Coastbusters

The Cross Currents Newsletter for Mid-Atlantic Paddlers

May 2025

400 NM on the Sea of Cortes

Rick Wiebush

A Scene

Sitting in a sandy campsite near Bahia de Los Angeles, well back from the edge of the Sea of Cortes, surrounded by desert bushes and plants. We had just watched a spectacular crimson and gold sunset over the mountains and were now gazing at hundreds of emerging stars as the sky blackened. Suddenly the unmistakable howl of a coyote rose up from one corner of the camp. Not too far off. "Cool" we thought. But then another yowling response from the opposite corner, "Hunh", we said. Then a third from another corner. Finally a fourth howling joined the chorus – also pretty close and now worrisome - from the last quarter. WTF, we're surrounded! Three ordinarily fairly tough guys decided to get into our respective tents.

As it turned out, we were threatened only by their curiosity. In the middle of the night, I was awakened by a dragging sound and a shout. One of the coyotes had snatched my PFD out of my cockpit and was making off with it, hell-bound to get at the candy bar wrapper I had left in a pocket. After some rather frantic yelling and chasing, the offender dropped it and loped away into the night.

But they weren't done. Hours later another shout – this one closer to screeching – woke everyone up.

Now what? Joel had again thought he heard something in the camp. Up on one elbow, he pulled back the tent flap and pressed his nose to the netting to see what was up. What was up was the face of a coyote with its nose pressed up against that same netting, a breath away. It was this nose-to-nose encounter that precipitated the shout/screech which in turn resulted in the coyote hightailing it and Joel having a hard time getting back to sleep.

Baja sunset. Photo: Rick Wiebush

This was just one of many scenes that played out from mid-October to mid-November, 2008, as three of us from the Baltimore area—Hank McComas, Joel Beckwith and I - completed a 30-day, 400-nautical mile self-supported sea kayaking trip in the northern section of Baja's Sea of Cortes. It was long; it was hard; it was spectacular.

Why

We had all previously been to Baja and had paddled some of the southern sections of the Sea of Cortes. Part of our motivation for this trip was to do something new and to link the northern section with trips we had already done, thereby completing over 600 continuous nautical miles of the Sea of Cortes coast.

Sunny, Warm, REALLY Windy

The northernmost section of the trip was just so-so in terms of dramatic scenery and wildlife, since much of the coast is relatively flat and populated by innumerable gringo RV "campos" that stretch sometimes for miles along the coast. The other 350 miles is a desert and mountain wilderness, broken up only by sporadic small fishing villages. Other than the pescadores found near the villages, and the town residents, we saw almost no one for the entire rest of the trip. We were generally on the water by.

Exploring Baja caves. Photo: Joel Beckwith

How

The trip was divided into two basic segments: from the put-in just north of San Felipe to Bahia de Los Angles and from LA Bay to Mulege. We also spent a couple of days exploring the islands of Bahia de Los Angeles and took two-day breaks in the small communities of LA Bay and Santa Rosalita. We were able to get water and some food resupplies there. We used boats rented from Jen Kleck at Aqua Adventures in San Diego. All other equipment was either our own, rented from the outfitters, or had already been shipped to Jen prior to the trip. Jen had also arranged for one of her staff members to shuttle us from San Diego to the put-in at San Felipe. It took five hours. On the back end, we totally lucked out in that we found a gringo who was driving from Mulege back to San Diego the day after we got done with the trip. And he had a big-ass pickup that was capable of carrying all three boats and our gear.

sunrise and usually made camp by 3:30, were in bed by 7, and up most mornings by 4:30. Generally the weather was cooperative: sunny, cloudless, mid- to upper-80-degree days—very typical Baja.

But there were three days when we were forced off the water early by strong winds (20-25 knots) and big seas, and two days we couldn't get on the water at all due to similar conditions. These interruptions were the result of the infamous El Norte winds, which can blow at a sustained 25-30+ knots for up to three days.

Our worst experience was the winds blowing at that rate for about 36 hours. We had to hole up in a crumbling, abandoned fish camp, trying to escape two days of a full-blown El Norte windstorm. To keep our tents standing, we created barriers: one a three-foot high wall of collected boulders and rocks; the other a four-by-eight sheet of old plywood we found. But there was more! A few days later, after rounding Punta Chuvato, we sought refuge from the high winds and huge swells by pulling our boats onto a rocky outcropping. While we rested, the tide

A section of "The Wall" Photo: Rick Wiebush

receded to a point that it was impossible to relaunch. And since the next significant tide would be coming in the middle of the night, we had to hoist all the boats and equipment even higher up on the rocks. And we ended up having to sleep next to our boats on a four-foot-wide rock ledge perched about 25 feet above the water at low tide and 10 feet above it at high.

The Wall

In the planning stage, there was the ominous prospect of dealing with the infamous "Wall"—a mass of virtually uninterrupted 500-foot cliffs that stretches approximately 40 miles from Punta Final to Punta Remedios. The word about this stretch was that there is no place to land, that kayakers have resorted to doing it all in a non-stop 15-hour push, and that at least one kayaker took Immodium to help him do it all without the inconvenience of having to figure out a way of going to the bathroom.

As it turned out, that common wisdom about the "Wall" seemed to be somewhat overblown. We covered this section in two days. There is no doubt that it is huge and imposing. However, we found several potential campsites. They were very exposed, with rocky landings and small camping areas, but they were there. The winds also cooperated—if we had had strong winds while negotiating the wall, I might be telling different stories and have a totally different assessment of the difficulty of this section.

Squeezed Currents: Get Out If You Can

Another challenge involved the strong tidal currents, standing waves, boils and eddies that are associated with big tides getting squeezed through narrow channels. This happens in the 100- mile stretch just to the north and south of LA Bay. In this area there is approximately a 16-foot tidal range. All that water running in and out gets squeezed by a series of islands that lie about 5-8 miles off the coast.

Between the coast and these islands are two very deep (4,000 ft) channels that create upwelling currents in addition to those running in and out. Moreover, these channels - Canal de Ballenas (Whales) and Canal de Salsipuedes ("Get out if you can") - rise dramatically in elevation at their southern and northern ends. Water that was running through a 4,000-foot-deep trough is suddenly squeezed through areas that are only 900-1,000 feet deep. We read, and were warned by experienced kayakers, about the conditions: four to five knot currents, standing waves, whirlpools. One sailing log referred to an area called the "standing wall of death", while other accounts warned about whirlpools and tide races. That was the kind of stuff we were apprehensive about as we set off on the trip. While we experienced some of these, none rose

400 miles from San Felipe in the north to Mulege in the south

to the degree of predicted high drama (well, one was pretty shaky). We encountered whirlpools, but nothing dangerous; we saw some standing waves from a mile away; we had some fairly strong eddy lines in places, but these were negotiable.

The only place in this section that got me unnerved was Punta Remedios, which was probably the tightest constriction we faced the whole trip. About two miles before we hit Punta Remedios the current started picking up big time. That was a fun ride. However, by the time we got to the point, the GPS showed us doing six knots and I felt like I was on a Class IV white water river. It didn't help that a 15-20 knot tail wind had just sprung up and was also pushing us along. Although rounding this point probably lasted no more than 25 minutes, it was one of those shallow breathing, constantly-on-guard experiences that seemed to last an hour. That we didn't experience more problems going through this section was part luck - we hit Punta Remedios within an hour after slack - and part planning - we timed going through Salsipuedes so that we were doing it on neap tides, when the currents were much less strong.

