

Summer 2021

Washington Canoe Club

CURRENTS



Photo by Bill Woodruff

Hi everyone and welcome to our Summer 2021 issue of *Currents*!

In this issue, we have lots of great and timely content:

- A friendly reminder to complete the boathouse restoration campaign feasibility survey by June 30
- An important update on the boathouse rehabilitation by **David Cottingham**
- An introduction to our wonderful summer Club Steward **Erin Rhodes**
- A timely reminder about Club rules
- Information about The Prone Paddleboard Sessions offered by **Kathy Summers**
- A great story about the WCC “Junior Flatties” taking on the Potomac’s rapids by **Elizabeth Pennisi**
- An important reminder about how to Paddle Smart and Safe on the Potomac
- An introduction to some new members
- Updates on buildings and grounds
- Team announcements - Novice Night is back!!!

and more!

If you’d like to join our newsletter team or have a contribution idea, just shoot us an [email](#).

Just a quick technical note, dear readers... Gmail “clips” email messages that it deems too “content-heavy” – which this newsletter certainly is! So make sure that when you come to what you might think is the end of the newsletter, you click on “view entire message.” You will know you’ve come to the end when you get to the shout-out!

News and Information

Have a say in the future of YOUR Club. Please complete the boathouse restoration campaign feasibility survey by June 30!

As you know, we are in the process of exploring a capital campaign to fund the long-awaited restoration of our boathouse. A survey went out to our current and past members to ask for feedback and guidance on our Club, the restoration, and potential campaign involvement. If you haven't done so yet, please participate in this effort by: (1) reading the [Case for Support](#), which outlines the proposed campaign, and (2) completing a brief online [survey](#).

Thank you!



June 2021 Update on Boathouse Rehabilitation

by David Cottingham

Over the past several months, your Boathouse Rehabilitation Committee has been working diligently on the renovation plans of our iconic boathouse, and we have some exciting progress to report. We have focused most of our attention on the reviews of our plans with the National Park Service (NPS), as well as with DC regulatory and historic review agencies. These reviews – which focus largely on the structural upgrades and exterior shell of the Boathouse – are an essential first step to secure alignment and approvals at the “concept level” before proceeding with the detailed design, and are all proceeding apace!

We presented our plans to NPS and the DC historic review agencies (the Old Georgetown Board, the Commission on Fine Arts, and the DC Historic Preservation Office) in December 2020. Based on discussions and feedback from these agencies, we have significantly revised the planning and construction schedule as well as the building and site plans themselves. At present, we are preparing packages of revised building and site plans to submit to NPS and the DC review agencies.

WCC's capacity to do the work described below will only be possible if our fundraising efforts succeed!

If you haven't completed the [fundraising survey](#) yet, please do so promptly and generously pledge your support for the project!



Figure 1. Perspective of newly renovated boathouse focusing on East Bay. Note the three bay doors and standard pedestrian access door to the boat storage area, balcony on second floor, three dormers, and new stairs to second floor rooms.

DESIGN AND PLANNING UPDATE

Revised Phasing Plan

The plans for the physical structure of the exterior haven't changed much since our last report (see [Early Winter 2020 Currents](#)), but the project phasing has. We have now combined what used to be Phase 1 (raise the west bay and center of the building, stabilize the foundation, and secure the building envelope) and Phase 2 (demolish and rebuild the east bay) into revised Phase 1. By accomplishing all of this work at the same time in revised Phase 1, we will greatly improve the building's stability and flood resiliency, as well as regain functional space in the boathouse sooner, providing:

- Critical structural work on the foundation, walls, drainage systems, and roof
- Increased boat storage with access to the entire ground level
- Access to men's and women's locker rooms with toilets and showers
- A food preparation area on the second floor
- Meeting/gathering area with balcony overlooking the river on the second floor
- Weight training room on the first floor
- Improved building accessibility
- Improved security and fire suppression throughout the building

The revised Phase 2 will be similar to plans we presented earlier as Phase 3, and will include primarily interior renovations to the ballroom and the old men's locker room.

Site Utilization Plan

WCC hired Rhodeside & Harwell Inc., a landscape architecture firm, to evaluate the site and develop a site utilization plan. Our site presents many challenges, including the alignment of outdoor boat storage structures and access to the dock ramps from the boathouse once we raise the boathouse ground floor level 14 to 18 inches (see Figure 2). Rhodeside & Harwell Inc. has presented several alternatives that we intend to analyze soon with civil engineers and NPS.

