

# Hoosier Canoe Club Trip Sponsor Guide

Successful Hoosier Canoe Club (HCC) activities, particularly trips, fulfill an important part of the objectives set out in the club constitution:

- *To bring together people with a mutual interest in paddlesports, camping and other family outdoor activities.*
- *To promote skill and safety in paddlesports.*
- *To promote interest in paddlesports.*
- *To promote the preservation of natural waterways and natural resources.*

This guide has been written to provide implementation ideas and check lists for members sponsoring HCC paddling trips. New trip participants may also benefit from reading this guide since it will help them to understand what to expect on a trip and what is expected of them.

This guide identifies areas and concerns that trip sponsors should address when planning and executing a safe, successful trip. It also identifies approaches that have worked for trip sponsors in the past. These are not the only ways to run HCC trips – there is always room for individual creativity.

## Role of the Trip Sponsor

Each club trip will have a trip sponsor. The trip sponsor is responsible for planning, organizing, publicizing, executing, and then reporting on the trip. On the water, sponsors often supervise their own trips but may elect to delegate this role to a paddler with more paddling or safety experience.

The Hoosier Canoe Club is a common adventure club. Paddlers participating in an event are responsible for their own paddling skills, equipment, and safety. Trip sponsors should emphasize skills and equipment needed for a trip as well as expected paddling conditions in the Trip Announcement. If someone is not sure about participating on a trip, they should check with the Trip Sponsor.

The trip sponsor has a lot of responsibility but they should be receptive and listen to input from other persons on the trip. The trip sponsor should serve as a facilitator to build the on-water paddling team. Since the HCC is a common adventure club, decisions regarding the activity should be shared. The paddling group should reach consensus on trip issues – such as whether an on-water leader is needed and who that will be, communications/signals, lead and sweep boat responsibilities, lunch break time, required rescue capabilities, and identification of who has safety equipment. On the water, paddlers should respect the trip sponsor or selected leader and follow their direction. As equal members of the paddling team, paddlers should always feel free to make suggestions. All paddling trips are highly dynamic in nature with changing weather and water conditions as well as the variable personal energy levels.

## Trip Preparation

As a trip sponsor, you must address the following areas when setting up a trip:

### ***Initial Location / Date Selection***

The water levels of many Indiana streams and rivers are seasonal—start by picking a date and location that offers good potential water conditions. Use the following sources to research expected conditions:

- Past club experience – Contact the HCC Trip Chairman for advice. He/she may also be able to provide past trip reports on specific rivers (trip dates, sections paddled, and paddling conditions for these trips).
- USGS historical level/flow data – The USGS maintains historical data for 186 water level gauges in Indiana (<http://waterdata.usgs.gov/in/nwis/rt>). After selecting the page for your river section, click “Summary of All Available Data link” at the top of this page. The historical data page lets you view flow data for the dates of past club trip reports. Use this historical data to help relate water level readings to observed paddling conditions.
- The “River and Stream” link on the Indiana Outfitter’s web site (<http://www.indianaoutfitters.com/>) – From the page for a river, you can click on the “Live River Flow Data” at the top of this screen to gain additional information on interpreting USGS gauge levels.

## **Scheduling**

Each winter, the HCC Trips Chairman holds a scheduling meeting to lay out the schedule for the upcoming year. Watch the newsletter and the Bulletin Board for announcement of this meeting.

Trip sponsors should plan on attending this meeting. If this is not possible, let the HCC Trips Chairman know your trip plans and desired dates.

**Note:** You can add trips throughout the year after the scheduling meeting.

## **Publicity**

After being listed on the HCC Trip Schedule, the HCC newsletter is the main way to announce your trip.

### **Newsletter – Trip Announcement**

**Timing** –Write up a trip announcement and submit it to the newsletter editor in time to get it in the newsletter for the month prior to your trip. The newsletter for a given month will normally be out around the 1<sup>st</sup> of that month and articles should be submitted by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the preceding month.

If your trip is in the first part of a month, submit your trip announcement even earlier so that it appears in the newsletter for the month before your trip as well as the month of your trip. By submitting it for the prior month's issue, people will have more than a week to think about going on your trip.