Transitory Terror

Although we routinely rounded large headlands, there were several occasions that severely challenged our nerves and skills. At times, the confluence of swells, high winds and strong currents produced confused seas and four- and five-foot (frankly terrifying) waves. Total focus and mounting concern would slowly replace the pure adrenaline of it all. On the next to the last day in a particularly chaotic stretch I recall thinking, "this is the way people die out here," and I felt as though I had run up against my limits as a sea kayaker. I was glad to be finally out of it.

Highlights

Of the many highlights of the trip - wildlife, rock gardens, caving along the coast - it was the omnipresent desert mountain ranges and cliffs running down to the sea that formed the backdrop for everything else. Every day's paddle, every meal break and every campsite took place in the context of a truly spectacular wilderness setting: soaring mountain ranges, chiseled cliffs, rocky outcrop pings, hardy desert cactus and fascinating wildlife all converging at the interface of land and sea. It is what makes Baja the special place that it is. When we pulled into Mulege on the last day, my sense was "well, ok, that's done. Not really a big deal." Now that I think about what was involved my reaction is more like: "Whoa!!!"

The rugged coast of the Sea of Cortes. Photo: Mike Thomas

In This Issue

Letter to the Editor

Rick - Great article on our OBX Expedition ("*Wind, Salt, Sand: An OBX Expedition, July 2025)*. It was a fantastic trip, pristine environment, wonderful friends. Elena's description was perfect.

My connection to the environment on that trip continues to grow as I read more about the history of those islands. Perhaps all of us on that expedition have become a bit of a "Banker". (Banker: as in Core Banks.)

"I found it surprisingly easy to just embrace the lack of control that I had on my environment and simply deal with whatever comes." - Elena Corriero

This is a very interesting quote from Elena, as she, along with the rest of us, adjusted to the OBX environment.

I was recently reading a book about OBX history. I found a description there of the people that live on those outlying islands. "Bankers are a people set apart. Men and women raised on shifting sand learn quickly that change is a constant and survival is dependent on a person's (and a community's) ability to hold on while letting go, their willingness to accept what is to come by remaining steadfast and strong yet powerless against the elements." - "Living at the Water's Edge" - Barbara Garrity-Blake and Karen Willis Amspacher

Additional Sources:
"The Outer Banks of North Carolina 1584-1958" David Stick
"Island Born and Bred" - Harker's Island United Methodist Women.

- **James Kesterson**

Upcoming Events

Dates	Event	Location	Sponsor	Website/Contact
Sept 17 - 18	Intermediate + Adv. Surf Camps	Cape Charles, VA	Cross Currents	Crosscurrentsseakayaking.com
Sept 19-21	Kiptopeke Symposium	Cape Charles VA	Cross Currents	Crosscurrentsseakayaking.com
Oct. 4 – 6 cancelled	Bay of Fundy Symposium	Argyle, Nova Scotia	Chris Lockyear	Bofsks.com rescheduled for Sept. 11 – 13, 2026
Oct. 10 -12	Delmarva Paddlers Retreat	Lewes DE	Qajaq USA	Delmarvapaddlersretreat.org
Oct 30 -Nov 1	Ocean Gathering	Tybee Is., GA	Sea Kayak Georgia	Seakayakgeorgia.com

"Can You Hear Me Now?": The VHF Radio and Sea Kayaking

Richard Essex

Anyone who has been on an open water paddle with a group of sea kayakers has probably experienced the difficulty of on-water communication. A few knots of wind and more than a couple of boat lengths between paddlers and trying to talk, or more accurately shout, can become an exercise in futility. A whistle and/or paddle signals can be used for very basic communication provided the group is not too spread out, the other paddlers are looking, and everyone knows what the signals mean. That is why many paddlers carry handheld marine VHF radios for real-time voice communication. There is a tendency to think of these devices as essentially fancy walkie-talkies but that is an oversimplification. By knowing a bit more about marine VHF radios, their limitations, and the protocols for proper communication, we can use these tools more effectively and avoid unrealistic expectations.

So, what is marine VHF radio?

The marine VHF radio has been a key piece of safety equipment for commercial vessels and recreational watercraft since the 1960's. Before the explosive growth of cellular phones and now personal satellite communication, VHF was often the only method for two-way voice communication in coastal waters. VHF radio is still ubiquitous and is still a required piece of equipment for many categories of vessel.

VHF stands for Very High Frequency transmission in the range of 156 to 174 megahertz (MHz). For perspective, AM radio is in the medium frequency range and ultra-high frequency is used in devices as diverse as cell phones and microwave ovens. A typical handheld marine radio that a kayaker would carry will transmit in the VHF range with a power output of 1 to 6 watts while a mounted unit in a power boat may transmit at up to 25 watts.

Figure 1. Components of a typical VHF radio

The main components of a VHF radio are the transmitter and receiver, the power source (i.e. battery for a handheld unit), microphone, speaker, and antenna. Controls for the radio include a power switch, volume control, a display panel, controls to set channels and program the unit, and the push-to-talk button for transmitting (see Figure 1). Some units will also have manual squelch control (sets minimal received signal strength to reduce background noise) and specialized features such as an emergency strobe light, built in GPS, Automatic Identification System (AIS), and Digital Select Calling (DSC).

How do you use your VHF radio?

Marine radios will typically allow the selection of 50 or more channels in the VHF and the capability of receiving NOAA weather radio channels is pretty much standard. That may seem like a lot of channel options but most of these are reserved for specialized uses, so there are only seven or eight channels in U.S. waters (see Table 1 opposite) that a paddler would normally use. Of these, Channel 16 is the most important. This channel is the international channel for distress calls and can be used for hailing. The Coast Guard also uses channel 16 to announce important safety messages that will be broadcast on another channel such as 1022/22A. Channel 9 is a secondary hailing channel where recreational or commercial vessels would initiate contact with another user before switching over to one of the five (really four for paddlers) general use or "working" channels to continue a "conversation".

A marine VHF radio is a push-to-talk device that broadcasts a signal on a chosen frequency. This means that when transmitting it is not possible to hear anything being transmitted from another radio. This aspect of VHF and the fact that efficient communication is critical in an emergency situation has led to the establishment of rules, regulations, and standard protocols for radio operation. In fact, some countries require a license to operate a VHF radio but this is not the case for recreational boaters in the U.S.

Table 1. VHF Channels Relevant to Sea Kayakers

Channel	Frequency (MHz)	Designated Use
09	156.450	Hailing
16	156.800	Internation Distress, Safety, and Hailing
1022/22A	157.100	USCG Safety Broadcasts (announced on 16)
68	156.425	Working channel (non-commercial)
69	156.475	Working channel (non-commercial)
71	157.575	Working channel (non-commercial)
72	156.625	Working channel (non-commercials ship-to-ship)
1078/78A	156.925	Working channel (non-commercial)

Technically, if a vessel is carrying a VHF radio, it is required to be on and monitoring channels 9 and 16 for hailing and emergency calls. Virtually all VHF radios will have a setting to simultaneously monitor these channels and, in many cases, a third channel of the user's choice can be monitored as well.

