

EMBRACING PADDLESports

By Pamela Dillon
NASBLA Education Director

The numbers continue to grow and they are not going to go away. According to the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) 2012 National Recreational Boating Survey (2012 Survey), boaters across the states and territories of the U.S. spent 640 million hours paddling 6.4 million canoes and kayaks in 2012; that was 430 million hours and 4.7 million boats MORE than what was reported for personal watercraft (PWC). Numbers reported that same year by the Outdoor Industry Association reveal 9.8 million canoe participants, 12.5+ million kayak participants and 1.5 million stand up paddling participants. That is a LOT of participants spending a LOT of time on the water!

The USCG 2013 Boating Accident statistics are equally as revealing. Of the record-low number of 560 boating fatalities, 169 (or 30%), occurred on non-motorized boats; this was a slightly higher percentage than the 26.9% reported in 2012. Both data sets indicate a lot of state and local services consumed in support of this user group with trends indicating continued growth in participation.

So how do we embrace paddlers, especially when they might relate more to hikers and bicyclists than to other boaters? The boating safety community characterizes them as 'non-motorized', 'paddle craft', 'rowers', 'paddle boaters', 'canoers', 'paddlers', 'kayakers', or even 'human-propelled.' These names alone indicate distinctly different sub-groups, with varying levels of participation, equipment usage, nomenclature, and opportunity. To embrace each sub-group, dive deeper into the relevant data, concerns and issues of each. Here are some starting notes based on current data:

Canoes

- Based on 2012 Survey, canoes have the LOWEST fatality rate - 14 deaths/100M exposure hours.
- 55 persons died while in a canoe in 2013.
- Of 48 reported drowning deaths in 2013, 41 (85.4%) were NOT wearing life jackets.
- Of 70 reported injuries in 2013, 46 (65.7%) were for hypothermia.
- 108 canoes were involved in a reported accident in 2013, of the 75 whose ownership was known, 20 (26.7%) canoes were rented.
- 55 canoes were involved in the 55 deaths reported in 2013. Of the 36 where ownership was known, 8 (22.2%) canoes were rented.
- 70 canoes were involved in 70 injuries reported in 2013. Of the 50 where ownership was known, 10 (20%) canoes were rented.
- The 2013 Life Jacket Wear Rate Observation Study reports an overall wear rate for adults in canoes of 35.7%.



Canoeing participants get out more often than kayaking participants. Nearly 50 percent of canoeing participants make four or more outings per year.

Kayaks

- Based on 2012 Survey, of all boat types, kayaks have the THIRD LOWEST fatality rate – 18 deaths /100M exposure hours behind canoes (14 deaths/100M exposure hours) and power boats (17 deaths/100M exposure hours).
- 54 persons died while in a kayak in 2013.
- Of 45 reported drowning deaths in 2013, 24 (53%) were NOT wearing life jackets.
- Of 40 reported injuries in 2013, 16 (40%) were for hypothermia.
- 113 kayaks were involved in a reported accident in 2013, of the 79 whose ownership was known, 11 (13.9%) kayaks were rented.
- 54 kayaks were involved in 54 deaths reported in 2013. Of the 35 where ownership was known, 4 (11.4%) kayaks were rented.
- 40 kayaks were involved in 40 injuries reported in 2013. Of the 29 where ownership was known, 5 (17.2%) kayaks were rented.
- The 2013 Life Jacket Wear Rate Observation Study reports an overall wear rate for adults in kayaks of 67.9%.



Kayaking has enjoyed steady growth since 2010, climbing to a participation rate of 3.6 percent of Americans ages six and older in 2012. ACA Photos

Stand Up Paddleboards (SUP)

- 5 persons died while on a SUP in 2013.
- Of 5 reported drowning deaths in 2013, all 5 were NOT wearing life jackets.
- Of 3 reported injuries in 2013, 2 (66.7%) were for broken bones.
- 8 SUPs were involved in a reported accident in 2013, of the 6 whose ownership was known, 2 (33.3%) were rented.
- 5 SUPs were involved in 5 deaths reported in 2013. Of the 5 where ownership was known, 2 (40%) SUPs were rented.
- 3 SUPs were involved in 3 injuries reported in 2013. Of the 1 where ownership was known, none of the SUPs were rented.
- The 2013 Life Jacket Wear Rate Observation Study reports an overall wear rate for adults on SUPs of 58.7%.



Inflatables

- 14 persons died while in an inflatable in 2013.
- Of 10 reported drowning deaths in 2013, 7 (or 70%) were NOT wearing life jackets.
- Of 18 reported injuries in 2013, 8 (44.4%) were for hypothermia.
- 32 inflatables were involved in a reported accident in 2013, of the 24 whose ownership was known, 8 (33.3%) were rented.
- 14 inflatables were involved in 14 deaths reported in 2013. Of the 9 where ownership was known, 4 (44.4%) inflatables were rented.
- 18 inflatables were involved in 18 injuries reported in 2013. Of the 15 where ownership was known, 5 (33.3%) inflatables were rented.
- The 2013 Life Jacket Wear Rate Observation Study reports an overall wear rate for adults in paddled inflatables/rafts of 15.8%.



(Continued on page 12)

Rowboats

- 30 persons died while in a rowboat in 2013.
- Of 26 reported drowning deaths in 2013, 22 (84.6%) were NOT wearing life jackets.
- 14 reported injuries in 2013, 7 (50%) were for hypothermia.
- 58 rowboats were involved in a reported accident in 2013, of the 46 whose ownership was known, 2 (4.3%) were rented.
- 30 rowboats were involved in 30 deaths reported in 2013. Of the 22 where ownership was known, 1 (4.5%) rowboat was rented.
- 14 rowboats were involved in 14 injuries reported in 2013. Of the 11 where ownership was known, none (0%) were rented.

