



## Canoe Safety Protocols and Procedures

The Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership's goal is to lead educational on-river experiences with safety as a priority.

*Updated May 2023*

### *Training and Certifications:*

- All year-round Educators will have current Wilderness First Aid and Adult/Child CPR certification.
- All Seasonal Recreation Leaders will complete a basic canoe course with an American Canoe Association certified paddle coach and have current Basic First Aid and Adult/Child CPR certification.
- All Canoe Program staff will participate in annual on-water training to refresh skills, refine systems, and practice appropriate scenarios.

### *Before Canoe Programs*

- Water Conditions: Estuary Partnership staff will evaluate water conditions before each canoe trip. Unsafe weather due to high wind, lightening, torrential rain, whitecaps, or any other condition deemed unsafe by Estuary Partnership staff, will result in trip cancellation. Staff will consult local weather forecasts and USGS real time water monitoring stations. Whenever possible, notice of trip cancellation will be the day prior to the trip or when conditions are first determined unsafe.
- Canoe Inspection: The exterior and interior of each canoe will be inspected for safety prior to each trip.
- Emergency Equipment: Each canoe will be equipped with a first aid kit, cellular phone, VHF radio, tow rope, bailing pump, floatation cushion and a space blanket.
- For School Programs: School busses need to stay on-site. Teachers are responsible for making appropriate reservations.
- A teacher, school representative, and/or organizational leader/staff should plan to be on the water for all rotations.

### *Before Boarding the Canoes*

- All participants will be given a chance to use the restrooms before boarding the canoes.
- All participants will be encouraged to apply sunscreen and/or wear appropriate clothing for the weather.
- Personal Floatation Devices: Estuary Partnership staff will ensure that all boaters are properly fitted with a Personal Floatation Device (PFD) before approaching the water or boarding the canoe.
- On-Water Guidelines: Canoeing guidelines will be discussed with all boaters regardless of experience.
  - PFDs must be on and fastened for the duration of the trip until instructed to take them off
  - Listen to and respect directions from Estuary Partnership staff
  - Stay seated unless otherwise directed
  - Speak at a conversational level
  - Paddle as instructed
  - Paddles that fall in the water will be recovered by Estuary Partnership Staff
  - Be respectful of other paddlers, no put-downs
  - Take care of yourself: apply sunscreen as needed and drink plenty of water

### *At the Dock: Loading the Canoes*

- Estuary Partnership staff will direct the loading and unloading of the canoes and determine seating assignments based on height, weight, and experience to ensure a safe and evenly loaded boat.
- Estuary Partnership staff will occupy the bow and stern positions.
- Paddling Instructions: Before leaving the dock, participants will receive instructions on holding the paddles, basic strokes, and simple maneuvers.

### *On the Water*

The Estuary Partnership staff member sitting at the bow (front) will provide paddling instruction, engage participants in on-river education, and look for any river hazards. The staff member sitting in the stern (back) is responsible for steering

the canoe and giving paddle directions. Unsafe behavior on the canoe may be cause for immediate return to dock and de-boarding of canoe based on Estuary Partnership staff assessment and decision.

In the very unlikely event that a participant falls overboard, Estuary Partnership staff will maneuver the boat to them or utilize a throw rope to get participant out of the water swiftly and safely. Staff members will assist the person back into the boat. The participant's medical status will be inspected, a space blanket will be provided if environmentally/medically necessary, and the canoe will return to shore as quickly as possible.