Unlike a telephone, these devices broadcast a signal, so it is important to keep in mind that the airwaves are a shared resource and anyone within range and tuned to the channel being used will hear the broadcast. For this reason, use of foul or abusive language is prohibited and extended non-essential conversations are frowned upon, even on working channels.

In addition to the fact that it is not possible to receive and transmit at the same time, the clarity of a VHF radio transmission can be degraded by a variety of factors including distance, weather conditions, background noise, and other users on the same channel. That is why a specialized vocabulary (Table 2 next page) and set of standard broadcasting protocols has been developed for VHS radio use. A non-emergency call would start out by hailing your intended recipient three times,

Table 2. Standard Terms for Marine VHF Radio Usage

Term	Usage
Mayday	Used to call for assistance in life threatening situations such as a sinking boat, or one on fire, or a severely injured person is on board.
Pan-Pan	(pronounced "pahn-pahn") Used to call for assistance in urgent situations that are not currently life threatening such as a failed engine or being lost in the fog.
Sécurité	(pronounced "securitay") Used to announce a navigation safety message such as a navigation light failure or a submerged obstruction in a navigation channel.
Affirmative & Negative	Used instead of "yes" or "no". When speaking on the radio. Short words like yes and no can easily be misunderstood.
Roger	Used to indicate that the proceeding transmission was received and understood.
Wilco	Used to indicate that the proceeding transmission was received, understood, and that the recipient will also comply (short for "will comply").
Over	Used to indicate that a transmission is complete and the sender is waiting for a reply.
Out	Used to indicate that a transmission is complete and no further reply is expected.

identifying yourself once, and then indicating you are done transmitting by saying "over". This will let your intended recipient know that you are ready to receive. When done communicating or when switching to another channel a user would signal this fact by ending the transmission with the word "out". For example, a typical radio communication might proceed as follows:

<u>On Channel 9</u>

Radio 1: "Kayaker Jen, kayaker Jen, kayaker Jen this is kayaker Bill, over."
Radio 2: "Kayaker Bill, kayaker Bill, kayaker Bill this is kayaker Jen, over."
Radio 1: "Kayaker Jen, switching to channel six-nine, over."
Radio 2: "Kayaker Bill, switching to channel six-nine, wilco, out."

<u>On channel 69</u>

Radio 1: "Kayak Jen, we are landing at Dead Man's Bay for lunch, over".
Radio 2: "Kayaker Bill, roger - lunch at Dead Man's Bay. We will meet you there in one – five (15)minutes, over."

Radio 2: "Kayaker Bill, roger - lunch at Dead Man's Bay. We will meet you there in one – five minutes, over."
Radio 1: "Kayaker Jen, roger – see you in one-five, out."

There are a couple things to note about this conversation. First, the hailing channels 9 and 16 should only be used to establish contact. To continue a conversation, switch over to a specified working channel. In practice, a group of sea kayakers paddling together will often avoid the need to switch channels for intra-group communication by monitoring a preselected channel such as 68 or 69.

The second thing to note is that because there can be multiple conversations on one channel and sound clarity is often an issue, specifying the recipient at the beginning of a transmission and repeating a received message can help to avoid confusion or misunderstanding.

Third, it is advisable to use the international phonetic alphabet and numbers when transmitting. For instance, say "I am at marker 7 alpha" rather than "7A" or "there are One-Three kayakers located TOO-ZEE-Ro ZEE-Ro (200) yards from the channel" rather than "there are thirteen kayakers located two hundred yards from the channel." For a full list of phonetic letters and numbers see Table 3 below.

Emergency Calls

Emergency "Mayday" or "Pan-Pan" calls use the same basic transmission protocols as the previous example but more information should be provided in the initial call. A distress call should be broadcast on channel 16, by saying "mayday" or "pan-pan" three times and identifying the vessel (or sender for kayakers) three times. Then, the sender should indicate their position as accurately as possible, the type of vessel, the nature of the emergency, the assistance being requested, and other pertinent information. After transmitting, it is necessary to listen for a response (as much as 30 seconds) and repeat the call until a response is received. An example emergency communication might proceed as follows:

On Channel 16

Radio 1: "Mayday, mayday, mayday. This kayaker Bill, kayaker Bill, kayaker Bill."
"Mayday this is kayaker Bill. We are a group of five sea kayakers. We are on shore at the southern tip of Skull Island, 2.5 miles east of Pirate Town. We are with a severely injured kayaker in need of immediate medical attention. I have a fife-niner year-old male kayaker with a shark bite to the lower leg. Compression is being applied but he is still bleeding."

Radio 2: "Kayaker Bill, kayaker Bill, kayaker Bill, this is Coast Guard Station X…."

Descriptions of locations can be ambiguous and if the emergency is offshore, it can be difficult to pinpoint an exact position using landmarks. If it is possible to provide coordinates in latitude and longitude (for instance using your GPS watch), that is the preferred way to describe an accurate location. One option, if you are in sight of a known landmark (e.g., a lighthouse), is to specify your location in terms of a bearing to (or from) that known object.

Table 3. International Radiotelephony Spelling Alphabet (IRSA)

Letter	Phonetic	Pronunciation	Letter	Phonetic	Pronunciation	Number	Pronunciation
A	**Alpha**	AL fah	**N**	**November**	no VEM ber	**0**	ZEE-Ro
B	**Bravo**	BRAH voh	**O**	**Oscar**	OSS cah	**1**	Wun
C	**Charlie**	CHAR lee	**P**	**Papa**	pah PAH	**2**	TOO
D	**Delta**	DELL tah	**Q**	**Quebec**	keh BECK	**3**	Tree
E	**Echo**	ECK oh	**R**	**Romeo**	ROW me oh	**4**	Fow-er
F	**Foxtrot**	FOKS trot	**S**	**Sierra**	see AIR rah	**5**	Fife
G	**Golf**	golf	**T**	**Tango**	TANG go	**6**	Six
H	**Hotel**	ho TELL	**U**	**Uniform**	YOU nee form	**7**	Sev-en
I	**India**	IN dee ah	**V**	**Victor**	VIK tah	**8**	Ait
J	**Juliett**	JEW lee ETT	**W**	**Whiskey**	WISS key	**9**	Nine-er
K	**Kilo**	KEY loh	**X**	**Xray, x-ray**	ECKS ray		
L	**Lima**	LEE mah	**Y**	**Yankee**	YANG key		
M	**Mike**	mike	**Z**	**Zulu**	ZOO loo		

Note that once contact is made with an emergency responder, such as the Coast Guard, they will likely request switching to another channel to continue communication leaving channel 16 open for other users.

Practice!

It is imperative to know how to operate your VHF radio before it is needed in a critical situation. Handheld units typically have a variety of built in programs, features for locking channels, and even have different transmission power settings. During an emergency or while bobbing around in choppy seas is not the time to figure out how a VHF radio works. The odds are that reading the manufacture instructions and practicing changing the settings and channels before getting on the water probably won't mean the difference between life and death, but it could!

