

**Environmental Traveling Companions
Sea Kayak Program
Policies and Procedures**

The below Policies and Procedures are the standard for conduct on all Environmental Traveling Companions (ETC) trips participating in sea kayaking or related activities.

I. Participants

a. Liability Release

- i. All participants participating in an ETC trip must sign a “waiver and release of liability, acknowledgement, and assumption of risk” form (hereafter referred to as “Liability Form”).
- ii. All participants under the age of 18 must have a Liability Form signed by a parent or legal guardian.
- iii. The designated Guide in the First Aid role must review all Liability Forms to ensure completion at the beginning of every trip.

b. Health Form

- i. All participants participating in an ETC trip must have a fully completed and signed Health Form.
- ii. All participants under the age of 18 must have a Health Form signed by a parent or legal guardian.
- iii. The designated Guide in the First Aid role must review all Health Forms to ensure completion at the beginning of every trip.
- iv. Health Forms for each participant and Guide must be carried with the First Aid Kit in each pod.

c. Medical Screening

- i. The designated Guide in the First Aid role must review all Health Forms at the beginning of each trip.
- ii. The designated Guide in the First Aid role should discuss any medical conditions raising concern with the participant or participant’s staff / caregiver / parent / legal guardian prior to launching
- iii. Pregnancy: Women known to be pregnant must be carefully warned and informed of the inherent dangers involved in participating in sea kayaking.

d. Drug and Alcohol Use

- i. The use of recreational and/or illegal drugs is prohibited during all ETC trips
- ii. The use of alcohol during all ETC trips is prohibited

II. Guide Requirements

a. Guides must be at least 18 years old

b. Application Process

- i. Complete written application
- ii. Interview
- iii. Criminal background check
- iv. Sign contract specific to position
- v. Documentation of First Aid and CPR certification submitted to ETC office
- vi. Complete Health Form and Liability Release annually

- c. Training
 - i. Sea Kayak Guide School (6 days)
 - ii. Inclusion Training (2 days)
 - iii. If a Guide does not participate in the above training, an outdoor resume must be provided and references checked to ensure mastery of the skills listed in “Skills Expected of a Guide”
- d. Technical Skills Expected of a Guide
 - i. Gear handling
 - 1. Know location and proper storage of gear
 - 2. Knowledge of how to transport a kayak
 - 3. Knowledge of how to clean equipment
 - 4. Ability to check equipment to ensure it is safe to use
 - 5. Appropriately size PFD, paddle, and sea kayak
 - ii. Teaching and Group Management
 - 1. Greet and welcome groups
 - 2. Lead group games and educational activities
 - 3. Conduct a soft gear and boat orientation talk (Soft Gear and Boat Talk)
 - 4. Conduct a paddle instruction talk (Paddle Talk)
 - 5. Conduct a safety orientation talk (Safety Talk)
 - 6. Proper use of a VHF radio
 - 7. Communicate clearly and respectfully with all participants, both on and off the water.
 - iii. Disability awareness
 - 1. General knowledge of and sensitivity to people with disabilities
 - 2. Perform transfers
 - 3. Ability to make adaptations to a kayak for a person with a disability
 - iv. Sea kayak skills
 - 1. Efficient forward stroke
 - 2. Efficient back stroke
 - 3. Wet exit
 - 4. Self launch in land in surf less than 1 foot
 - 5. Assist with the launching and landing of a participant boat
 - 6. Feathered draw stroke
 - 7. Sculling draw stroke
 - 8. Low brace
 - 9. High brace
 - 10. Maintain boat position in wind and current
 - 11. Paddle float self rescue
 - 12. Assisted rescue techniques (T-Rescue, dump and pump rescue)
 - 13. Towing
 - 14. Ability to read and interpret tide and current information

III. Trip Leader/Head Guide

- a. Trip Leaders must be at least 21 years old, unless approved by Insurer’s Risk Management office.

