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Winter 2022

Washington Canoe Club

CURRENTS



Photo by Bill Woodruff

Dear WCC members and friends,

As 2022 comes to a close, we would like to thank everyone who has made a year-end gift to the Friends of the Washington Canoe Club. It is your generous support – through dues and additional annual gifts – that allows us to make lease payments, pay for Club improvements, support our teams and programs, and hire architects and engineers. If you haven't made your gift yet, [your support now](#) will make a difference. No matter how big or small, every gift is important and a commitment to the Club's future. You can [donate online](#) or send a check to The Washington Canoe Club, PO Box 25449, Washington DC 20027.

We are very grateful for all of your support this year. We hope you will continue paddling with us in 2023 and renew your membership starting January 1st.

Thank You and Happy New Year!





Welcome to our Winter 2022 issue of *Currents*!

In this issue:

- **Membership renewal for 2023 opens on January 1**
- **Oyster Roast – January 15**
- ISO – WCC Capital Campaign Manager
- 2022 Annual Meeting Summary, including boathouse rehabilitation efforts
- Congratulations to the WCC recipients of the coveted Chattajack Buckle by **Liz Pennisi**
- Cold water paddling safety tips and a cautionary tale of cold water capsizes in the Chesapeake Bay by **Kevin Rooney**
- Feeling winters chill? Warm up with **Liz Pennisi's** interview with WCCers living (and paddling) the dream in Hawaii
- And More...



Proposed rehabilitated boathouse.

Just a quick technical note... Gmail "clips" lengthy email messages. So make sure that

when you come to what you might think is the end of the newsletter, click on “view entire message.” You will know you’ve come to the end when you get to the shout-out!

Upcoming Events

WCC 2023 Membership Renewal Opens January 1 and Ends January 31, 2023

All returning members must [re-register](#), sign the waiver, and pay 2023 dues in SportsEngine, *including non-resident and honorary lifetime members.*

2023 dues and additional boat storage fees remain unchanged.

If you selected the quarterly payment option in 2022 you must set it up again for 2023 during the registration process — it does not carry over.

Please email membership chair, [Kelsa Gabehart](#), to let her know if you are changing your membership status. **If you have not registered and paid by January 31, 2023 your membership spot will be given to a new member.**

Any boat/board storage changes should be directed to commodore [Tim Johnson](#). Fees for additional boat storage (those with more than one boat/board) will be invoiced separately after registration is complete. The invoice will come in February from SportsEngine, independent of the registration process.

We look forward to paddling with you in 2023!

Oyster Roast

Sunday, January 15

1:00 pm – 4:00 pm (Rain, Snow, Sleet, Hail, or Shine)

Let's get together and celebrate the new year with a traditional WCC oyster roast! The club will provide oysters, oysters raw raw raw, and steamed, burgers, hot dogs, various sides, beer, wine, non-alcoholic drinks, and desserts. Open to all WCC members and their guests.



\$50 adults, \$20 teens (kids under 12 free), \$90 families

Prices may change due to the price of oysters. Admission is due at the door. Credit cards or cash.

Please **RSVP** to the Evite that will go out next week so we can plan food and beverage accordingly. **We need volunteers to help with registration, setup, and clean up.** Contact entertainment@washingtoncanoeclub.org to help out. Thanks to **Gloria** and **Jay** for organizing this event and **Dan Havens** for procuring Kent Island's finest oysters! WCC

is still looking for an entertainment chair or co-chairs. If you're interested sign up to volunteer!

We hope to see you there!

Remember there is no guest parking at the club. Here is a [guide](#) to parking in Georgetown.

