

## **A Message from Claudia Rose regarding kayak activity in the La Jolla Bay Area**

Hi Everyone,

Sorry for the mass broadcast but I thought I should get this information out to those who might benefit.

Many of you have noticed the masses of rental kayaks out on the water. These kayak companies competed for permits from the city this year this process was quite expensive, its also quite strict on what the winners are allowed: <http://www.sandiego.gov/real-estate-assets/pdf/kayakrfpexhibtc.pdf>

The winners now stage from the beach with hundreds of boats stacked near the boat ramp at the shores. This weekend is when the new policies took effect. The good news is that the boat ramp area itself has become a bit less chaotic, the bad news is there is only a small area for private citizens to launch from. The other bad news is that clearly there are more than the allowed 15 kayaks at a time out on the water from any given company. There are only 8 permit holders so there should be no more than 18 groups on the water at a time. Also in effect there is now no other legal area to launch kayaks except the ramp and swimmers are not supposed to swim there (so if you are being escorted you should not swim out right at the ramp). Also the kayak companies are given strict time slots so if an event (tour of buoys) is likely to impact that time slot, it would be a nice courtesy to find out which of the 8 companies has the slot and just talk to them about it, they are interested in being accommodating.

Dorothy and I swam from the shores yesterday with Ralph and Jon escorting. We actually ended up leaving at separate times. Dorothy had trouble getting out in front of the lifeguard stand by the bathrooms due to too many kayaks trying to land there, a lifeguard noticed and instructed the kayaks they were in the wrong area.

At the end of my swim I went to the 1/2 mile buoy then swam a direct line to the yellow ropes at the beach & tennis club (a common swimmer's line). I had one near miss with a group of kayaks at the 1/2 mile. Near the yellow ropes, a large group of kayaks from San Diego bike & Kayak approached. Since I had a kayak next to me, they had guides with them and we were in front of them, I continued on towards the rope line. Imagine my surprise when I heard Ralph (in his kayak perhaps 5 feet away from me) yelling at a kayak, more surprise when they ran me over anyway. I admit some amusement when I picked up their boat by the bow and threw it off me and the occupant continued to try to paddle. I realized she didn't speak English so I addressed myself to the guides telling them they could not allow this behaviour and one should be in front actually "guiding" to prevent it, they just shrugged.

Each kayak company must clearly mark their boats and equipment, what i didn't know is they must also number each boat. When I spoke to the company reps on the beach they wanted to know the kayak number I didn't notice that. Since they said they were sorry but clearly didn't care, I spoke to the lifeguards. They took a report and urged me to press charged with San Diego Police Department. They clearly feel strongly that we need to press charges and get the police involved. Since I was uninjured I declined but agreed I'd bring this to everyone's attention.

If a kayak comes within 100 feet of you they are in violation of the codes. If they run you over it's a serious safety violation. If any company has 3 safety violations, reported to the lifeguards and the city they can lose the permits, at 2 they suffer a suspension. I understand that they need to make a living and that they need to recoup their losses from the permit process (which cost over \$6,000) and make a profit but they need to learn to be careful before another injury occur. If I had not been looking up I could easily have been injured that would be bad. I feel its better to be proactive, let the companies and the lifeguards know when issues occur immediately that way the companies can work on improving the guide training (each group must have 2 guides) before anyone gets hurt. So please keep your eyes open particularly between the boat launch and the cove. Please try to see what the name of the company is on any boats causing you trouble and if possible note the number on the boats, report to the life guards and let them know you want to file a complaint and/or call the company that was at issue and let them know.

There are ambassador life guards at the shores assigned to the rental company (liaisons) and they are not very positive about the whole thing. They are the ones that urged me to call the police. They also informed me that kayaks are no longer allowed to launch at the Marine room and they hope to have them banned from that area altogether. This will come as a blow to the Kayak club. Teresa from the club responded to my recent information on the jet ski issues by informing the kayak community (via the night heron board) that we were not responsive to her requests to educate swimmers not to go where kayaks were surfing, she further added she wanted the swimmers to stay away from the marine room where they are ruining her surfing experience by swimming slowly back and forth inside the break. If the lifeguards have their way, kayaks will soon not be allowed there at all. I think this is too bad as generally the whole sharing of the area has gone well and now individual kayakers will lose use (its fun to surf there in big winter breaks when swimmers aren't there). Lets do our best to try to all get along but also protect our swimmers from being run over, address our concerns to the specific offenders and encourage everyone else to do the same thing(the specific company, permit holders include Hike Bike Kayak in green boats and blue life jackets, SD bike kayak in red boats, their guides have black shirts and they wear helmets, Aqua Adventures in a variety of colors often with helmets, OEX in mostly yellow boats, La Jolla Kayaks which sometimes has green boats, and there are 3 more permit holders but I don't know who they are).

One further note, the guards told me that the kayak rental companies are picking up bus loads of tourists from the cruise ships and bringing them to the shores for these tours. The operators show them to paddle paddle paddle and then put them in a boat on the beach, several of their operators then push the boat through the surf. This is why the poor tourist kept paddle paddle paddling as I lifted her boat out of the water. Be aware that these large groups may behave quite differently from true kayakers. Also be aware that we count on the kayak community to support our events. Its important to distinguish between the two but it looks like the La Lolla area is going to become regulated to control the behaviour of these commercial groups and incidentally removing access for individuals.

-Claudia