Limitations

There are some important limitations that arise from the fact that VHF marine radios work by broadcasting at a high frequency. First, VHF it too high a frequency to follow the curvature of the earth, "bounce" off the atmosphere, or overcome significant obstructions. So, VHF radios are only effective for line-of-sight communication between the transmitter and receiver. This fact, combined with the low power of a handheld VHF unit and the fact that a kayaker is generally transmitting from only two to three feet above the water, limits the effective range for a handheld VHF radio to just a couple of miles. Although that is a limited range, the vast majority of sea kayaking trips, even for more adventurous paddlers, are rarely more than two or three miles from shore or other vessels. Also, Coast Guard stations will have relatively tall antennas greatly increasing the range of signals they can receive in the event of an emergency.

Accessible and Working

Despite limitations in range, VHF radios are worthwhile communication device but only if they are operable and accessible when needed.

Accordingly, it is important to ensure a handheld VHF is charged and in working condition. This is best accomplished by performing a "radio check" before setting out for a paddle. Have a paddling companion tune to the same channel (say 68 or 69) and test the ability to transmit and receive by calling for a "radio check". If the transmission is received and the recipient responds "loud and clear" or something similar, then you can be confident the radio is operating property, at least for the time being.

A VHF radio, even in perfect working condition, is useless if it can't be reached when you need it. A paddler would be best served by having the radio attached to, or in a pocket of their PFD. That makes it very easy to access if needed in an emergency or when being hailed. A marine VHF radio in the hatch of a kayak or strapped to the deck will be very difficult to use if paddler needs help because they became separated from their boat. Of course, some judgment is necessary. It is possible that the radio itself can be an issue when rolling or playing in rough water. More than one paddler has been poked in the eye by their own antenna.

Handheld VHF marine radios are, in general, built to be rugged and are waterproof to an Ingress Protection (IPX) rating of 7 or 8 ("X" indicates that the rating number is only for water ingress). The IPX rating scale runs from 0, which is essentially no waterproofing, to 8 which is rated for complete submersion. The most common rating for marine radios is IPX7 which corresponds to protection for submersion to a depth of 1 meter for 30 minutes.

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With proper care, a marine VHF radio is a reasonably reliable piece of equipment, however, marine or even freshwater environments are hard on electronic equipment and sea kayaking is particularly so. It is wise for a group paddling in coastal environments to be carrying more than one working VHF radio and have them turned on. It's also important to thoroughly rinse your radio after each trip in brackish or salt water.

Optional Tools

More paddlers are carrying alternative means of communication due to the limitations of VHF. These include cell phones and satellite communication devices such as Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacons (EPIRBs) and personal satellite messaging systems. Some padders view these devices as practical alternatives to VHF. Although they do have some advantages over VHF radio, they too have limitations.

- Cell phones are rarely designed for use in wet conditions and are potentially useless in areas with poor cell coverage.
- EPIRBs can work anywhere with an unobstructed view of the sky and are designed to automatically alert emergency operators of the beacon location and the need for immediate assistance when activated.
- Personal satellite messaging systems (e.g., SPOT) will also function like an EPIRB but with an added advantage of allowing for more detailed communication from anywhere. Both of these systems require registration and personal satellite messaging systems require subscriptions.

It is important to note that these systems (and cell phones) are not broadcasting. So, if the help needed is better served by the recreational fishing boat one mile away rather than the first responder 20 miles away, VHF is the best bet. Likewise, if you want to tell a paddling companion who is a quarter mile away to wait for you or that you need assistance, these alternatives to VHF will not be of much use. Although EPRIBs and satellite messaging systems should be considered essential for paddling in more remote areas, they are important complements to a good marine VHF radio rather than replacement.

Final Word

This article is a start but by no means provides a full understanding of marine VHF radios. In fact, many modern handheld marine VHF radios are available with a variety of features that I mentioned but did not discuss, such as built in GPS and special features such as Automatic Identification System (AIS) and Digital Select Calling (DSC). With a quick search on the web, links can be found to a variety of buyer's guides that can provide details about the array of features and capabilities available for handheld VHF radios. It is also highly recommended that you read more about operation, rules, and protocols for using VHF in waters of the U.S. The website URLs provided at the end of this article are some potential resources. Finally, keep in mind that if you plan on paddling in other countries, the rules and protocols for VHF radio can be different.

Additional Resources

U.S. CG Navigation Center
https://www.navcen.uscg.gov/radio-information-for-boaters

Radio Academy: Best Practice for Radio Users
https://www.taitradioacademy.com/topic/procedure-words-in-radio-communications-1/

USCG Auxiliary: Using Your Marine Radio
https://wow.uscgaux.info/content.php?unit=095-43-04&category=radio-use

Connecticut DEP: Maring Radio Basics
https://portal.ct.gov/deep/boating/safety/marine-vhf-radio--the-basics

Tide Races:
Races vs. Rapids and Ocean Breaks

Dale Williams

Surfing a tide race. Photo: Richard Davis

From Wikipedia: **Tidal race** or **tidal rapid** is a natural occurrence whereby a fast-moving tide passes through a constriction, resulting in the formation of waves, eddies and hazardous currents. The constriction can be a passage where the sides narrow, for example the Gulf of Corryvreckan and the Saltstraumen maelstrom, or an underwater obstruction (a reef or rising seabed), such as is found at the Portland Race in the United Kingdom.

Races vs. Rapids

The above is a functional definition, but if you change "tide" to "current" and drop the reference locations, it pretty much matches the definition of a river rapid. You might be tempted to say that if it's tidal, it's a race; if not, it's a rapid. But that omits *the two most significant factors that distinguish a race from a rapid:* ***ocean swell, and wind.***

Both races and rapids depend on the right combination of *current speed* and *water level* to generate turbulence in the form of *standing* waves. An even more precise combination is required to create *breaking* waves: as current speed and depth change, the turbulence created by constrictions changes too. The number of breaking waves, the extent to which they break, their shape, position and

intensity all change as a function of current speed and depth.

Both factors (current speed; depth) are often more consistent in river rapids than in tide races. They change slowly as flood waters or dam releases build and recede, and there are longer stretches of time with minimal change. Rivers are also generally more often protected from wind.

This is not the case with tide races. When the energy from ocean-swell and wind enter the equation, as they often do in a tide race, depth and current speed can change in a matter of seconds. The bigger the passing swell, the greater the change, and as the tide floods or ebbs, average depth and current speed change with it, often within minutes. Add wind to the equation, and things get even more dynamic. Wind can make standing waves taller (opposing wind), push them down (tail wind) or alter their direction (beam wind).

It's all relative, of course. The changes created by a small swell and light opposing wind over a small race may hardly be noticeable. With sufficient hull speed (a good thing to have in tide races), you're likely to bridge right over any bumpy water. When a six-inch swell encounters a tide race with six-inch standing waves, it's not likely to create a large breaking wave and it might actually result in no break at all. One factor (e.g., wind) may cancel out the other one (e.g., swell). It depends on how the optimum speed/depth relationship is affected.

in a tide race, the shape, size and precise location of the "standing" waves are very likely to be constantly changing

Convex-shaped standing wave. Photo: Richard Davis

Concave-shaped dumping ocean wave. Photo: Fran Lapolla

The takeaway is that in "more noticeable" conditions in a tide race, the shape, size and precise location of the "standing" waves are very likely to be constantly changing. For this reason, and because tide race waves tend to have more convex faces, longer boats provide a distinct advantage…at least as long as the dominant energy source remains the compressed tidal current. When ocean swell becomes the dominant force the characteristics change.