- b. Trip Leaders must be fluent in the local language
- c. Additional technical skills expected of a Trip Leader/Head Guide
 - i. Trip Facilitation
 - 1. Extensive knowledge of and experience with all aspects of trip logistics
 - 2. Knowledge of special needs of the participant population
 - 3. Collaborate with group/agency leaders to facilitate a successful trip
 - 4. Maintain trip timeline
 - ii. Risk Management
 - 1. Mitigate and manage hazards appropriately
 - 2. Maintains adequate energy and focus levels throughout the trip
 - 3. Manage environmental hazards and cold
 - 4. Respond appropriately to incidents
 - iii. Team/Guide leadership
 - 1. Delegate roles appropriately
 - 2. Provide basic instruction to Guides
 - 3. Ability and openness to solicit input from all guides in making decisions; but with the willingness to take responsibility for the final decision
 - 4. Ability to give constructive feedback when appropriate and praise accomplishments
 - 5. Comfort leading a team of guides to execute a kayak trip
 - iv. On-water skills
 - 1. Intimate knowledge of paddling destinations and emergency access points
 - 2. In-depth knowledge of tide, currents, and weather conditions and their implications for setting a safe course
 - 3. Understand and assess open crossings
 - 4. Comfort with variable weather conditions and confidently identify when a group should paddle or not
 - 5. Understand and manage proper travel formation
- d. Trip leader check out process
 - i. Minimum of 20 on-water days guiding sea kayak trips
 - ii. Complete ETC Sea Kayak Trip Leader Training
 - 1. Guides with sufficient other training may be approved by the Sea Kayak Program Manager to not participate in ETC Sea Kayak Trip Leader Training. In this case, guides should provide a written description of previous training, references specific to trip leading, and copies of any certifications obtained
 - iii. Complete Policies and Procedures Exam with a minimum of 80% correct
 - iv. Complete Trip Leader Check Out Skills Verification
 - v. Trip Lead a specific trip type with a current ETC Trip Leader in a support role and earn positive recommendation

IV. Guide/Trip Leader to Participant Ratio (Minimum)

- a. Day Trips: 1:6
- b. Night Trips: 1:4

V. Participant Instruction

a. Soft Gear and Boat Orientation Talk

- i. Each group must receive a Soft Gear and Boat Orientation Talk prior to paddling on a trip
- ii. Topics
 1. Soft gear
 - a. Spray skirt
 - b. Splash jacket (optional)
 - c. Personal Flotation Device (PFD)
 - i. Demonstrate proper fit and how to assess proper fit
 2. Boat
 - a. Carrying handle
 - i. Demonstrate how to carry kayak
 - ii. Carrying guidelines
 1. Minimum 4 people for a single
 2. Minimum 6 people for a double or triple
 3. Lift by bending knees, not using back
 4. Group should count to three to coordinate lifting a boat or setting it down
 - b. Deck bungees
 - c. Cockpit and seat
 - d. Rudder and foot pegs
 - i. Demonstrate how to adjust foot pegs
 3. Proper boat entry and exit
 4. Attaching spray skirt
 5. Correct sitting position
 6. Wet exit procedures

b. Paddle Instruction Talk (Paddle Talk)

- i. Each group must receive a Paddle Instruction Talk prior to paddling on a trip
- ii. Topics
 1. Orientation to parts of the paddle
 2. Hand position on the paddle
 3. Forward stroke
 4. Back stroke
 5. Sweep strokes
 6. Paddling in double and triple kayaks

c. Safety Orientation Talk (Safety Talk)

- i. Each group must receive a Safety Orientation Talk prior to paddling each day
- ii. Topics
 1. Personal safety
 - a. Hydration
 - b. Sunscreen and sun protection
 - c. Importance of staying warm
 2. On-Water Travel

