

# Trip Planning and Logistics

For Flatwater Leaders, Potential Leaders and Active Paddlers



Blackstone River near Manville



# Agenda

- ✓ Risk Management
- ✓ Planning
- ✓ At the Put-in
- ✓ On the Water
- ✓ At the Take-out



Ashuelot River

# Risk Management



Whipple Drop on the Branch River

# What is “Risk”

Things that can go wrong (aka Perils):

- Injury
  - ✓ Drowning
  - ✓ Hyperthermia
  - ✓ Exhaustion
  - ✓ Dehydration
  - ✓ Blunt Trauma
  - ✓ Lacerations
  - ✓ Internal injuries
- Damage
  - ✓ Lost/damaged equipment
- Situational
  - ✓ Lost
  - ✓ Unintended end-point
  - ✓ Late return

Things that increases the likelihood of something going wrong (aka Hazards):

- Human
  - ✓ Poor physical condition
  - ✓ Insufficient skills / experience
  - ✓ Poor leadership / decisions
- Equipment
  - ✓ Old / worn / damaged
  - ✓ Wrong for the trip
- Environmental
  - ✓ High Wind / Tides / Waves
  - ✓ Poor visibility
  - ✓ Limited egress points
  - ✓ Rocks / strainers
  - ✓ Remoteness
  - ✓ Inability to communicate