Interior Planning

We are also developing our interior space planning, and we will provide details soon on opportunities for membership engagement as this planning develops.

NPS AND HISTORIC AGENCY REVIEWS

All of our plans undergo extensive review, as discussed above, first by NPS and then by review agencies. We recently met with the historic agencies and NPS and based on those

discussions, we revised some of our earlier plans and developed the revised phasing plan, set forth above.

We also contracted with EHT Traceries, a local historic restoration firm that specializes in projects like ours, to assist us through the detailed review process, which includes complying with the National Historic Preservation Act, National Environmental Policy Act, and other regulatory programs. Traceries is close to finalizing an “historic structure report” of the boathouse. This report assesses boathouse critical historical characteristics and recommends rehabilitation measures and will be a key document as NPS and WCC continue to consult with DC historic review agencies and interested parties.

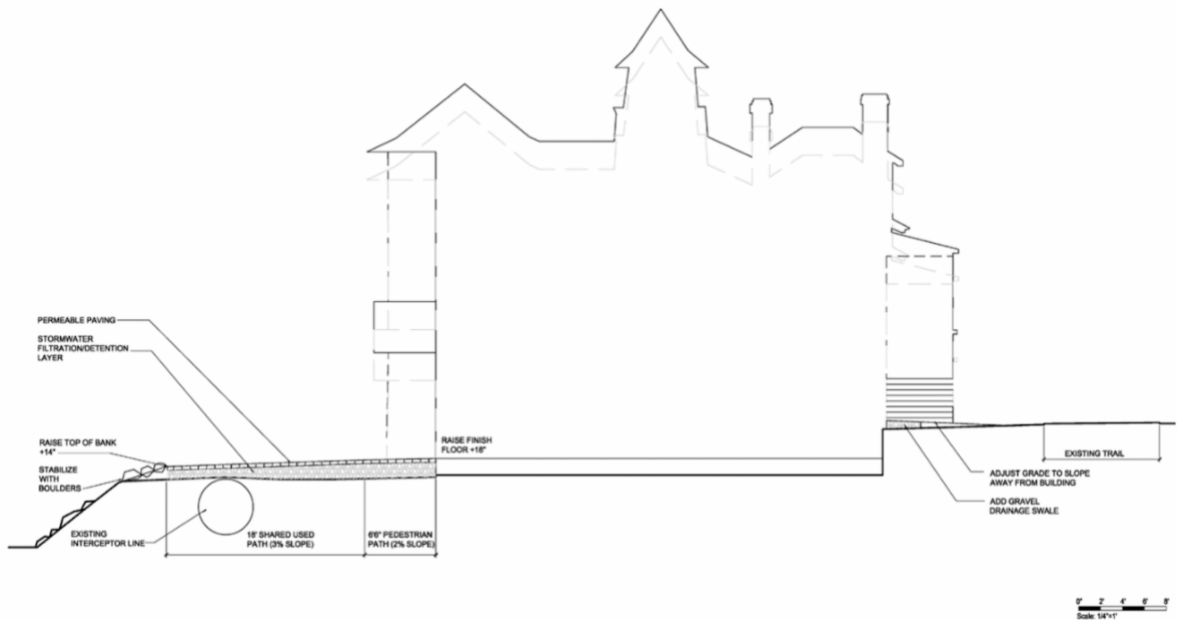


Figure 2. Cross-section of rehabilitated boathouse showing access to dock ramps across the concrete apron from the raised boathouse.

SCHEDULE

Our Traceries team has worked with us at the Boathouse Rehabilitation Committee to prepare an aggressive review schedule that calls for us to submit “concept-level plans” to historic review agencies over this summer and early fall. We are very happy to report that NPS has approved the concept-level plans already. Our hope is to gain historic review agency and “consulting party” approval of our concept plans by late fall.

Once we have these approvals, the architect, engineering, and landscape architect teams will develop “construction documents” for us to submit to the DC Office of Regulatory Affairs for an actual building permit. We intend to submit those documents to this Office in early (February/March) 2022, and will use these documents to solicit construction bids.

We anticipate being ready to start construction in late (October/November) 2022 at the earliest. This projection is heavily dependent on receiving agency approvals and permits, as well as success with fundraising efforts.

