

Dear SCRC Members,

Wednesday morning, we held the first of the ongoing discussions we will have about safety on the water. As our club continues to grow and our training intensifies, safety must remain our top priority. Technique, fitness, and boat speed are all secondary to keeping a safe environment on the water. Before launching, rowers must know Wind Direction, Tidal flows, and Tide depth ([WillyWeather app](#)). These 3 factors will greatly affect the way ALL boats will respond in the ICW and the amount of water you have to work with, or against.

This email outlines our required navigation protocols on the Intracoastal Waterway (ICW) and reinforces expectations for every member in every seat. Please read carefully. These guidelines should be followed **regardless** of other rower or boat traffic.

1. Why We Are Elevating This Conversation

In 2024 Florida enacted Florida Statutes Title XXIV , which gives motorboats the right-of-way over human-powered vessels inside the ICW channel. Previously, powerboats were responsible for their wake and speed; this is no longer the case.

SCRC has received several notices, contacts, and even complaints about crews not adhering to the required traffic pattern. To continue training safely and successfully, we must adjust and operate within the law and with heightened awareness, discipline, and consistency.

This is not a one-time correction — it marks an ongoing commitment to safe navigation for every athlete in every boat.

2. Required Traffic Pattern for All SCRC Crews

Every rower, not just bow seats and coxswains, must understand and follow the navigation pattern. No matter what seat you are in, your awareness contributes to the safety of the entire crew.

General Rules:

- Southbound: Stay near green markers.
- Northbound: Stay near red markers.

Tide Considerations:

- High tide: More room to row outside the channel.
- Low tide (like this week): Limited water depth; boats must stay close to the channel markers.
- If you stop to rest, never sit stationary inside the channel. Move either outside the channel or toward the marker so you never impede traffic.

3. Passing, Side-by-Side Rowing & Communication

When boats converge, communication and discipline are essential. Safety comes before pride or competitiveness.

- If two crews become parallel, communicate clearly. Stroke seat may act as the designated communicator when needed, as their voice projects best.
- The slower boat should take a stroke hard port (toward the side of the channel) to create space for the passing crew.
- Do NOT interpret proximity as a challenge to race.
- If you need to paddle lightly for 20–60 seconds to allow another boat to pass safely, do so.

4. Turning, Paddling & Stopping Procedures

When changing direction, finishing a piece or encountering swells:

- Do not execute a 360° turn within the channel.
- First turn east, cross to the opposite side of the channel, then turn north.
- DO NOT STOP for rest periods until you have reached the far starboard side of the channel, do not impede oncoming traffic.
- In the event of passing motor craft that throws a wake, turn your boat parallel to the approaching swells, keep oars flat on the water, and sit in a relaxed position until the water calms. Note - during low tide you might experience a ‘bounce back wake’ that will come back out to the ICW once the swell hits the shore.

Universal Stop Signal:

I will now carry a red flag on the launch.

- Flag held straight up and still = WEIGH NOUGH — all crews stop immediately.
- Flag pointed: up → at you → toward a direction (repeated) = steer in that direction

Please share this with your boatmates so everyone recognizes the signals from a distance.

5. Safety Authority Belongs to Everyone

Every rower, in every seat, has the right and responsibility to call WEIGH NOUGH if something feels unsafe. You will never be criticized for erring on the side of caution. We can always reset and restart — we cannot undo a dangerous situation.

Your vigilance protects:

- You
- Your crew
- Other rowers
- The club’s equipment and reputation.
- Our long-term ability to train effectively in Osprey

6. Building This into Our Culture

This topic is not a one-time meeting — safety is an ongoing conversation. As more members join and as we learn from experience, we will continue to refine our protocols.

I encourage open dialogue. If you have observations, ideas, or suggestions that could improve safety or the rowing experience for the club, please reach out anytime. We learn best when we learn from one another.

Thank you all for your attention, cooperation, and the positive spirit you bring to this ongoing discussion. Together we can make SCRC safer, more confident, and more unified than ever. The habits we build now will define our future success as a club.

Let’s continue rowing with the highest standard of respect for the water, for one another, and for our shared responsibility to keep every practice safe.