**Content** – A trip announcement template is attached to the end of this guide. Not every item in the template may make sense for your trip but it will prompt you to provide all pertinent information—see the template for details.

### **Bulletin Board**

Think about using the Bulletin Board to complement the newsletter. It can generate additional interest in your trip and may reduce time spent on the phone with participants. Post the trip announcement from the newsletter to either the Flatwater section or Whitewater section of the bulletin board.

After posting, monitor the board frequently to address any responses. The bulletin board provides an easy way for people to indicate interest, to ask questions, and to receive last minute information about the trip and river conditions.

### **Tips – Publicizing a Weather/Water-Dependent Trip**

You may only be able to decide where to paddle after checking the weather and scouting the water 1 or 2 days before a trip. In this case, think about using one or more of the following approaches:

1. Specify a meeting place that is central to all potential put-ins. Everyone can then drive to the selected put-in from there.
2. Either call people on your trip list or ask them to call you on the day before the trip to confirm the meeting place and trip viability after you have scouted the river.
3. Get e-mail addresses when people RSVP and send e-mail to everyone after scouting the river. Some people may still need to call but this could reduce the number of calls that you need to make.
4. Tell people to monitor the Bulletin Board. After scouting the trip, post the meeting place, river section, and paddling conditions to the Bulletin Board. Again, people without Internet access would still need to call you.

## **Communications**

Keep a trip list of all people who RSVP along with their telephone numbers (and possibly e-mail addresses). When people call, be sure to review the trip with them especially any special requirements. Remind them of any equipment needs and what level of paddling expertise is expected. Encourage participants to share rides to save fuel, make friends, and facilitate shuttling and parking. Consider giving out your cell phone number in the newsletter or when people RSVP if you feel comfortable doing so – you may request people to only call your cell phone on the day of the trip.

If the meeting place may change due to weather or water conditions, be sure to warn callers and tell them how to get final trip details (see *Tips* above).

At the meeting area, the RSVP list can aid in checking attendance, making introductions and signing the release form.

Call the HCC Trips Chairman if paddlers ask you any questions that you are unable to answer. The Trips Chairman usually knows who to call for specific river facts or equipment sources.

## **Scouting**

If possible, scout the river as well as trip and shuttle routes during the week before your trip.

The best way to scout a river is to paddle it. You can learn hazards, play areas, rest areas, lunch stops, points of interest, and paddling time. If you have a GPS, by all means, use it. Also, be sure to find a landmark on the river at the take-out or somehow mark the take-out.

Check weather and water conditions a day or two before the trip. Changing plans is easier with advance notice. If water is at hazard level, consider changing the trip or limiting those who can participate based on experience. Put safety over all other considerations.

The USGS maintains real-time water level gauges throughout Indiana (<http://waterdata.usgs.gov/in/nwis/rt>). If there is a gauge for the area you will be paddling, record the flow/level reading for the time when you scout the river so that you can compare it with the reported reading before your trip.

When you scout the river, note the water level at the put-in against a permanent feature such as a bridge pillar. This will let you quickly judge the water level on the day of your trip.

A county map is best for selecting shuttle routes and a topological map is best for river information. You can also get information from satellite and road maps available on the internet (e.g., Google Maps).

If you cannot scout a trip, talk to a member who has run it recently or was the last trip sponsor. If you could not scout in person, arrive early and check the put-in and take-out areas before the others arrive.

If real-time water level data is not available, you may try getting the name and telephone number of someone who lives near the river and would be willing to check water conditions for you. There are other sources that you may be able to use: canoe liveries, DNR offices, Forest Service, Corps of Engineers, and sometimes a Chamber of Commerce that may be able to provide water level information.

## **Property Permissions for Put-In, Take-Out, and Camping**

Obtain permission from land owners if the put-in, take-out, parking areas, or lunch stop are on private property. Do this for each trip. Don't rely on previous permission since property is often sold.

If camping is part of the trip, select a campground and make reservations if necessary. Try to select a group camping area if possible. Make sure that all HCC members have paid for their camping spaces.

