

From the Lead Boat

By Gordon Dayton, President of NACK
May 20, 2007

Greetings NACK Paddlers,

Our **History** is short but illustrious. In April of 2005 six founding members agreed to form an official paddling club aimed at the highest standards in the sport. In the ensuing weeks they formulated bylaws, chose a name, prepared a charter and filed articles of Incorporation with the State of New York. By June 7, 2005 the corporation: North Atlantic Canoe and Kayak was accepted as a domestic not-for-profit corporation under the laws of New York. I suggest we consider this June 7 as **Founder's Day** and June as our **Founder's Month** and celebrate it accordingly in the future. What we might plan as a celebration this year is open to suggestions from the membership. Please contact Ron Longmore with your recommendations.

By June 26, 2005 NACK had been accepted as one of approximately 150 **Paddle America Clubs** affiliated with the American Canoe Association. This association offers us legitimacy and helps cover liability for all our members. We have strived to espouse the highest standards fostered by the ACA in the areas of **Safety, Public Education and Instruction**. Two of our members presently serve on the SEI Council of the ACA. Those same members, Elizabeth O'Connor and myself, have also accepted positions on the Atlantic Division Board of Directors. I am Coastal Chair and Elizabeth is the Training Chair also serving as the Divisional Instructional Facilitator (DIF) responsible for facilitating training throughout the division. Through us, NACK has exposure and influence at the highest levels of the Division and in the National organization.

NACK has **Training and Assessment** as two of its basic tenets. These were two fundamental reasons for the formation of the club. The Founding Members, all instructors, are held to a higher standard of liability when on the water, and any group they paddle with becomes their legal

responsibility regardless of what the group may think. The structure of NACK, and its requirements for training and skill certification of all members is intended to mitigate that problem. It is also hoped that as members progress in training to higher levels, there will grow a core of paddlers with advanced skills and interests in more adventurous activities. Those interested in specific types of training should express those proposals to Elizabeth O'Connor who Chairs our Training Committee.

During 2005/2006 the main focus was on building **Membership**. This effort met with some success, as there were 34 members by the end of 2005, an increase of over 500% in 6 months. In 2006 we added another 20 members and to-date, 2007 has supplied 8 more. Members leave for various reasons, and our loss rate is about 20%. This is pretty good for an outdoor club, and an improvement on the 30% rate experienced by the ACA. Some of our new members are forwarded to us through outside training activities of our Instructors. In order to grow, we still need to maintain an aggressive outreach program and hopefully develop some effective public projects. We all should thank Roy Baillard for agreeing to add the post of Membership Chair to his other duties.

The **Website** has become increasingly more functional since its debut in July-05. Our Navigation page has some of the best trip-planning resources you will find gathered in one place and other websites have linked to it. Anyone interested in our Training, Assessment and Certification (TAC) program can learn most of what they need to know on our Training Page with more details on curriculum available on the ACA website. We have started a Sea Market page where members may post boats, paddles and gear for sale and recently we added trip reports to our Gallery page. In response to many requests we have posted our membership list in a secure area of the website. All but a few new members should be able to log into this area to view our membership list, update their contact information and also review and manage their work credits.

In 2006, at the ACA Annual Meeting, Elizabeth O'Connor and myself were invited guests and were presented with the **ACA Stroke of Achievement** award on behalf of NACK in recognition of the quality programming NACK has developed and all of the successful Outreach activities completed in the 2005/2006 season. We recently reported to ACA on a continuation of our **Outreach Program**. In all we sponsored 4 booths this spring in which we promoted NACK and the ACA, using approximately 216 club man-hours and potentially contacting over 5000 people. As a thank-you for this and other work, ACA has awarded us certificates for 400 daily event memberships to be used in building our membership. I would like to solicit ideas from all of you on how we could use this insurance coverage to promote NACK and bring in new members.

One of the future challenges facing NACK is **member involvement**. Aside from outreach, where we obviously excel, our members have been reluctant to take on continuing commitments to the organization. This is obvious in the records of our Work Committee. 85% of the 1000 man-hours/year of running the club is credited to six members. Though many members contribute some hours, nearly half our members fail to meet a substantial portion of the 20-hr/yr recommended work commitment. This is not good for the long-term health of NACK. Fortunately a few people continue to step forward. I would especially like to thank members Roy Baillard and Linda Buffa who agreed up to run for posts of Treasurer and Secretary as well as Board positions. If you have time to devote to NACK service, either in a continuing position or on individual projects, please contact Jerry Collins, our new Vice President and Work Chair.

To help promote member involvement we have instituted the **NACK Buck program**. Here members with extra time can earn credits toward training discounts. At the moment an extra 10 hours of service to NACK can earn a \$25 discount on sponsored Training. Since NACK training is already arranged at discount rates this should be a powerful incentive. If our Training Fund grows this could become an

even stronger program. We still need members to step forward to manage a number of key committees.

