

Paddling Trip Guidance

Background

The River Town Program hosted a total of 5 paddling trips on the Mon—

- June 8, 2012- Rices Landing to Fredericktown w/side trip up Ten Mile Creek; lunch at Greene Cove Marina
- October 20, 2012- Point Marion to Greensboro w/side trip up Dunkard Creek; lunch at Two Rivers Marina
- May 25, 2013- Point Marion to Greensboro w/side trip up Dunkard Creek; lunch, purchased from Apple Annie's, at northern bank of Dunkard where it meets the Mon
- August 17, 2013- Brownsville to California w/side trip up Redstone Creek; no lunch provided, due to short distance
- September 7, 2013- North Charleroi to Monongahela; lunch at Webster (former boat club launch), purchased from Little City Coffee

General Tips

- Offer lots of water, snacks, and other beverages.
- Bring lots of extra sunblock. People will need it and not realize it until they're out on the water.
- Make sure each person is safely off of the water. We handed out t-shirts and information packets with each person's name on them at the final take out as a way of making sure every got off the water.
- We had people fill out the waivers at the start of the trip but it was confusing and took a lot of time. One suggestion on the participant surveys was to email the waivers ahead of time so that people could complete them and bring them with them.
- Navigational charts of the river are provided by Army Corps of Engineers at <http://www.boatpittsburgh.com/page-navigation-charts.aspx> (to gauge mileage between points).
- If using Fish & Boat Commission ramps for put-in or take-outs, all boats *must* have registration or a use permit. Learn more at <http://fishandboat.com/faqreg.htm>

Safety/Insurance

- Make sure you have liability insurance for trip. We recommend the relatively inexpensive insurance offered through American Canoe Association. You may be able to piggyback on the POWR (Pennsylvania Organization for Watersheds and Rivers) policy.
- Create a safety plan that specifies how you will address problems if they arise; see sample.
- The Izaak Walton League, Harry Enstrom Chapter also has safety guidelines for the paddling trips they lead that would be a good model.
- Contact local emergency responders to let them know the event is happening; see sample.

- We recommend a ratio of one safety boater for every seven participants. All safety boaters should have, at a minimum, current First Aid and CPR certification. At least one safety boater should have Wilderness First Responder certification. At least one safety boater should have training and experience in “boat over boat” rescue.
- For trips longer than a few hours, it is a good idea to have a staff person on land with a reliable vehicle to pick up any paddlers who get sick or get wet/cold, etc. In case of a true emergency, an ambulance should be called, but the staff vehicle can be used to transport people who need to be off of the water but are not a medical emergency. This staff person can also set-up and tear down any lunch stops or breaks and can deliver cold water and snacks to the final takeout.

Outfitter

- For all of these trips we worked with Wilderness Voyageurs out of Ohiopyle, PA. They provided a River Guide with wilderness first responder training, a shuttle van, and equipment rental (kayaks and canoes; paddles; PFDs).
- Cost of equipment rental was \$15/person.
- They charged \$125 for the guide and \$75 for transportation.
- At the time we scheduled our trips, we couldn’t find a closer outfitter to work with, but Northeast Paddle Sports at the Greene Cove Marina might be able to provide equipment for future paddling trips.

Shuttle

- Participant surveys consistently indicate that the shuttle is one of the most appealing parts of the trip, allowing paddlers to do a “point-to-point” trip.
- For River Town Program trips, we sometimes shuttled at the beginning, sometimes at the end, depending on which location had more available parking and restrooms.
- When possible, it seems as though having people park at the end point and shuttle to the start is more popular.
- Those bringing their own equipment will have to drop it off at the start point, then drive to the end and park their vehicle.

Costs/Budget

- In the past, POWR and DCNR have provided mini-grants for sojourns that range from \$500-\$900/ trip
- Learn more at www.pawatersheds.org
- The costs of the trips can be highly variable, depending on whether you provide lunch, t-shirts, etc. and depending on how much you charge people to participate. For the trips the River Town Program sponsored, registration fees were \$10-20/adult and \$5-15/child, depending on the length of the trip.
- The cost of providing the trip was on average \$31-33/participant. This includes all costs *except* staff time.
- Examples of costs included are outfitter services; kayak rental for staff; water, Gatorade, and snacks; lunch; ice; rental van; gasoline; t-shirts; and ACA one-day liability insurance.

- For all trips, businesses sponsorships ranging from \$20-50 helped to offset costs.

Educational Presentations

- Participant surveys consistently ranked the educational presentations as a favorite part of the trips.
- Presentations might highlight history of region, water quality issues, trees and vegetation of the area, or wildlife.
- All educational presenters used by the River Town Program donated their time. We generally provided them with lunch and/or a t-shirt as a thank you.

Staffing

- In addition to the on-the-water safety staff, you will need staff/volunteers to run registration, set-up lunch, take photos, help paddlers get on and off the water, etc.
- Attached is a sample task list for a River Town Program paddling trip. We have found it is important to tell volunteers/staff what their role will be *prior* to the trip, so that they are prepared.