

Association of Canadian Sea Kayak Guides

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Dear Mr. Young,

The Association of Canadian Sea Kayak Guides (ACSKG) is concerned because the operating standards currently approved by Pacific Rim National Park Reserve of Canada (PRNPR) essentially increase the potential for another incident similar to British Columbia's 1993 guided kayak tour fatality. The Transportation Safety Board Marine Investigation Report for this incident is available at: www.acskg.ca/tsb

Regarding the 1:5 guide to client ratio for the Broken Group Islands, a November 12, 2014 letter to kayak guiding operators from Pacific Rim National Park Reserve states: *"This ratio was implemented in 2002-03 with consultation with the three main certifying bodies operating in British Columbia at the time (Association of Canadian Sea Kayak Guides, Sea Kayak Guides Alliance of BC, and Canadian Federation of Ocean Kayak Educators.)"*

Requesting a record of this consultation is where I began my inquiries long ago. I have not yet received a definitive record of this alleged consultation. I would like to once again request the minutes of *any* consultation that dealt specifically with a proposed 1:5 ratio. It would be very helpful to the Association of Canadian Sea Kayak Guides if we were able to discover who is on record as our representative during any meeting where a 1:5 ratio was specifically mentioned.

The Association of Canadian Sea Kayak Guides has no record and no recollection of approving a 1:5 guide to client ratio for the Broken Group Islands. I have asked past directors of the ACSKG and Canadian Federation of Ocean Kayak Educators; there is absolutely no memory of a consultation on this topic. It remains a mystery and it has me wondering...

1:5 is a more profitable ratio than the Sea Kayak Guides Alliance of BC (SKGABC) promotes for their identical water classification situated outside of PRNPR. Somehow, a lower standard enabling higher outfitter profits was implemented specifically for the Broken Group Islands.

Perhaps some light would be shed on this mystery if we were to research who were the directors of the Sea Kayak Guides Alliance of BC during the 2002-03 period? If there was a director during that period who was also a business owner operating in the Broken Group Islands, it may suggest a method by which these profitable ratios became approved for use in Pacific Rim National Park Reserve.

According to SKGABC classification maps on the skgabc.com website, the Broken Group Islands is SKGABC Class 3. Outside the boundaries of PRNPR, the SKGABC's ratio for single kayakers in Class 3 waters is 1:4. For some reason, within the Broken Group Islands the SKGABC promotes the more profitable ratio of 1:5. Why only here?

In Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve, National Marine Conservation Area Reserve & Haida Heritage Site (Gwaii Haanas), the SKGABC raises their standards to meet the higher ACSKG baseline standards approved and upheld by Gwaii Haanas long ago. Here, the standard for single kayakers in the same water classification as the Broken Group Islands is 2:6. Two certified guides provide a *very* significant boost to managing a group's safety. Why would one National Park approve the ACSKG's appropriately high baseline standards, while another nearby National Park approves a standard that is even lower than the SKGABC's default standards? A principled and reasoned explanation for this discrepancy would be very helpful.

Additionally, there is the issue of a guide's first aid requirements. The ACSKG does not accept occupational first aid, while the SKGABC does.

In Gwaii Haanas, SKGABC guides must separately prove they have current wilderness first aid certification. ACSKG guides are not required to prove this separately, as *all* ACSKG certified guides hold approved wilderness first aid certification. Additionally, National Parks in the Rockies require each backcountry mountain guide to hold a current wilderness first aid certificate.

Does PRNPR provide licenses to wilderness guides who do not hold current wilderness first aid certification?

In 1994, Association of Canadian Sea Kayak Guides standards were adopted as baseline operating standards by Gwaii Haanas. The ACSKG's high standards remain entirely in effect throughout Gwaii Haanas today.

The ACSKG's primary motivation regarding this issue is to inform PRNPR management of the discrepancy in standards and the associated ongoing risks to Park visitors that would result from continuing to accept low standards. The ACSKG is convinced that the best time to bring these discrepancies to Parks Canada's attention is before a serious kayaking incident occurs.

During an operating standards review process, Pacific Rim National Park Reserve of Canada will have the opportunity to adopt Association of Canadian Sea Kayak Guides standards; the original and highest professional sea kayak guiding standards in Canada.

Sincerely,

Gord Pincock

Gord Pincock
ACSKG Director

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