

# Paddling Is Like Other Sports!

You need to have the right equipment and know the rules so that you can perform your best.

## Important information before paddling out

Manually propelled boating activities (i.e. rowing, stand up paddleboarding (SUP), canoeing and kayaking, etc.) are rapidly evolving. It seems that new styles of these boats and ways to enjoy them are appearing nearly every day. Boats such as pedal driven kayaks and inflatable stand up paddleboards are attracting many new boaters and opening up new waters for many. Although these boats are attracting attention, traditional canoeing and kayaking activities are also gaining in popularity. Unfortunately, the increased number of manually propelled boaters has also increased the number of paddling related injuries and deaths. No formal education is required to use a manually propelled boat in Connecticut. However, there is legally required gear that you must have on your vessel and recommended gear and tips that will help keep your day on the water safe, more comfortable and fun from the start.

### REGULATIONS

**WEAR A LIFE JACKET:** Most paddlers that have died in Connecticut were NOT wearing a life jacket. Sadly, if they had been, the outcome of these accidents could have been much different. Connecticut law requires there be a properly fitting life jacket for everyone onboard a manually propelled vessel at all times. It also requires that all children less than thirteen years of age at any time during the year, and all adults between Oct 1 and May 31, wear a properly fitting life jacket while onboard a manually propelled vessel.

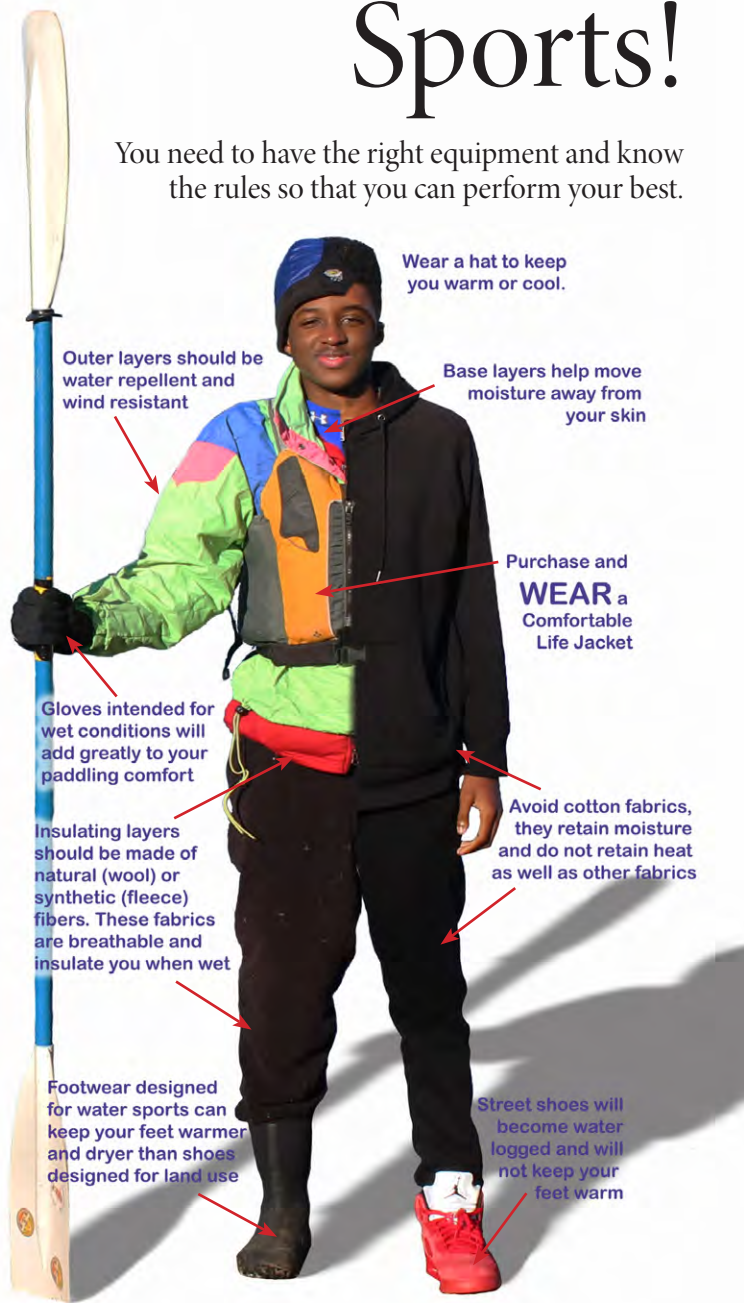
**Note:** Stand-up paddleboards are considered vessels (boats) by the U.S. Coast Guard unless they are being used in a surf zone or designated swim area. Anyone who is using a stand-up paddleboard is required to abide by all boating laws.