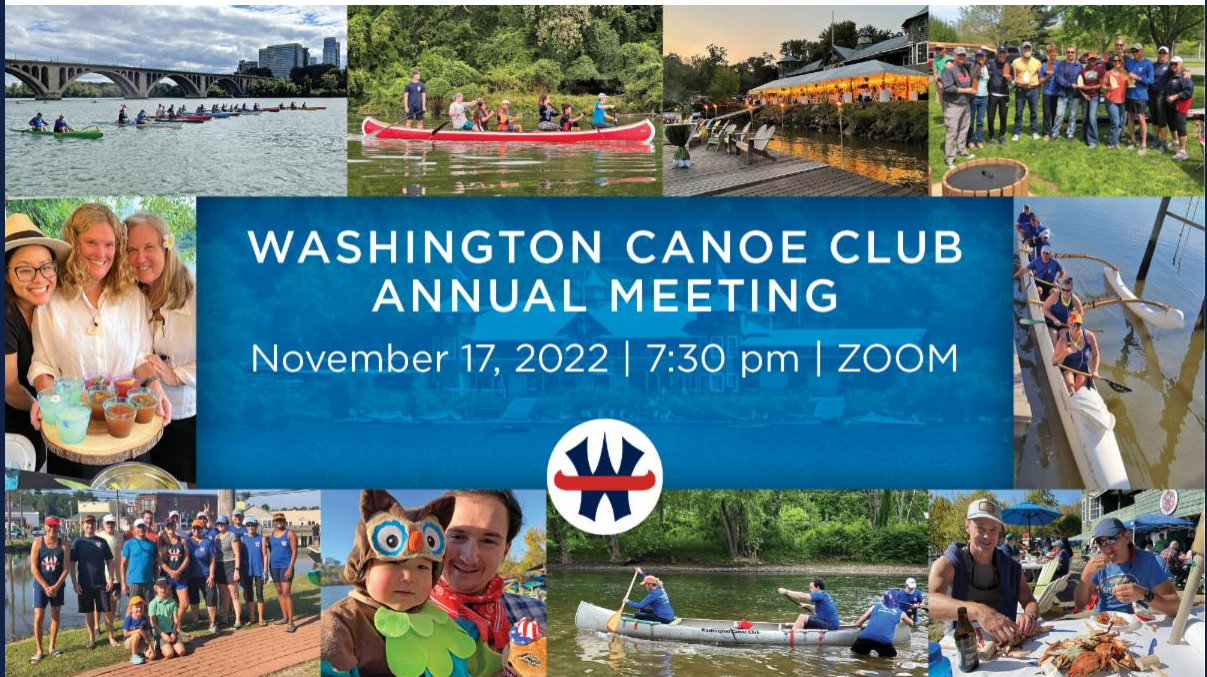
News and Information

WCC IS HIRING

ISO Capital Campaign Manager

The Capital Campaign Manager is primarily responsible for managing and executing a \$1 million capital campaign for the restoration of the Washington Canoe Club (WCC) boathouse that results in successful fundraising for the WCC. This is a paid position.

Please forward this information to your professional networks. Interested candidates should download the [job description](#) and send a cover letter and resume to fundraising@washingtongcanoecub.org.



2022 Annual Meeting Recap

The **118th Annual Meeting** of the Washington Canoe Club was held via Zoom on November 17, 2022. There were informative presentations made by each of the club's committee chairs, including the boathouse restoration and fundraising committees, and the election of the Board of Governors who will serve the club in 2023.

If you missed the meeting, do not despair. You can [download the presentation](#). A Zoom video will be posted on the members-only section of the website in January.

Here's a brief synopsis of the meeting:

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President **Andrew Soles** thanked the Board and officers then touched on a few of the Club's highlights and lowlights as well as plans for 2023 including:

- Approved plans for phased building
- Getting the fundraising campaign staffed and underway
- Continued membership and program growth
- Continued investment in our fleet

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Membership chair **Kelsa Gabehart** went over current membership dues rates (no increase) along with these highlights:

- 86 new members joined in 2022
- 382 members, 334 count towards the membership cap
- Membership cap increased from 300 to 350 (individual and family memberships)
- 49% of our members have joined in the past four years
- 2023 dues and registration begins on January 1 (please complete by the 31st)



WCC's mixed unlimited crew took first place in the Monumental.

COMMODORE'S REPORT

Commodore **Tim Johnson** reported on 2022's hugely successful racing season:

- The Crew: 56 members named in 2022, participating in more than 20 races around the USA and Europe
- WCC competed at the highest levels of outrigger, canoe, and kayak sprint – in the US and internationally
- The Masters program returned in 2022

Thanks to our coaches and our junior team volunteers, WCC held a very successful six-week intro to sprint program for kids interested in racing.



Thanks to **Stephen Weiss** for acquiring new recreational craft and paddles.



And finally, on behalf of the entire Club, Tim thanked **Kelly Rhodes** for the 20+ years that she has dedicated to WCC's outrigger program as she steps down as the women's outrigger coach.

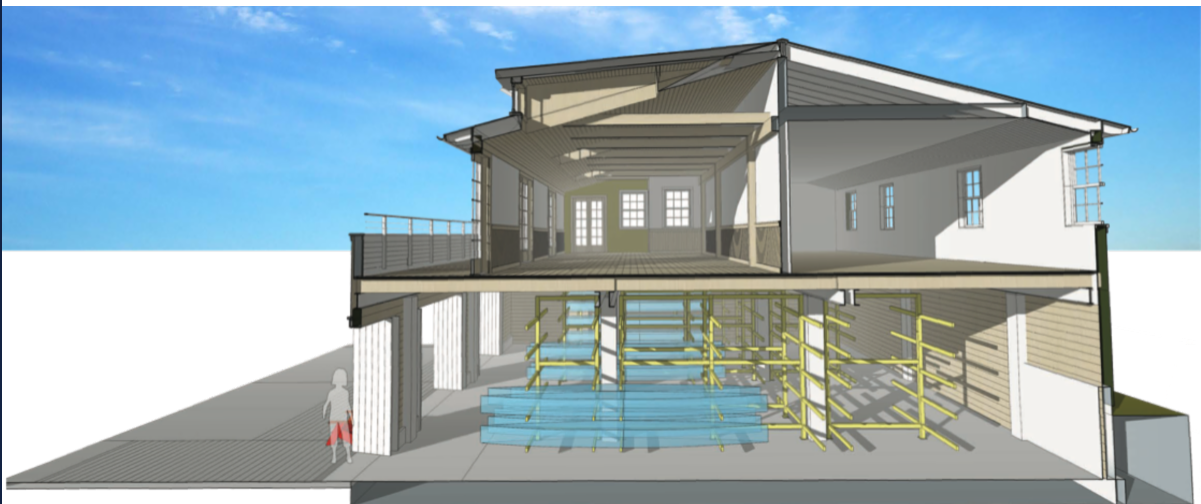
BUILDING & GROUNDS REPORT

Vice President **Jim Ross** talked about the C&O canal leak that has been flowing into the boathouse and over the concrete pad. Since the meeting, the canal was drained, and within a day the flow over the concrete pad had abated and within 2-3 days the pad and the bike area, and even most of the interior of the club had dried. Therefore, the mats were all removed and stored for use in 2025 when the canal is re-watered.