- a. Lead boat sets pace and direction
- b. Sweep boat is last and provides assistance
- c. Right and left flank positions used for larger pods
- 3. On-Water Communication
 - a. Ideally close enough for verbal communication
 - b. Whistle signals
 - i. One blast: Bring the pod closer together
 - ii. Two blasts: Raft up
 - iii. Three blasts: potential hazard or incident
- 4. Preventing a Capsize
 - a. Waves are from wind and other boats. Turn your nose into the wave and keep paddling. Don't lean away from the wave.
 - b. Keep your center of gravity low. Paddling helps to maintain stability.
 - c. Stay balanced left / right
 - d. Avoid collisions!
- 5. In the Event of a Capsize
 - a. Release spray skirt
 - b. Push out of boat
 - c. Hold onto boat and paddle
- 6. Specific launching procedures
- 7. Specific landing procedures

VI. Equipment

- a. Personal outfitting
 - i. Personal Floatation Device (PFD)
 - 1. Each participant and guide must wear a US Coast Guard approved PFD
 - 2. The PFD must fit each person so that when the shoulder straps are pulled up they do not come above the bottom of the ears
 - 3. Each participant's PFD must be checked by a guide for proper fit
 - 4. Each PFD must have a whistle firmly attached
 - ii. Spray Skirt
 - 1. Each participant and guide must wear a spray skirt
 - 2. Spray skirts are not required when using open-deck/sit-on-top kayaks
- b. Kayaks
 - i. Single Kayaks
 - 1. Single kayaks may only be used on trips by Guides and participants who have prior experience and are comfortable with self-rescue techniques
 - 2. Single kayaks may be used for training purposes by participants who do not yet have self-rescue training, though use must be in a calm environment and closely supervised by a Guide
 - 3. Each pod must have at least one single kayak
 - ii. Kayak Inspections
 - 1. Each kayak must be inspected prior to use for the following criteria
 - a. Rudder Components

- a. 1-Vice grips
 - b. 1-Pliers with wire cutters
 - c. 1-Screw driver
 - d. 1-Multi-tool
 - e. 2-Replacement rudder cable
 - f. 4-Ferrules (2-1/16th inch, 2-1/8th inch)
 - g. 1-Duct tape
 - h. 1-Tube Aquaseal
 - i. 4-Zip ties
 - j. 1-Replacement hatch strapping
 - k. 1-Replacement hatch closure clips
 - l. 2-Replacement foot pegs (both types)
 - m. Assorted nuts, bolts, and washers
- iii. Towropes
 - 1. Each Guide in a single kayak must carry a tow rope
 - 2. A minimum of 1 towrope for each 6 participants must be carried in each pod
 - iv. Pumps: Each kayak must be outfitted with a pump
 - v. Paddle Float: Each single kayak must be outfitted with a paddle float
 - vi. First Aid Kit
 - 1. One First Aid Kit (Major) and 1 Ouch Kit (Minor) must be carried in each pod
 - 2. Both the First Aid Kit and Ouch Kit must be inventoried prior to each trip to ensure they are complete
 - 3. First Aid Kit contents (See Appendix 1)
 - 4. Ouch Kit contents (See Appendix 1)
 - 5. Agency staff are responsible for the administration of participants' medications. Guides are never to be responsible for the administration of a prescription medication unless on a Youth LEAD course.
 - vii. Spare Paddle: 1 spare paddle must be carried in each pod
 - viii. Warm Clothes: 1 bag of non-cotton warm clothes must be carried in each pod
 - ix. Toilet Kit: All Tomales Bay overnight trips must carry a toilet kit in case a group has to camp at a beach without a toilet

VII. On Water Travel

- a. Pod Dynamics/Travel Formation
 - i. A pod is defined as an independent group of kayakers on the water not to exceed 12 participant kayaks
 - ii. Lead Boat: All pods must have a Guide in a Lead Boat role. Lead Boat responsibilities include:
 - 1. Set appropriate pace
 - 2. Lead the group appropriately while taking into account current, wind/weather conditions, boat traffic, geography, and other factors
 - iii. Sweep Boat: All pods must have a Guide in a Sweep Boat role. Sweep Boat responsibilities include:

1. Traveling at the back of the pod
 2. May assist boats/participants in the event of an incident
 - iv. Paddling without the supervision of a guide is not permitted
- b. Boat Traffic
 - i. Boat channels
 1. Boat channels of any size must be crossed as a complete pod
 2. When possible, pods should cross boat channels at a 90 degree (perpendicular) angle to minimize time in an area of increased traffic
 3. All Guides must visually monitor boat traffic and take actions to avoid collision or splitting of the pod due to boat traffic
- c. Night Paddles
 - i. Lighting
 1. The Guide in the lead boat role must have a backward facing headlamp turned on during the entire paddle.
 2. The Guide in the sweep boat role must have a forward facing headlamp turned on during the entire paddle
 3. All participants must have a red light affixed to the top shoulder strap of his or her PFD
 4. Participant red lights must stay on for the whole time. Sweep and lead boat lights can be shut off only when the group is podded up in one place for a moment of silence / bioluminescence observation.
 - ii. Safety talk additions
 1. Explain boat numbering and number off boats. Each boat should be assigned a number for count-offs. Guide boats should be assigned the first and last number in the sequence. Boats should count off before launching, after launching, midway through the trip as necessary, and before landing.
 2. Pods – group should be closer together than a normal, daytime pod, and should stay closer to shore. For paddles to Tiburon, the group should remain in a tight pod as the while preparing to round Peninsula Point (if applicable).
 3. The consumption of alcoholic beverages is prohibited on ETC trips.
 - iii. Tomales Bay night paddles (if applicable)
 1. Lanterns – two lanterns should be left in an ON position in a “goal zone” formation on the beach to make it easy to find the landing area from the water.
 - iv. Dock landing procedures (if applicable)
 1. Guides will provide assistance to participants during unloading
 2. Avoid standing in boats
- d. Launching and Landing in surf
 - i. Landing

1. One Guide (minimum) must land first on the beach before any participants are allowed to land to assist with the landing of participant boats
 2. One Guide must remain on the water until all participant boats have landed
 3. The lead guide on the water and lead Guide on the beach should be in communication, either by VHF radio or hand signals, regarding boat order for landing and timing
- ii. Launching
 1. One Guide must be on the water before any participant boats are launched
 2. One Guide must remain on land until all participants boats have been launched

VIII. Weather

- a. Forecasts and monitoring
 - i. Trip Leaders must check weather and wind forecasts for the trip area within 24 hours of the start of the trip
 - ii. On multi-day trips, Trip Leaders must check weather and wind forecasts for the trip area each morning
 - iii. Trip Leaders must make visual assessment of weather conditions before launching a group on the water
 - iv. While on the water, Trip Leaders must visually monitor weather conditions
- b. Reduced Visibility
 - i. When visibility is reduced and sight of visual landmarks and boat traffic is obstructed, pods shall not launch until visibility improves and sight of landmarks and potential boat traffic is possible

IX. Tide and Current conditions

- a. Trip Leaders must check projected current conditions prior to each trip
- b. Trip Leaders must monitor the effect of current conditions on group's progress, direction, and location
- c. Trip Leaders must check projected tidal height prior to a trip to assess potential impact on landing sites

X. Swimming

- a. Guides must use best judgment to assess the safety of conditions and location for swimming
- b. All participants must wear a PFD anytime they are in water deeper than their knees
- c. Participants must wear shoes at all times on ETC trips, including when swimming
- d. Participants must be supervised while swimming at a ratio of 1 ETC guide for every 5 participants
- e. Diving into any natural body of water from a watercraft, cliff, rock, ledge, or from any other object above or below the waterline is not permitted

XI. Off Water Procedures

- a. Hiking/On-Land Travel
 - i. Minimum ratio: 1 guide for every 10 participants

