

# Frequently Asked Questions



## Beginner/Intermediate Paddle Trips for Canoes and Kayaks on the Monongahela River & Tributaries

June 2012

Paddling on the Mon between Point Marion and Greensboro PA, September 2011: L-R daughter, mother, and dog.

### Q. Who is sponsoring the trips?

A. The Izaak Walton League of America (IWLA) - Harry Enstrom, Greene County, PA Chapter is the main sponsor, via their new Pedlar's Paddlers Club. Some trips may be co-hosted by nearby communities or non-profits.

### Q. Why are these trips being organized? What are the vision, mission, goal, and objectives?

A. VISION- The vision is a self-sustaining series of easy river paddling events with numerous and diverse people sharing the social and learning experience that being close to the water provides. These experiences will lead to caring and active stewardship of the river, and hopefully membership in IWLA or other environmental advocacy organizations.

MISSION- The mission is simply to create paddling trips in order to encourage more people to enjoy paddling the local rivers safely and to learn about our rivers, our river towns, and how to set up and guide a paddling trip of their own. It is a highly social river outings program with environment and nature themes for discussion.

GOAL- The goal is to use the river paddling as a means of engaging all ages to interact in multi-generational and multi-cultural experiences together, creating a shared memorable experience each time. These trips are set up to be self-sufficient, fun, and exploratory trips.

OBJECTIVES- 1) Starting in the fall of 2012, one to two paddling trips each month during the paddling season will be coordinated, promoted, and implemented by a collaboration of organizations.

2) Leadership of the trips is maintained by members of IWLA's Paddling Club.

3) Hands-on training will allow and encourage new paddlers to lead their own trips.

### Q. What is the cost?

A. These trips are insured by Paddle America Club (PAC) and are provided at **no cost** to American Canoe Association (ACA) members. **The cost for non-members is \$5/trip**, payable at the launch site with cash (preferred) or check (made out to ACA). A waiver form must be signed upon arrival. You may fill this out in advance by downloading it from this website: [http://www.americancanoe.org/?page=Insurance\\_PAC](http://www.americancanoe.org/?page=Insurance_PAC).

Memberships to ACA can be obtained online or at the paddling event, as part of the waiver form and fee. You may join ACA at a discount as a PAC member of the "PEDLAR'S PADDLERS OF HARRY ENSTROM CHPTR OF IWLA". <http://www.americancanoe.org/>

### Q. What do I need to bring with me?

A. Participants must bring their own canoes or kayaks and paddles. **Each person must have a personal flotation device (PFD) life jacket.** You should also bring the following:

Sunblock	Snacks	Carabiner or Rope to secure your gear to your boat
Sunglasses	Drinking Water	Dry Bag (or use an old backpack with plastic garbage bag liner)
Sun hat	Personal Comforts	Toilet paper or paper towels in zip-lock bag
Change of clothes		

**Optional:** Plastic garbage bags to put river trash in  
Waterproof camera

Q. What type of clothing should I wear?

A. Dress for the weather & water! Anytime the water is less than 60 degrees, or the combined air/water temperature is less than 120 degrees, you should wear a wetsuit or other acceptable clothing such as neoprene. If you don't have a wetsuit or neoprene, wear polypropylene, wool, or fleece so you stay warm even if you get wet. Bring windbreakers or raincoats and wind/rain pants that will keep you warm if it's windy out or if you get wet. Bringing gloves made of neoprene, fleece, polypropylene, wool, or silk, and not of cotton or leather, is recommended if it is cold enough.

Quick-dry and moisture wicking materials are best. Accidents do happen, and you should be prepared to get wet, flip over, or go into the water. If you wear cotton, bring a change of clothes with you in the boat as cotton does not dry quickly, and you will get cold fast.

On hot summer days, a swim suit under shorts and short sleeve shirt is good. Bring sunscreen.

Footwear: Depending on weather, wear or bring shoes that can get wet, or sandals with heel straps. Some people wear neoprene "booties" to keep feet warm. There will likely be instances where you have to walk your boat, or get in/out of your boat in wet areas.

Put extra clothing in a dry bag (a waterproof, lined backpack or sealable bag) that you can bring with you attached to your boat with a quick-release carabiner and rope. Also, be sure to bring a change of clothes to leave in your car.

Q. What about toilet facilities?

A. Come to the put-in already toileted! There might not be flush toilet facilities available. We strive to practice Leave No Trace (LNT) ethics <<http://www.lnt.org>>, so "pack it in – pack it out", no littering. Bring your own toilet paper or paper towel in a sealable plastic bag, and use the woods if need be. When pulling over to shore while on the trip, be aware that most of the land along the river is private, and you would not want to trespass!

Q. Are boat permits required?

A. In PA, law requires a *Use (Boat Launch) Permit* or *PA Boat Registration* on the canoe/kayak to use PA Fish & Boat Commission launch sites (i.e. Point Marion Park). If you don't have either of these boat-specific stickers, you can still put in at the park but cannot use the launch ramp.