The board decided to leave the docks rather than move them to Columbia Island lagoon for the winter paddling season. This decision was based as much as possible on factual forecasting that calls for a warm winter.

Thanks to all club members who turned out for two club cleanups in 2022.



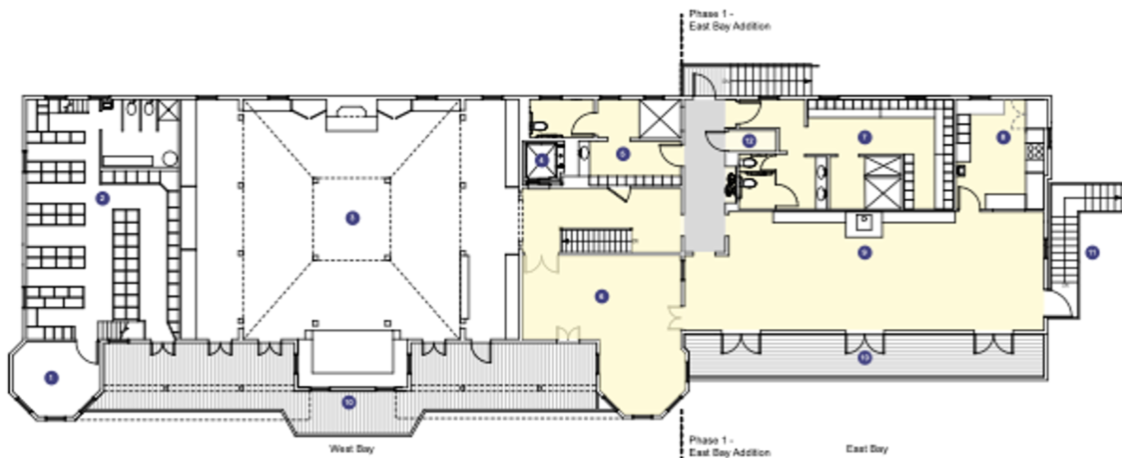
Proposed East Bay design

BOATHOUSE REHABILITATION REPORT

Boathouse rehabilitation co-chair **David Cottingham** detailed the slow but steady progress his team is making in getting approvals. Here are a few key accomplishments:

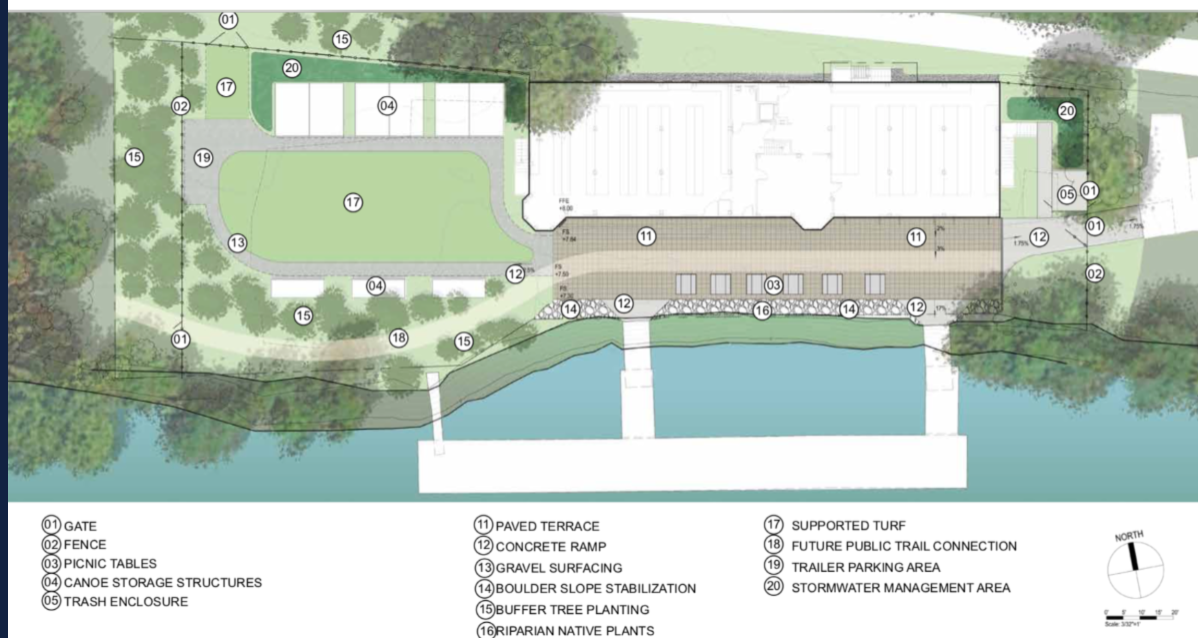
- NPS has approved our concept-level Master Plan for rehabilitating the boathouse and site plan
- CGS architects, EHT Tracerics, and MCC 1200 Engineers continue to assist WCC get through historic structure review
- NPS and DC HPO concurred that removing the East Bay would not be an “adverse effect”

Phases of the general development plan were outlined. ([Download](#) the full report.)