## **Execution**

### **What to Bring**

Before you come to the meeting area, be sure to have the following:

- **Club Trip Log/Waiver** – Obtain and use the club trip log/waiver form. The trip sponsor is responsible for obtaining the signatures of all participants before the trip starts. Usually, this is done at the meeting point as people arrive. A copy is attached to end of this document.
- **HCC Club Brochures**– Take a few HCC club brochures, trip schedules, and applications for guests.
- **Paddling Equipment** – Check your equipment. Try to set a good example for the other paddlers. See that your boats, paddles, PFDs, etc. are in good condition. Make sure you have a whistle attached to your PFD.
- **Safety Equipment/Personnel:** Prior to the trip, sponsors should consider problems that the paddlers for their trips may encounter and then identify safety equipment that should be carried. This safety equipment could include throw ropes, tow belts, swift water rescue kits, and first aid kits. Sponsors also need to make sure that paddlers experienced with the equipment are on the trip. If paddlers with this experience have not signed up, a trip sponsor should recruit them or consider altering their trip.

- **Radios** – Use of 2-way radios between the lead and sweep boats can be of useful in managing larger groups. Cell coverage may not be reliable while you are paddling.

### **Meeting Area**

You should arrive at the meeting point before the scheduled time. Occasionally, road markers will be necessary to direct people to the meeting point.

As paddlers arrive, see that each person signs the club reliability trip log/waiver form. Make it a practice to ask if the paddlers have any special physical or medical conditions that you might need to know about. After all paddlers have arrived, place the trip log/waiver form in your vehicle. Consider making a list with names and contact phone numbers to carry with you in case of an emergency.

Make sure guests get a club brochure with HCC membership application, a trip schedule, and club contact information in case they have any questions.

### **Shuttle**

If it is possible, start the shuttle one-half hour after the scheduled meeting time.

Consolidation of boats on vehicles at the meeting place is always a good idea. It reduces the parking and shuttle problems, particularly for a large group. Organize the shuttle so that some vehicles can carry two boats back from the take-out.

The lead driver should drive slowly enough that the convoy can easily stay together. Remind drivers that they should maintain visual contact with the car behind them. Maintain a normal safe driving interval but don't let the convoy get too spread out.

Park vehicles so as not to block access to driveways and fields or to create a traffic problem.

### **The Trip**

At the put-in, the trip sponsor should have a short meeting to have everyone introduce themselves, to explain how the trip will be run, and, if needed, to build the on-water paddling team discussed in the "Role of the Trip Sponsor" section above. You will probably need to discuss PFDs, the role of the lead and sweep boats, safety roles/responsibilities, whistle signals, known hazards, and how to identify the location of the take-out.

The following practices should be observed during the trip:

- **PFDs:** For both safety and legal reasons, each person in a boat **must** have a PFD – if not, you don't paddle, PERIOD! A whistle should be attached to the PFD. Encourage paddlers to wear their PFDs!
- **Hazards:** Discuss any known hazards, downed trees, fences, dams and what to do at those spots.
- **Lead/Sweep Boats:** Paddlers in the lead and sweep boats should carry and know how to use safety equipment carried on the trip.

In some cases, particularly whitewater, lead paddlers will need to stop other paddlers when they scout the river ahead. They may also get set with throw lines and rescue boats at certain sections.

- **Organize Paddlers into Groups:** For larger groups, organize the boats into sub-groups by skill and experience. A mention of the desire to do this is usually enough to make it happen.
- **Paddling Instructions:** Safety is always a primary concern and is enhanced if all paddlers follow the following rules:
  - Paddlers should always paddle safely while on the water. Unsafe practices will sometimes require the trip sponsor or club leaders to warn or even order a paddler to change undesirable behavior.
  - Instruct the paddlers to maintain sight contact with at least one other boat – particularly the boat behind them. Having all paddlers maintain sight contact with the boat behind them will help keep your group together on the river and will help insure that no boats become isolated.
  - Paddlers should always stay between the lead and sweep paddlers. Be sure to introduce the lead and sweep paddlers at the put-in and explain their roles to any new paddlers.
  - Paddlers needing instruction might be assigned stronger paddlers as mentors.