Diving Deeper

The data demonstrates why a “one size fits all” approach to engaging the non-motorized community will not work. It further demonstrates unique aspects of the activity worth taking a closer look. For instance, of the 2012 deaths detailed above, each was a single death occurring from a non-motorized boat. The data begs this question: How many deaths and/or injuries occurred from a canoe with ONLY a solo participant vs. how many were involved in a boat with multiple participants? In the 2007 report “Analysis of Factors Associated in Canoe and Kayak Fatalities” conducted for the American Canoe Association (ACA), the preliminary analysis reads (in part):

“The primary factor that emerged from the analysis was the number of people involved in the incident. In short, the more people involved in the incident, the lower the fatality rate. One could conjecture that more people involved means that more people may be able to perform rescues/first aid, thereby producing the negative correlation to fatalities found in the analysis. While this analysis cannot definitively identify cause and effect, the results certainly support the buddy system as a component of safe canoeing and kayaking.”

NASBLA Efforts

NASBLA’s Education & Outreach Committee, acting under the direction of the Executive Board, this year established the Non-Motorized and Paddlesports Subcommittee to take a deeper look. Under the leadership of Committee Chair Mark Brown (boating law administrator for Oklahoma) and Subcommittee Chair Wade Alonzo (boating law administrator for Washington), the subcommittee is finalizing work on three charges:

- 1) Monitor and evaluate efforts to engage the non-motorized community. Develop a White Paper on proven methods to engage various segments of these groups.
- 2) Review and compare participation and accident statistics from the national boater survey and USCG accident statistics regarding non-motorized versus motorized. Develop an info graphic/ fact sheet template which can be updated annually regarding non-motorized segments and their accident statistics for use in communicating with these user groups.
- 3) Develop a White Paper discussing services and programs for non-motorized boaters and ways these groups contribute financially to the program in various states. Consider recommendations for financial contribution that might be made to the program at the federal level to ensure that services rendered by states are subsidized by this boating user group.

These complex charges have generated a great deal of work and are in the final stages of completion. Updates and final reports will be presented during this year’s NASBLA Conference being held in Bar Harbor, Maine, Oct. 16-19.

National Boating Education Standard

Course content for non-motorized education activity is also under close review by NASBLA’s Education Standards Panel (ESP). The current National Paddlesports Standard, developed in partnership with the ACA and adopted by the NASBLA membership in 2009, is now undergoing revision. Retitled as Basic Human-Propelled Boating Knowledge (Paddlesports, etc.), the standard received 105 public comments during its initial Call for Proposed Revisions period. These are now being processed by the ESP. The revised draft standard will be posted for public review and comments in the near future. In addition, entry-level skill standards are now in the finalized stages of completion by US Sailing under a separate USCG grant.

Moving Forward

Much has changed over the past decade. One needs only to review the ACA’s 2003 report “Critical Judgment” to see the historic change resulting in the increase of kayaks and kayakers. Will the next 10 years result in another historic change involving stand up paddleboards? Two recommendations from the ACA report, aimed at state boating agencies and the USCG, remain highly relevant. They read:

- 1) State boating agencies and the USCG should place a high priority on increasing the proportion of staff that comes from a canoeing and kayaking background.
- 2) State boating agencies should place a priority on building stronger relationships with local paddling clubs.

These and other efforts to understand and embrace the community will result in current insights into various segments of this ever-growing user-group. Just like how the face of boating changed with the introduction of the outboard motor in the early 1900s, the face of non-motorized boating looks very different today than in past decades. One thing remains clear, non-motorized remains an important and growing component of the ever-changing boating scene. Now, more than ever, it’s time to establish and deepen relationships to fully embrace and engage this community. *

References

- i. 2012 National Recreational Boating Survey
U.S. Coast Guard
http://www.uscgboating.org/assets/1/workflow_staging/AssetManager/821.PDF
- ii. Outdoor Recreation Participation Topline Report 2014
Outdoor Foundation
<http://outdoorindustry.org/images/researchfiles/ResearchParticipation2014Topline.pdf?207>
- iii. 2013 Life Jacket Wear Rate Observation Study
JSI Research & Training Institute Inc.
<http://tinyurl.com/2013WearRate>
- iv. Analysis of Factors Associated with Canoe and Kayak Fatalities Responsive Management
<http://tinyurl.com/CanoeFatalityReport>
- v. Critical Judgment Understanding and Preventing Canoe and Kayak Fatalities
American Canoe Association
<http://tinyurl.com/CriticalJudgment>

Factors to consider when engaging the non-motorized and paddlesports community

This year, one of the charges of NASBLA's Non-Motorized/Paddlesports Subcommittee is to monitor and evaluate efforts to engage the non-motorized community and then develop a white paper on proven methods to engage various segments of these groups.

The subcommittee has identified a draft list of key success factors to engage the paddlesports community. This list will be further refined and then presented as a final product at this year's NASBLA conference in October.

- Have a good reason to meet. Do you need help with developing a strategic plan? Direction from boaters?
- Identify your plan, your goals.
- 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, be sure to include all sides of the sports, law enforcement, geographic diversity. Get an outside advisory group to approve your criteria if possible.
- Create an application for those that would like to participate.
- Build a list of organizations and experts to reach out to for participation.
- 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?
- 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. The more complex the message, 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, 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 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 meetings and scope of work with regards to public meetings.
- Be prepared for the skeptics outside of your group. How will you explain your goals and plan? *

The Non-Motorized/Paddlesports subcommittee (housed within NASBLA's Education and & Outreach Committee) works to monitor and support the work currently underway in states to engage the non-motorized/paddlesport community.