

Association of Canadian Sea Kayak Guides

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ACSKG.ca

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Helen Davies
Coastal BC Field Unit Superintendent
Parks Canada
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Dear Ms. Davies,

The Association of Canadian Sea Kayak Guides (ACSKG) believes the operating standards currently approved by Pacific Rim National Park Reserve (PRNPR) increases the potential for another incident similar to British Columbia's 1993 guided kayak tour fatality.

As a result, the ACSKG has requested a comprehensive review of kayak tour operating standards and guide requirements for PRNPR.

In 2014, the ACSKG initiated contact with PRNPR to communicate our concerns about inappropriately low standards for kayak tour operators. Since then, Pacific Rim National Park Reserve has had at least three different Superintendents or Acting Superintendents. ACSKG directors have now become concerned that this visitor safety issue may not be receiving appropriate attention, partly as a result of Parks Canada staff turn-over. Due to this concern, we now wish to bring the issue to your attention.

The ACSKG believes our government will be accepting avoidable risks to visitors of Pacific Rim National Park Reserve for as long as Parks Canada continues to endorse lower standards. The Association of Canadian Sea Kayak Guides wishes to be on record for having brought this to Parks Canada's attention before another incident occurs.

After the kayak tour fatality in 1993, many experienced sea kayak guides were distraught because we had not effectively addressed safety issues with a specific tour operator before a client was killed on one of their guided tours.

Soon thereafter, the Association of Canadian Sea Kayak Guides completed a comprehensive set of operating standards, guide-to-client ratios, water classifications and guide requirements.

In 1994, Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve and Haida Heritage Site endorsed the ACSKG's standards and declared ACSKG standards the baseline for operating within Gwaii Haanas. ACSKG standards remain the baseline for Gwaii Haanas today.

Gwaii Haanas has also recently endorsed the ACSKG's new kayak mothership standards, which include reference to equivalency with a separate BC guide certifying organization:

www.acskg.ca/equivalence

After meeting with PRNPR staff, ACSKG directors are under the impression that some Parks staff may be focussing too intently on guide-to-client ratios, rather than considering the merits of an entire set of proven standards.

ACSKG standards contain several different aspects. When applied in their entirety, Canada's highest relevant industry standards can be achieved. The ACSKG strongly suggests that Parks Canada avoids applying only selected portions of an organization's standards, as standards are designed to work in concert with each other and may have undesirable effects when applied piecemeal.

Guide-to-client ratios can certainly provide an important cornerstone for standards. Comparing ratios can quickly indicate which organization's standards have the potential to generate higher outfitter profits. When comparing standards, it is clear that ACSKG ratios uphold a more effective level of risk management, rather than promote additional profits for outfitters.

When operating standards and guide-to-client ratios are applied consistently, it provides outfitters with the opportunity to compete on a level playing field. It is our view that effective risk management should not be sacrificed in order to increase profits for selected outfitters.

The ACSKG believes it is appropriate for licensed tour operators in Canada's National Parks to operate using the highest relevant industry standards.

The ACSKG strongly suggests that PRNPR choose one organization's standards and declares them the baseline standard, as has been successfully achieved in Gwaii Haanas for over twenty years.

Detailed background information on this issue is available online: www.acskg.ca/prnpr

Thank you for your consideration. We ask that you reply to confirm receipt of this letter.

Sincerely,

Gord Pincock

Gord Pincock
ACSKG Director

cc:

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