

Symposium for Human-powered Boathouses in and around NYC.

A Discussion of Key Issues and Sharing of Best Practices Among
Neighboring New York Area Boathouses, April 13, 2013

**Sponsored by Brooklyn Bridge Park Boathouse and New York City Water Trail
Association**

The Symposium was held at the Shanty, part of the New York Distilling Company and was moderated by Tom Potter (Brooklyn Bridge Park Boathouse, Sebago Canoe Club)

There were 4 panels consisting of 14 panelist and 41 participants from over 20 different boathouses.

First Panel: Youth kayaking

Panelists: Rob Buchanan (Village Community Boathouse, New York City Water Trail Association. And Beth Schermer (Brooklyn Bridge Park Boathouse)

MAIN POINTS:

- There are many types of youth programming with kayaks, canoes, rowboats and rowing gigs.
- Youth programming is good for the community, potentially fun and rewarding for volunteers/staff and, importantly, very attractive to funders.
- Try to work with established youth groups instead of walk-up only.
- Youth need more supervision both on-water and on land; attention span is limited; watch for male/female interaction and dynamics.
- Must double and triple check that correct size PFD is being worn, and has been fitted properly.
- Communication and language barriers may cause issues.
- Waivers and paperwork SHOULD be the responsibility of the invited group not the boathouse.
- Kids have been known to forge parental signatures on waivers; in addition to the waiver, consider a parental notification form and verifying phone calls to parents.

Second Panel: Training Volunteers

Panelists: Mike Sylves (Brooklyn Bridge Park Boathouse), Tim Gamble (Red Hook Boaters), Todd Seidman (Red Hook Boaters) ALL PANELISTS ARE ACA certified Coaches

MAIN POINTS:

- Training Volunteers is essential to running an organized and safe program.
- Training should be tailored towards boathouse and program but basic safety protocols are useful for all boathouses and all types of water.
- Training is an ongoing process
- Outside certification is not mandatory
- discussion of running public programs in general ensued. many points were raised, including:
- how many staff / volunteers are a minimum to “open” a program safely?
- dealing with public launches

- importance of standardization of message to participants about safety, boundaries, rules, etc identifying volunteers / staff by sight
- what to do in various emergencies, and whom to contact for what--eg, org leadership, park staff, PEP, NYPF, CG, etc.
- how to deal with people who break rules

Third Panel: Written safety policies and procedures

Panelists: Phil Giller (New York City Water Trail association, Sebago Canoe Club, Yonkers Paddling and Rowing club). Ted Gruber (Long Island City Community Boathouse, Astoria Boathouse). Will Elkins (North Brooklyn Boat Club). Nick Lung-Bugenski ((Long Island City Community Boathouse)

MAIN POINTS:

- Human –powered community should adopt safety procedures before they are mandated by a city, state or federal agency.
- Each boathouse’s policies will reflect their individual needs but most participants felt a set of community-wide minimum safety standards would be useful
- New York City water Trails association will put a template on their website entitled “Public program protocols for Human-powered boathouses” which can be used as a resource by all boathouses interested in creating or amending written safety policies and guidelines
- Outside certification is not always necessary but can be helpful, especially for motivational purposes.
- Discussion about inter-club training and assessments of members from different clubs at the same time.
- strength in numbers in influencing regulations - example was “no immersion training” in HRPT which we got changed and then this led to same change in NYCDPR regs. this community can lead in efforts to define what is reasonable as far as regulations / rules from landlords.

Fourth Panel: Insurance

Panelists: Owen Foote (Gowanus Dredgers, NYCWTA) Dewey Thompson (North Brooklyn Boat Club) Jerry Dunne (Sebago Canoe Club, ACA Atlantic division Chair and National Board member)

MAIN POINTS:

- Boathouses should aim to meet community-wide safety standards, but for structural reasons not all of them may be able to do so
- Insurance is needed to rent / run some programs at some locations
- Insurance won't cover accidents due to gross negligence
- ACA insurance only covers on-water events; you need additional liability insurance for off-water coverage.
- ACA Insurance only covers group trips sponsored by the club. Members are not covered when they just go out paddling.
- NYCWTA will work with ACA on a harbor-specific policy to help groups who do free programming the ability to insure participants