Paddling and Boating Safety

- Always wear your life jacket.
- Let someone know your paddling agenda. Leave your plans with a friend, on a cell phone, or with the police.
- Boating alone is dangerous. Boat with others and carry a spare paddle.
- If your kayak or canoe capsizes, remain calm. Hold onto your paddle or boat and the bail or re-enter.
- Make sure you are properly dressed for inclement weather and have the gear you need. Be alert to possible weather changes. Squalls and thunderstorms are common during the summer months, usually accompanied by temperature changes, rain, lightning, and gusty winds. Be aware of the weather immediately and seek shelter. Windy and rainy weather, even in summer, can lead to hypothermia if you are improperly dressed.
- Dress appropriately. Cold water is dangerous and can kill unprepared boaters. Swimmers should wear cold-water immersion suits to most boat wiring deaths. Wear a hat and dress in layers of wool or polypropylene. Avoid cotton during the entire month. If air and water temperatures are both below 60°F, dress in layers of clothing. Obstacles encountered along the trails include trees, sandbars, and other hazards.
- Never paddle while under the influence of alcohol.
- Beware of stinging sea nettles and jellyfish in the water throughout the summer.
- Respect private property.
- Plan for emergencies.

American Canoe Association

Guide American Canoe Association advocates for paddler safety, clear water, the preservation of natural resources and paddler access to our waters. For information on paddling preparation and safety visit the American Canoe Association on the web at www.acainc.org or call (703) 451-0414.

Leave No Trace Outdoor Ethics

Like all areas around the Chesapeake Bay, the Tidewater Island area is a sensitive ecosystem. Please be sure to understand and practice the following stewardship principles of Leave No Trace:

1. Plan ahead and prepare.
2. Pack it in, pack it out.
3. Leave what you find.
4. Respect wildlife.
5. Be considerate of other visitors.

For more information, visit the Leave No Trace, Inc. website at www.leavintrace.org or call 1-800-332-4100

Guides and Outfitters

While many visitors and residents enjoy birdwatching, sailing, paddling, and hunting game birds, please be sure to participate in responsible and appropriate recreational activities. The island shares a wealth of charter fishing and hunting guides as well as businesses designed for kayaking, canoeing, and small craft rentals.

The Department of Natural Resources has partnerships with several outfitters that provide guided trips, including birdwatching and educational tours. For more information contact Maryland DNR’s State Park and Forest Service at (410) 586-3620, or visit Occoquan Avenues in Maryland on the web at www1.maryland.gov/ocooquanavenues

Also available from the Tidewater Island County Office of Tourism (410) 770-8000 or on the web at www.tidewaterisland.org

For More Information

Directions
From the Chesapeake Bay Bridge, follow Route 366 South to Tidewater Trail (Route 525). Turn right onto Tidewater Trail. Continue 2.5 miles, then take the next right onto Route 253 until the Tidewater Island sign. Continue on Route 253 for 1.5 miles, then take the left onto Route 372. Turn right onto Route 372, then take a right onto Route 372A, and finally take a left onto Route 372B. The Tidewater Island Trailhead is on the right.

Tidewater County Office of Tourism
11 Northville Street
Baltimore, MD 21202
Tel: (410) 770-8000
Email: info@tidewaterisland.org
Web: www.tidewaterisland.org

Water Trails

There are three suggested paddling routes around and near Tidewater Island. The trails are not marked and demand a certain level of skill and caution. Be located on the Bay and in areas with a large amount of rippling water, boaters should be aware of the weather forecast, wind direction, wind speed, tide, and water temperature before undertaking any of these trails. The trails are so that you can see along each trail and the experiences you may enjoy vary depending on the season of the year.

Waterman’s Way of Life

The waterman’s way of life can be traced back to the prehistoric peoples that lived on the Delmarva Peninsula. For example, the “pound net” is illustrated in some of the rock carvings that were discovered in Indian rock shelters around Chesapeake Bay dating back at least 13000 years. While kayaking or canoeing around the island, you will probably notice a pound net much like that in the illustration in this section.

The early delawares who settled the island practiced a lifestyle that was a mix of agriculture and fishing. After the Civil War, the demand for oysters as a market commodity rose in Germany. In the 1880’s the community of transporters to the oyster market. In the 1980’s the waterman’s lifestyle began to develop. Oystering and fishing were the primary occupations. These demands and regional migrations forced many to travel up and down the bay to take advantage of the various fish and oyster beds. The first watermen’s organization was formed in 1885. The modern waterman’s organizations were established along Knippa Narrows. Along with Dogwood Harbor, it serves as the home of the island’s waterman’s community.