# Balancing Risk

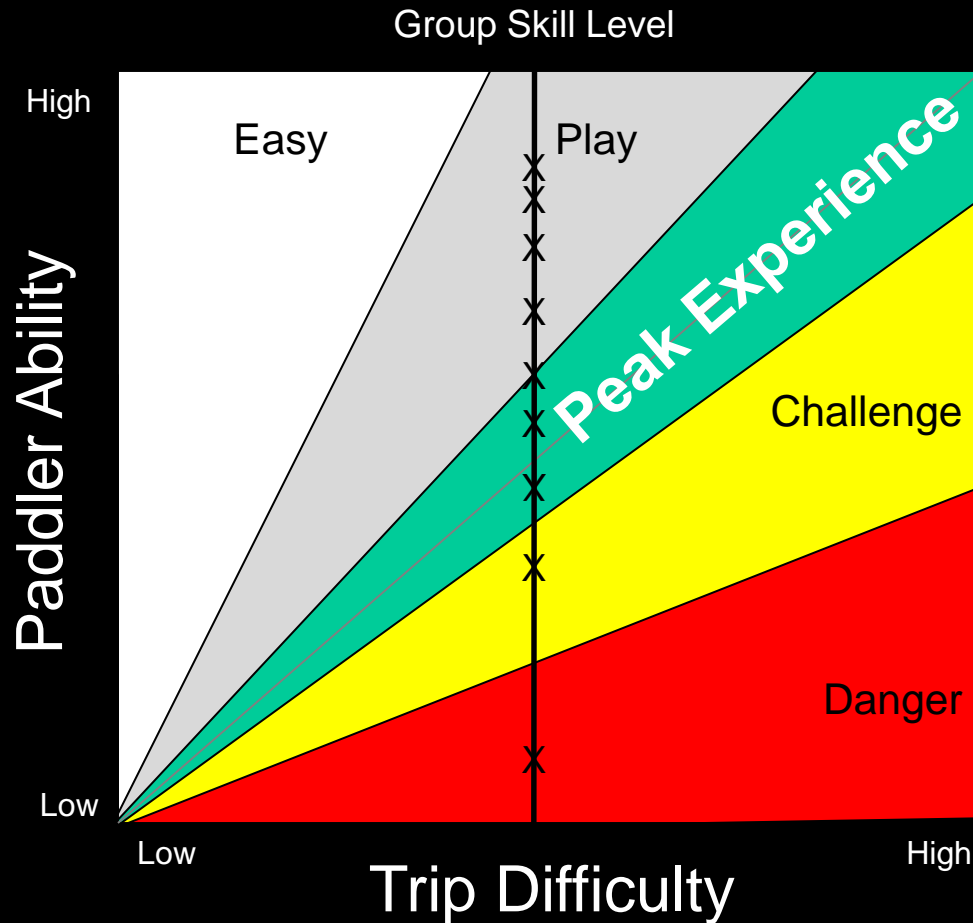
Low Risk  
Conditions

Acceptable  
Level of  
Risk

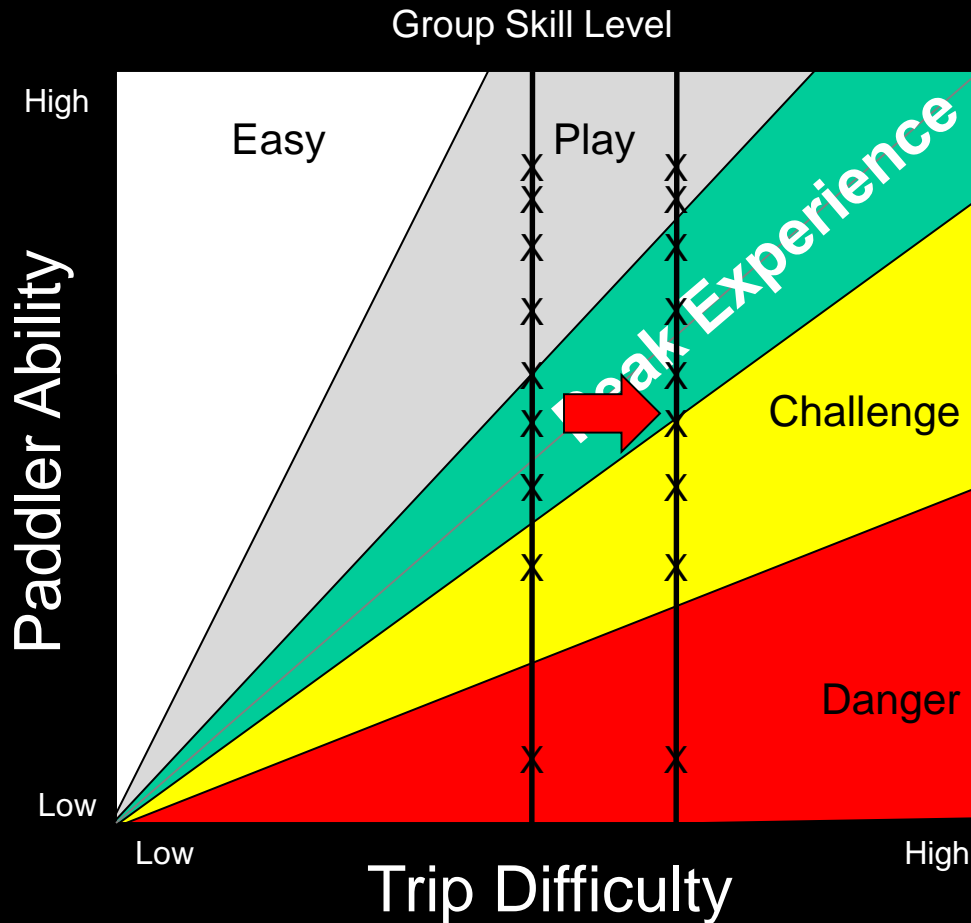
High Risk  
Conditions



# How Much Risk is Acceptable?

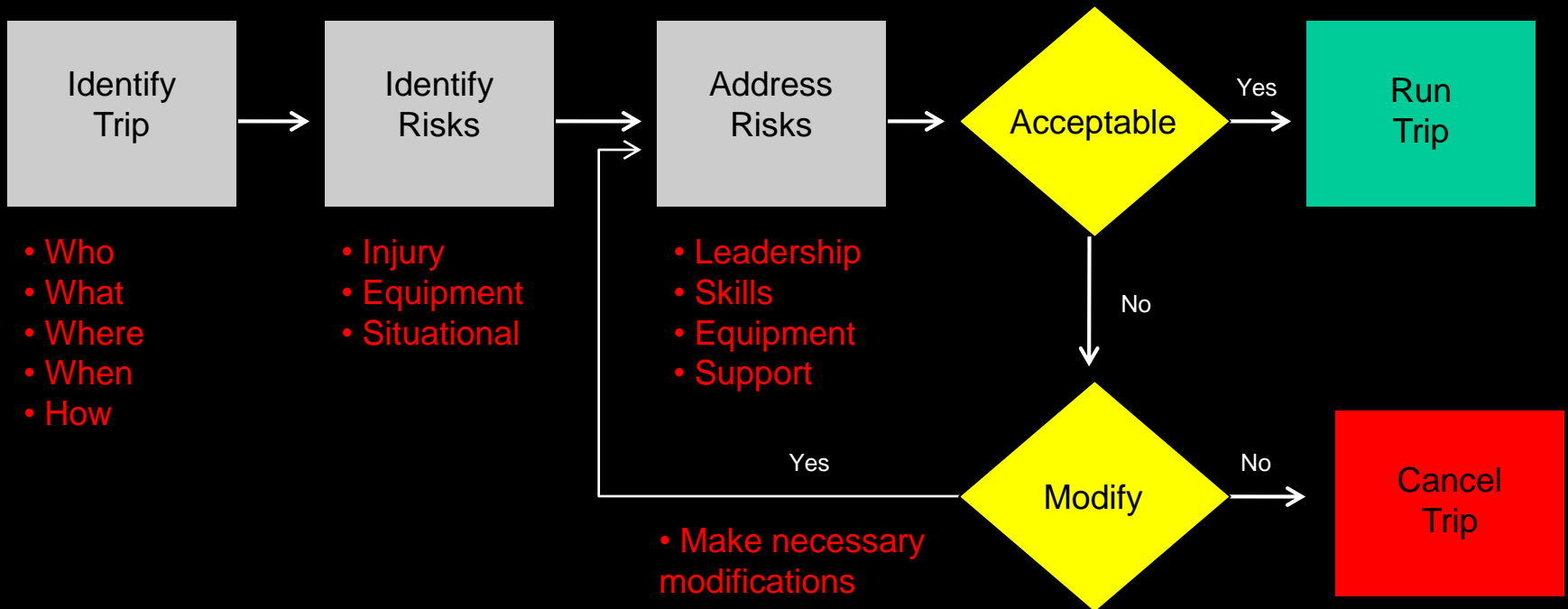


# What Happens when Conditions Change?



# Trip Planning/Logistics

The process of identifying, assessing and mitigating risk.





# Planning



At the top of Spirit Falls in the Tully Lake Recreation Area

# Flatwater

- River with little or no current. The surface is smooth and unbroken. Paddling upstream is easy.



Contoocook River

# Quickwater

- The river moves faster. Its surface is nearly smooth at high water levels, but is likely to be choppy at medium water levels.



Farmington River

# Class I

- The river contains fast moving water with a riffles and small waves. Obstructions are obvious and can be easily avoided. The risk to swimmers is slight, and self-rescue is easy.



Housatonic River

# Lakes/Ponds



Long Lake in the Adirondacks

# Protected Inland Coves



Egrets at Pettaquamscutt Cove on the Narrow River

# Choosing a Trip

- Leaders should only lead trips at locations that they know.
- Find something fun and interesting.
- Respect the rights of property owners and local residents.



East Brimfield Reservoir

# Risks/Hazards

- Open Water Hazards
  - Wind
  - Waves
  - Tides
  - Long Crossings
- River Hazards
  - Water level
  - Strainers
  - Rocks
  - Ledges/Low-head dams



Pawcatuck River - running the broken dam at Burdickville



# Wind

- Wind – most significant hazard in open water
  - Physical endurance
  - Waves
- Dealing with wind
  - Be flexible – know when not to paddle
