

Association of Canadian Sea Kayak Guides

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March 20, 2014

Dear Darcy,

Thank you for your letter dated February 27, 2014 regarding guide to client ratios for commercial kayak tours in the Broken Group Islands, Pacific Rim National Park Reserve (PRNPR).

I have recently been in contact with ACSKG founding members as well as past and current ACSKG directors. Additionally, I've spoken with Bruce Wilson, founder and director of the Canadian Federation of Ocean Kayak Educators (CFOKE).

CFOKE and the ACSKG merged their standards and administration in 2013. These two professional sea kayak guide organizations now operate in cooperation under the banner of the ACSKG. To simplify communications, I will refer to the ACSKG, though this reference now also includes CFOKE.

The ACSKG is concerned about the operating standards currently accepted by PRNPR for commercial sea kayak tours in the Broken Group Islands. The ACSKG does not endorse the guide to client ratios currently accepted by PRNPR.

Your letter mentions a consultation process that took place when PRNPR developed these standards, yet no one I've contacted within the ACSKG community has any recollection of consultation regarding the 1:5 ratio currently accepted by PRNPR. In fact, since our inception in 1994 the ACSKG has no record of ever endorsing this ratio.

ACSKG standards require two guides during overnight tours in the Broken Group Islands. The standards currently accepted by PRNPR require only one guide.

ACSKG guide to client ratios for the Broken Group Islands are 2:10 for double kayaks, 2:8 for a mixed fleet of single & double kayaks and 2:6 for single kayaks.

The ratio currently accepted by PRNPR is 1:5 for all kayak fleets.

The standards currently accepted by PRNPR are among the lowest standards for commercial sea kayak tours in British Columbia. Lower standards increase outfitter's short-term profits while reducing each guide's ability to effectively manage risks. The ACSKG is concerned about these risks.

One of the persistent motivating factors behind the ACSKG's pursuit of high standards is our intent to avoid an incident similar to the 1993 multiple capsizing and fatality during a guided sea kayak tour on Haida Gwaii. The Transportation Safety Board Marine Investigation Report for this incident is available at: acskg.ca/tsb

Soon after that fatal incident, Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve & Haida Heritage Site chose an appropriately high baseline standard for commercial kayak tours operating within Gwaii Haanas. Twenty years ago, ACSKG operating standards were selected as the baseline standard for Gwaii Haanas. Another guide organization known as SKGABC then created their own separate standard specifically for Gwaii Haanas; one that met the higher ACSKG standard. The result is an enhanced long-term ability for every guide to appropriately manage risks when operating in Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve & Haida Heritage Site.

The ACSKG urges Pacific Rim National Park Reserve to consider revising the operating standards currently accepted for the Broken Group Islands. A high baseline standard will significantly reduce risks to visitors on guided kayak tours operating within Pacific Rim National Park Reserve.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Gord Pincock

Gord Pincock
ACSKG Director