

NACK Certification Levels: Paddler Proficiency

Open Water Paddler (OW)

Description: This level is one of not only technique and skills, but of responsibility. The open water environment places paddlers in a rapidly-changing, challenging, and sometimes dangerous environment. In the sea, paddlers will not paddle alone, especially when challenging conditions are present or possible during the duration of the trip. A great deal of responsibility is required of the paddler, as the ability to paddle in the sea at night and in surf is understood. A paddler at this level of proficiency has sought out higher-level certified instruction in open water conditions and has practiced learned skills to gain confidence and experience. A paddler should have completed a series such as the ACA Open Water Coastal program, as well as attended multiple Club-sponsored paddling activities or seminars. Many will also seek individualized instruction to fine-tune their skills. Paddlers at this level will paddle in open water settings, crossings, and ocean conditions, including surf up to three (3) feet and winds up to force 5 (11-16 Kn). Currents up to 3 Kn, with ferrying, eddys utilized. They will be able to participate in extended trips in excess of 15 miles with limited shore access, and may choose to embark upon overnight outings. The ability to be an effective, active group member, providing support for group leader is understood.

Required equipment for assessment (in addition to that required for IC rating):

- Fully-outfitted sea kayak (or equivalent) with a combination of bulkheads, hatches, installed floatation, and recovery accessories is required. Few sit-on craft will meet this specification.
- Helmet (for surf conditions)
- Repair Kit

Skills and Knowledge (in addition to that required for IC level):

All skills at this level are to be performed with confidence in the above conditions. The ability to blend strokes continuously, choose correct strokes for particular situations, and react quickly to novel demands is expected. This assessment will also include scenarios that test a paddler's ability to perform "real life" rescues in challenging conditions and situations.