During the trip, the trip sponsor or selected leader, lead boat and sweep boat should monitor trip progress. The lead boat should never be more than a mile ahead of the sweep. Have the lead stop regularly to allow others to catch up.

- **On-Water Communications – Whistle Signals:** Discuss on-water communications:
  - 3 blasts on the whistle – There is an emergency and all paddlers should participate in the rescue to their ability or get to the shore and hold their positions on the river.
  - 1 blast on the whistle – Your attention is required. This may be to observe something special or to move to the shore to scout a downstream rapid or obstruction.
- **Take-Out:** Make sure everyone knows how to identify the take-out while on the river.
- **Property Rights:** Respect property rights along the river. In most cases, you have a right to paddle the river but not to be on the banks above the high water level. In any case, don't argue with a land owner – be as polite as possible and continue down the river. Take more litter with you than you brought and leave the river and banks in better shape than before you were there.

### **Take-Out**

- **Boat Tie-Down:** At the take-out after the boats are loaded, have members check that new members' boats are secure. A good practice is that when a boat is placed on a roof rack nothing else is done until that boat is tied down.
- **Site Inspection:** Inspect the area to see that no litter or equipment has been left by the club.
- **Guests:** Pay particular attention that guests had a good time and are leaving with a good impression of the HCC. Guests are potential members. A small gesture of friendship may result in a new member that you can enjoy on trips for a long time.
- **Get Home Safely:** Make sure that drivers are alert and ready to make the trip home or to their camp.

## **Follow-Up Actions**

### **Trip Report**

While your memory of the trip is fresh, make some notes about the physical aspects of the river, the shuttle, and things that happened on the trip. Get input from others. All this makes the reporting job easier. The report is important because it documents attendance and if necessary, can serve as an incident report. The report is also a good way to share the experience with other paddlers. Be sure to report any particularly good or bad things that happened. The HCC wants to repeat the good things and eliminate the bad.

This report should be sent to the HCC Trips Chairman and the newsletter editor. You can also post the report to the "Trips Reports" section of the HCC Bulletin Board. Use the Trip Report Template that is attached to this document to help prepare the trip report.

Be sure to send a copy of the Participant Trip Log/Waiver to the club Yeoman immediately after the trip.

### **Guests**

Let the Membership Chairman know the name and contact information for guests on your trip.

## **Closing**

This trip guide summarizes the collective wisdom of many HCC trip sponsors and participants and is intended to be a living document. After you sponsor a trip, please report new approaches that worked well to the Trips Chairman so they can be added to the next release of this guide.

After you have been on a few trips, please think about volunteering to be a trip sponsor. This is a good way to share your love of paddling with other people. Don't be shy about asking a more experienced HCC paddler to help you with the first few trips that you sponsor. HCC members are generally cooperative and understanding.

## Newsletter Trip Announcement Template

The following is a template for flatwater trip announcements to be submitted to the newsletter editor. A simplified template is used for whitewater trips since these trips are typically overnight and highly flow dependent.

### Common Flatwater Equipment List

To save time and space, the newsletter will run the following list of things to bring for flatwater events so that these don't need to be repeated in each trip announcement.

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#### What to Bring on a Flatwater Trip

- PFD (Personal Floatation Device) with attached whistle
  - Spare Paddle
  - Rescue gear: paddle float, throw rope, first aid kit
  - Bilge pump or bailing device (small bucket, sponge, etc.)
  - Personal medications: Be sure to inform your trip sponsor of medical conditions.
  - *[Early Season Only]* **Cold Weather Protocol:** Change of clothes, gloves, and hat in a Dry Bag. No cotton clothing. (See "Cool Paddling", February 2008 Newsletter)
  - Sunglasses, sun/bug spray
  - Lunch, snacks, drinks (hot or cold) plus 2 quarts of water
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### Trip Announcement Template

When you fill out the template below, there may be points that you can skip since they don't make sense for your trip and there may be others that you need to add. If you want to "free style" your trip announcement, please include the information requested below in your description.

