

# Requirements and Recommendations for VKC CLUB TRIPS

**Please note that the club trips are organized by volunteers and not commercially guided. This means that you as participant have to take full responsibility for your actions and decisions.**

*From the Safety Code of the American Whitewater Association:*

*"III. Group preparedness*

*1. Organization. A river trip should be regarded as a common adventure by all participants, except on instructional or commercially guided trips as defined below. Participants share the responsibility for the conduct of the trip, and each participant is individually responsible for judging his or her own capabilities and for his or her own safety as the trip progresses. Participants are encouraged (but are not obligated) to offer advice and guidance for the independent consideration and judgment of others."*

## **SANCTIONED VKC CLUB TRIP**

- 1) Must be listed on official VKC trip schedule and approved by the VKC executive. Trip coordinator may select alternate destination if water levels or other conditions are not appropriate.
- 2) VKC club trips will not be conducted on class IV or V runs (as rated by guidebooks).
- 3) An official club trip must have 3 or more participants.

## **SKILL LEVELS**

- **Beginner:** Has pool experience, knows how to put on a spray skirt, how to wet exit and where bow and stern are on a kayak.
- **Novice:** Some experience on moving water. Has an idea what a roll is and manages to do some. Can maneuver the boat. Rivers on which beginners should feel OK are the lower Seymour, lower Mamquam, Chilliwack from Pointe Vista down. Class II (with occasional class III drops).
- **Intermediate:** Roll works most times. Boat moves usually where you want it. Class III (occasional class IV drops). Comfortable on Capilano, Chilliwack (Slesse down), Chehalis, Cheakamus (Daisy Lake down).
- **Advanced:** 99% roll. Very good boat control. Rivers: Lynn, Chilliwack Canyon, Nahatlach Canyon. Class III and IV.
- **Experts:** Almost a 100% roll. Because you don't want to swim what you paddle. Sorry, we don't have any class V trips for you girls and guys. But you are welcome on our easier trips. We always need some help.

## **PARTICIPANT RESPONSIBILITIES**

- ✓ Participants hold the ultimate responsibility for their own safety.
- ✓ **Call organizer by Thursday** for day trips and earlier for the weekend trips (especially important for Socials or when campsites need to be booked in advance). You must inform the organizer you are coming. You cannot just turn up.
- ✓ Choose **trip within your abilities**. The trip organizer will help you to assess your skills; but it will be your own decision to participate in a trip and to judge your performance on the river.
- ✓ Must not participate in a trip if uses of drugs (medical or other), alcohol, physical or medical conditions affect their ability to participate in a safe manner.
- ✓ It is your responsibility to bring the following **mandatory equipment** (According to Canadian Coast Guard Regulations):

- Seaworthy boat with floatation bags,
- Adequate paddle,
- Personal floatation device (PFD) with whistle,
- A bailing device (sponge?)
- A floating rope of at least 15 meter length (throw rope).

In addition the **VKC requires** you to have:

- A functional sprayskirt,
- Appropriate helmet and
- Appropriate thermal protection clothing.
- An emergency plan should be agreed upon by all participants (what to do when the group splits up, location of possible walk-outs, location of next phone and emergency medical care).

**Additionally useful items:**

- Spare paddle,
- Spare warm clothing,
- Food and drink water
- Rescue and first aid kit (make sure there are a few of each in your group).

## **TRIP ORGANIZER/COORDINATOR**

### **When Choosing to Organize a Trip**

- Should be familiar with and comfortable on the run selected to organize. Typically trip organizers select runs, which are at least one class easier than the hardest stuff they normally paddle.
- Knows suitable water levels, makes decision to cancel run or select different run (preferably at similar difficulty) if levels are too high or conditions not suitable.
- Should be aware that class IV drops on class III runs are not covered by VKC insurance.

### **During the Week before Trip**

- Will be available in the days before the trip to answer questions of potential participants and organize the trip. Can designate alternate to help with organization.
- Will help participants decide if their skill level is appropriate. Should reject participation if he/she feels that skill or gear is not adequate. Some questions to ask: Have you done this run? How did it go? Have you run similar local rivers (see SKILL LEVELS above)? How consistent is your roll (on some runs this may not be a big issue)? Of course we cannot rule out the participants overestimate or misrepresent their skills. See 'During Trip' below.
- On beginner and low intermediate runs: ensures that number of support boaters is sufficient. If you cannot find enough support boaters, then you can either limit the number of participants or cancel the trip.
- Update and check existing EAP(emergency action plan) or make a new one. Topo maps should be used if possible.

### **Onshore before River Trip**

- Have participants sign waiver and complete emergency information sheet
- Mark put-in and take-out locations on EAP and familiarize group with them and their location (e.g. in your boat)

- You should refuse to allow anyone to participate in your trip if they do not have adequate equipment or if you feel a participant does not meet other requirements necessary for the trip. You can also refuse to allow anyone to participate if they have not contacted you in advance.
- Conduct short pre-trip briefing:
  - ✓ Ensure all participants understand how the trip will be conducted. Choice of (1) play run/buddy system or (2) leader – group – sweep configuration. If (1) is selected, buddy up in groups of two (but everyone should always stay in eyesight of each other), if (2) is selected, appoint lead and sweep boat.
  - ✓ Alert participants to known dangers and emergency plan (e.g. mandatory scouts, portages or must-make take-outs, possible exit routes, nearest medical aid).
  - ✓ Review of river signals.

### **On the Water**

- Group management, which may include appointing lead and sweep and pointing out hazards and preferred routes to those who have not been down this run before. You can also point out play spots.
- If you feel that an individual's skills or physical conditions or environmental conditions could cause difficulties for the group, you have the authority to mitigate problems before they become an issue. This may include asking individuals or the entire group to take off the river, portaging certain rapids etc. Please note that on some runs taking off the river is NOT the fastest/easiest way out.
- Your responsibilities end when everyone is off the water and accounted for.