in safety gear, with alcohol, or viewed as a danger to themselves or others.
  - Participants are not allowed to “swap” out paddling partners during a race. If you start with a vessel you must finish in the same vessel and with the same paddling partner.
  - All Kevlar boats must register in their appropriate racing classes. There will be no special classes for straight versus bent shaft paddles.
  - Racers should be experienced and have good paddling skills to join in this race!
  - Racers must remain on the natural course of the river. Canal sections are off limits, except for the quarter mile section along the west bank of Rice City Pond and the one mile section which leads to the finish line.
  - The waterfall under Hartford Ave is off limits to all racers. Racers must enter under the Stone Arch Bridge at river-right. The wide spillway beyond may be run or portaged.
    - The river can be quite challenging! Inexperienced river paddlers should not participate.
    - Beware of fallen trees in the river usually found on outside turns. These can be very difficult to get out of and are potentially dangerous. Use caution when approaching blind corners and leave plenty of room between yourself and obstructions.
- **No alcohol is permitted at any time.**

*Pre-registration forms and payments must be received no later than April 30th, otherwise please hold your registration and payment until the day of the race.*

Blackstone River Canoe / Kayak Race  
Blackstone River Watershed Association  
271 Oak Street  
Uxbridge, MA 01569  
Telephone (508) 278 5200 www.thebrwa.org

*For more information, to participate, or to volunteer please contact Rosemary Longo at [roseisarose@hotmail.com](mailto:roseisarose@hotmail.com) or go to <http://www.thebrwa.org>*

Registration Form Side 2

### Circle your event class:

#### KAYAK CLASS - 12 MILES

- A K1 Short 13' 2" or less Men
- B K1 Long > 13'2" Men
- C K1 Short 13' 2" or less Women
- D K1 Long > 13'2" Women
- E K2 Tandem
- F Grand Master (> 50 years old)

#### CANOE CLASS - 12 MILES

- N OC1 Solo (includes Kevlar boats)
- O OC2 Tandem Racing (includes Kevlar boats)
- P Recreational Tandem Men
- Q Recreation Tandem Women
- R Recreational Tandem Mixed
- S Recreational Tandem Adult/Youth (youth 10-16 with adult over 21)
- T Recreational Tandem Youth (ages 15 - 18)
- U Recreational Masters (each paddler must be 50 or older)

This is an example of a checklist used to ensure organization and that tasks are completed. It doesn't copy and paste well so if you would like a working copy please email Rosemary at [roseisarose@hotmail.com](mailto:roseisarose@hotmail.com).

	RACE DAY	Friday	Saturday						
	19-May	18-May	12-May	April	March	February	January	December	
Notify starting line land owner of race date							as soon as you know where you're going to start		Change the dates and column A tasks to work for you. This is a good tool when you need to pass this to someone else too!
Notify mill owners/land owners about race date						1st week			In your case - this is where your race starts and ends. Ensure everyone who needs to know is notified.
Notify Police Departments				end of month					If you think you need a permit or patrol do this earlier.
Post with NECKRA								done	This was done in December and is usually a December task to ensure you keep your date.
Permit for River Bend Farm w/DCR							now		Do you need permits for your park??
Acquire Insurance Certificate							between now and march		First you need to become a member of the USCA in order to obtain the membership - it needs to be in someone's name and make sure you note that you're a 'race sponsor'. Then print off the doc and fill it in. guesstimate #s.....like 50 racers. They'll reimburse you if there are less and you pay actuals within 15 days (or so) after the race. See if you also need a liability certificate for the park where you are starting and ending.

## APPENDIX II

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### *Websites of interest*

New England Canoe and Kayak Racing Association: [www.NECKRA.org](http://www.NECKRA.org)

United States Canoe Association: [www.usca.org](http://www.usca.org) This organization can provide insurance.

USCA WorldWide Paddling Event Calendar: as above. See link on USCA website

[www.americancanoe.org/](http://www.americancanoe.org/) This organization can provide insurance. See the ACA website.