The phasing would place much of the work during the winter “off season,” when fewer members use the Club. We anticipate that construction would likely take at least nine months. We will direct the construction company to do what it can to minimize disruption to WCC members’ activities during construction (although we anticipate that some short-

term interruptions to our paddling and socializing activities will be inevitable when the construction is underway).

FUNDRAISING

We have also been coordinating with the WCC Fundraising Committee to secure the funds we anticipate needing for the project (\$3 million for Phase 1 and \$5 million for the entire project).

Once again– if you haven't completed the [fundraising survey](#) yet, please do so promptly – and generously pledge your support for the project!

From the editors: We extend our heartfelt thanks and appreciation to everyone on the Boathouse Rehabilitation Committee: Co-chairs David Cottingham and Christie Ciabotti; Members Kate Mooney, Addie Pearce-McManamon, Jim Ross, and Liz Wissner; and Ex Officio Members Chris Brown and Andrew Soles.

Meet Our Summer Club Steward Erin Rhodes

WCC Board of Governors



Keep an eye out for this summer's club steward, **Erin Rhodes**. Erin will be on hand Friday evenings, as well as Saturday and Sunday afternoons, to assist new members, help with club equipment questions and otherwise be a friendly knowledgeable resource for members in need of information or assistance!

Erin is a very skilled paddler and has a lot of knowledge about the club. She is a worthy successor to **Gavin Ross** who did the job for a few summers pre-COVID.

Erin's duties do **NOT** include lifeguarding and looking after children.

“As one goes through life, one learns that if you don't paddle your own canoe, you don't move.”

– Katharine Hepburn

Do Your Part When at the Club

Here are a few friendly reminders from the Board of Governors about the following club rules:

No unaccompanied minors

Members are responsible for all actions of their guests and for the actions of children under the age of 18 at all times while guests and children are on club grounds and/or using club facilities. **Children under 18 are not permitted on club grounds/facilities unless accompanied by a parent or hosting member.**

Return all club craft and gear to its proper storage location

If you use a club pfd, paddle, or boat, **you are responsible** for the equipment while you are using it and for its storage post-paddle. Don't leave boats, boards, or gear lying around on the docks for others to step around. Boats, boards, and gear must be removed from the front of the dock immediately upon returning from your paddle.

Don't block the trash dumpsters

Wednesday morning is our normal trash pick-up service. Please park on the riverside of the parking area on Wednesday mornings. (It is best to use the riverside first every morning since our trash pick-up occasionally gets rescheduled.) Please also help out by emptying the trash when it is full. Trash bags are in the clubhouse on the bottom shelf in the foyer.

Thanks for doing your part to help maintain a safe, clean, and orderly club!



Bark Team paddlers at the 2019 Chattajack race. Photo by Chris Aguilar.

Prone Paddleboard Information Sessions

By Kathy Summers

The WCC is now the proud owner of a 14' Bark Paddleboard (as previously announced). We will be holding information sessions on Friday nights at 6:00pm to get you acquainted with prone paddling (knees and bellies for cross training and racing). **Advanced registration is required.**

Anyone who is interested should email me, [Kathy Summers](#), and let me know if you are an experienced/competitive paddler or a recreational paddler. That way we can both get an idea of how much interest there is and we can determine how to group the information sessions appropriately. We will keep each session small, and will continue to offer them until everyone who is interested has gone through the process. Paddleboarding is very new to this area and it comes with its own unique challenges and dangers, so any member who wants access to this board must go through an information session. Please feel free to reach out to me for more information about and training in this exciting sport!

WCC Junior Flatties Take On Potomac's Rapids

By Elizabeth Pennisi

Anyone who has tried high-kneel canoeing knows all too well how to brace, as falling out is a right of passage that happens over and over again in beginners. That skill came in handy earlier this month for **Becca** and **Helen Schuette**, two high-kneeling juniors. Participating in their first whitewater race, the duo suddenly found themselves in one of the Potomac's trickier rapids, a place called Yellow Falls about 1.5 miles upstream of the Beltway's American Legion bridge. They had intended to bypass the rapid

altogether but were so intent on following the boats in front of them that they missed that sneak alternative. “The main thing I kept thinking about was ‘don’t fall out,’” Becca recalls. Somehow they managed to do the 3-foot drop and zigzag back and forth across the river to avoid the rock garden below.

