

Here is a quick and dirty synopsis for the first-time attendees (aka The Newbies). We will NOT discuss these during the meeting.

1. **Our purpose is to make the Occoquan River as safe as possible for everyone who uses it. It is NOT to point a finger but to accept the responsibilities imposed on each of us.**
 - From the Rules of the Road: A vessel includes every description of watercraft or other artificial contrivance used, or capable of being used, as a means of transportation on the water. Focusing on the Occoquan River, the following have been determined to be vessels by the Coast Guard, the lead agency in determining what is and is not a vessel
 - Human-powered craft such as kayaks and stand-up paddleboards.
 - A person drifting down the river on a tree trunk.
 - Someone floating down the river on an inner tube.
 - Any motor-powered craft.
2. Simply put in Rule 2 of the published Rules of Navigation (COLREGS), every vessel has equal rights to use the Occoquan according to the rules of the road. No vessel, motor driven, wind-driven, or human-power-driven is automatically given the right of way over any other vessel.

—INLAND— General RULE 2 Responsibility (a) Nothing in these Rules shall exonerate any vessel, or the owner, master, or crew thereof, from the consequences of any neglect to comply with these Rules or of the neglect of any precaution which may be required by the ordinary practice of seamen, or by the special circumstances of the case. (b) In construing and complying with these Rules due regard shall be had to all dangers of navigation and collision and to any special circumstances, including the limitations of the vessels involved, which may make a departure from these Rules necessary to avoid immediate danger.
3. It is not wise to read the Rules of the Road as if each were in a vacuum. Each encounter may bring its own set of circumstances.

Questions Asked and Answered During The Discussions

- The next meeting of the Safety Forum is November 9, 2023 from 0900-1200
- Goals by department/organization to make the Occoquan River, especially the no-wake zone, as safe as possible this boating season.
- How can we help the first responders and police? Citizens contacting Fairfax Executive and Board has helped increase support from higher levels in government.
- Normal drilling and training can be helpful but a surprise drill may be more beneficial. The Prince William Police and Fire Departments will be discussing joint training to evaluate response time.
- Discussion about Human Powered Vessels being in the channel. Signage discussion again to detail safe areas to be and avoiding the channel. The group was

discussing developing a sign or map to post in town. The Fairfax Yacht Club attendee would like help for the design.

- Event dates can be provided Safety Forum members for circulation.
- 911 is the go-to emergency number for summoning resources. The 911 operator will sort out any issues as to who gets what call.
- Thanks to YouTube and creativity, people are now able to convert their Human Powered Vessels to a motorized boat using a hand drill and an available I kit.
- The Human Powered vessel races on May 20th will be over before the Blessing of the Fleet. There should be no problems as the participants are all racers.

Prince William Marine Patrol

- Increase presence in evening and during special events.
- Avoid over policing by having all law enforcement units on the river at the same time.
- The Prince William County Police will be working 17 days after the hours of darkness.
- Biggest problem - reckless operation of personal Water Craft.

United States Coast Guard Auxiliary

- Education for boater safety.
- Vessel safety checks for motorized vessels.
- Vessel Safety Checks and stickers for paddle craft.
- Provide "If found" stickers for lost human powered craft.
- Provide reflective material for all human powered craft paddles.

United States Coast Guard

- Will work toward Increasing presence in our area.
- Most of their work is enforcing security zones and enforcement in the District of Columbia.
- If assistance is needed, call the station on 16.

Virginia Conservation Police

- Enforcement of the laws throughout Virginia waters.
- Raise awareness of the new Virginia Move Over law.
- *Every motorboat, when approaching or passing within 200 feet of any law enforcement vessel or emergency services vessel that is displaying flashing blue or red lights, shall slow to no-wake speed so that the effect of the wake does not disturb the activities of the law enforcement or emergency services personnel. Where the operator of a motorboat fails to comply with this regulation, and where such failure endangers the life or limb of any person involved or endangers or damages the vessels involved, the operator shall be guilty of a Class 3 misdemeanor and, upon conviction, shall be additionally required to complete and pass a NASBLA-approved safe boating course.*

- The Move Over law in Virginia applies to emergency vessels and will be heavily enforced this season.
- Tow boats are covered under the Move Over law.
- The Conservation Police will bring in Wardens from other districts for large events.

Fairfax County Marine Patrol

- Education continues to be primary goal.
- Overall, mission is the same as the other law enforcement agencies present.
- Will be stepping up formal vessel stops, not necessarily with the goal of writing a ticket, but to educate.

Occoquan-Woodbridge-Lorton (OWL) Volunteer Fire Department

- Goal to increase number of operators.
- They have 3 boats total. (512, 502 and small boat 514).
- Increase presence on the reservoir will be one of our goals.

Fairfax Fire Boat

- Operate out of Pohick Bay.
- Time to water is delayed because of towing time from the station.
- Operations has allowed new schedule to allow the boat to be on the water 9 am through 9 pm on weekends.
- Additional training hours have been approved.

Prince William County Fire Boat

- Boat 512 is on Neabsco Creek
- They are working toward having increased presence on the water after darkness.
- Still working to get more operators.

Regional Park Rentals

- New management but no significant changes in operations.
- All PFDs are now inspected, with whistles etc.
- Looking forward to a busy season.

Belmont Bay Paddlers

- Group since 2015.
- 100 members based at Belmont Bay Harbor Marina.
- Emphasis on safety.
- Hoping to get together packets for their members that will include whistle and some sort of reflective material.

Vulcan Materials

- “What 3 Words” app provided for all relevant personnel.
- Annual Captains refresher training and most like it.
- Vulcan tour dates will be made available to the facilitator for dissemination.

Tow Boat US

- Tow boats are covered under the “Move Over” law.
- Remember that motor vessels need to drop to no wake speed within 200’ of a public safety vessel engaged in operation with their lights on.
- Please remember to give way to the vessel towing.

Freedom Boat Club

- Beginning to show membership the “What 3 Words” app.
- Increased training hours from 3 to 4 hours.
- More time to close quarter maneuvering and shallow water operation.

PWYC

- Our mission within the club is to continue to educate members on safety, weather, sharing the waterway, etc.
- Opening day April 15th.
- Overview of Wild Apricot
- Discussion by Rick overviewing the deaths of 2 PWYC members during boating activities.

Occoquan River Virtual Yacht Club

- This Yacht Club meets virtually.
- As with the theme of the meeting, their emphasis will be on safety.
- Most members are long boat time owners.

Fairfax Yacht Club

- Continue to educate our boaters on the no wake.

Occoquan River Marina Association

- Thank you all for participating and supporting ORMA.
- May 20th - Blessing of the Fleet 12 pm-2 pm at Belmont Bay Marina.

Potomac River Yacht Club Association

- Dahlgren range changes discussion March 29th at 6:00 pm in Colonial Beach.

What Would The Ball & Strike Callers Like From The Recreational Boaters?

- Prince William County Police - Come talk to us. Have your equipment, readily available to us. Consider testing the stuff in the pool to see how your inflatable PFDs work.
- Fairfax County Police - KNOW WHERE YOU ARE! Learn how to geo locate.
- US Coast Guard - We need to have better coordination between USCG and local jurisdictions. If you are short coverage, call the station and we will try to help and adjust. Looking to increase training with local partners in public safety down here.
- US Coast Guard Aux - Continue to encourage boaters to get vessel inspections.
- Fairfax County Fire Department – Would like to increase their training with other organizations. Suggest that local yacht clubs push things like safety alerts and weather announcements