Proposed second floor layout – Phase 1. Yellow shows phase 1 areas of interior work.

Historic review is taking **far longer** than anticipated. Now that DC HPO agrees that the project will not have an adverse effect, we are eager to wrap up the 106 process for concept-level plans.



Next steps:

- Finish reviews by NPS and all DC agencies
- Authorize CGS and engineers to prepare construction permitting plans
- Submit building permit plans to DCRA
- Seek bids from construction companies
- Raise money to pay for all this.
- Jan 2022 estimate to complete Phase One is \$7.8 million
- Prepare for construction
- Build it

The boathouse rehabilitation committee needs volunteers to help with the

following:

- Removal and storage of the historic cartoon frieze in Grille Room
- Document women's history at WCC
- We need someone with construction expertise on the committee

If you can help with any of the above tasks, please email [David Cottingham](mailto:David.Cottingham@wcc.edu) for more information.



Historic cartoon frieze in need of restoration.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Treasurer **Joel Rynes** went over the budget and laid out the club's financial highlights:

- Events are back! Social and race event income over 100% increase from last year.
- The lease agreement was adjusted for inflation and property improvements.
- Total WCC assets continue to increase despite the stock market.
- No due or fee increase in 2023.



Sunday Jazz Fundraiser



Sunset Dinner Fundraiser

FUNDRAISING UPDATE

Cheryl Zook reported that the Fundraising Committee has been busy and continues to coordinate with the Building Committee on the timing for a Capital Campaign Progress in 2022:

- Two successful fundraising events
- Campaign plan created
- ISO a Capital Campaign Manager (see the [job description](#) above)
- Database updated
- Investigating financing options

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The new slate of officers was voted on and approved.

ELECTED TERM OFFICERS:

President: **Andrew Soles**
Vice President: **Jim Ross**

LEADERSHIP CHANGES IN 2023:

At Large: **Cheryl Zook** retiring;
Newly elected: **Grace Hong**

Treasurer: **Joel Rynes**
Secretary: **Trish Riggs**
Commodore: **Tim Johnson**
Vice Commodore: **Stephen Weiss**
Board of Governors at Large:
Tom Cooney
Jay Gopal
Grace Hong
Kevin Rooney
Gloria Vestal

Entertainment Chair: WCC member
volunteer nominee needed

THANK YOU WCC COMMITTEE CHAIRS:

Boathouse Rehabilitation Committee Co-
Chairs: **David Cottingham** and **Christie
Ciabotti**
Building Fundraising Committee: **Grace
Hong, Caitlin MacKenzie, Coralie Miller,
Denise Schlener, Andrew Soles, Cheryl
Zook**
Membership Chair: **Kelsa Gabehart**

And, a big THANK YOU to our outgoing Board member **Cheryl Zook**. We appreciate the time and attention you've given to make the Club a great place - now and in the future.

All for the buckle

Tennessee River is now a mecca
for WCC racers

By Elizabeth Pennisi



The Chattajack31 race attracts hundreds of boats of all types, gathered here for the 2021 event in Tennessee.

For WCCer **Sarah Minard**, heading to Tennessee to race 31 miles down the Tennessee River for the Chattajack31 was all about the buckle. This year 14 Washington Canoe Club

paddlers made the trek and left their mark on that event, which started 10 years ago as the East Coast's first long-distance SUP event. That first year in 2012, 35 showed up; by year three, surf skies joined 160 or so SUPs. Now the 600 slots fill up in a matter of hours after registration opens. In 2022, there were 720 people, 80 in OC-1s and dozens in OC-2s. Many do it just for the fun of paddling through the "East Coast Grand Canyon," as the river gorge is called, and the money raised goes toward the Tennessee River Gorge Trust, a foundation that buys land to preserve that beauty.

But others are aiming for the unorthodox awards, all of which are created by different local artists every year except for the gaudy but highly coveted belt buckle for anyone who completes five consecutive years. Temporarily back from Hawaii, **Sean Havens** battled fiercely for first in his OC-1 but lost to a young Californian by 10 seconds, with **Martin Lowenfish** taking third eight minutes later. **Kelly Rhodes**, who set a course record last year, also took second in the women's OC-1 category.



Martin Lowenfish, Kelly Rhodes and George Smawley watch the SUP start.



