

SAFETY CHECKLIST



NEW YORK
Susquehanna Basin
Water Trail

PADDLETHE607.COM

BEFORE



- Learn basic skills:** It's unsafe to paddle anywhere if you are not a confident swimmer. Beginner paddlers should take a class or spend time with an experienced paddler. Also learn basic first aid and rescue, including what to do if your vessel flips.
- Check conditions:** Weather, including rainfall and seasonal melt can affect river conditions. Know any hazards along your route and pack the right clothes for the forecast.
- Know what you need:** Secure any permits or licenses for fishing or camping; review the equipment checklist for needed gear and always wear a PFD (personal flotation devices are required in New York State) and safety whistle (or signaling device, which is also required in New York State). Don't forget water, snacks and a waterproof bag for your cell phone!
- Plan ahead:** Choose a route for your capabilities, then share a float plan with someone you trust. Always inspect your boat for holes or damage before every trip and cover any open cuts or wounds.
- Never paddle alone:** It's safer and more fun to paddle with others. Always communicate the route, timing, who will lead and what to do in an emergency before you launch!

DURING



- Practice proper paddling etiquette:** Avoid busy areas and keep your group together. Be alert when crossing channels, staying close to the shore when possible. Never put in or take out on private land.
- Maintain proper visibility:** Always assume other boaters can't see you. Use brightly colored PFDs, boats and paddles when possible. Wave a paddle in the air to be seen. Avoid paddling in the dark and pack an emergency light.
- Take care of yourself:** Avoid dehydration and maintain energy by planning water and snack break. Use sunscreen, a fitted, wide-brim hat and sunglasses as the sun is more potent on the water. Keep a waterproof jacket and gloves available for rain.
- Stay aware of weather and river conditions:** Be alert for rising water, darkening skies or other sudden changes to your surroundings. Exit the water quickly and safely. Plan a route with stops to check your phone for weather alerts.
- Know your limits:** Don't push yourself or anyone on your paddle beyond their capabilities. Heat, river conditions and fitness level can affect how long and what conditions you can handle. Always play it safe.

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AFTER



- Clean, drain, dry:** Help stop the spread of invasive aquatic species. Always disinfect your vessel, as well as paddles and equipment and do a careful inspection. Visit NYS Department of Environmental Conservation to learn more.
- Clean yourself:** Wash hands or use hand sanitizer after paddling, especially before eating or using the restroom. Take a hot bath or shower to rid skin and hair of any bacteria or plant contact that could cause infection or a reaction. Treat or redress any cuts or open wounds with antibiotic lotion and fresh bandage.
- Drink water and eat: Even** if you don't feel thirsty or hungry after a paddle, it is important to refuel and avoid dehydration
- Keep a journal:** Document where you went, what you saw and things you learned for future adventures! Note any supplies you used up or could add next time.
- Share your experience:** Post a photo and thoughts about the paddle on social media and tag NYSBWT!

ADDITIONAL SAFETY RESOURCES

- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Paddling Safety**
dec.ny.gov/things-to-do/paddling
- United States Coast Guard Float Plan**
floatplancentral.cgaux.org/download/USCGFloatPlan.pdf
- United States Coast Guard Paddlecraft Safety**
www.uscgaux.info/content.php?unit=B-DEPT&category=for-paddlers
- United States Coast Guard Boating Safety**
www.uscgaux.info/content.php?unit=B-DEPT&category=for-boaters
- United States Coast Guard Foundation Boater Safety**
coastguardfoundation.org/news/boater-safety-starts-with-you