**Sound producing device:** The sound of a whistle, horn, or other device will travel farther than your voice and attract attention. Connecticut and federal laws require a sound producing device onboard all vessels.

**Lights:** Anytime between sunset and sunrise or during daylight periods of reduced visibility, lights are required on any paddlecraft. Lights may be in the form of anchor lights, bright white lights, or a VDS type lights. Paddling at these times can pose enhanced risk and is not recommended.

### RECOMMENDED GEAR AND SAFETY TIPS

**Take a lesson:** Before venturing out on the water, consider taking a paddling course, the time and money you spend are well worth the investment! Class topics may include knowing how to dress, the correct paddle strokes,



Wear a hat to keep you warm or cool.

Outer layers should be water repellent and wind resistant

Base layers help move moisture away from your skin

Purchase and **WEAR** a Comfortable Life Jacket

Gloves intended for wet conditions will add greatly to your paddling comfort

Insulating layers should be made of natural (wool) or synthetic (fleece) fibers. These fabrics are breathable and insulate you when wet

Avoid cotton fabrics, they retain moisture and do not retain heat as well as other fabrics

Footwear designed for water sports can keep your feet warmer and dryer than shoes designed for land use

Street shoes will become water logged and will not keep your feet warm

Always dress appropriately keeping in mind the water temperature. The best clothing recommendations will change seasonally but should always include wearing a life jacket.

# PADDLECRAFT INFORMATION

the navigation rules, what equipment you should have with you on the water and how to use it, what to do in an emergency, being able to right and get back in your boat if you capsize are all skills that may lengthen your season and will add to your boating enjoyment. Many of the paddling related accidents and deaths in Connecticut might have been eliminated had the victims received some form of education.

**Do NOT paddle impaired:** Do not drink alcohol or use drugs before or while paddling. These substances can reduce reaction time, balance, coordination, and judgment - all of which are vital to your survival in a threatening situation.

**Put contact information on your boat:** Attach an "IF FOUND" sticker to your unregistered boat or write the boat owners contact information in the boat. This contact information can help rescuers locate you faster should an emergency situation occur, and the boat is found unattended. (See page 53, for more information about "If Found" stickers.)

**Know your ability:** Be honest with yourself when planning a trip. Rough water, white water, or rapids can be difficult for experienced paddlers and are no place for beginners. Check the weather forecast, tides and water flows before heading out to a location and for the period of time you plan to be on the water. Changes in weather, tides and water flows can easily turn a calm waterbody that is within your paddling abilities into a deadly environment. Our website contains links to several good Connecticut weather forecasts and resources [https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Boating/ Weather--Tides--Streamflows](https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Boating/Weather--Tides--Streamflows) .

**Plan ahead:** Know the waters that you are paddling and plan your day accordingly. Tell someone where you are going, what boat you are taking and when you plan on returning; this is called filing a "float plan." The information in a "float plan" will help first responders rescue you faster should an accident occur.

Avoid paddling alone: Paddle with a friend or group. You will have someone that can help you get back in your boat or call for help if needed.

**Wear appropriate clothing:** The correct clothing choices can add significantly to your paddling comfort, extend your boating season and might save your life. Chose the most appropriate clothing you own. Dress in layers of clothing that will retain body heat when wet (fleece) and outer layers that repel water. Avoid cotton, which stays wet and does not retain heat. Wear a hat! (If you are a paddling in the cold-water seasons consider investing in wet or dry suit, you will be amazed at the difference in comfort they make.)

**Bring a communication device:** Carry a phone in a waterproof bag and/or a waterproof marine VHF radio. In coastal/tidal waters, a VHF radio is the best way to call for help. By using its modern VHF radio technology, the US Coast Guard can accurately pinpoint the location of a VHF radio transmission and send rescuers to that location faster than using traditional searching techniques. (Use VHF channel 16 to call the USCG. It is the international distress, safety and hailing channel.)

## **Know the local regulations and navigation rules:**

Waterways are filled with all types of vessels engaged in many different activities. Knowing and understanding the basic "rules of the road" will help make everyone's day on the water much safer and enjoyable. Please DO NOT paddle in the middle of main channels, high traffic areas or interfere with the passage of other boat traffic.

Keep a lookout: Small paddlecraft can be difficult to see. Always keep an eye out for other boats that are coming close to you. If possible, wear brightly colored clothes or use other means to make you and your boat more visible on the water. Beware, that large boats DO NOT stop very quickly. Do your best to avoid putting yourself in a dangerous situation and remember that larger boats may not be able to avoid a collision.

