

Current Methods to Engage Segments of Non-Motorized and Paddlesport Community

(Note: Also see Appendix 19B - Small Craft Advisory May-June 2014 articles, 'Embracing Paddlesports' and 'Factors to Consider When Engaging the Non-Motorized Community' developed in conjunction with this Charge.)

Go in with the attitude 'If you can't beat them, join them'. It has been recognized that the non-motorized community of boaters has a strong voice with a successful track record of defeating proposed bills. It is also recognized that non-motorized participants who are serious about their sport and equipment are not as great a concern for the law enforcement and rescue community as the casual non-experienced 'looks like fun, let's do it' groups. Here are some examples of current efforts to engage the Paddlesport Community:

➤ **ACA State Directors Program**

Chris Stec of the American Canoe Association (ACA) tells us that since the early 1990's there has been an explosion in non-motorized activity, peaking in the area of 50 million according to national surveys on recreation and the environment. It is these staggering numbers that have prompted the ACA to develop a 'State Directors Program'. The mission of the State Director Program is to increase effectiveness of the ACA at the state level by:

- Facilitating communication between paddlers and the ACA National Office – (Note: The Paddlesports Subcommittee would like to expand on this to include communication between the non-motorized community and state boating programs);
- Fostering community responsibility in protecting and preserving paddling environments;
- Assisting others with acquiring the necessary skills to safely enjoy local waterways; and
- Promoting paddlesport competition at the local and state level.

ACA State Directors will have the opportunity to enlist additional volunteers in the form of an Executive Council to aid in the distribution of responsibilities. There was an application process with a submission deadline of April 15, 2014.

It is also the hope that the ACA's State Directors program will result in other program improvements such as development and availability of effective and consistent signage at paddlesport put-ins.

A Sample Engagement Process:

- Have a good reason to meet. Before you get on the phone, make sure you have a good understanding of what it is you need to accomplish. Do your homework and gather data. If you cannot find data, then make that part of your need. Do you need help with developing a strategic plan? Direction from boaters? Make your plan and your goals explicit. A sample goal statement might be "What can we do to promote paddle sports in my state while growing a culture of safety with it so that, over time, the rate of accidents declines while participation increases?"

- When you have a sense of what you want to achieve, consult with your state’s ACA Director!
- Identify the type of representatives you want on your group.
 - Identify the criteria that help define who will be on your group. Go for diversity in the types of stakeholders, areas of interest and expertise.
 - Be sure to include all sides of the sports and law enforcement. Do not forget geographic diversity and think about inviting injury prevention specialists from your State Health Department.
 - Get an outside advisory group to approve (or at least look at) your list. You will probably find that there are certain leader’s in your state’s paddling communities that really need to be a part of the group. When you start hearing the same people’s names suggested in more than one meeting, you have probably identified the key stakeholders that should be included.
 - You can also consider a recruitment process. Create an application for those that would like to participate and build a list of organizations and experts to send the application too. That way, individual organizations and clubs can decide who they want to participate.
 - Use your list to advertise the opportunity and invite potential members to apply to participate. Be prepared to explain to prospective members what you want to achieve and what you offer. What value will you bring to paddlesports?
- Draw up a charter for your group that identifies why the group is coming together, what you want them to achieve, what the final product will be, how long they will meet, and the limits of their authority. You may also consider including the process whereby the group will make decisions (consensus, majority rules etc...)
- Bring the group together.
- When you start to meet, go slow to go fast. Tell your story. Be prepared to own up to the past if you represent an agency that may have bad relationships with the paddling community. Remember that the more complex the story you have to tell, the longer it will take to explain. If you have hard data, share it.
- Be prepared to explain the finances behind paddlesports from the government’s perspective. Explain what paddlers receive and (maybe) what they could receive.
- Be transparent. Set up a public web page to provide access to meeting minutes, agendas, PowerPoint presentation, etc. Assuming you are able to achieve consensus, use your members to talk with skeptics – peer to peer communication (especially around complex issues) is more trusted than coming from government.
- Involve the public at a certain point with “open houses” or public meetings. Consider contracting with a professional facilitator to help with the public.

Public Engagement Case Study – Oregon:

The Oregon State Marine Board (OSMB) recognized the importance of integrating non-motorized boater needs and participation into agency operations. Through the OSMB Strategic Planning process, motorized and non-motorized boaters expressed the importance of engaging non-motorized boaters. In 2012, OSMB chartered a strategic project and established a non-motorized advisory committee to provide counsel and direction to the agency. As a result of this process the OSMB initiated a public engagement process to engage interested and affected citizens in a dialogue with OSMB about needs and uses of non-motorized boaters in Oregon, and whether and how to put together a non-motorized program with an associated user pay-user benefit fee structure. With the help of outside consultants, they developed a process design and meeting format meant to engage community members in an interactive discussion about their needs and values as non-motorized boaters, and their thoughts about a user fee, user benefit program specifically for non-motorized boaters. Consultants helped OSMB staff kick off the process by facilitating the first two sessions (in Portland and Medford), and assisted in writing up and analyzing the first round of inputs. OSMB is taking time to understand non-boater stakeholder needs before crafting any recommendations; a decision is not anticipated until summer 2015, which allows the agency sufficient time to engage its public in a meaningful and impactful way.

Other proven methods to engage segments of the non-motorized group include:

- Consider including paddling representatives on state-level Boating Advisory Councils:
 - Ohio has included a paddlesport representative on its Waterways Safety Council for many years.
 - Washington is advised by a 15-member stakeholder group that includes three members representing paddlesports: whitewater, Washington Water Trails, and human powered vessel operators.
- Host live or virtual listening sessions where the paddling community is invited to voice their needs and desires. If you are starting a process to engage paddlers, this is a great way to meet a cross section of the community face to face.
- Organize meetings to explain efforts to address paddling needs and where funding has been obtained for these services.
- Enhance opportunities for improved transparency from state and federal government. Provide a link to national efforts surrounding paddle sports like the efforts of the Education Standards Panel.
- It was stated that the non-motorized community does not see the value of involvement and participation in the structured boating programs and that state boating programs need to show them the value. One way to demonstrate this value is to include special access areas for paddlers in the state's funding request.
- Open a communication path with the paddling community to educate them on the potential of a return to paddlers financial support in the form of car top launch sites, water trails, educational opportunities and direct involvement in what happens within the boating community.

➤ **Links to National Organizations**

- American Canoe Association: <http://www.americancanoe.org/>
- American Whitewater Association: <http://www.americanwhitewater.org/>
- US Rowing – links to rowing clubs by state:
<http://www.usrowing.org/DomesticRowing/Organizations/FindAClub.aspx>

In Closing, there are numerous resources available to help any state wanting to engage their paddling communities. Many are posted on NASBLA’s Basecamp.

Recommendation: It is recommended that this charge continue in order to monitor and report on the activity and lessons learned from states’ engagement efforts with the Non-motorized Community.

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