But a place on the podium wasn't important to Sarah (pictured here with her buckle). "I had been chasing the 5-year buckle since 2015 when I first heard about it," she says. That's when she started paddling SUP, and her first Chattajack run in 2016 didn't count as she finished a half hour after the cut-off time. But Sarah tried again and in 2017 she finished in the allotted time, and by 2018, "I'd gotten wiser," she recalls. So, she switched to OC-2, taking on partners for the next four years (with a break in 2020 when the race was canceled due to COVID) who were as new to outrigger as she was. Since she was not athletic as a child, doing Chattajack year after year has

been a "huge personal achievement," she says. This year, recognizing she might never do the race again, she took time to look at the beautiful scenery and was on cloud nine when she finished and got her buckle. "I joke that I probably have the highest cumulative finishing time of any belt buckle recipient ever," she says. "But it is still special to me."

OC-2 partners **Dale Andrade** and **Tim Summers** also earned their buckles. Even bad weather in their first two years hadn't deterred them from that quest as it's "a well-run race with an energetic vibe," says Dale. Starting in Chattanooga's waterfront district and paddling down the twisty, tree-lined Tennessee River "create a first-rate racing experience." They won their first two Chattajacks, but with ever more competitive athletes coming, "we had no hope of being on the podium" in 2022 and finished sixth in their division. After a fast start and getting ahead of all but four OC2s, they wound up in a friendly duel with another OC2 for most of the race, but after weeds got tangled in their rudder, they lost that duel. Dale says he's not sure when—or if—they will be back.





Tim Summers and Dale Andrade are still smiling after the race.

When it comes to Chattajack, no one at the WCC has the relationship with it that **Kathy Summers** does. In 2012, SUP was still in its infancy, especially on the East Coast. While there were plenty of challenging races being offered, none of them were for more than 12 or so miles. If you wanted to race more than that on a SUP, there were only two choices, (both in the Pacific and both ocean crossings) so when **Ben Friberg** introduced the idea of a 31-mile SUP race down a river on the mainland, Kathy was desperate to go but it wouldn't be until 2014 that family obligations would allow her to get there and she has registered every year since then. She has raced SUP 5 times, been on the podium for SUP once, and last year she raced a 14-foot prone paddleboard beginning a new class of prone paddling for women. However, the 5-year buckle has eluded her for one reason or another. "It is comical at this point," she laughs. "I may never get it but I don't really care because for me the Chattajack is so much more, it is a huge reunion of friends that happens to also include a race."

2022 was **Sara Jordan's** sixth Chattajack. She's taken first place three times in an OC-1 and once in a surf ski. It's an annual event for her because training keeps her working hard through the summer, and often her mom, aunt, or other family members come to help. This year she raced a 14-foot SUP, switching from kayak/canoe because she is still recovering from a back injury in February. So, for her, it was a very different race. "All new cramps! All new chaffing!" she jokes. "But, since I was looking up down the river, I actually saw the course for the first time!" It was also a tough race, as her abs and back were cramping much of the way. "It's been a humbling year," she says about coming in sixth in her class. "I am not used to being behind."



The third time's a charm for Emilia Rastrick

(right).

This was **Emilia Rastrick's** third go at Chattajack. For the first two years, she paddled OC-1, but this year she used a Stellar 18sx surf ski in the fast Kayak division to test her progress after two years of training on surf skies. Having started in the wave ahead of the outriggers, Emilia's goal was to not be passed by any of the women on OC-1s, "which I just managed to do." She had a great start and good line, then midway hooked up with another surf ski and they switched off riding each other's wakes for more than 12 miles. With a half mile to go, they split up and they came in second and third.



A first-timer eager to try 31 miles in her OC-1, **Lisa Ramm** (pictured here), also had a great start, then wound up after mile 7 in a race within a race, as another female OC-1 got ahead, too far for Lisa to ride her wake. But she kept plugging away, passing that boat around mile 23. She, too, started to flag a mile later, but at mile 29, she caught sight of other boats that had passed her. "Catching them gave me a push at the end," and she passed all but one, feeling

quite satisfied with her performance.

Another first-timer, **Stuart Smith**, used the race as motivation to work through shoulder reconstruction last year. He had done the long Molokai OC-1 and Kauai World Challenge OC-1 races, but "the flat water combined with that length was different for me." He regretted starting conservatively, as for a long time there were no other OC-1s around to pass. Eventually, one boat caught up to him and they battled for 14 miles - passing a number of OC-1s in the process - before the other paddler fell away. Stuart wanted to beat five hours but missed that goal by a minute and "ended up finishing with too much left in the tank."

Pushing hard was the WCC's OC-6's strategy. "We made an effort to leave everything on the river," says **Joe Cafferata**, who steered Chattajack for the first time. He thanks WCC president **Andrew Soles** for lending his van to pull the WCC's unlimited OC6 to Tennessee. **Marshall Hoskins** stroked, followed by **Mike Grachev**, **Kyle Kosinski**, **Blaise Rhodes**, and **George Smawley**. They kept up with most of the fastest boats, weaving among slower craft that sometimes moved unpredictably, and finished under four hours by a second. "The end felt good," says Joe.





During the 2022 Chattajack31, the WCC OC-6 paused to rescue a downed boat, helping the paddler and boat to shore before continuing on.

