

Know your craft - become familiar with your choice of paddle boat and how to operate it. Be sure your paddles or oars are securely attached to the boat. If you plan to leave your boat to explore the shore, be aware that a rising tide can float a beached boat away, leaving you stranded.

Dress for success - dress like you are going to end up in the water. Dress warm knowing you will be working by paddling or rowing. A US Coast Guard (USCG) approved personal flotation device (PFD) is required. Wear one even if you are in a wetsuit. If you capsize and are hit on the head and knocked unconscious, your PFD can keep your head out of the water, allowing you to breath.

Plan ahead and follow your plan – Before you launch, check the weather and the tides and currents. Rain can be uncomfortable but wind can be dangerous. Tides and currents are related. Extreme high tides with corresponding low tides will create faster currents. Low tides can make it difficult to return to shore without getting muddy. Incoming tides are much safer. Tide tables and related current information specific to Humboldt Bay can be found online at the PORTS website (see *For more information* on next page) Tell someone on shore what your float plan is and then stick to it. Be sure to say when you will be back and inform your shore partner when you return. Do this even if you are in a group.

Stay away from danger - Only cross the shipping lanes at right angles when clear. Stay near shore in shallow water where the current is less. You will see more wildlife there. Paddling in open water takes more energy because you cannot sense your progress, making you work harder. Do not paddle around the moored boats in the marinas. You could get caught in the prop wash of a large fishing boat and be run over as the boat backs out of its slip. Remember, you are very hard to see from large vessels.

Do not paddle under docks or piers. Currents could trap you against the pilings and possibly capsize you. If you encounter large boat wakes it is better to take them head on than side-ways risking capsize. If you hear a large boat honking at you, he is not telling you to get out of the way, but telling you which side he is going to pass. One blast of the horn means he intends to pass on his right, two blasts on his left.



Equipped for safety -

- Be visible by wearing bright colors and fly a flag on a tall fiberglass pole.
- Wear a headlamp or other light /strobe device during low light conditions.
- Carry a canned air horn or loud whistle; a flare gun with three flares.
- Carry bottled water and energy bars
- A length of rope and anchor
- A working waterproof cell phone (with emergency numbers stored) or a handheld VHF radio to contact the USCG on channel 16.

Emergency Numbers -

Cellular phones dial 911

USCG on VHF Marine Channel 16

USCG - 707-839-6100

Non emergency numbers -

USCG - 707-839-6103

Sheriff Marine Dispatch -707-445-7251

Weather forecast recording - 707-443-7062

Weather Service Office - 707-443-6484

USCG Bar and Entrance Report -

707-443-2213



For more information -

USCG navigation rules website: navcen.uscg.gov/

The Humboldt Harbor Safety Committee website :

humboldtharborsafety.org/

Physical Oceanographic Real-Time System (PORTS®) website

tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/ports/

California Division of Boating and Waterways website

dbw.ca.gov

Humboldt Bay Aquatic Center - HSU Center Activities

humboldt.edu/centeractivities/departement/humboldt-bay-aquatic-center



Created by the Humboldt Harbor Safety Committee and Humboldt Area Saltwater Anglers

Paddle Boat Safety Guide For Humboldt Bay



Paddle boats include kayaks, canoes, standup-paddle boards, rowing shells, prams, row boats, and hunting scull boats

Humboldt Bay is a wonderful place to explore in small boats. Fishing, hunting, and sightseeing opportunities are many and will never get old. There are many access sites around the bay which allow you to plan to ride the tide and still see all that the bay has to offer.

Safely paddling or rowing on Humboldt Bay is like taking a bicycle on the road. As bicycles must stay out of the way of cars and trucks and follow rules of the road, paddle boats must stay out of the way of larger boats and ships.

Paddlers should take advantage of the paddle crafts ability to navigate shallow water and stay near the edge close to shore. There is less current and you can easily gauge your progress by the passing shore.

The Humboldt Harbor Safety Committee

