

Nanaimo Meeting Highlights

ACSKG - SKGABC - PRNPR

March 2015

Compiled by ACSKG directors Gord Pincock & Doug Tyrrell

On March 27, 2015 in Nanaimo, the Association of Canadian Sea Kayak Guides (ACSKG), the Sea Kayak Guides Alliance of British Columbia (SKGABC) and Pacific Rim National Parks Reserve (PRNPR) attended a meeting to discuss sea kayak guiding standards for the Broken Group Islands, located within Pacific Rim National Park Reserve.

The ACSKG has chosen to highlight the following points discussed during the meeting:

The Association of Canadian Sea Kayak Guides requested a comprehensive review of kayak tour operating standards and guide requirements for Pacific Rim National Park. The ACSKG explained how the best time to review and raise standards is before an incident. The ACSKG suggested it is appropriate for licensed tour operators in Canada's National Parks to operate using the highest relevant industry standards.

Parks Canada declared they did not create the kayak guiding standards currently approved by PRNPR. Rather, the standards were created in consultation with guiding organizations and tour operators.

The ACSKG reiterated that for several years we have repeatedly requested these consultation records, yet have received *no* records that contain *any* mention of guide to client ratios, or first aid requirements for guides.

Both the SKGABC and the ACSKG clearly stated they do not approve of PRNPR's current guide to client ratio of 1:5 for single kayak fleets in the Broken Group Islands.

It was confirmed that the SKGABC approves a ratio of 1:5 for mixed fleets (consisting of single & double kayaks) in the Broken Group Islands, while the ACSKG does *not* approve a ratio of 1:5. ACSKG standards require two guides on overnight trips in this water classification.

It was confirmed that ACSKG certified guides are required to hold current wilderness first aid certification, while SKGABC guides are not. Rather, SKGABC guides may hold occupational first aid, provided they at some point in history held a wilderness first aid certificate.

A SKGABC representative declared that ACSKG operating standards are more conservative than SKGABC standards. There was no dispute of this fact.

The ACSKG strongly suggested PRNPR raise their standard to require a minimum of two guides per trip, each of whom hold current wilderness first aid certification. It was further suggested that PRNPR simply adopt the higher ACSKG standards as the baseline operating standard, as has been successfully achieved in Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve for over twenty years.

PRNPR explained aspects of the lengthy bureaucratic process involved in conducting an operating standards review.

The ACSKG is open to suggestions for improving the accuracy and clarity of these highlighted meeting notes. Both the SKGABC and PRNPR were invited to contribute in May 2015. To date, both have declined. The invitation remains open.

A public record of letters from the Association of Canadian Sea Kayak Guides to Pacific Rim National Park Reserve of Canada is available online: www.acskg.ca/prnpr

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Some questions and concerns arise from this meeting:

If Parks Canada did not create the current standards, while both the ACSKG and SKGABC do not approve of a component of the current standards, then who created the standards?

This question was not explored in detail during the meeting, yet a possible explanation may exist within a 2004 letter from PRNPR to the SKGABC.

This letter was distributed during the meeting and is available online:

https://web.archive.org/web/20040415030458/http://skgabc.com/2004/pacific_rim.html

During the meeting, both of the SKGABC representatives clearly stated that the SKGABC does not approve of PRNPR's ratio of 1:5 for single kayaks in the Broken Group Islands.

However, in March 2016 (a year later), this is still not indicated on the SKGABC website, which states:

"2:8 when maximum group size of 10 is reached. 1:5 for smaller groups."

www.skgabc.com/nationalparks.php

Is the SKGABC website incorrect, or were the SKGABC representatives mistaken?

What single kayak ratios does the SKGABC approve in the Broken Group Islands?

Occupational first aid training is rigorous, yet the ACSKG only approves wilderness first aid courses specifically devoted to teaching patient care and evacuation techniques for wilderness environments. The ACSKG believes professional wilderness guides must hold up-to-date wilderness first aid certification. Occupational first aid does not qualify a guide for ACSKG certification.

A detailed comparison of the two courses is available online:

www.wildernessalert.com/wa-faq.aspx#divQ9

The ACSKG remains concerned because we believe the operating standards currently approved by Pacific Rim National Park Reserve of Canada increase the potential for another incident similar to British Columbia's 1993 guided kayak tour fatality.

ACSKG directors attending the meeting are grateful to have had an opportunity to express our concerns in person to Parks Canada.

ACSKG concerns will be addressed when PRNPR's standards are appropriately raised.