

**San Francisco Bay Area Water Trail Steering Committee  
Meeting Summary  
October 3, 2006**

**Next Meeting—January, Date TBD, BCDC**

**Meeting Overview**

- ▶ The Water Trail Steering Committee (Committee) learned about and provided guidance to staff on strategies to address water trail safety and education issues. Through panel presentations and discussion, the Committee identified key safety issues, communication tools, and knowledge and equipment necessary to be safe on the Bay. Closely linked, the Committee identified educational opportunities, audiences, key messages, and effective implementation of educational programs. Staff will consider these facets when developing education and safety-related strategies for Committee review in the spring.
- ▶ The Committee recommended that overarching principles on safety and education clarify the context of safety, the need to augment existing education programs, and the critical importance of education.

**Action Items**

<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
Steering Committee	Email or call Sara Polgar with any additional ideas and comments on safety and education.	10/31
Sara Polgar	Incorporate changes to the principles, develop safety and education strategies, and distribute to Committee	11/30

**For Materials or More Information**

Please contact Sara Polgar (415 352-3645; [sarap@bcdca.gov](mailto:sarap@bcdca.gov)) for a copy of any documents mentioned below, or with any questions.

**Meeting Summary**

**Water Trail Safety**

Sara Polgar introduced water trail safety needs, issues and current efforts also summarized in the staff report. Following this introduction, three issue experts presented water trail safety issues and suggested strategies for possible inclusion in the water trail.

**Ken Mannshardt (Kayak Skills Instructor and Member, Bay Area Sea Kayakers)** identified two non-motorized small boating (NMSB) groups of concern in terms of water trail safety: novice and non-local boaters. Unique Bay conditions such as strong tidal currents and sudden afternoon gusts are challenges for both of these user groups. To help them boat safely, they need “local knowledge” about conditions around the Bay. Ken also pointed out challenges at NMSB access sites that limit a boater’s ability to safely launch their boats, such as a slippery launch ramp or big changes in tide levels. The third set of safety challenges that Ken highlighted occur when NMSB

users are interacting with others on the water. To successfully avoid accidents, trail users need to understand the Rules of the Road and practice “defensive paddling” techniques. Ken identified three ways in which the water trail might address these and other safety issues:

- ▶ Maintain a water trail website with up-to-date safety regulations and news, including information to the different trail heads;
- ▶ Distribute education materials at the point of sale/rental of equipment to inform users about key safety issues and direct them to additional safety resources; and
- ▶ Use existing boating clubs’ outreach materials, member networks, and events to help spread information about safety issues to members and the public.

**Sean Kelley (Operations Director, Chief, Vessel Traffic Service (VTS))** discussed safety issues associated with Rule 9 of the Inland Navigational Rules and Regulations (Rules of the Road), visibility and communications on the water. In the Bay, deep-draft vessels, such as container ships and ferries, are confined to dredged shipping lanes. Rule 9 requires vessels not to impede the progress of these ships when they are in dredged lanes. Using a past example in which a container ship operator changed course to avoid a sailboat and hit a support for the Bay Bridge, Sean emphasized that trail users and all other boaters should never put the operator of a deep-draft vessel in the position of making this type of decision. Sean also pointed out the key issue of visibility for trail users’ safety. Not only do NMSB users need to stay alert to their surroundings (as required under Rule 5 of the Rules of the Road), they should also do their utmost to make themselves visible to other boaters on the water, especially at night. Lastly, Sean described essential communications and sources of information, including:

- ▶ Nautical charts which show regulated navigation zones and permanent exclusion zones;
- ▶ Tide and current books;
- ▶ The “local notice to mariners” about marine events (available on the web); and
- ▶ Marine radio channels that trail users can monitor on VHF radio to learn about vessel movements on the Bay, and, if necessary, communicate with other vessels or VTS.

**Peter Thorner (President, San Francisco Boardsailing Association (SFBA))** described three safety needs that relate to the water trail and how SFBA is addressing these:

- ▶ Developing personal knowledge;
- ▶ Getting people the right equipment; and
- ▶ Strengthening communication with agencies.

