

INFORMATION FROM OUR OUTFITTER: A REALITY CHECK

- As enjoyable as canoeing is, it can be dangerous - even on a small creek like Antietam. On our **waiver form** we spell out some of the risks (listed below). The dangers are manageable but very real. You are the manager of those risks and dangers. They increase with high water, cold and bad weather. Inexperienced boaters can expect to flip 2 or more times on any Antietam Run and be un-sticking boats from obstructions more often than that. You will get wet. It's a rule. You will be swimming or standing [flip flops don't work, shoes are a must] in the creek.
- Keep in mind that YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR YOU out there on the creek. At some spots you will be miles from help or a phone, where it may be impossible or imprudent for others to come to your assistance.... so don't count on it. Many cell phones don't work there.
- Stay alert to your situation; Wear your life jacket; wear shoes: know where you are. Use good judgment; no drugs or alcohol; dress for the weather and the water. If you canoe you will flip. It's the same rule as above. Ask about the 120 degree rule.
- The banks of Antietam Creek are private property. When you step out of your boat, for whatever reason, you are trespassing. You have no rights. You are in someone else's yard..... be discrete; be courteous; be sanitary; be respectful of your surroundings. Creek Banks don't grow back .. ever. Rocks belong where they lay (or is it lie?) even if you are 6 (yes I did and yes sometimes I do...but I go to meetings and try to control it) Do not confuse your wishes, needs, convenience, fun or good intentions with reality. Reality to a property owner is that boaters, even courteous, considerate boaters are at best a potential problem....and many quite simply are a pain in the ass! Those who have gone before you in some instances spoiled the broth.
- Warm up before you paddle (did I mention about car keys?) . Start slowly, get your "seat". Rock the canoe back and forth to get the feel....hips loose head and shoulders quiet. Balance in a canoe is just like a bicycle. You keep the boat up right ...not the other way around. Practice the strokes you'll need to control the boat. No control ?... Take a lesson
- Stay as far away from fishermen's (women's too) lines as you can, safely. They need nice days too and we're sharing the creek. It's a long discussion, but Fisherman win all arguments so don't participate and save yourself some anxiety.
- Be careful at each bridge and at each rapids. This is where strainers accumulate and where a broach, flip or swim is most likely to occur. Scout if you are not sure of the lines or consequences. Always Scout:
 - Poffenbarger road bridge (the 1st bridge on the upper section)
 - Wagaman Road Bridge (2nd bridge upper sec.)
 - Furnace Rapids & Harpers Ferry Road Bridge (last Bridge) always Boat scout each bridge and each rapids.
- Watch for strainers (trees limbs rocks and debris that let water pass through but can trap you or your equipment like a sieve. They occur often on Antietam and can be lethal, especially at high water levels. Stay away from downed trees or any trees in the water. Stay to the inside of creek bends. Don't walk in fast moving water above your knees. If you must walk in fast water at all, take a paddle with you to use as a staff.

- If you hit an obstruction, (rock, bridge pier, tree trunk, Chevrolet etc.) lean onto it / lean into it / lean down stream / hug what you hit - this all means the same thing.
 - If you lean away from what you hit (your natural reaction) your boat will flip. I promise..... It's another rule
- A canoe filled with water weighs about the same as a Volkswagen. Stay up stream of it. Don't get between a swamped boat and anything.. rock, tree, another boat etc. To empty a swamped boat. Pull it to shore up-side down.. pull it to shore upside down . [sometimes it's hard to remember the simple stuff] Put one nose on shore and lift up the other nose. Keep it flat! Like magic, the water falls out. Turn it over and away you go. If you do it the other way you will get a hernia or a heart attack, maybe both.
- Tie your gear into your canoe with short lines. See item above "away you go". If you don't tie your gear in, you will need to change the "away you go" part to "away you go chasing your gear all over the creek". Make sure you have your car keys on your person secure[like in a zippered pocket]. Make sure you have another set at the car or at our shop. I'll say this another way. If your car keys are tied to your boat, no matter how, you may lose them. Wear your life jacket - fastened - while you're paddling. It breaks falls, (most canoe accidents are caused by falls getting into or out of boats, falls on slippery rocks or banks etc.) it gives rescuers a hand hold. Keeps you warm, or cool if you keep it wet. It can even keep you afloat and save your life on a bad day. I know you are a great swimmer and don't need..... etc. The point is "How well do you swim unconscious or hurt?"
- Should you choose to assist in the event of a mishap, get boaters to safety first. Get loose gear and boats after the paddlers are safe. Help only if you can do so safely and realistically. There is no sense adding to a problem beyond your capabilities with a flip or swim. Little is gained by the good intention and sometimes good intentions get in the way of good rescues.
- BE SAFE AND REMEMBER THAT going out to paddle is not an amusement park ride. Half way through the run you can't get the operator to turn it off or slow it down. YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR YOU out there on the creek.
- Some risks and hazards on Antietam Creek:
 - WEATHER - heat, cold (sun stroke, sun burn, hypo and hyperthermia) wind, rain, dark, hail, lightning.
 - WATER - waves, holes, water falls, rapids, hydraulics (reversals, keepers) ,high, cold, fast water, pollution [germs].
 - RIVER FEATURES - strainers, bends, dams, ledges, falls (again) weirs, wire fences, downed trees, must portages, bridge piers, rocks low head dams
 - PREMISES - private creek banks, hunters, cows, dogs, insect, animal and snake bites, ivy, nettle, slips/falls, cuts, walk outs, bacteria and more germs.
 - ANOMALIES - drowning, pins, broaches, flips, entrapments, swims, actions of others, over exertion, heart attack, health limitations, paddling injuries, separations, dislocations, blisters, low blood sugar..SUN BURN, SLIPS, FALL&FOOT
 - THE SCARIEST THING OF ALL - these are all real! and it's not a complete list!!!.

WHAT TO WEAR WHAT TO BRING

Antietam Creek is always cool It's great on a sunny day but on a cool clammy day with wind rain and no Sun you can be miserable if you are not dressed properly. Worse if you flip and swim!!! Make sure to check the weather report; dress for the air temperature and wind [15 to 20 MPH equals chilly] throughout the whole day. And make sure you have an outer layer that is wind and rain proof. A big plastic trash bag will work if you don't have rain type gear.

Rule of thumb. If the air Temp and water Temp equal 120 degrees you need special clothing. Fleece, wet suit etc.

Bring your meds, food, water, shoes that lace up, gloves are nice if your hands are tender, and most of all bring a sense of humor and the stuff in the below crib sheet.

