

**Camp Thunderbird  
Marine Explorations Program  
Risk Management Plan  
Spring 2010**

*Program Goals and Objectives*

- 1) The Marine Explorations Program provides an experience that is safe. This is achieved by:
  - a. Training staff to ocean recreation industry standards.
  - b. Providing all participants with safety preparations time for beach discovery and sea kayaking programs.
  - c. Providing all participants with a gear list and monitoring the quality and quantity of Camp Thunderbird equipment for safety and proper use.
- 2) The Marine Explorations Program is designed to give participants an experiential learning experience in the subject areas of marine biology, geography, and physical education. We will meet our educational goals, both curricular and philosophical, by:
  - a. Hiring and training staff to provide experiential education at camp, on the beach and on the water.
  - b. Developing a program using the Ministry of Education curriculum guidelines, the expertise and experience of teachers, and YMCA-YWCA Camp Thunderbird camping and outdoor recreation expectations.
- 3) The Marine Explorations Program offers participants the opportunity to explore marine life first hand, through trips to the beach and sea kayaking, so that their knowledge and skills increase.
- 4) The Marine Explorations Program seeks to empower participants to be stewards of their own community and the ecological communities that support them by:
  - a. Providing the opportunity to engage with nature.
  - b. Providing a space that immerses the participant in nature by sleeping in cabins in the Thunderbird coastal temperate rainforest and exploring near-by beaches that are quiet and natural in the spring season.
  - c. Creating opportunities for participants to identify and conceptualize their beliefs and values about the ocean and seashore communities and their personal relationships with nature.

## ***Philosophy of Risk***

These goals are created with the understanding that personal growth through challenging experiences creates an unconscious transfer to everyday experiences, and will enrich the lives of our participants. We understand in order for this to happen there must be some level of risk involved. We also understand that there is both real and perceived risk and we believe that we must create a perceived risk for our participants and limit the real risk although we will not be able to eliminate all real risk. Because of this we have developed a system to train our staff in order to ensure that they can manage the risk that we have chosen to keep within our program and have developed a minimum standard that we will abide by in order to ensure that our programs are run as safe as possible while still meeting their goals.

## ***Minimum Operating Standards***

Currently, there exist standards for the commercial guiding industry. These standards are unrealistic in a custodial care setting due to the need to ensure a variety of skill sets are held by staff. In order to meet the principles of safe wilderness travel, Camp Thunderbird has developed a more comprehensive staff training and supervision regime. Our training is focused on the development of decision making tools and safety related technical skill development while leading trips. This process ensures sound decision making despite different certification requirements than the current guiding industry standard. Also, we will incorporate close supervision of our staff members by always having an experienced staff member on the water to act as the lead. We will ensure that each of our ocean kayaking trips has a communication device for each staff that they can use to contact any other staff working their program, both on the water or land, at any time. These areas of additional support for our staff are designed to increase the safety resources available to our on-water instructors. The following guidelines for staff hiring are a minimum standard for hiring Marine Exploration Instructors and is not the goal but rather a point we will not fall below.

### **Marine Explorations Group Coordinator**

- Bronze Cross Lifesaving Certification
- Wilderness First Aid/CPR-C
- Paddle Canada Sea-Kayaking Skills levels 1 & 2
- Minimum 1 summer leading multiday sea kayak trips

### **Marine Explorations Program Instructors**

- Bronze Cross Lifesaving Certification
- Standard First Aid/CPR-C
- Paddle Canada Sea-Kayaking Skills level 1
- Previous sea-kayak training or experience

### **On Water Standard**

- All on-water tours will be run with a ratio (1:4) of one leader to four participants (guiding industry standard is 1:6)
- One of the on-water leaders will have the certification and experience of the Marine Explorations Group Coordinator

## ***Program Locations***

All of our paddling will be held on class one waters no matter what the weather as to ensure the safety of our trips is always at an acceptable level. Our Beach locations have been chosen to provide the best location to start a half day sea kayak tour within the area of the Sooke Basin. The Sooke Basin is an excellent staging ground for our program because it is a large area with natural marine life and provides protected paddling waters and a location close to emergency care. This was our first priority because we need to ensure that our kayak trips are run safely and do not put any of the participants at unnecessary risk. We recognise that it is not possible to eliminate all the risks associated with travel on the ocean. From this area we have chosen two beaches that both offer us a launching point that is safe and protected while still providing an interesting and exciting kayak tour.

We have also established a set of guidelines for when we will use our location of greatest risk on Whiffen Spit at the mouth of the Sooke Basin. At this location, programs will always launch on the inland side of the spit. We will never paddle on the outer side of the spit due to the potential risk when paddling the open water. Also, we will only use the Whiffen Spit launch when the wind forecast for Juan de Fuca strait/central strait is below 20 knots as a maximum wind speed.

We actively discuss trip locations and when we see a reason to change the paddling location, for our student's safety, we do so. Also, we ensure that managing risk is an active exercise in planning all of our specific trip routes.

## ***Preparation Days***

We understand that our participants may have little to no experience in sea-kayaking or outdoor recreation. In light of this we have an extensive preparation activity block, called "Sea Kayaking Safety Education," that we hold on our calm and private lake. As well, we understand that each preparation activity block must be different depending on the group and activity. In accordance to this we have created a list of skills to be taught during the three (3) hours Sea Kayak Safety Education.

- Wet Exit with a spray skirt
- 2 assisted rescues
- Basic Strokes
- 1 unassisted rescue
- raft formation
- Safety equipment use

These lessons are the minimum skills to be covered on during Sea Kayak Safety Education and more can be added to this depending on the group skill level and experience. This list is simply the minimum that must be covered.

### ***Pre-Defined Alternatives***

We will have one staff trained above the required number of staff needed for the largest group that will participate in our program on any given day. This will enable us to react in the event of one of our planned staff members were to not be able to participate in the program for any reason. This will ensure that our programs are always run with the right number of trained staff in order to ensure that they are run safely. If for any reason we cannot meet the stated requirements for staff certification and training levels, an alternative program at our Camp Thunderbird location will be offered.

### ***Record Keeping***

In order to demonstrate our planning for trips, how we lead our trips, and how we react to problems that arise, we have a few documents used for record keeping. These are as follows and can be found as appendixes to this document:

- Route Cards, both nautical and land based
- Equipment Sign-Out Sheets, to log equipment use and ensure a record of what each trip brought
- Log books, for all trip days
- Weather logs, for recording the marine weather broadcasts
- Incident Reports, to keep records of our incidents
- Near Miss reports, to develop an internal dialog on trip decision making

We also have other risk management documents that we use including our Marine Exploration Instructor Handbook. All past out-trip paperwork can be obtained through the Camp Thunderbird Manager. All paperwork and log records are kept on file for at least 7 years.

### ***Audits***

To ensure that we continue to grow and change with the overall industry we incorporate audits for our programs. We will have an audit of our out-trip program every 3 years. Of these audits every second audit will be external. This will allow for our program to be seen and evaluated by another source in our industry to ensure that we are meeting standards. We will keep records of the audits and what we have done to try and fix any areas where some improvement is needed.