That was just one of several exciting moments for the Schuette sisters and two other juniors who joined about 40 other boats — with more than 70 paddlers total — for the Potomac Downriver Race, sponsored by the Canoe Cruisers Association. This seven-mile adventure starts near Great Falls just below a challenging rapid called “S-turn” and ends at the Sycamore Island Canoe Club, which is accessible only by ferry. The race usually attracts white water kayakers and canoeists, with an occasional wildwater boater — and every once in a while, a “flattie” (flatwater sprint kayaker)— speeding downriver as well. But this year the WCC fielded seven, among them three with high kneelers providing the power.



Helen Schuette (#18) and her sister Becca used bike helmets for their first whitewater race.

“It’s fun to cross over into a different discipline,” says **Jimmy Ross**. So, when the race was first run in 1956, WCC canoeing champions **Bill** and **Frank Havens** entered, doing high-kneel in a canvas-covered wood boat and winning by a mile. Jimmy does it almost every year and so did Jimmy’s sons **Gavin** and **Ian Ross** and **Dan Havens’s** son **Sean Havens** when they were teenagers.

Since there were no flatwater races last year and few this past spring, Jimmy suggested the older WCC juniors give this downriver run a try. “Paddling whitewater in an open canoe is completely different from paddling a sprint kayak,” says the juniors’ head coach, **Kathleen McNamee**. It requires a different stroke in a heavier, clunkier boat. “However, the balance and water sense you learn in a sprint boat definitely helps in whitewater.”

Three of these juniors had other commitments but four said yes. “I wanted to try something outside of my comfort zone,” says Helen. Becca, Helen and **Erin Rhodes** had all done the Clinton relay and before this race, considered that river “white water.” “The Susquehanna river has some sections with minor rapids, so I learned about “v”s and eddies,” says Erin. But she also realized this race would be a bigger challenge. “The fact that we had to wear helmets and life jackets worried me,” Erin recalls. “I was sure that I didn’t know what I was getting into.”



Jim Ross and Alistair Leith stayed in their boat the whole Potomac Downriver Race

Jimmy teamed up with his nephew **Alistair Leith** to high-kneel the course in an Old Town Penobscot. Alistair had tried a whitewater race before and “raced hard,” says Jimmy. Coach Kathleen steered another Old Town Penobscot with Erin, a kayaker, in the bow. And the Schuette sisters high-kneeled in a Peterborough. Gavin, too, decided to do the race after a 9-year-hiatus. He high-kneeled in a boat his dad built in the 1970s, one that with its low gunnels and no airbags that gave the race organizers pause.

These WCCers did practice runs on Memorial Day and the Wednesday before the race. Several boats flipped, but on race day, they proved they had gotten the hang of running rapids before the race even started. “Getting to the start was probably the most exciting part of the race,” says Kathleen.

Although the race started below S turn, the put-in was above this very challenging piece of river with fast, deep and very squirrely water that requires maneuvering from side to side to get down upright. There was a lot of yelling and “my stomach dropped,” says Helen. But she and her sister were able to stay on Gavin’s stern to get down safely, as did all the WCCers. “It was a bigger rapid than what we had practiced in.” says Becca.

The next challenge was the start. All 40 boats started together, so it was mayhem, with lots of wakes and boats trying not to collide. Gavin sprinted toward the lead; Jim and Alistair inched their way forward along the side of the river. The two girls’ boats stayed close then and through all the rapids to make sure they got through them intact. “I thought that I would hate the rapids but they ended up being really fun,” says Helen.



The race's mass start was chaotic for everyone

“The most exciting parts of the race were definitely the rapids,” Erin agrees. “Everything moved faster and sometimes split-second reactions and decisions were required from both the steersperson and the bow person--me.” What made the whitewater even more

exciting was they realized they'd forgotten a bailer and their boat was filling up in the waves.

However, Helen and Erin luckily managed to find a bailer floating in the river about halfway through the race as she and coach Kathleen had forgotten one and had taken on quite a bit of water. **Tim Manning** and **Rob Bowman**, the other WCC crew in a sit-down two-person boat, accidentally let go of theirs as they were bailing, so Erin grabbed it and she and Kathleen used it for the rest of the race.



Erin Rhodes (#31) and Kathleen McNamee took the turbulent water in stride

The bailer loss was also a boon for Jimmy and Alistair. Tim's boat was gaining on them and might have passed the high-kneelers. But in the last rapid, Tim and Rob took on so much water they had to stop under 495 and empty the boat.