Race or Bar Break

Some say that "the difference between a standing wave and an ocean break, is that in a standing wave, the water moves but the wave doesn't, whereas in an ocean break, the wave moves but the water doesn't."

…. ocean swell moves through the water below the surface, like a cat beneath a blanket, causing the surface water to rise and fall with little if any horizontal movement..

There are many exceptions. Standing waves break too, and ocean waves can be significantly slowed temporarily. But in a general sense the comparison above is useful and true. In a river rapid, as in a race, (if without influence of ocean swell or wind), the standing waves are created by water moving through constrictions.

In contrast, an ocean swell moves through the water below the surface, like a cat beneath a blanket, causing the surface water to rise and fall with little if any horizontal movement. An ocean swell is a mostly cylindrical circle of energy that becomes increasingly elliptical as it approaches shallower water. Then the lower part of the rotating mass is slowed by friction with the bottom. When the depth reaches 1.3 times the height of the wave, the speed difference from bottom to top becomes too great and the wave breaks. Only at that point does the surface water move horizontally, with *the water on the face of the wave rushing upward and the water on the back falling forward*. (You can imagine how this might affect the boat differently than a standing wave).

Wave Shapes

The shape of a breaking ocean wave is generally more concave than that of a tide race standing wave, but just how concave depends on the shape of the bottom. The steeper the bottom, the more abrupt the change in depth, the more dumping the wave. Dumping waves fall full face. In extreme cases the crest reaches the trough without touching the face. (These are not easy waves to surf except when they're very small).

Spilling waves are formed when the change in depth is more gradual. The face "crumbles" rather than smashing down with a whoomp. (Point breaks occur when the bottom becomes shallower at one end of the swell than at the other.) A wave that initially dumps can fill in with a more convex face as it passes over a shallow bar into deeper water.

Dumping/plunging wave (left) and spilling wave. Photos courtesy of empireengineering.co.uk.

The Nexus of Ocean Break and Races

There are lots of places where these phenomena combine - where ocean break merges with the standing waves of a race, or (depending on how you view the dominant influence), where constricted current feeds into breaking ocean waves. Well known examples on the Mid-Atlantic and Southeast Coasts are Metompkin Inlet and Smith Island on the eastern shore of VA; Masonboro and Oregon Inlets in NC; Charleston Harbor and Folly River in SC; Tybee Triangle in GA; and Vilano and Matanzas Inlets in Florida.

When the race effect is dominant, you can see standing waves in a more clearly defined area. When ocean wave energy is sufficiently dominant, the race may not be recognizable, except by where the breaking waves are largest or by how quickly in certain areas the current moves you across the inlet or out to sea.

There are different surfing strategies for moving vs standing waves, convex vs concave wave faces and clearly identifiable energy sources vs confusing ones. But they'll have to wait until next time.

Current-dominant tide race. Photo : Nigel Dennis

Swell-dominant tide race. Photo: Fran Lapolla

Photos of the Month

Dolphin Playing at Cape Henlopen, DE

Photo: Keith Betts

Photos of the Month

Carnage at LaBufadora, Baja

Photo: Bill Vonnegut

Photos of the Month

Tide Race at House on the Rocks, Newport

Photo: Ricardo Stewart

Name Groups of Kayakers Contest: Time to VOTE!

Rick Wiebush

Huge group of paddlers filling the Trent-Severn Waterway Locks, Ontario. Photo: Parks Canada

In the July issue of *Coastbusters*, we announced a contest to come up with a name to refer to groups of sea kayakers. The quick background is that a group of Mid-Atlantic paddlers realized that even though the animal world has cool names for groups (e.g., parliament of owls; gaggle of geese; murder of crows) nothing similar exists for sea kayakers. So we decided to have a contest.

The Response

In the July issue we solicited suggestions from readers and the response was great: 27 people submitted 53 different names for consideration. In two rounds of voting, a group of eight judges selected five names as nominees. It is those names that we are asking you to vote on. (Various paddling clubs in the mid-Atlantic will also be polling their members.)

The Nominees

The five names selected by the judges are:

1. Confluence of kayakers
2. Knot of kayakers
3. Splash of kayakers
4. Swell of kayakers
5. Wave of kayakers

Vote!

You can – and should – vote! Here is the link to the voting site:

https://forms.gle/aANGSbB69jMfCoN76

Please vote only once! The winner will be announced in the November issue of Coastbusters.

Vibrio: Rare But Dangerous

Rick Wiebush

It was late August, 2023 and I was getting ready to lead a rocks and ledges course in Rhode Island's Narragansett Bay, near where it empties into the Atlantic at the eastern edge of the Long Island Sound. I had just learned that some mysterious water-borne condition had resulted in the deaths of two people from New York and two from Connecticut, after they had been swimming in Long Island Sound.

Although I had only a vague understanding of a disease called vibrio – the alleged culprit in the deaths – the fact that four people had died in nearby waters freaked me out. What added to my fears was the knowledge that a couple of years earlier, a Maryland waterman had contracted vibrio and had to have his leg amputated. It sounded to me like vibrio clearly wasn't something to fool with. So on the first day of the course, I gathered the class participants and told them what I knew (not much) and offered to refund their money if anyone decided they didn't want to take any chances in the potentially risky waters. Everyone said they'd stay. As it turned out, we all had a great three days. Everyone went home happy and healthy and no one reported any illness subsequently. But ……..

But Wait, There's More!

What I didn't know was that in the previous six weeks *eleven people had serious outcomes from vibrio* on the East Coast. Four people entered septic shock; five died. In addition to the four from NY and CT, seven people in North Carolina were infected and hospitalized. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) found out the causes for 10 of those people: six resulted from vibrio entering their

Photo: Rick Stewart

bodies through some type of open wound while swimming; two had handled raw seafood with an open wound on their hands; one had eaten raw oysters and the 10th person was incapacitated as a result of eating oysters *and* having been in the water with a wound. In September, the CDC issued a national health advisory as a result.

What is it?

Vibrio is a waterborne and foodborne bacteria that is found in coastal areas in warm, salty and brackish water. There are about 12 varieties of vibrio that cause illness in humans. The most common variety results in food poisoning after eating raw or undercooked oysters, crabs and other shellfish. Of the 80,000 vibrio cases reported to the CDC each year, approximately two-thirds are of this type. Most of these people suffer only from diarrhea and possibly stomach cramping, vomiting, fever and chills.

Figure 1. Vibrio vulnificus lesions. Photo: NIH.

But there is one strain of vibrio – *vibrio vulnificus* – that is less common but far more deadly. Only about 150 – 200 such cases are reported to CDC each year, but about 20-25% of the cases result in death. Those that don't die often require intensive care. This is the kind of vibrio that results primarily from having open wounds exposed to salt and brackish water while swimming, fishing or, gulp, sea kayaking. But there are also a number of cases that result simply from handling raw shellfish and having a cut.

Increasing Threat

Through July of 2025, 60 cases have been reported in 11 states in the U.S. About half the cases have been in Florida (16) and Louisiana (17), but the mid-Atlantic states of NC and VA account for another 15 cases. Five people have died in FL and four in LA. Since the most vibrio -related cases occur during the months when the water is warmer (May to October), the number of total cases and deaths could easily double by year end.