“A little knowledge of the right of way” has been a key safety challenge in the boardsailing community. SFBA tries to resolve this problem by informing boardsailors about areas to steer clear of, and teaching them to respect others on the water (e.g. “give a beginner a break”) and to use common sense (e.g. “better to be safe than right”). Peter highlighted some important safety gear such as a full wetsuit, light source, compass and whistle. SFBA trainings and events (e.g. Safety Day at Coyote Point) have been effective methods for educating boardsailors about recommended equipment as well as increasing personal knowledge. Lastly, Peter emphasized the importance of developing good communication between the water trail and agencies to ensure that the trail is recommending best safety practices, and that agencies are aware of safety concerns unique to the

NMSB communities. As an example he described the annual training he does for Coast Guard rescue personnel. He shows them safe methods for retrieving boardsailing equipment, teaches them about boardsailing safety issues and learns from the Coast Guard about how boardsailors can make their work easier.

### **Safety Discussion**

During the discussion, meeting participants identified additional safety concerns and re-emphasized some of those raised by the experts. Meeting participants discussed the kind of knowledge and equipment unique to safety on the Bay, identified different methods to communicate effectively, and highlighted materials and distribution points that contribute to educating NMSB users about safety on the Bay and, in the future, on the Water Trail.

- ▶ Experienced NMSB users at the meeting expressed that the key navigational safety concerns for trail users will be due to motorized recreational boats such as powerboats and jet skis. Unlike large, deep-draft vessels, these fast boats do not follow predictable routes, and the person at the helm may or may not have training in operating the vessel.
- ▶ A safety issue facing land-side agencies that provide access onto the Bay was also raised: what should park or other agency staff do if they find a car left in the parking lot after hours? The Committee discussed a variety of potential solutions for this scenario, including having trail users leave a note on the dashboard, an overnight parking permit program and a onsite drop-box for trail users to leave their ‘float plans.’
- ▶ The Committee also emphasized concerns about hazards for trail users on the land (e.g. treacherous launching conditions) and in the water (e.g. objects falling into the water from large vessels or docks).

Tools and approaches for promoting water trail safety were also identified.

- ▶ Recommend safe boating practices (e.g. wearing a personal flotation device and kayaking with a group) through a variety of methods (e.g. guidebook, signage, website, tours, etc.);
- ▶ Create a water trail membership program similar to one run by the Washington Water Trails Association that enables boaters to gain access to a comprehensive guidebook for the trail;
- ▶ Establish water trail regulations or guidelines for use of the trail;
- ▶ Create a clearinghouse of key information – weather, tides and currents, marine events and water quality – that is available via the web and an email listserv.

### **Water Trail Education**

After a brief introduction by Sara Polgar to identify existing education efforts related to the water trail, two issue experts described opportunities that a water trail education program should address.

**Jessica Parsons (Education Program Manager, Save the Bay)** focused on three opportunities for the water trail education program. The first opportunity is to develop and promote water trail education messages that are consistent across all outreach efforts (e.g. signage, guidebook, website, tours, brochures, etc.). Jessica cited examples from the Cascadia Water Trail in Washington state where information about conservation, sustainability, wildlife protection, safety and other trail issues is consistent whether it is in a brochure offered on an inter-island ferry, on a sign at a trail head or told by a tour guide on the water trail. Jessica also discussed the potential role of the water

trail in creating personal connections with the Bay. This involves engaging and inspiring trail users to care for the Bay by boating in a manner that protects resources, sharing their knowledge with others – both on and off the water – and participating in active stewardship of these resources. Lastly, Jessica described the need for partnerships between the water trail and agencies and other organizations to develop and disseminate consistent trail-related messages throughout the Bay Area.

**Nancy Krebs (Naturalist and Manager, Crab Cover Visitor Center in Alameda)** also emphasized the importance of partnerships for a water trail education program, particularly for opportunities to tap into the expertise and resources of other agencies and organizations such as the East Bay Regional Park District’s educators and interpreters and ‘exhibit lab,’ and the guidelines already promoted by the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics. Nancy also emphasized the value of well-developed education and interpretive programs. These are programs that have a cultural and/or scientific basis of information that is communicated in a manner that engages diverse audiences. Programs should have a theme and a key message, be provocative and refer to what participants are seeing and hearing, and include a “call to action” to inspire them to take further steps to protect resources.