- ii. Participants must receive approval from a Guide before commencing any side hikes, explorations, or solo-travel
- iii. Mandatory equipment for hiking activities
 - 1. Water must be present in a sufficient quantity to prevent health problems due to dehydration and heat stress
 - 2. First aid kit
 - 3. Map
 - 4. Participants must wear shoes at all times on ETC trips, including on hikes, around camp, and on beaches
- iv. All participants must be instructed on the following safety topics before commencing any hike:
 - 1. Must stay together as a group unless receive permission from a Guide
 - 2. Stay on marked trails or roads unless receive permission from a Guide
 - 3. If a participant becomes separated from the group, they should stay in one place, making noise if possible, until found
- b. Guide one on one
 - i. Unless in an emergency situation, Guides must never be alone with a participant under the age of 18
- c. Kitchen procedures
 - i. Participants under the age of 18 are not permitted to light stoves without adult supervision

XII. Incident Management

- a. Class A incidents: incidents requiring the support of an outside agency
 - i. Criteria
 - 1. On-water incidents that cannot be managed using the resources available within the group
 - 2. Person lost or separated from the group for over 2 hours
 - 3. Any of the criteria for immediate evacuation that cannot safely and rapidly be evacuated using the resources available within the group
 - ii. Action steps
 - 1. Provide initial interventions to care for injuries and or manage the incident to the best of the ability of the group
 - 2. Designate Guide to be responsible for the remainder of the group not involved in the incident (if applicable)
 - 3. Contact appropriate outside agency (based on Emergency Call Down List for the given trip area)
 - 4. Initiate the ETC Call Down List
 - 5. If a motorized craft will be used to tow a sea kayak, the passengers of the sea kayak must get on board the motorboat before the tow is initiated. Kayaks should not be under motorized tow with passengers inside.
- b. Class B incidents: incidents that can be managed without the support of an outside agency
 - i. Action steps

1. Provide initial interventions to care for injuries and or manage the incident to the best of the ability of the group
 2. Initiate evacuation if any of the criteria for immediate evacuation are met
 3. Contact appropriate ETC Staff Member
 - a. If evacuation is not required, contact the appropriate Program Manager at the conclusion of the trip
 - b. If evacuation is required, initiate the ETC Call Down List
- c. Criteria for immediate evacuation
- i. Has experienced a traumatic head injury
 - ii. Has experienced any loss of consciousness
 - iii. Has been treated for apparent heat stroke or who has severe hypothermia
 - iv. Has a fever above 102.5°F
 - v. Has a persistent rapid heart rate (over 120 beats per minute)
 - vi. Has not quickly improved following treatment of symptoms of shock
 - vii. Has diarrhea persisting for more than 48 hours
 - viii. Has been involved in a lightning strike
 - ix. Has experienced a seizure or stroke
 - x. Has suspected myocardial infarction and/or congestive heart failure
 - xi. Has abdominal pain persisting for more than 24 hours
 - xii. Has wounds with severe infection or deep wounds with a high probability of infection
 - xiii. Has a serious chest injury or has been treated for difficulty breathing or anaphylaxis
 - xiv. Has suspected fractures or has sustained a musculoskeletal injury that is not usable in the field
 - xv. Has experienced a dislocation, with the exception of dislocations of the fingers or for chronic dislocations if the patient still has use of the joint after relocation
 - xvi. Has a possible spine injury
 - xvii. Has burns covering greater than 1% of their body area, or any burns that could cause scarring of the face, hands, feet, or genitals
- d. Transporting individuals to the hospital
- i. The ETC Guide responsible for administering first aid must accompany the injured individual to the hospital
 1. If the ETC Guide responsible for administering aid is also the Trip Leader, he or she may appoint another Guide to either remain with the trip and step into the Trip Leader role, or appoint another Guide to accompany the individual to the hospital.
 2. If sending an ETC Guide to the hospital with an injured individual will compromise the safety of the remaining group or trip, the Trip Leader may make the decision that an ETC representative will not accompany the individual to the hospital. In this case, an ETC representative must be sent to the hospital as soon as possible (this person could be someone who was not on the trip).