With so much going on, all the paddlers regretted when the rapids were over. "I thought there was going to be a lot more waves and rocks all throughout the race," says Alistair, who grew hotter and hotter as the flat miles went by. For Erin, too, the most difficult part of the race was the last three miles: "It felt like it went on and on forever," and at that point, she missed her lighter, narrower sprint kayak. "They were all hurting at the end," adds Gavin.

Nonetheless, they all passed a bunch of kayakers, so the four boats finished in the top 10, most with times of a little more than an hour. By taking third, Gavin earned a trophy. But organizers never expected a canoeist to do that well, so he went home with a nice, polished metal kayak trophy. "You should have heard his outrage," says Jimmy.

The juniors took home a desire to do the race again, and to even try a whitewater kayak. "It was a very hard race but also very enjoyable," says Alistair. But, he adds, "I wouldn't do it again without training at least two more times."

Congratulations to all of the other WCCers who also completed the race:

C-2 sit-down: **Tim Manning/Rob Bowman**

Kayak K-1: **David Cottingham**

SUP: **G-Mo, Todd Bewley**

And a final note from Kathleen: "***Big thanks to Jimmy for suggesting we do the race, loaning us boats, and taking us out for practice!***"

Thank you **Peter Swiek** for taking all of these amazing photos!





Gavin Ross took third overall in the Potomac Downriver Race

Paddle Smart and Safe on the Potomac

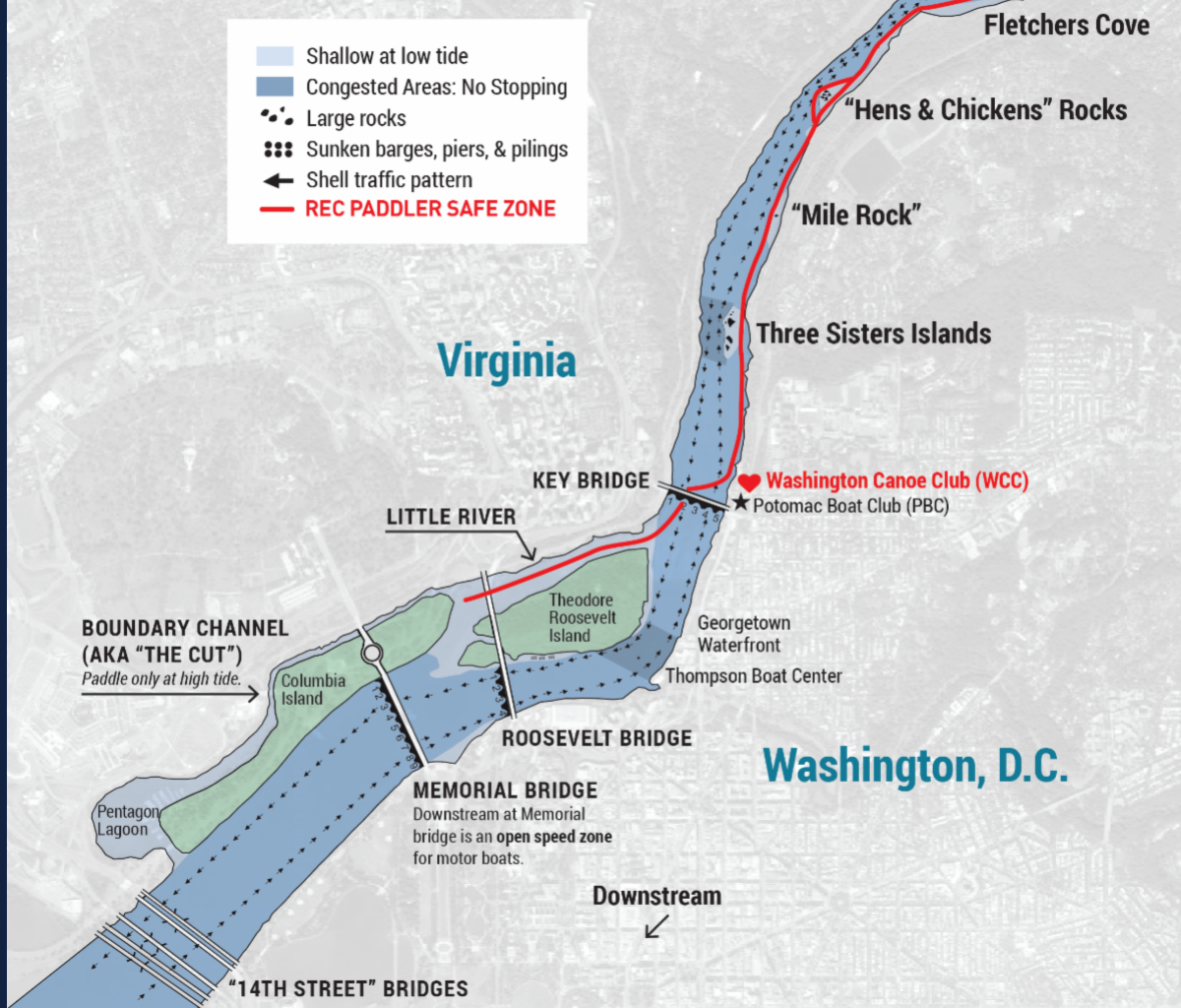
As you enjoy the long, warm summer days at WCC, please continue to prioritize safety on and off the water. This means understanding your paddling limits, knowing the waterways and conditions you are paddling, and being aware of others sharing the space around you. Even though the Potomac River off our docks may look beautiful and serene, there were, unfortunately, multiple drownings between Key Bridge and Chain Bridge this spring alone.