Skippack on Dogwood Harbor

Dogwood Harbor located on the east side of Tidewater Island, opposite one of the last sites for the oyster fishery. Contaminated in the 1890’s, the harbor has remained as the oldest remaining skippack and one of the last oyster harbors. The skippack was used for fishing and hunting. It is a small, narrow waterway that connects to other oyster harbors. Skippackers used other oyster towns and oyster boats were a common sight on this part of the bay. There are only a few oyster skippackers scattered about the bay.

Drawbridge

As you drive onto the island, you will pass over the Knippa Narrows drawbridge. The bridge is known as a “barcole” bridge. The bridge is open and not counted by the time the Knippa Narrows drawsbridge is the most active drawbridge in the world. It opens between 16,000 and 15,000 times per year for boat traffic.

Explore the Island

Welcome to Tidewater Island, Maryland, a landscape nestled between the Chesapeake Bay and the Choptank River. Located on Maryland’s Eastern Shore, Tidewater Island brings to life picturesque scenes and the perfect balance of maritime, water, and culture. The area, noted for exploration by boat and land, is home to generations of villages, watermen, restaurants, B&B’s, and country inns. The island encompasses approximately 1,390 acres and is two miles long. The recreational resources on Tidewater Island are equally a view and include a mix of public lands being or being developed along the water’s edge. Some of the water trails are protected for bird and waterfowl, providing ideal conditions for waterfowl, as well as, the experienced paddler. The surroundings provide a variety of water access to the natural habitat and the ability to view wildlife where land and water interweave.

Underwater Inhabitants

The underwater surrounding Tidewater Island provides excellent habitat for birds, seals, sea turtles, fish. The historic creeks and marshes harbor a multitude of wildlife species within an occurrence of underwater organisms. In the spring and summer, underwater vegetation, CAS appears on the sandbars, and various species of shrimp live in the tributary creeks. The SAVs also provide camouflage for young eels, crabs, shrimp, and juvenile fish. The shallow areas of the island, while allowing access to the island or crabs in the rock and live in the live rock. The rock and live rock are used for the rock and live rock. The rock and live rock are used for the rock and live rock. The rock and live rock are used for the rock and live rock. The rock and live rock are used for the rock and live rock. The rock and live rock are used for the rock and live rock. The rock and live rock are used for the rock and live rock. The rock and live rock are used for the rock and live rock. The rock and live rock are used for the rock and live rock. The rock and live rock are used for the rock and live rock. The rock and live rock are used for the rock and live rock. The rock and live rock are used for the rock and live rock. The rock and live rock are used for the rock and live rock. The rock and live rock are used for the rock and live rock. The rock and live rock are used for the rock and live rock. The rock and live rock are used for the rock and live rock. The rock and live rock are used for the rock and live rock. The rock and live rock are used for the rock and live rock.
Water Trail Descriptions

1. TILGHMAN ISLAND TRAIL
   Paddling Time: 3.5 - 4 hours, Distance: 9.4 miles

2. EAST TILGHMAN ISLAND TRAIL
   Paddling Time: 4 - 4.5 hours, Distance: 10.2 miles

3. BACK CREEK TRAIL
   Paddling Time: 1 - 1.75 hours, Distance: 4.2 miles

4. BLACK WALNUT COVE TRAIL
   Paddling Time: 1 - 1.5 hours, Distance: 3.3 miles

5. EASTERN BAY TRAIL
   Paddling Time: 2 - 3 hours, Distance: 6.6 miles

6. KNAPPS NARROWS TRAIL
   Paddling Time: 1.25 - 2 hours, Distance: 4.8 miles

7. POPLAR ISLAND TRAIL
   Paddling Time: 3.5 - 4 hours, Distance: 9 miles

8. DOGWOOD HARBOR TRAIL
   Paddling Time: 3 - 4 hours, Distance: 8.8 miles

9. HARRIS CREEK TRAIL
   Paddling Time: 2 - 3 hours, Distance: 7.7 miles

10. DUNES COVE TRAIL
    Paddling Time: 2 - 3 hours, Distance: 7.8 miles