3. If emergency transportation does not allow for an ETC Guide to be transported with the participant (i.e. helicopter), an ETC representative must be sent to the hospital as soon as possible (this person could be someone who was not on the trip).
 - ii. If the injured person is a participant, the participant group leader or a family member of the participant must accompany the individual to the hospital
 1. If emergency transportation does not allow for participant staff or family member to be transported with the participant (i.e. helicopter), someone familiar with the participant must be sent to the hospital as soon as possible
 - iii. The individuals Health Form must be transported with them to the hospital
- e. Lost group members
 - i. Conduct an initial search for the missing person in search groups of 2 or more people from the Point Last Seen (PLS)
 - ii. Always ensure that at least 2 people remain at the PLS
 - iii. If the missing person is not found within 2 hours from the Time Last Scene, this elevates to a Class A Incident and the appropriate action steps are followed
 - iv. A lost group member scenario can be upgraded to a Class A incident sooner than 2 hours based on the discretion of the Trip Leader
- f. Documentation
 - i. For all incidents, complete a Field Incident Report Form within 24 hours, gather witness statements as soon as possible and submit materials to the appropriate Program Manager.
- g. Communication with Media
 - i. Only the ETC Executive Director is permitted to speak with the media regarding an incident
- h. Equipment
 - i. Any and all equipment involved in the incident that could have conceivably contributed to the incident must not be used until approved by the appropriate ETC Program Manager
 - ii. If the use of the equipment is necessary for the safe completion of the trip, the equipment must be removed from use upon the conclusion of the trip until approved for use again by the appropriate Program Manager
- i. Communication during and after incident
 - i. Do not guarantee a fast evacuation
 - ii. Do not make admissions of guilt or wrong doing
 - iii. Do not make value judgments or statements concerning what happened
 - iv. Do not argue or debate
 - v. Do not mention or offer insurance
 - vi. Do not lie or exaggerate
 - vii. Do not guess, speculate, or voice an assumption about the incident
 - viii. Do not give a signed statement about the incident with the approval from the appropriate Program Manager

Appendix 1: First Aid Kit and Ouch Kit Contents

1. Ouch Kit contents (Minor First Aid Kit)
 - a. Antibiotic ointment
 - b. Alcohol pads
 - c. Band-aids
 - d. Gauze pads
 - e. Medical tape
 - f. Moleskin
 - g. Tylenol
 - h. Aspirin
 - i. Diphenhydramine (i.e. Benadryl)
 - j. NSAID (i.e. Ibuprofen)
 - k. Duct tape
 - l. Hand sanitizer
2. First Aid Kit (Major First Aid Kit)
 - a. CPR shield
 - b. Medical scissors
 - c. Safety Pins
 - d. Tweezers
 - e. Accident/Incident report
 - f. 1st Aid manual
 - g. Call-down list
 - h. Pencil
 - i. Matches
 - j. Duct tape
 - k. Latex gloves
 - l. Hand sanitizer gel (i.e. Purell)
 - m. Irrigation Syringe
 - n. Eye drops
 - o. Hydrocortisone ointment
 - p. Antibiotic ointment
 - q. Q-tips
 - r. Alcohol pads
 - s. Band-aids
 - t. Butterfly strips
 - u. Gauze pads
 - v. Non-stick gauze pads (i.e. second skin)
 - w. Medical tape
 - x. Moleskin
 - y. Gauze rolls
 - z. Tampons
 - aa. Pads
 - bb. ACE bandage
 - cc. SAM splint
 - dd. Cold packs
 - ee. Triangular bandages

- ff. Tylenol
- gg. Aspirin
- hh. Diphenhydramine (i.e. Benadryl)
- ii. Dramamine
- jj. NSAID (i.e. Ibuprofen)
- kk. Glucose paste