For your personal paddling safety, we encourage you to review USCG and ACA resources:

- [US Coast Guard Auxiliary Paddlecraft safety and AUXPAD](#)
- [The American Canoe Association Safety Series](#)

We also encourage all members to review the Potomac River Safety Committee's (PRSC) [website and guidelines](#). The PRSC includes liaisons from various clubs and organizations that use the upper Potomac River area for paddling and rowing. WCC has two representatives on the committee – **Emilia Rastrick** and **Peter Swiek**. The committee developed a set of guidelines to encourage safe shared river use. This includes a “traffic pattern” (see the map [on their](#) website and below) to help standardize rowing traffic and safe spaces for paddlers. In the traffic pattern, the area along the DC shore between Key Bridge and Fletchers Cove is reserved for paddlers to safely operate. Remember, though, to stay aware of your surroundings no matter where you paddle, as not all craft follow or know these patterns.





Finally, please remember to reach out if you need help or have questions:

- In an emergency, dial 911 immediately. This includes during any on-land emergencies or safety issues.
- If you are on the water and need help, signal to other craft with a whistle or by yelling and waving your arms. It is USCG regulation that others must assist those in need. Conversely, if someone needs help and you can assist safely, please help. WCC has a strong history of helping individuals on the water.
- If you observe unsafe behavior on the water that is not an emergency, please report this to aquatics@washingtongcanoecub.org so that it can be reviewed and shared with the PRSC. Please feel free to send any questions you have about safety as well.

Have a great paddling season and stay safe!

Welcome New Members

Meet **Michael** and **Jackie Bailey**. Michael and Jackie are recreational paddlers who like to travel with their canoe. They are interested in working with the Building Restoration Committee. Welcome Michael and Jackie!



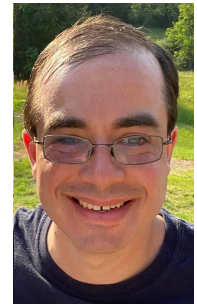
Meet **Denise Natali**. Denise notes, "I love paddling and



being on the water. I am just an amateur but hope to learn from fellow paddlers at WCC.” She is interested in the Fundraising, Building Restoration, and Community Outreach Committees. Welcome, Denise!

Meet **Miguel Serrano**. Miguel observes that *“early mornings on the Potomac are a lot of fun in the summer.”* Agreed! He is interested in the Community Outreach Committee. Welcome, Miguel!

Meet **Barry Slaff**. Barry notes, *“I like training and racing OC1 and OC6! Previous team affiliations include Philadelphia Outrigger Canoe Club (POCC), Philadelphia Dragon Boat Association (PDBA), and US Dragon Boat Federation (USDBF).”* Barry is interested in the Communications, Community Outreach, and Membership Committees. Welcome, Barry!



Meet **Alex Stickney**. Alex writes: *“I’m a runner that got into kayaking a few summers ago, and realized floating on the Potomac was much a better way to survive the DC heat.”* Indeed! He is interested in the Entertainment, Building Maintenance/ Grounds, Communications, Community Outreach, and Membership Committees. Welcome, Alex!

Club Operations and Maintenance

Summer Break. Ahhhh, how sweet it is...