CDC data indicate that the number of vibrio cases is definitely on the rise. In 2011, 113 cases were reported; in 2014 that number increased slightly to 124 but then jumped to 159 cases in 2019 – a 40% increase in eight years. In addition, the geographic range of infections has increased, moving up the east coast at a rate of 20 miles per year since 1988 (CDC). Scientists agree that this growth is tied to climate change and the warming of ocean waters.

Vulnerabilities

Anyone who plays in/on the water or handles or eats raw/undercooked shellfish can contract vibrio. But it is the presence of open wounds that escalates risk dramatically for the more serious *vibrio vulnificus*. Cuts, scrapes or punctures, as well as recent piercings, tattoos or surgery are all entry points for vibrio. Also, certain underlying conditions have been found to be associated with serious vibrio infection outcomes. These include chronic liver or kidney problems, diabetes, HIV and other immuno-compromised conditions. There are also data that indicate that men and older people (65+) are more susceptible to vibrio infections.

Symptoms and Treatment

A person infected with vibrio vulnificus will show symptoms quickly, usually in less than 24 hours. The primary symptoms are fever, chills, a rash that becomes swollen and painful and the emergence of large, fluid-filled, discolored, painful blisters (see Figure 1). Other symptoms can include nausea, vomiting, and/or diarrhea, and light-headedness or dizziness associated with low blood pressure (Cleveland Clinic).

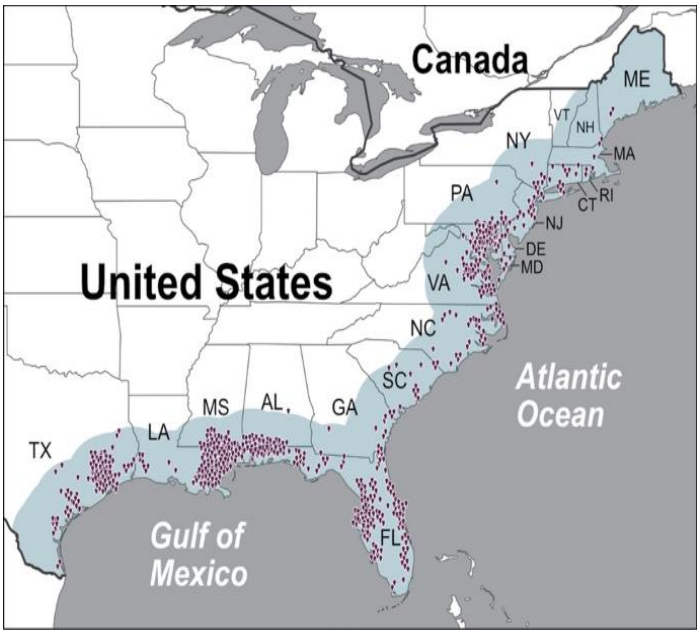


Figure 2.Distribution of the 709 confirmed non-foodborne V. vulnificus infections between 2007 and 2018 within 200 km of the east USA coastline (blue shading). Archer, E. et al (2023) Climate warming and increasing vibrio vulnificus infections in North America. Scientific Reports 13 (March).

North Carolina Watermen and Vibrio

The day's catch still clung to the planks when crabber Marc Mitchem finished unloading in Wanchese. He has worked these waters since 1984 and now keeps bleach, gloves and sanitizer within easy reach. "Got to keep doing what you're doing and try to be smart," Mitchem said.

This week the risk turned personal. A friend and fellow shrimper is in an Outer Banks hospital with a Vibrio vulnificus wound infection. "He's a friend, always willing to help people. He's fished all his life," Mitchem said. "I think he's getting better, but it's a scary thing."

Between fishing charters, John Silver has been visiting his friend and mentor in the hospital, hoping he can fight off the infection. "I try to check in on him most days, and so I'm just hoping that he'll pull through," Silver said. "It's a lot of prayers are being said for him."

Silver said watermen here have learned the risk the hard way, after two deaths in Dare County in the past two years and several close calls. "A guy got it behind his eyes and he almost blind over it," he said. "Another fisherman, he got a crab point stuck in his hand, and then it ate up his whole arm."

Source: Source: WRAL News NC Aug 5, 2025

If these symptoms are seen while you are on the water or in camp, it will be almost impossible to provide an effective intervention in that setting. The only recourse is to get the person immediately to a hospital, even if that means having to do an evacuation. Septic shock and/or death can occur quickly absent immediate treatment of symptoms.

Hospital treatment includes antibiotics, debriding skin in the area of the wounds and infection, draining blisters and, in some cases, amputation to avoid further spread of the infection. Septic shock is treated with norepinephrine (for low blood pressure), oxygen, and IV fluids.

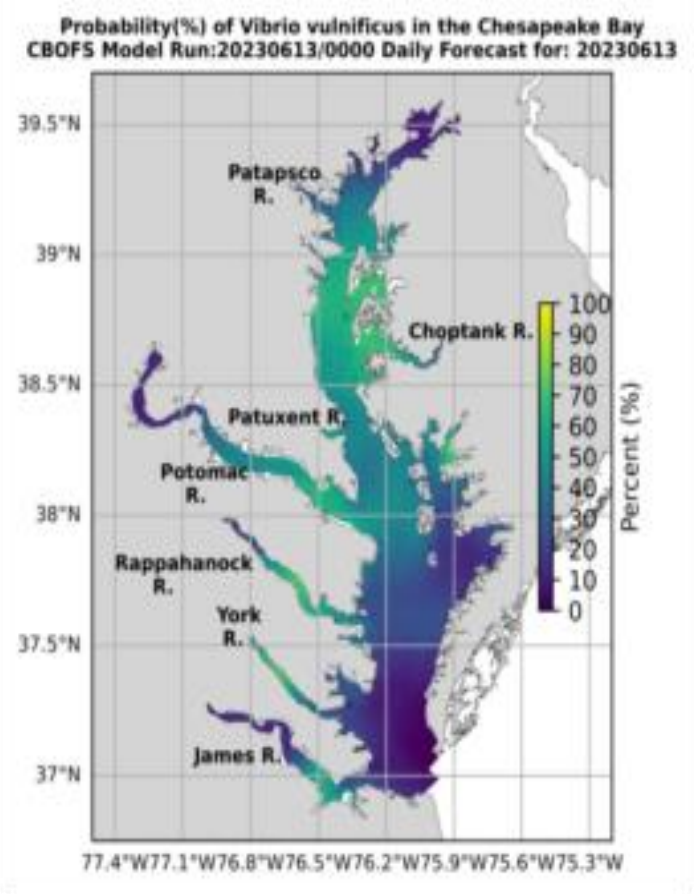
Prevention

Given the causes, prevention efforts are pretty straightforward:

- don't eat undercooked or raw shellfish, especially oysters;
- wear gloves or wash hands with hand sanitizer or soap and water immediately after handling raw shellfish;
- avoid contact with warm ocean/brackish water if you have cuts, wounds or recent piercings, tattoos or surgery.
- if contact is unavoidable, cover any wounds or cuts with waterproof bandages.
- wearing closed paddling shoes can help prevent cuts to the feet, especially in areas where there are a lot of oyster beds and shells.