### **Education Discussion**

During the discussion of water trail education, the Committee built on some of the themes raised by the technical experts related to educational opportunities, defining audiences and messages, as well as methods and considerations for implementing educational elements of the Water Trail.

- ▶ To facilitate consistent messaging across the entire trail, agencies that manage access points will need guidelines that describe standards for signage and outreach materials, as well as information about resources to assist them in developing educational materials.
- ▶ ‘Training the trainers’ is an important component of water trail education efforts. The trail should provide information and tips for outfitters and tour operators that they can use to teach clients about protecting wildlife other resources.
- ▶ To improve the educational value of interpretive and outreach signage, these materials should be located as close to decision points as possible. Additionally, designing these media such that information is easily changed would enable agencies to maintain current and relevant information at launch sites.
- ▶ Building upon the partnerships theme, meeting participants identified other organizations such as Audubon Society, Estuary Program and American Canoe Association to involve in developing education materials and guidelines.

The Committee also identified challenges associated with these education ideas and opportunities.

- ▶ There may be a tension between promoting consistency of messages and building strong trail partnerships because different agencies and organizations will have different formats for educational messages.
- ▶ Ideally signage should be located where people are making decisions, but often this is on the water. Buoys may be a suitable substitute in some locations, but signage on the Bay will most likely be infeasible.

- ▶ Committee members recognized the diverse audience for the water trail– novice boaters, one-time trail users, boat owner, outfitters, future trail users (youth), etc – and the challenges that this presents for developing broadly effective water trail education and outreach.

### **Review of Safety and Education Principles**

Staff asked the Committee to review and comment on two overarching principles to guide the water trail approach to safety and education issues.

- ▶ Promote safety through a water trail education program, and through active coordination among NMSB groups and other mariners and regulatory agencies.
- ▶ Offer a comprehensive water trail education program that increases opportunities for environmental education and interpretation and promotes consistent and accurate educational messages in all outreach efforts.

The Committee’s comments addressed three major concerns.

- ▶ The first principle should define “safety” to be clear that it applies to boater and navigational safety, and national security.
- ▶ The second principle does not reflect that the water trail should be working with and augment existing education programs, rather than reinventing the wheel.
- ▶ The second principle implies that the education component of the trail is discretionary. The wording of this principle should be strengthened to reflect the critical importance of education in implementing the trail.

### **Meeting Participants**

#### **Steering Committee**

Mike Ammon, Dept. of Boating and Waterways  
 Margot Brown, SF Bay Harbor Safety Committee  
 Ted Choi, City Kayak  
 Arthur Feinstein, Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge  
 Jim McGrath, Bay Access, SF Boardsailing Association  
 Jessica Parsons, Save the Bay  
 Barbara Salzman, Marin Audubon Society  
 Laura Thompson, ABAG Bay Trail Project  
 Penny Wells, Bay Access  
 Brian Wiese, East Bay Regional Park District

#### **Invited Speakers**

Sean Kelley, Vessel Traffic Service  
 Nancy Krebs, Crab Cove Visitor Center, East Bay Regional Park District  
 Ken Mannshardt, Bay Area Sea Kayakers  
 Jessica Parsons, Save the Bay  
 Peter Thorner, SF Boardsailing Association

#### **Staff**

Ann Buell, California Coastal Conservancy  
 Tim Corrigan, California Coastal Conservancy  
 Joe LaClair, BCDC  
 Sara Polgar, BCDC  
 Linda Scourtis, BCDC

#### **Members of the Public**

Dan Alexander, Open Water Rowing Center  
 Kisasi Brooks, Office of Assemblywoman Loni Hancock  
 Winnie Chan, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, SF Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex  
 Frank and Janice Delfino, Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge  
 Paul Kamen, Berkeley Waterfront Commission  
 Robert Johnson, Oyster Point Marina  
 Steve Siskin, UCSF Outdoors Unlimited  
 Ted Warburton, City of Brisbane Marina

#### **Facilitator Contact Information**

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