Everyone was pleased with the WCC turnout and with the race. “It’s a fantastic event in part because of the density of paddlers in general,” says Stuart. Lisa loved that the crowds cheered her and every other competitor as they crossed the finish line, but she warns, “know it is 32 miles, not 31 as advertised.” Their advice to those thinking about trying it: practice with the food and water you will use in place, as keeping fueled up is key. “It’s all about the distance,” says Dale. “Envision it, train for it.” For some, that means doing back-to-back 3.5-hour-long (or longer) paddles in July and August to get used to paddling fatigued.

But don’t let the length of the race discourage you, says Sarah. “If I can finish, anyone can.” **Sara Jordan** has even greater ambitions: “I really want to see the owls sweep the podium next year,” she says. “If anyone wants to train with me, **let’s do this!**”



More photos from Chattajack 31 are on the WCC website [gallery page](#).

Thanks to Bonnie Havens, George Smawley, and Sarah Minard for the photos.





Floating Alone in the Chesapeake in January

By Kevin Rooney

This incident occurred on the Chesapeake Bay near Annapolis, Maryland on January 28, 2012.

But by the grace of God — and four wonderful people aboard a boat named Audacious — I would not be alive today to share my story. While wiser, I am also humbled and embarrassed by the experience. I share my story to (1) hold myself up as a cautionary tale, especially for experienced sea kayakers who might be complacent (as I was), and (2) to recognize the people who saved my life.

I'm a 48-year-old man who's been paddling for more than 15 years. I've also been a sailor since I was a kid, having grown up with a father who was a career Coast Guard officer. I'm comfortable on and in the water. I paddle almost every week, year-round, and often solo. I've taken numerous paddling classes and have paddled in all kinds of conditions in lots of places. I've done multi-day kayaking trips, ocean paddling, flat water, and moderate whitewater. I have (what I thought was) a pretty decent roll and I know a few different self-rescue techniques (though I hadn't practiced in several years).

My sea kayak is a Necky Looksha IV HV and is constructed of kevlar and fiberglass. It's a great boat. I've had it for 12 years. I was wearing a dry top, neoprene gloves, and I used a spray skirt (of course). I had no hood, dry or wet pants, or boots (I know, I know — I will get back to this). I was wearing a PFD.

On January 28th, I decided to take advantage of the sunny day and the warm-for-winter temps and drive to Annapolis and paddle out to Thomas Point Lighthouse. This is a short paddle — about four miles round trip from my put-in. I've done it 4 or 5 times, and I've sailed in the area countless times. I launched around noon. The weather forecast was for mostly sunny skies, highs in the low 50's, and winds out of the south at 10-15 knots (though building throughout the afternoon). A small craft advisory had been issued for 6pm and into the night. I expected that, even with some goofing off and photo taking, I still wouldn't be on the water longer than two-and-a-half hours (i.e., back by 2:30 pm).



It was a lovely day, but breezy as expected. I would be paddling southeast so the winds were off my starboard bow. I had a nice paddle to the lighthouse and dealt with a bit of chop just fine. I took some photos (see on [Flickr: http://bit.ly/zAHCt9](http://bit.ly/zAHCt9)). The winds were definitely building and the growing waves began to make me uncomfortable with having my nice Nikon camera out. I didn't want to get it wet so, with it hanging around my neck

and waves splashing the boat, I paddled to the lee side of the lighthouse and then under it to hold onto a dock piling while putting the lens cover on, getting it back in its dry bag and strapping it to the deck. I drank some water, took a phone call(!) and then took off for the paddle back. Everything was fine. By this point the winds had built to probably 15-20 knots, gusting higher. The tide was going out (against me) and the winds were off my port stern quarter. With the wind and tide going in different directions — combined with being right over a shoal — the waves were a bit bigger than usual, but still nothing I found alarming. I've handled worse and was actually enjoying surfing down waves while also noticing the faces were steeper than I was used to. Right around the shoal near the lighthouse, the sea was in a bit of a confused state. The wave direction wasn't totally consistent. While on the crest of a wave focusing on balance I reached back on the port side to brace with the paddle when suddenly water wasn't where I expected it to be. The paddle was still in the air where I expected resistance and I capsized to port.

I immediately attempted to roll back up as waves were tossing around the boat and me. I was not successful and then attempted two more rolls. I really wasn't even getting close. I decided to exit the boat to attempt self-rescue using the Ladder technique ([YouTube: http://bit.ly/wMW43O](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wMW43O)). I got to the rear of the kayak and began crawling to the cockpit and got knocked over by another wave. I was realizing I was in serious trouble because the cold water was quickly sapping my strength. I tried another self-rescue and was once again knocked over.

I didn't see any boats on the bay. I knew I was in a really bad situation.

I wasn't far from the lighthouse — a couple hundred yards at most. I thought my best chance was to swim for it and to try to climb up on its dock. I began swimming and immediately realized I couldn't swim the kayak upwind in those conditions. I wasn't making any headway at all. So I made a quick decision to let the boat go, even though knowing "stay with the boat" is almost a mantra for problems at sea. I didn't think that was an option because of the cold water and being nearly two miles from shore. So I let the boat go and the wind quickly took it. I'll never forget that moment when the thought hit me "I'm floating alone in the Chesapeake... in January."

