

From the Lead Boat

By Gordon Dayton, First Past President of NACK - July 27, 2008

Greetings NACK Paddlers,

It is just over 3 years since NACK was incorporated in the State of New York and joined the American Canoe Association as a Paddle America Club. The first couple years of the club saw a lot of work on the part of the Founders to define our goals and grow our membership. We realized that the job of running a club was beyond the capability of just a few people. Some of the early founders have gone other ways, others are less active. An incorporated club, for all its advantages, has some complex requirements. In 2007-2008, it became necessary to build a new team of Directors, Officers and Committee Chairs to run the organization. In this task we have been lucky to find a group of people that appreciate our ethics and goals and understand the commitments of NACK to safety and training. It is time that I step aside from daily management. This is my parting message to members as President.

Through 2007 the Training Committee worked to advance the paddling skills of our membership. In order to facilitate improved performance at Assessments we scheduled targeted programs for flat-water, advanced flat-water and inner coastal training. These classes were designed to bolster specific skills for those "at level". We have been very successful so far in building a good group of skilled paddlers: Of our current members we currently have 60% with NACK Skill ratings. With the advent of three ACA Assessors in-house, many are also opting for ACA Skill certification.

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| Flat-water (FW) | 6 |
| Adv. Flat-water (AFW) | 9 |
| Inner Coastal (IC): | 4 |
| Open Water (OW): | 3 |
| Advanced Open Water (AOW): | 1 |

We applaud all the diligent paddlers who are working hard on developing their skills. We also have a group working hard to build their Leadership skills, both through in-house

training and certification as Instructors. We currently have 11 leaders at various levels:

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|--------------|---|---------|
| FW Leaders: | 2 | (1 WFA) |
| AFW Leaders: | 3 | |
| IC Leaders: | 1 | (1 WFA) |
| OW Leaders: | 3 | (2 WFA) |
| AOW Leaders: | 1 | |

Some members have gone the extra step of taking Wilderness First Aid training. Please thank these dedicated member leaders!

This past year NACK has placed a strong commitment to Instructor development. We are pleased to announce that *Elizabeth O'Connor*, our Training Chair, achieved her Coastal Kayak Open Water Instructor Trainer status in June. The work that goes into this certification is can perhaps be appreciated by the members who pursued Instructor certification in the same time period, two of whom participated in the first NACK Instructor Assistantship program. Congratulations to our new kayak Instructors: *Steve McDonald* (L2), *Roy Baillard* (L2), *John Weickert* (L2) and *Buddy Ficarelli* (L1). I was pleased to upgrade my Coastal Kayak Instructor certification to L4 and my A3 Assessor status. I also added Tandem ratings to my Canoe L2 Touring and River certification, for those interested in Canoe. All this considered, NACK now has a great strength in club-based training.

NACK has developed a more complete slate of dedicated Officers and Staff. *Steve McDonald* with his experience in kayak fishing and dedication to paddling has been a great addition as President. *Ann Kaiser* is shaping up to be an active VP and has spent hours learning our Excel work database and is busy defining and expanding our NACK Buck incentive program. *Roy Baillard* continues to juggle two important hats as both Treasurer and Membership chair while serving on the Board. *Linda Buffa* while distracted this spring with outside training has shown interest in developing as Corporate Secretary and Board member.

Steve McDonald was able to pull together our first Awards program at our Holiday Dinner this winter. We honored *Roy Baillard* with the President's Award, *Ivan Chase* with

the Training Award and *John Weickert* with the Most Valuable Paddler Award for his work on fundraising.

Tom Straub has taken an active role in organizing our Outreach Program. With spring events including: Farmingdale Show, LI Paddle-sport, Jersey Paddler, Heckscher Fest, NYS Paddle Safety Check, Riverhead Kayak-a-thon and fall events, we estimate approximately 6000 contacts this year. Public education is a major goal of our club and a great work commitment.

Ivan Chase has put together a great series of programs this year for our club meetings. We were pleased to enjoy interesting and informative presentations guest speakers from the Riverhead Foundation, the Peconic Bay Keeper, as well as other fine guest and member speakers. Thanks Ivan!

Dan Troup has taken on the role of Demo Team Captain, and with support from Ann Kaiser he has put together a great series of demos for our outreach events. The effort our team puts into practicing skills and the time spent at events is highly commendable. Thank you all for a fine job!

We are pleased to welcome *Harold McLaughlin*, a new member who has expressed interest in starting a NACK Newsletter. This is a program in the making, but the trial draft looks quite professional. We are currently working to secure content for the first 1-2 editions. If you can put together an article, please forward it to Harold via the address on our members list.

The website has seen continued improvement with a face lift on the home page. The "Members Only" area is the place to meet and communicate with other members - those having trouble logging in should contact us for help. In the NACK Library we are posting are a series of articles from our roving reporter, *Sandy Noyes*, under the title "Field Notes". We will continue to post articles here as work continues on the newsletter.

We had a strong emphasis on member involvement over the past year and have shown a good deal of success with new Officers and committee chairs. We still need

to fill a few critical posts: Trip and Activities Committee, Social Committee and Fundraising Committee all need Chairs. If you have interest, please see *Steve McDonald* or any other Officer or Board member.

One with any club, NACK faces challenges of membership retention and growth. The past year has actually seen our membership decline slightly. Partly this is due to the concentration we have placed on member involvement. Sad, but in many ways this is a healthy transition. NACK is a club designed for those committed to personal development and willing to "give back" to the sport. Current members appear to be more active and dedicated paddlers, making this "OUR" club. We hope that through the 2008 Instructional Assistantship project and the continuing NACK Buck program we can reward further commitment and promote the growth of our core membership.

Some of our members continue to give of their time at higher levels in the ACA. *Elizabeth O'Connor* continues as Divisional Instructional Facilitator for the Atlantic Division and serves at the National level on the Safety, Instruction and Education Council (SEIC). I continue as Coastal Chair for the Division and have a seat on the SEIC as Clubs Liaison. Together we are working to promote club-based training in the ACA. I am proud to state that the ACA considers Atlantic one of the strongest Divisions and NACK one of its foremost Paddle America Clubs.

Going forward, I intend to continue as Board Chair. I am hoping to make progress working with Roy to formalize our bookkeeping in preparation for our registration as an IRS Tax Exempt Organization. I also want to develop a planning committee for the club and continue my development as a paddling instructor in various disciplines.

To all who supported my first three terms as President - thank you! Please join me in supporting *Steve McDonald* as he paddles "the Lead Boat" and help him and *Ann Kaiser* manage our club going forward. May you all achieve your paddling goals. And, remember, NACK is your club, help it grow!