  - Paddle early or late to avoid highest winds which usually occur mid-day
  - Follow the shore route – 100 yards from shore
    - Easier rescue in event of capsizing
    - Lower wind due to trees
    - More interesting scenery



Quinebaug River Canoe Trail

# Rocks

Love the rock!



Blackstone Gorge in low water



Same section in high water

# Ledges

(and Low-Head Dams)

Portage!



Blackstone Gorge in low water



Same ledge in high water

# Strainers



Strainer in the Glendale Rapid on the Branch River

# Lightning

- If you can hear thunder, you are within striking distance of lightning, and should seek shelter immediately!
- Wait at least 30 minutes after the last clap of thunder before leaving shelter. Don't be fooled by sunshine or blue sky!
- If you are stuck outside in a thunderstorm, you should avoid the following:
  - Open areas including water.
  - Hills, isolated trees, towers or utility poles.
  - Metal conductors such as wires or fences.
- Enclosed buildings with wiring and plumbing provide the best protection. If a sturdy building is not available, get into a car and close all the windows.



There is no safe place outdoors  
in a thunderstorm

# Cold

- Exposure to the cold can drain your strength and rob paddlers of the ability to make sound judgments regarding safety.
  - Keep the trip short, and well within the paddling ability of the group.
  - Dress for immersion in a wetsuit or drysuit. Protect the extremities with a hat/helmet, neoprene gloves and warm footwear. Always carry a change of cloths in a dry bag.
  - Always, always, always wear your PFD.
- Cold water can be an issue anytime - not just in winter.