**Privacy Note:** The newsletter may be given to non-HCC members and is also currently available on the Internet through the HCC web site. While you need to include information so that interested paddlers can contact you, be aware that this information will be available to non-club members. If you have concerns, please contact the newsletter editor or Trips Chairman.

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#### Trip Name

*Day, Month DD, YYYY*

#### Trip Sponsor(s): *Names (Phone Numbers, E-Mail[Optional])*

4-5 line description discussing the trip. If this is an overnight trip, include camping arrangements (where, how much, ...).

**Meeting Place:** Location of meeting place and directions to get there. Also include approximate driving time from Indianapolis.

**Put-In:** Put-In location ((Note: Only need detailed directions if people might meet there.))

**Take-Out:** Take-Out Location ((Note: Don't need directions.))

**Trip Length:** XX hours – MMM miles

**Expected Water Conditions:** Flat to Wind Chop

|                  |          |                             |
|------------------|----------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Schedule:</b> | hh:mm am | Gather at the Meeting Place |
|                  | hh:mm am | Arrive at the Put-In        |
|                  | hh:mm am | Shuttle leaves              |
|                  | hh:mm pm | Start Paddling              |
|                  | hh:mm pm | Land at the Take-Out        |
|                  | hh:mm pm | On the Road                 |

**Trip Requirements:** Any special skills, equipment, or physical conditioning required for this trip

#### Contact Information:

Who to contact, how to contact them, and when they need to contact you by. Is an RSVP required?

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## Trip Report Template

After you complete your trip, you should write a short Trip Report and submit it to the Trips Chairman. Also, consider submitting it to the newsletter editor and posting it to the Trip Reports section of the HCC Bulletin Board.

Your Trip Report should include the following information:

- Trip Name
- Date
- Trip Sponsors
- Trip Participants
- Where you Paddled
  - Name of river, stream, or lake
  - Location of meeting place, put-in and take-out
  - Observed water level (if available)
  - Weather Conditions
  - Paddling conditions
  - Trip length and paddling time
- Trip Discussion
  - Description of the Trip – This can include interesting things that you saw on the trip, wildlife that you observed, interesting paddling conditions, and aspects of the trip that you enjoyed.
  - Problems encountered during the trip

# HOOSIER CANOE CLUB – TRIP LOG AND WAIVER

TRIP \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

I recognize and fully understand that canoeing can be a dangerous activity. There can be hidden obstacles in the water, tricky currents, sudden weather changes, any number of other hazards. In addition, mistakes can be made by fellow canoeists. Despite the mutually supportive group structure, I am ultimately responsible for my own safety and do assume sole responsibility for my decisions. In consideration for my membership in the Hoosier Canoe Club and/or for the privilege of voluntary participation in its activities and events, I hereby waive and forever release any and all claims and/or demands against the Hoosier Canoe Club, its officers, or any club members for personal injury to myself, including death, for damage to any item of personal property, and/or loss of service, arising from any damages or losses which I may suffer or incur while taking part in any activity or event of the club. This waiver and release shall be binding upon my heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns. I further agree that if I bring a child or minor to one of the club's activities or events, I alone shall be responsible for the child's health and safety.

|    | Name | E-Mail Address | Emergency Contact Number | Member | Guest |
|----|------|----------------|--------------------------|--------|-------|
| 1  |      |                |                          |        |       |
| 2  |      |                |                          |        |       |
| 3  |      |                |                          |        |       |
| 4  |      |                |                          |        |       |
| 5  |      |                |                          |        |       |
| 6  |      |                |                          |        |       |
| 7  |      |                |                          |        |       |
| 8  |      |                |                          |        |       |
| 9  |      |                |                          |        |       |
| 10 |      |                |                          |        |       |
| 11 |      |                |                          |        |       |
| 12 |      |                |                          |        |       |
| 13 |      |                |                          |        |       |
| 14 |      |                |                          |        |       |
| 15 |      |                |                          |        |       |

**Please submit this form to the Hoosier Canoe Club Yeoman after this trip.**