I began swimming on my back toward the lighthouse. I was making minimal headway against the winds and waves. The cold water was causing great pain at this point, and my ability to swim was rapidly leaving me. During those few minutes I knew I was facing death. I was angry at myself for doing this to my father. Just a few months earlier we had lost my mother to cancer — his beloved wife of 51 years. I remember thinking that at least they will know where to look for my body because I had emailed a float plan to him and my sister that morning.

I was swimming as hard as I could with whatever strength I had left and decided to roll over off my back for a second to check to see that I was at least still pointing at the lighthouse. I saw a boat up ahead! It was a classic white Chesapeake Bay fishing boat. I learned later she is the Audacious, seen here at Thomas Point Light (not my photo).



The Audacious with Thomas Point Lighthouse.

I began yelling. They couldn't hear me and it appeared, at first, that it would just cruise by me when I realized they were actually slowing down to pull up to the lighthouse. I kept

yelling but was growing worried that I wouldn't be able to even yell much longer. I was exhausted. Then the boat pulled up to the dock (positioned exactly as in that photo) and someone jumped off the boat with a line to secure it. He was now facing me and I yelled again with every ounce of energy I had. He heard me! He looked up, waved and immediately jumped back in the boat and they headed my way.

I wasn't going to die.

There were two men and two women on board. They had to literally pull me out because I couldn't help them at all. I weigh 200 pounds, was almost dead weight from exhaustion, was obviously soaking wet, and the boat was rocking around because of the conditions. It was really hard for the two guys to pull me up by my PFD, but they were champions and managed to get me on board with some serious effort.

They got me inside the small cabin and began drying me off and warming me up. While I was in there they retrieved my kayak and paddle, which must have been a half-mile downwind at that point. I estimate that I was in the water for about 15 minutes, which is right about the limit before total exhaustion in 40-degree water. I could have expected to lose consciousness after 30 minutes and would have been dead within 60, at best (and these figures are without physical exertion).

I'm not being overly dramatic when I say they saved my life. I have no doubt that this is true.

MISTAKES I MADE:

1. I should not have been paddling solo in the winter on open water like the Chesapeake.
2. I should have been wearing pants, shoes, and a hat made for cold-water immersion. I couldn't find my wetsuit pants that morning and went anyway.
3. I should have had a submersible VHF marine radio strapped to my PFD, as well as flares and/or a smoke signal device.

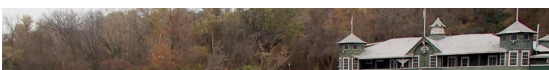
Solo winter paddling in open water and not wearing pants/shoes/hat for cold-water immersion were total rookie mistakes. "Dress for the water, not for the air." I know this and ignored it. I nearly paid for my mistake with my life. Other lessons: I must work on my rolls and self-rescue techniques every year, and practice in conditions closer to what could be expected in a real-life emergency. I was clearly complacent and overconfident in my skills. If there are other paddlers out there, no matter how experienced, who might be taking on needless risks, I hope this story will change their behavior.

I want to publicly thank my rescuers **Henry and Chris Gonzalez**, and **Captain Howard and Cathy Lewis**. Henry is the lighthouse keeper for the [Thomas Point Lighthouse](#) and vice-president of the [U.S. Lighthouse Society](#). Howard is the owner and skipper of Audacious, and I understand he lends his time helping out with the lighthouse.

They were on the water that day — the **ONLY** boat in the area at that time — to do their annual winter check on the lighthouse. In all the years I've paddled and sailed near Thomas Point Light I have never seen a boat pull up to it. The long odds of them being there at that exact time and within earshot defy description.

I am very, very fortunate to be alive. The term "divine intervention" comes to mind.

Photos courtesy of Kevin Rooney





Paddling "The Marcy" in late November.

Cold Water Paddling Safety at WCC

WCC members are fortunate that we get to paddle year-round while other clubs and venues close for the season. As of mid-November, the river temperatures have fallen below 50 f. Please be mindful that even if the air temps are "warm", immersion in the river is dangerous.

Although the Club does not have an official list of cold water paddling rules, here are some basic guidelines to help safeguard paddlers in cold weather.

- Members are always encouraged to wear a life jacket/PFD, especially if the air or water temperature is below 40' F. Members and guests paddling club boats are required to wear a PFD.
- Paddle with a buddy. If you're heading out alone, please let someone know you're out, where you're heading, and when you expect to return.
- All paddle craft must have a light on board if you're out before sunrise or after sunset.
- Take a cell phone or other form of communication with you, especially if you're on your own.
- If the water is cold and the weather looks bad (high winds or storms), stay safe by remaining on land.
- Paddle near shore. Know yourself and your skills. Don't go out just because "other people are out there."
- Always dress for the water temperature—no exceptions.
- Field-test your gear.
- Imagine the worst that can happen and plan for it.

For further guidance on cold weather paddling, members are encouraged to consult these resources:

- [National Center for Cold Water Safety](#)
- [Safe Cold Water Paddling from Paddling.com](#)
- [Potomac River Safety Committee](#)
- [Paddling Tips for Cold Water](#)

Also check out [this video](#) from the U.S. Coast Guard's Cold Water Boot Camp USA featuring **Professor Popsicle**.