Since that first situation in Rhode Island, I have started carrying a large plunger in my first aid kit. If a paddler has been in the water and sustained a cut or abrasion (or had one before), the plunger can be used to forcefully – and repeatedly - irrigate the cut. It strikes me that the pumps that paddlers carry might be used for the same purpose if the clean water container were large enough. Covering the wound with a waterproof bandage is the next step, followed by monitoring the person for emerging symptoms of vibrio infection.

NOAA Prediction Model. Another prevention strategy – for those of us in the mid-Atlantic region - is to monitor a model developed by NOAA's National Center for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) that tracks and reports on concentrations of vibrio vulnificus in the Chesapeake Bay. It is a probability model that uses water temperature and salinity data to estimate the likelihood of finding vibrio at different locations in the Bay. It shows an average prediction for the previous six days, the current day and the next day. This would allow paddlers to determine whether some parts of the Bay are more or less risky in terms of the

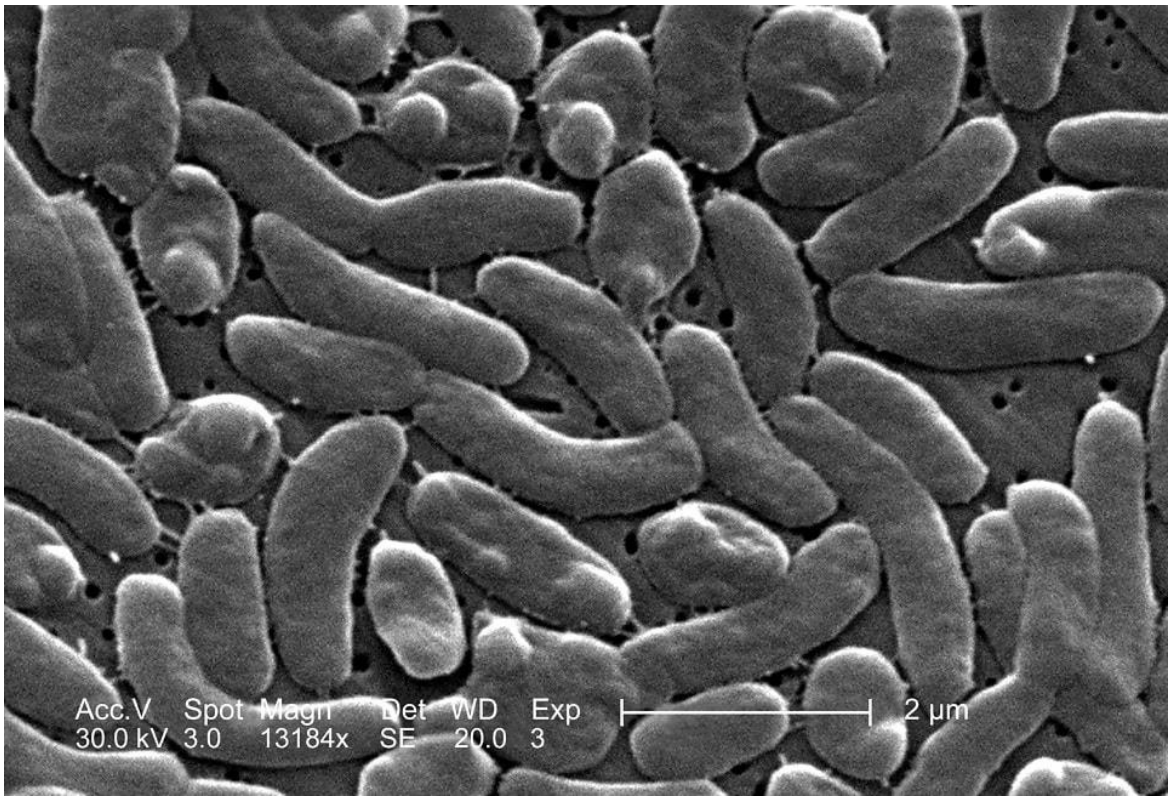


concentration of vibrio. That model is here: NCCOS | Vibrio vulnificus - Chesapeake Bay.

It appears that the Chesapeake Bay model is the only one developed to date by NCCOS, i.e. it doesn't have similar models for other parts of the country.

Conclusion

As sea kayakers who frequently paddle in warm coastal waters, it's important for us to be aware of the potential threat posed by vibrio bacteria generally and vibrio vulnificus specifically. While infections are still quite rare, the number of cases is rising and spreading. And the consequences can be deadly. While there is no need for panic, it just makes sense to stay on top of developments and to take steps to protect ourselves, especially when we paddle with cuts or wounds, or if we've had recent piercings, tattoos or surgery.



Vibrio vulnificus bacteria. Photo courtesy of pixnio.com

Skills: Clear The Deck

Tom Noffsinger

Note: this article previously appeared in the Sept 2018 Issue of Cioastbusters It is as relevant now as it was then.

There's an old naval expression, "Clear the Decks," that urges seamen to stow gear, leave the deck of the ship and prepare for battle. That same mentality applies to sea kayakers, particularly as you start paddling in rougher conditions. You're not preparing for ex- changing cannon fire, but if you have lots of gear on your deck, you may be in for a different kind of battle altogether.

I'm a big advocate of having as little gear on the deck of my boat as possible when on an open water paddle, or even when teaching or leading trips on flat water. The reasons are simple – safety and efficiency. The more items I have on my deck, the more there is to get in the way.

Bilge pumps, paddle floats, deck bags, water bottles, camera cases and all the other stuff that some paddlers carry on their deck can snag lines when towing, get in the way of having someone climb on the back deck for a rescue or may snag a PFD during a layback roll. The biggest issue seems to be interference with t-rescues, specifically people trying to get up on their back decks.

Everything but the kitchen sink. Photo: Rick Wiebush

Frequently when I see people practicing t-rescues, they either:

- cannot get up on the deck at all due to the clutter or,
- they remove the items and hold them in their hands while trying to get up on the back deck (!) or,
- they remove the items and throw them into the cockpit, only to have to remove them again in order for the paddler to re- enter the cockpit or,
- if they do get up on the cluttered rear deck, they have a hard time sliding their bodies around to get into the cockpit because a PFD strap gets caught on the pump, or something else is digging into their chest or side.
- If you ever have to do a t-rescue in a serious situation, you do not want any extra steps or have gear flying around (whether you are the swimmer or the rescuer).

Things like pumps and paddle floats also are the first to go when waves start breaking over the bow or when someone capsizes.

When things get dicey, that's when you need to focus more attention on the water, bracing, your paddling buddies, and effectively maneuvering the boat. The last thing you want distracting you is having to chase down gear that has washed off the deck.

With a little planning, you can keep your deck very clear. On an open water crossing, I may have a chart (in a chart case clipped to the deck line and under the bungee), a contact tow securely fastened to the deck line, and a spare paddle under the bungees in the stern. That's it. Everything else can be strategically placed, so it's there when you need it, and out of the way when you don't.

Pumps, sponges and paddle floats can be stored securely alongside or behind the seat (see photo), or under your deck.

Paddle float behind the seat. Photo: Rick Wiebush

You may need to fashion a mini-cell "holder" and glue it to the underside of your deck (see photo), cut down the pump height, or rig some bungee in a zigzag under the deck, but you can get it all there. After all, the only time you will need those items is likely when the spray skirt is already off the boat.