Maybe projects are your cup of tea? There are a number of high-profile **work projects** that have been discussed by the Board of Directors. Some of the possibilities include public education or waterway access. Both of these are areas for which we could access funding from outside organizations. Each year the National Safe Boating Council offers approximately \$30,000 in grants for public education of boating safety. Many paddling clubs have received grants for development of training materials or running training activities. In addition, the ACA has grant money that it offers each year for Club Sponsored Stewardship projects aimed at improving waterway access, such as put-in development. We have already verified that Suffolk County would support us if we wanted to run such a project in our area. We have the funding sources and the governmental support, what we lack now is the member interest in executing such projects. If we have members that are interested in programs of this type, please step forward and we can discuss some of the options.

Our funding has grown dramatically over two short years and I am pleased to announce nearly \$3000 in our treasury. I would like to thank one of our members who already stepped up to help grow the **Training Fund**. John Weickert has graciously donated 4 Mets tickets for a Baseball raffle that could earn the Club significant dollars for our Training Fund. He has also agreed to print raffle tickets for us that we will distribute to members to sell to friends and co-paddlers. This is a great opportunity!

Our **Assessment** program is a great success. As of Fall-06 we had certified over 60% of our membership. This past weekend we certified another 5 members who braved rain and windy conditions to complete their testing. Two of these opted to receive what will likely be the first ACA Skill certifications in our region. We are proud that NACK has three ACA Coastal Kayak Assessors.

Our **Training program** this spring was not as well attended as we had hoped. Possibly

this was due to the reschedule forced on us by the Northeaster, but our Training Committee is concerned and is planning a NACK-wide review of training interests. This will be your chance to participate in planning the training programs that you most desire in order to meet your goals as a paddler. Keep in touch with us on the schedule for this special Open-Meeting of the Training Committee in conjunction with the Board of Directors. We will notify you through NACK Notes.

Keep in mind the advantages you gain by membership in NACK. There are gear and apparel **discounts** available through ACA and NACK that we all should be familiar with. Several of our members are involved in the industry and you can access their activity schedules through links on our website. Certainly mention that you are a NACK member if you patronize their programs.

Our **Instructors** are perhaps our most valuable in-house resource. These individuals have all invested thousands of dollars and hundreds of hours of their time in achieving Instructor Certification. ACA Instructor Certification is the mark of quality in the United States. When you take training you should always ask for proof of certification to insure the instructor can understand and meet our standards. Having these individuals ready at hand and available to paddle with is a benefit not every club can provide. If you are interested in becoming an Instructor, or serving as an Instructional Aide, please let us know.

A strong **Trips and Activities** program is the heart of any outdoor club and one of the main reasons for joining NACK. At the present time only our Instructor members are certified to lead NACK trips. Because of training commitments during the paddling season this is a limited resource. We are working to train and certify other members as leaders and I am pleased to say we will probably have at least two completing the program shortly. These people deserve our applause and our respect for giving their time and effort in hopes of serving the club. We are still looking for someone to fill the post of Trips Chair. This is a key position needed to plan a healthy and useful

schedule of trips that are valuable to our members.

Through the **Atlantic Division** we have access to the ACA Camp at Lake Sebago in Harriman State Park. Lodging there is an inexpensive way to access great recreational opportunities in a nearby rural area, but must be arranged through our Officers. In another year or two NACK may be invited to apply for its own cabin. This could give our members access to this picturesque area throughout the season on our own schedule. One vision is that the cost could be shared among members who intend to use it with some support from NACK. If any are interested in forming a group to work on this please let me know.

Sometimes other organizations approach us for affiliated programs. We currently have an offer from the Sagamore Rowing club to join them in support of their new boathouse. They are looking to develop a more active kayak program and would like to know if we have members that might want to store their boats at their facility in Huntington Harbor. I have plans to write a generalized letter of support that they can use to help secure funding from Town and County resources, but it would have greater impact if we could confirm interest from specific members. If such a facility could meet your needs, please let me know. Indoor rack storage fees are projected to be around \$20/month per kayak with complementary access to the Gold Star Beach put-in.

I would like to thank all the members who have worked hard to make NACK a success. You all know who you are. I am proud to be an important part of such a bold and prestigious venture in paddling, and it is gratifying to meet and paddle with people who are dedicated to improving their skills and setting an example for others on the water. This spring there were 14 paddler deaths in the northeast region and most could be ascribed to poor training. These statistics motivate local efforts toward regulation of paddling. If we are not successful in the programs we foster, the paddling industry will soon see greater restrictions and regulations, to the detriment of all paddlers. **Keep up the good work!**