Ice Breaker Paddle on the West River above the West Hill Dam

# Other Hazards

- Rain - its going to happen
  - Rain gear
- Heatstroke in summer
  - Hats and water



Tully River

# Required Equipment

- Select the right boat for the trip
  - Long boats – fast on flatwater
  - Short boats – maneuverable
- PFD
  - Must be worn at all time
  - Proper fit
- Group gear
  - Spare paddle
  - First aid kit
  - Throw bag / towline
  - Cell phone
  - Emergency numbers



“Gearing-up” on the Deerfield River



# Personal Gear

- Water shoes
- Whistle
- Non-cotton cloths
- Splash top / rain gear
- Dry bag
- Knife
- Change of cloths
- Water
- Snack
- Hat
- Sunglasses
- Bug spray
- Headlamp / flashlight
- Camera



Long Pond in the Tully Lake Recreation Area

# “Show and Go” vs. RSVP

- Most trips are “show and go”. No advance contact is required, but potential paddlers should contact the leader in advance with any questions.
- For more advanced trips, the leader may request an RSVP. This will allow the leader to provide additional information about equipment and skills that will allow the paddler to decide if the trip is right for them.



Wood River below the Woodville Dam

**Any paddle sport is an assumed risk sport. Some aspects of canoeing and kayaking involve the risk of serious injury or death. The Rhode Island Canoe/Kayak Association (Rhode Island Canoe Association, Inc.), although safety conscious, cannot guarantee your personal safety in club activities. Each participant is responsible for his or her own training in boating and rescue techniques, equipment, and personal well-being when engaging in or attending club-organized activities.**

# Trip Description

- Who do paddlers contact?
- What is the trip?
  - Distance
  - Hazards
  - Skills
  - Equipment
- Where is the trip?
- When is the trip?
- How do you get there?



Riverton section of the Farmington River

September 18<sup>th</sup> – Farmington River – Riverton, CT. Shuttle at 10:30. leader: Erik Eckilson [eckilson@cox.net](mailto:eckilson@cox.net) (401) 765-1741. Please RSVP to organizer.

A 10-mile trip on the upper Farmington River – officially designated as a National Wild and Scenic River. We will put in at the Riverton Picnic Area and take out at the Satan's Kingdom Recreation Area (before the Satan's Kingdom Rapids). This section runs through the American Legion and Peoples State Forests. There are sections of quickwater and class I rapids depending on water level - moving water experience (including wet exits) and appropriate equipment (boat under 14 feet, helmet and sprayskirt) are required. Bring a lunch. Please RSVP to the organizer.

Directions:

Traveling on I 84, take exit 39 – Rt. 4 toward Farmington. Follow Rt. 4 through Farmington Center into Unionville. Turn right on the Rt. 177 – Lovely Street. Follow Rt. 177 for approximately 4.5 miles to Rt. 44. Take a sharp left on Rt. 44 West – Albany Turnpike. After 4.7 mile turn right into the Satan's Kingdom Recreation Area. Organizer will make arrangements for a group shuttle.

**Who, What, Where, When, How**

# Scouting

- Whenever possible, leaders should scout the trip in advance. A trip's difficulty can change dramatically depending on water levels or the presence of hazards such as strainers. Identifying these conditions in advance will greatly improve your ability to deal with them.



Lining a shallow section of the Blackstone River

# Changes/Cancellations

- The leader may cancel a trip or change its location as conditions warrant.
- When possible, cancellations and changes should be posted on the message board at least 2 hours in advance the scheduled launch.
- Trips should always be canceled in the event of thunderstorms.



Willimantic River

# At the Put-in



Providence River



# Personal Preparedness

- Research the trip in advance.
- Be in good physical condition and a competent swimmer.
- Be honest about your ability - take training classes, including self-rescue.
- Ask the leader about trip conditions and hazards.
- Arrive early and have the right equipment.
  - Boat, paddle, PFD and personal gear.
- Once on the water, stay with the group.



Flatwater Training at Stump Pond

# Leader Preparedness

- Know the conditions on the water – hazards change in different conditions.
- Know the participants – talk to them about their skill level.
- Make sure everyone has the right equipment.
- Have the right organization and support.
- Have a float plan and communicate it to the group.