Visit <http://www.fish.state.pa.us/registration.htm> for more information. The 2 options are a bit confusing, but both are \$18 for 2 years. The yellow *Launch Permit* sticker allows you legal access to the PFBC launch ramps, has a very simple application, is \$10 for 1 year or \$18 for 2 years, and expires end of December <<https://www2.pa.wildlifelicense.com/start.php>>. The green *PA Boat Registration* sticker also gives you legal access to their launches, but in addition, it helps the PFBC locate a lost or stolen boat using the identifier number, and they send you a renewal notice every 2 years, which expires end of March <<http://www.fish.state.pa.us/boatreg.pdf>>.

In WV, there are no permits required for canoes & kayaks. However, to use PFBC launch ramps, you must have a PA permit.

Q. What time does the trip leave and return?

A. Meeting times are variable and subject to change, but we generally meet at the put-in by 10 am on Saturdays or 2 pm on Sundays. Trips are generally about 4 miles long. We will generally be on the water for about 2 to 3 hours, and the trips may take a total of 5 hours including shuttles. Please try to be early, so you can assess the conditions, re-consolidate your gear, and be ready by the start time.

Q. Do I have to RSVP?

A. No, it is not required, but it would be greatly appreciated. Call or email if you are planning to attend so we know how many people to expect at the meeting place, and we will wait for you. Also, there may be details that you need in advance for trip planning and directions to the put in. In addition, there may be instances (such as low water or thunderstorms) where the trip is cancelled, so we need to know how to contact you.

Q. How do I apply to participate?

A. Call or send us an email with the following information: name, address, phone number(s), email address, previous paddling experience, transferable river skills and expertise, special training or certifications, any medical/health issues, and fears/concerns. Everyone must sign a waiver form upon arrival in order to participate.

Q. Are children allowed to participate?

A. Yes! Children under the age of 18 must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian – they are encouraged to join us!

Q. Does anyone have liability insurance covering the trips?

A. Yes, the "PEDLAR'S PADDLERS OF HARRY ENSTROM CHPTR OF IWLA" holds liability insurance in the case of injuries or death. Participants must sign the waiver form, and pay \$5 if you are a non-member of ACA. Trip leaders are not liable for loss, injury, or death.

Q. What are the safety ground rules?

A. The following must be abided by in order to be covered by the liability insurance:

- 1) No alcohol or illegal substances permitted.
- 2) You must wear an appropriate PFD (personal flotation device).
- 3) All participants must sign the waiver form.

Q. What are the river conditions where we will be paddling, and skill levels needed?

A. The Monongahela River is a nice easy river of flowing flatwater, with "pools" backed up between locks and dams, moving at a speed of about 2 miles per hour. You can easily paddle up or down stream. On the Mon, there could be barges or other motor boats to watch for, and you need to be mindful of their wakes. We will be staying close to shore and out of the shipping channel. When crossing the river, look both ways often. Barges are very quiet and can be on top of you before you know it. They cannot stop or turn very quickly at all, and often they cannot see a small paddler. Being struck by a barge would almost certainly mean death, so be very careful and pay attention! It is illegal for motor boats to zoom by within 50' of paddlers. We recommend that paddlers make an effort to stay out of the way of all motor boaters.

The Cheat River by Point Marion is similar to the Mon, in that you can paddle up and downstream, however it is much more dangerous 3 miles upstream by the dam, because the water can rise quickly with very little notice depending on the releases from the power company.

Other streams we paddle, such as Dunkard Creek and Ten Mile Creek, are Class I flowing water, with some riffles, bridges, rocks, downed trees and other obstacles.

All trips are for beginning paddlers, and are on Class I-II rivers.

**Class I:** Very small rough areas, requires no maneuvering. (Skill Level: None)

**Class II:** Some rough water, maybe some rocks, small drops, might require maneuvering. (Skill Level: Basic Paddling)

Q. What happens if there is an emergency?

A. The trip leaders will have a first aid kit for people to use, but they are not trained as an EMT or Wilderness First Responder. Everyone must be self-responsible, so bring what you think you might need for your own comfort and safety. There is safety in a group if everyone agrees to watch out for and help each other. We will have lead and sweep safety paddlers (John, Peggy, and a few others), but if you dash off ahead of the group, you are pretty much on your own and we frown on this action. We go as fast as the slowest paddler like other outing clubs do.

Since we will be paddling as a group, please follow the guidance of the organizers and on-water guides, in order to assure a safe and pleasant experience for all. Listen carefully to the pre-trip instructions, and follow the hand, voice, paddle, or whistle signals. We want to start and end as a group, and not lose track of anyone in the process!

Q. Who is leading the trips, and what are their credentials?

A. There are two trip leaders, both of whom have Blue Cards from the PA Fish & Boat Commission, indicating that they have completed the Boating Safety Education Course. These courses are recommended for all paddlers to complete <<http://www.fish.state.pa.us/98boatco.htm>>. They are both actively pursuing additional training to develop instructor, rescue, and first aid skills.

**Peggy Pings** <mpings@wvu.edu>

Core, WV

304.879.5622 home

304.282.7464 cell (no signal at home)

**John Yesenosky** <justyjohn1@yahoo.com>

Garards Fort, PA

724.966.7367 home



September 2011 group of paddlers on the Mon River at Point Marion PA.