

Pod Leaders & Pod Assistant Volunteers - Roles and Responsibilities

In order to ensure safety and foster camaraderie on the river, paddlers are grouped into “pods.” Each pod will have a maximum of twelve people and at least two pod leaders. Participants choose pods based on paddling pace, daily departure times, and special interests. All participants are required to have paddling experience on moving water or recent instruction. Needless to say, their level of skill varies.

There are three types of volunteer pod leaders that we look for every year, pod leaders, pod assistants and interpretation guides.

Pod Leaders: As the name suggests, Pod Leaders are the leader of the pod and make all of the decisions regarding safety on the water. *These volunteers need; a combination of paddling and rescue experience on moving water, strong communication skills, the ability to lead/control a group and experience on the Willamette is a plus.*

Pod Leaders should:

- Be familiar with safety sheet information, i.e. river reading, river signals, and emergency procedures. (Participants receive this as well so feel free to refer to it on the trip)
- Be familiar with trip itinerary, map reading, mileage, camping locations.....etc.
- Introduce yourself, other leaders, and volunteers at the put in.
- Read over safety sheet to your pod on the first day, repeat throughout trip if necessary.
- Round up your pod and make sure everyone gets on the water together each day.
- Provide on the water safety support.
 - Keep an eye out for all of your paddlers, *lay ground rules* you feel are necessary to keep folks safe, i.e. everyone remain in visual contact, or verbal reach.
 - Maintain lead and sweep boats that are in contact via walkie-talkie.
 - **Be aware of hazards** and your group’s abilities; make route and stopping decisions accordingly.
 - Help people get on and off the water safely.
 - Carry first aid kit, cell phone, and contact list provided at the put in.
 - Make sure everyone has a whistle.
 - Make sure everyone has their PFD’s on and zipped up!
- Provide basic paddling advice, and refer to instructional pod leader if needed.
- Keep your pods together on the water.
- Help with the transfer of paddlers to other pods.

Pod Assistants: *Assistants help the pod leader in fulfilling safety tasks on the water. Pod leader assistants should; have paddling and or rescue experience on moving water, communication skills and willingness to help lead others, specific Willamette River experience also a plus.*

Assistants should:

- Become familiar with safety sheet information, i.e. river reading, river signals, and emergency procedures.
- Introduce yourself at the put in.
- Help to round up your pod and make sure everyone gets on the water together.

- Work with the Pod Leader to provide on the water safety, see list above.
- Communicate with participants about safety decisions.
- Provide basic paddling advice, and refer to instructional pod leader if needed.
- Keep your pods together on the water.
- Help with the transfer of paddlers to other pods.

Special Interest Pod Assistants: *Special Interest assistants help with the educational aspects of the trip. Skills include canoe and kayak instruction, Willamette Valley naturalist, birder, historian, ecologists. In addition to previous paddling experience on moving water and confidence in current paddling skills.*

- For safety, review safety sheet and support pod leader decisions.
- Introduce yourself at the put in and give an overview of what you know the best.
- Make yourself available for questions on and off the water.
- Provide nature interpretation and paddling skill advice to fellow pod leaders, whichever is your specialty. *This is flexible but should be determined before the trip. Ideas include sharing information throughout the day, giving a talk at lunch each day, hosting a paddling clinic or bird walk for all participants.*
- Carry reference books or handouts, binoculars, maps..etc.

Extra roles & requirements of all volunteers

- Participate in pre-trip paddle, scheduled for May 30 and/or 31st (to be determined).
- Familiarize yourself with the Paddle Oregon route.
- Arrive **one hour earlier than** participants. That's early, but we could use help with registration, directing parking and participants and loading boats and gear.
- Always communicate with Kate or Travis regarding any questions or concerns you might have before and during the trip.
- **Lastly, review the pod leader safety talk document to refresh your thinking about river safety.**