The WCC History Book is Still Available



Images of America: Washington Canoe Club, by WCC lifetime honorary member **Chris Brown**, is still available for purchase (and all proceeds from the sale will go to the boathouse restoration fund). Or donate \$250 or more to the restoration fund and receive a complimentary signed copy.

Head over to our history page and watch **Chris Brown's Virtual Book Talk** that was given via Zoom on December 3, 2020.

Local paddlers make good in Hawaii

By Elizabeth Pennisi

While many of us only fantasize about moving to Hawaii to paddle in its beautiful blue-green water, ride the Pacific's many waves, and have nice weather year-round, **Sean Havens** and **Samantha (Sam) Stewart** did just that in July 2021. And they have shown the islands' outrigger community that WCC paddlers are a force to be reckoned with. Sam had only been to Hawaii once – for the 2019 Queen Liliuokalani Race, but Sean had been there four times, twice to race and twice for a family vacation. But they yearned to hone their outrigger skills in one of the best places to do that.



Members of the Outrigger Canoe Club on the ocean's edge after a change race.

Sam joined the large paddling community of Outrigger Canoe Club on the ocean's edge. There, lots of women OC-1 paddlers get together for group workouts and downwind runs. "Interval training prepared me for the group workouts," she says, and she's become known for how fast she is on flat water. Through those runs, she learned to surf well, stay stable, and have confidence, and thus has been able to compete at a high level. "I've been mentored in ways to push myself when it comes to ocean paddling and technique."



Sam racing (in seat 4) with Diamond Head in the background.

Sam's team at the IVF World Sprint Championships in London.

She loves how many races there are, and how affordable. With scores of boats, “the race starts are absolute chaos with practically jungle rules,” she says. And catching one good wave can alter a race, so “more can happen depending on conditions,” but she’s made it to the podium several times as a solo paddler.

Her OC-6 team has shined as well, even beating Team Bradley—Hawaii’s elite of the elite—at one race. In the fall, they went to French Polynesia and won the Hawaii Kai. It’s a 12-mile race in Tahiti, but “it was like going to the Superbowl,” says Sam, because the men’s event, Hawaiki Nui Va’a is a grueling 3-day race from island to island and paddling is that country’s national sport.

Sean joined Hui Nalu, which is in Hawaii Kai and, like the WCC, is run by volunteers. Everyone who wants to paddle and race is encouraged to do so, he says, so about eight OC-6s go out for each men’s practice. Training at the WCC gave him a good base, and he built on that by spending as much time as he could becoming efficient and fast in the surf. It’s complicated, as you have to be able to anticipate waves, then steer and change your pace and your line to take advantage of any pushes, he explains. This past year, he raced in as many OC-1 events as he could, and the intense competition pushed him to excel even more.



Sean (2nd left) with Team Oceana for Queens Race.

He did well enough to be asked to join Team Oceania, which is sponsored by Querido tequila. Sean sat seat four in the Queen’s Race, and the Team Oceania unlimited beat a tough team from Bora Bora, coming in first for unlimiteds and second overall. “It was really an amazing experience and weekend,” he says. “I can’t wait to do it again next year.” He feels the same way about the last race of the season, from Hawaii Kai to Sand Island. There were 100 canoes overall. His Hui Nalu 6-man battled multiple crews the entire race, including one from the Big Island where “we just snuck by them at the very end,” taking second in the spec category.

Sam and Sean miss the Potomac and friends and family here but are building strong ties on the islands. “Everyone there has been incredibly welcoming and taught me so much about paddling in the ocean,” says Sean.



Sean racing OC1 with Waikiki in the background.

Itching to use those gift cards?

Do your online shopping at smile.amazon.com
Select **Friends of the Washington Canoe Club** as your
charity and AmazonSmile donates to WCC.

And Finally...

Shout Out!

Huge thanks to **Liz Pennisi** for consistently telling WCC's engaging story in the newsletter with professionalism, wit, and creativity!

Thanks to everyone who takes out the trash, winterizes our club, and tidies things up in the foyer on a regular basis.

If you know of a WCC member who should get a shout-out (and there are many), [let us know.](#)





Show Your Club Spirit and Look Good Doing It!

Any item can be customized with your name.

The WCC Squad Locker stores have a wide variety of club-branded items for members of all ages (including infants and toddlers). All items allow for personalization through the ordering process. With embroidered items, you can put your name (or mantra) on the sleeve. If an item has a printed logo, you can get your name (or nickname) on the back or sleeve. Hats are personalized on the back band area. Both shops are periodically updated and changed, so keep checking back. If there's something you would like to see offered, [let us know](#).

Visit the [Spring/Summer Store](#)

Visit the [Fall/Winter Store](#)

Thanks to Bonnie Havens for all her hard work on the stores.

THANK YOU to all club volunteers

If you have an idea for a contribution to the next issue of *Currents*, please reach out to one of your newsletter team members at Newsletter@WashingtonCanoeClub.org.

We love hearing from you!