- Thanks, everyone for using the new pedestrian gate. We’ve got a lot of positive feedback on it and the new entry system overall.
- The CONNEX aka “the container” has been moved to its new location. Thanks to all who helped move things out and then back in after the move.
- New dock construction has been postponed another month due to the crazy prices of lumber and other conflicts.

Team Announcements

WCC Coaches: Kelly Rhodes (Women's Outrigger), Nate Day (Men's Outrigger), Joe Cafferata (Novice Outrigger), Kathleen McNamee (Junior's), TBD (Master's Kayak), and Kathy Summers (SUP)

OC-6 Novice Night

Have you ever wanted to paddle one of the "big boats"?

On Monday nights at 6 pm **Joe Cafferata** will get you started with the basics of six-person outrigger canoe (OC-6) paddling (timing and stroke technique). Novice nights will start this Monday, June 28, and run until the daylight savings time change.



Novice Night coach Joe Cafferata



WCC Master paddler Dan Havens demonstrates the perfect paddle stroke

There is a novice email list and sign-up sheet. To be added to the list and get the link to the sign-up sheet, email Joe at josephlrc@yahoo.com to be added. Please sign up ahead of time rather than just showing up so Joe can plan accordingly.

Plan to meet at 6 pm, paddle for an hour then have a potluck after that. How many slots are available in the OC-6 will depend on how many steers we have, but should normally be between 10 and 15. If we have too many people for the OC-6 the remainder can paddle in aluminum canoes, and learn about the stroke there.

Men's Outrigger

By Nate Day





The men's outrigger team is back on the water and practicing on Wednesday nights and Saturday mornings, with an additional workout for experienced small craft paddlers on Monday nights.

In mid-May, **Derek Park** of Puna OCC on the Big Island of Hawai'i worked with us on stroke technique for a couple of days, giving us new ways to think about how to apply pressure to the paddle while keeping it locked in the water and maximizing the forward movement of the canoe. The goal of higher hull speeds at lower stroke rates is one we're already making progress on, and we are applying what Derek modeled for us to make our stroke more powerful and uniform across the team.

We are in the process of pulling together teams for:

- the Blackburn Challenge (August 7, Gloucester MA)
- Bay Bridge Paddle (September 26)
- Sandy Point State Park MD)
- Catalina Crossing (September 11-12) Newport Beach and Avalon CA

with several other races spread across August through November.

Anyone interested in joining the men's outrigger team should contact [Nate Day](#) at nathan.a.day@gmail.com if they have prior outrigger training or are currently competitive athletes in another sport or paddling discipline, or [Joe Cafferata](#) at josephlrc@yahoo.com if they have little to no prior outrigger training and are not currently training for competition in another sport or paddling discipline.

Do your post-pandemic shopping at [smile.amazon.com](https://www.smile.amazon.com)
Select **Friends of the Washington Canoe Club** as your
charity and AmazonSmile donates to WCC.

And Finally...

Shout Out!

WCC'S ABANDONED CRAFT AVOID "BOAT HEAVEN"

Huge thanks to **Tim Johnson, Thomas Reiter, Carmela Leith, Sharyn Lie, and Jay Gopal** who ran the "online yard sale" and got the large pile of abandoned boats that were

on the kayak trailer just inside the front gate into the hands of folks who can use them in a few short days!

Thanks to everyone who takes out the trash, wacks the weeds, and sweeps the goose poo off of the docks on a regular basis.

If you know of a WCC member who should get a shout-out (and there are many), [let us know](#).



Show Your Club Spirit and Look Good Doing It!

Any item can be customized with your name.

The WCC Squad Locker stores have a wide variety of club-branded items for members of all ages (including infants and toddlers). All items allow for personalization through the ordering process. Embroidered items, can put your name (or mantra) on the sleeve. If an item has a printed logo, you can get your name (or nickname) on the back or sleeve. Hats are personalized on the back band area. Both shops are periodically updated and changed, so keep checking back. If there's something you would like to see offered, [let us know](#).

Visit the [Spring/Summer Store](#)

Visit the [Fall/Winter Store](#)

Thanks to Bonnie Havens for all her hard work on the stores.

THANK YOU to all club volunteers

If you have an idea for a contribution to the next issue of *Currents*, please reach out to one of your newsletter team members:

[Gloria Vestal](#) | [Dawn Nunziato](#) | [Mary Stapp](#)



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