Under deck pump holder with minicell foam. Photo: Wiebush

Water bottles can be stored in the day hatch, or better yet, use a hydration bladder on your PFD or stored behind the seat with the tube running up through your skirt tunnel. Hydration bladders let you drink more often without stopping to fuss with a water bottle, and in the case of a PFD-mounted option, you have water even if you don't have your boat for some reason.

Snacks go in a PFD pocket, along with your radio and camera. If your pocket isn't big enough, consider clipping the radio to your PFD, similarly to how you might clip it to a belt (make sure the antenna won't put your eye out!). Having the radio on your person is much better than watching this critical rescue device sink if you go over or float away if you get separated from your kayak.

For me, extra paddles go on the stern, under the bungees, with the power face facing up. I know the arguments for keeping them on the front deck (e.g., easier to reach). I've had paddles come loose from there too many times in the surf, but it has happened rarely when I've stowed them on the stern deck. There are devices (leggings, extra bungee loops) that help keep them more secure on the front deck, but that's more complication in my mind. I've never had to recover a split paddle and roll up, and I'd argue that if I'm good enough to pull out half a paddle, get it oriented and roll up with it, I can probably practice enough to recover it just as well from the stern as from the bow.

The exception to this rear deck preference is if I have a Greenland paddle—because of its length, I can put far more of it under the multiple bungees on the front deck and it is more secure there.

The next time you go paddling, give your boat a once-over before you launch and look for ways to de-clutter your deck, rather than adding to it. This can be a great conversation with your paddling partners, too – talk about how and where you store your gear. Instead of talking about the cool new piece of kit, brag about where you store it out of the way!

Local Paddling

A Stunning – and Sometmes Vexatious – Water Trail in RI

Rick Wiebush

The Upper Wood River. Photo: Ricardo Stewart

The big swells and surf on the East Coast generated by Erin in late August stymied our first day of planned play on Narragansett Bay. The upside was that it led to the discovery of a fantastic stretch of river that was well-protected from high winds and swell. The downside was that the Upper Wood River – which stretches for seven mostly wooded miles from Rt 136 in Exeter RI to Wyoming Pond – was at low water. The result was that while we totally reveled in the scenery and the deeper sections of the river, the low water level also required repeated - repeated, repeated - gorilla walks and/or in-boat lunges to get ourselves unstuck from rocky riffles that claimed approximately 10 pounds of gelcoat off my boat and long strands of multi-colored polyethylene off the bottom of everyone else's.

Photo: Ricardo Stewart

The Upper Wood reminded me of the Wading in the New Jersey Pine Barrens – narrow (20 -25 feet wide) twisting, curvy, woodsy, often fun – but without the sandy riverbed and sans the strong current that can be found in the Wading in April and May. Speaking of Spring water levels, I should have realized that in August the water would be low in Rhode Island, just like it is in August in the Pines. We looked at the water at the put-in. It was about eight inches. Without rocks. We went anyway. I'm glad we did. Mostly.

The first five miles of the Upper Wood – a designated Wild and Scenic River - runs through the Arcadia Management Area, a protected area that contains exactly zero houses and about 50 million trees. It reflects the largely rural surroundings of central Rhode Island that are so strikingly different from the Providence/Cranston/Pawtucket metro area. Even when houses started to appear after five miles they were sporadic and looked like vacation cabins – no developments, no malls, no traffic. Not surprisingly - in retrospect – we didn't see any other paddlers either. It was a calm, relaxing environment. Well, except for getting stuck every 15 minutes.

There are three nice breaks from the dense forest and serpentine path of the river. The first is Frying Pan Pond, where the river opens up into a pretty, marshy area and bigger sky. (For those of you who fish, it's good to know that it is frequently stocked with Rainbow and Brook trout.)

Then, a little over half-way into the trip, there is the Barberville dam and millrace, and to facilitate the necessary portage, a small cement dock and four-foot wide landing beach. Next to the dam is the headquarters building of the Wood-Pawcatuck Rivershed Association and a small kayak/canoe rental facility. It's a great place for a lunch break.

Even at low water, the millrace was cranking and it's easy to see the need for the portage. Several people have drowned there. The portage itself is fairly easy – about 100 yards across a little-traveled road and down a sloping hill to the river below the race. Having some wheels helped.

The third break comes near the end when you reach Wyoming Pond, which stretches about three-fourths of mile to the takeout. Wyoming is much more expansive than Frying Pan and includes some appealing sections of marsh and swamp.

Even though the original plan was to do rocks and ledges on Narragansett Bay, everyone was glad we found and paddled this Plan B attraction. I'd love to do it again – maybe in May next time.


Wyoming Bay. Photo Rick Wiebush

Frying Pan Bay. Photo: Rick Wiebush

The *Explore Rhode Island Greenways and Blueways* site has an excellent water trails section. It shows over 20 trails outlined in red on a map of the state. Click on any trail and two links pop up, one showing the map and description of the route; the other just the put-ins and dams on that route. The route descriptions are clear and informative. Link:

Boat Launch Mapper: Rhode Island Blueways

Advertisement

Cross Currents Paddlng Shirts

For the first time ever in *Coastbusters*, I'm offering something for sale. Gulp! I'm doing it because the people who have them (about 120 paddlers) *really* like them.

Material - They are long sleeve, lightweight, UV resistant and quick drying. They are a soft, very comfortable material called Sport Tek Posi-UV.

Logo - They all have the Cross Currents logo on the front. The back has a smaller logo and the words Cross Currents Sea Kayaking.

Colors and Sizes - They are available in three colors: seafoam green, light blue and black. They are available in four sizes: small, medium, large and extra large. They are in a man's cut, but they work well for most women.

Ordering, Cost, Payment - The price is $20. There's an additional postage charge of $7.50. If you want one, send me an email at rwiebush@gmail.com. Specify the color and size. Payment is via Zelle or check. Details upon ordering.

Contributors

Richard Essex **– started sea kayaking on lake Michigan and the rivers near Chicago about 20 years ago. However, it is only after moving to Maryland a few years ago that he started to seriously pursue the sport. Since then he is out on the water most weekends developing his skills as an open water sea kayaker. Richard is an ACA L3 Instructor.**

Tom Noffsinger **– is an ACA L5 Instructor who is currently living and working in a camper as he and his wife explore every corner of the U.S.**

Rick Wiebush **- runs *Cross Currents Sea Kayaking* and is the editor of *Coastbusters*. He is an ACA L2 IT and British Canoeing 4* Sea Leader. Rick lives in Baltimore.**

Dale Williams **– owns and operates Sea Kayak USA and is the U.S. importer of NDK/SKUK sea kayaks. He is an ACA L-5 Instructor Trainer Educator (ITE) and former BCU Coach 5T Sea. Dale serves on the ACA Coastal Kayak Committee which develops course curriculum and helps set standards for sea kayaking certifications.**

Coastbusters **welcomes submissions of trip reports, incident descriptions and analyses, skills and "how-to" articles, boat and gear reviews, book and video reviews, and photographs. We are interested in receiving submissions from all paddlers.**

Articles should be limited to about 1,500 – 2,000 words and submitted in Word. Photos should be submitted in .jpg format. Please send your submissions to Rick Wiebush at rwiebush@gmail.com.

Coastbusters **is a publication of Cross Currents Sea Kayaking**