Getting the trip started at Pummers Landing on the Blackstone River

# Assigning Responsibilities

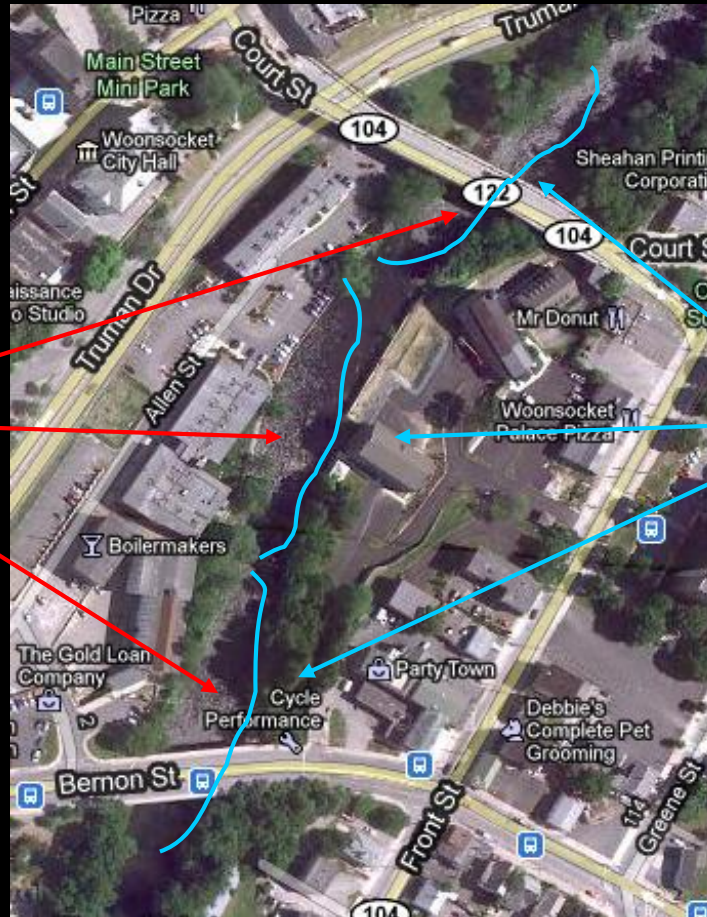
- Leader should arrange to have other qualified paddlers assume key responsibilities for the trip. This should include:
  - Lead boat who knows the route and will set the pace.
  - Sweep boat to make sure everyone stays with the group and can perform rescues.
  - Others as required to assist paddlers through particular hazards that were identified while scouting the trip such as strainers, drops or small rapids, portages, etc.



Hop River

# River Island Park

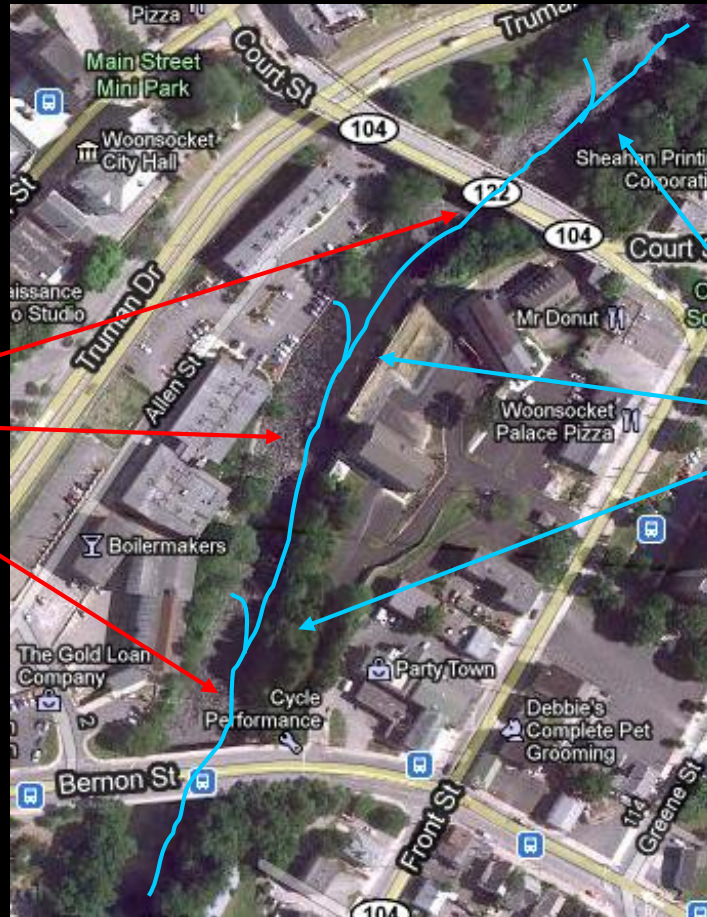
Rapids



Lead boat breaks the river into sections so the group addresses one major hazard at a time.

# River Island Park

Rapids



Alternatively, leader arranges to have qualified paddlers up front prepared to “peel off” at hazards while the group proceeds on.

# Distributing Safety Equipment

- Leader should confirm that team members have the necessary equipment for the trip. This should include:
  - First Aid Kit – generally in the sweep boat
  - Tow belts - if necessary with the strongest paddlers.
  - Throw Bags – if necessary in the lead boat or paddlers who have been assigned as safety at specific locations.



Safety positioned with a throw bag below a ledge on Otter Brook

# Running the Shuttle

- Drivers move their cars from the put-in to the take-out (or vice versa) - following the leader and staying together.
  - Always have the car in front and the car behind in sight. If someone gets separated (stop sign, traffic light or in traffic), all drivers pull over and wait for them to catch up.
  - Drivers come back to the put-in in as few cars as possible. Make sure you have all your gear. Offer to drive your car back to the put-in.
  - If your car stays at the take-out, offer to drive the shuttle drivers back to the put-in as soon as the trip ends. Make sure they have their keys.



Shuttle on the West River

# Safety Talk

- Leader should conduct a short safety talk before any boats are launched. This talk should include:
  - A short description of the trip including potential hazards that might be encountered.
  - An introduction of other paddlers who have been assigned specific responsibilities or have safety equipment.
  - Safety rules regarding PFDs and staying with the group.



Safety talk at Stump Pond



# On the Water



Big River

# CLAP



Pawcatuck – Potter Hill

- Communication
  - Maintain contact with the group and other leaders.
- Line of Sight
  - Keep the group together – you should be able to see the lead and sweep boats.
- Awareness
  - Be alert to changing water and weather conditions and alter plans as needed.
  - Monitor paddlers - get help to those that need it - (fatigue / hypothermia, etc.).
  - Monitor other leaders – make sure critical duties are covered.
- Position of Maximum Usefulness
  - Be where you can help most – that might not be the front!

# SAFER

- When things go wrong...
  - Stop and Assess the situation
  - Formulate a plan
  - Execute
  - Reassess



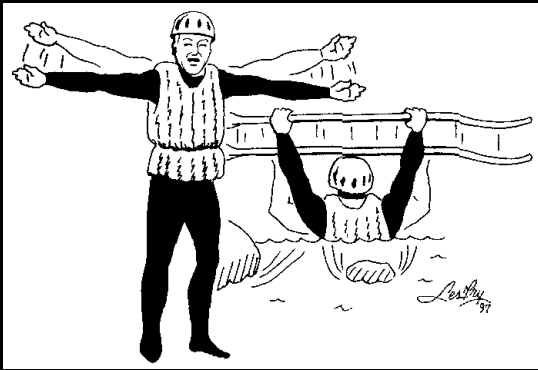
Great Swamp

# Communication



Charles River

# Stop



Raise arms or paddle horizontally - pump up & down. (like a bird flapping wings or a weightlifter). Meaning - potential hazard ahead - wait for "All Clear"

# All Clear



Come ahead (in the absence of other directions proceed down the center). Form a vertical bar with your paddle or one arm held high above your head. paddle blade should be turned flat for maximum visibility. To signal direction or a preferred course through a rapid around obstruction, lower the previously vertical "all clear" by 45 degrees toward the side of the river with the preferred route.

# Help / Emergency



Wave hand or paddle repeatedly in circles over head; and/or blow repeatedly on whistle. Assist signaler ASAP - use only in real emergencies

# I'm OK



I'm OK and not hurt. While holding the elbow outward toward the side, repeatedly pat the top of your head. This signal is meant as a question and a answer:

"You OK?"

"Yes I'm OK."



# At the Take-out

- Make sure all paddlers are accounted for.
- Make sure everyone gets back to their cars.
- Debrief each of significant events that may require action in the future.



Slatersville Reservoir

# Becoming a Better Leader

- Take a safety course - open water or swift water.
- Take a first aid course.
- Continue to improve your paddling skills.
- Have fun and enjoy your time on the water.



Nipmuc River

# Questions



A happy group at the take out - Blackstone River - South Uxbridge

Thanks to Cheryl, Jim C. and Mike V. for providing pictures.