



Occoquan Boat Club Handbook

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Occoquan Boat Club**

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About OBC, the Park and the Boathouse

Occoquan Boat Club was founded in 1979. Its purpose is to recruit new members interested in rowing, sponsor crew races, send teams to regattas, and generally support rowing in Northern Virginia. The club's colors are red, white and black.

OBC provides a fleet of 1x, 2x, 4x, and 4- shells for its members' use. Shells are available on a first-come, first-served basis except for regattas, when members make reservations. The club offers lessons to new members who are novice scullers but does not currently offer other coached rowing programs. George Mason University coach and sculler Bob Spousta offers summer sculling camps; information about these may be found on OBC's website.

The Occoquan Reservoir provides drinking water to the majority of Northern Virginia residents. Upstream of the Occoquan Dam, the river is long, narrow, and well protected from wind by trees. Wildlife sighted include deer, beavers, bald eagles, herons, and wild turkeys. Our landmarks are

- The sprint race course (downstream from Sandy Run)
- Painted Rocks (less than 1000 meters upstream, on the Prince William side)
- Oxford Boathouse cove (just above Painted Rocks, Prince William side)
- Jacob's Rock (about 2 miles upstream, Fairfax side)
- Fountainhead Regional Park (about 3 miles upstream, Fairfax side)
- Ryan's Dam (about 4 miles upstream, Prince William side)

Sandy Run Regional Park is operated by the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority. The park manager's office is in the upper boathouse (703-690-4392). The park is closed December and January.

Rowing out of Sandy Run are eight high schools, one university (George Mason), and two clubs (OBC and Northern Virginia Rowing Club).

Getting Oriented

How do new members demonstrate competence?

As a new member, you will need to schedule an orientation meeting through the membership chair. He or she may give the orientation or designate another OBC member to do it. The member orienting you will require you to

- Remove a 1x from the racks, carry it to the docks, and launch.
- Scull upstream within the sight of the docks, turn 180°, back the shell, and possibly perform other maneuvers.
- Return to the dock, carry the shell back to boathouse, and return it to the racks.

We want to see that you can scull competently and that you can move shells in and out of the racks without damaging them.

OBC does not administer a flip test, as no swimming is allowed in the reservoir.

Does OBC offer coached or organized rowing programs?

OBC does not offer coached sculling programs. The club does offer a limited number of lessons to new members who are novice scullers.

Many members organize informal outings in small groups. In 2011, for instance, many members met on Wednesday evenings and Sunday mornings to do race pieces.

Bob Spousta may offer one or more sculling camp sessions in the summer. Depending on the session, the camp may be targeted to novice or to experienced scullers. Check the OBC web site for information.

Knowing When You Can Row

What times of day may I row?

Sandy Run Regional Park opens at sunrise and closes at sunset seven days a week. Rowing is permitted during daylight hours only.

What times of the year may I row?

Members may sign out any OBC shell between April 1 and December 1, weather permitting.

Sandy Run Park is closed December and January. If the weather is temperate, however, you may call the park office (703-690-4392) and listen for a message that authorizes rowers to launch.

Between February 1 and March 31, no OBC singles may be taken out.

See page 12 for cold weather rules and restrictions.

Are there any days on which rowing is restricted?

On days that high school regattas are held at Sandy Run, members may row up to one half hour before the regatta begins. If you want to row on a regatta day, you must call the Park Authority office by Thursday evening to leave your name (703-690-4392, ext. 0). The park authority will give your name to regatta parking officials so you won't be charged for parking. You will need an ID.

In addition, OBC adheres to Sandy Run Park Authority's weather-related restrictions and recommends debris-related restrictions (see below).

What regattas take place on the reservoir?

Sandy Run offers ideal courses for the sprint and head races held here. OBC members often enter the Occoquan Masters Sprints and many of the fall head races. OBC hosts the Occoquan Masters Sprints and the Head of the Occoquan.

On any regatta day, regular outings from Sandy Run are restricted. Typically, you must be off the water 30 minutes before the regatta begins.

NVSRA regattas (April, May, June)

College regattas (April, May)

Occoquan Masters Sprints (mid July)
Occoquan Challenge (1st Sunday in October)
Occoquan Chase (2nd Sunday in October)
Head of the Occoquan (last weekend in October or first in November)

Getting In and Out of the Park

How do I get into the park and boathouse?

OBC members put down a \$35 deposit for keys to the park gate and boathouse. To obtain your keys, make an appointment with the park ranger by calling 703-690-4392; press 0 to bypass the menu. Leave a message with your name and phone number and what you need. Bring a copy of your Ronin receipt showing your paid membership to your appointment.

Note that the park gate must be closed (but not locked) on weekdays until 2:00 and all day on weekends. Therefore, close the gate behind you when you enter *and* exit during these times.

What if I am the last person to use the boathouse?

First, verify that no one else is on the water: check both the OBC and the private ownership logs.

If you are the last person in (Boathouse 1 and/or 2), roll the racks into the house, turn the lights out, close and lock the bay doors, and close and lock the side door.

Be aware that you may be the “last person in” as early as 7 a.m.

What if I am the last person in the park?

First, verify that no one else is still in the park. The best indications are that all boathouses are closed and the parking lot is empty of cars. Familiarize yourself with the park-owned truck that stays in the parking lot overnight (and that does not necessarily indicate the park ranger’s presence in the park).

As you exit the park, lock the gate behind you.

About the Equipment

What equipment is available for OBC members?

As of Spring 2012, OBC owns

- 1 4x/- (Vespoli heavy, which may be rigged as a straight four)
- 2 4x (Filippi heavy, Vespoli light)
- 9 2x (range of weights; Hudson, Vespoli)
- 11 1x (mix of Peinert x25 and 26, plus one heavyweight 1x)

- 33 pairs of sculling oars (Croker, Concept 2, Dreher)
- 2 sets sweep oars (Concept 2)

As the club's most fragile boats, the Vespoli heavyweight 4x/-, the Vestpoli lightweight 4x, and the new lightweight Hudson 2x are to be used only by members with appropriate experience and skill level. Anyone wanting to use the restricted boats should get approval from a member of the board. These shells are identified on the website and on the equipment list posted in the boathouse.

OBC equipment may be used by OBC members only (see guest policy below). This rule includes oars: all OBC oars are kept in the wooden racks at the front of the house. None of the oars in the back of the house are OBC-owned, even though they may be painted with OBC colors and insignia. Use of any individual's or other club's equipment is grounds for expulsion from Sandy Run Park.

Who may use OBC Equipment?

Members in good standing, and in some cases their guests, may use the club's equipment. No one else is permitted to use OBC equipment.

Guest policy: Guests must row in the same boat with the hosting member. At least half the crew in a shell must be OBC members. Guests who want to use an OBC 1x must have the permission of a board member. Members with less than one year's sculling experience should not take guests on outings. Repeat guests must become members. A good rule of thumb is that a local guest rowing more than twice a season should become a member.

Who may not use OBC Equipment?

Anyone who is not a member in good standing, or the guest of such a member (as described above), is in violation of Sandy Run Park regulations by taking out OBC equipment.

Anyone under 18 years of age may not use OBC equipment unless accompanied by a experienced member 20 years of age or older.

How do I reserve a shell?

For ordinary outings OBC operates on a first-come, first-served basis.

For regattas, members reserve shells. Links to the on-line reservation system are on the Equipment page of the OBC website.

What policies govern the use of shells in regattas?

OBC members may be affiliated with other local or out-of-town clubs. Items 1 – 3 below give members priority in racing reservations:

- 1.) OBC boats may be reserved for regattas only by OBC members unless a petition is submitted to and approved by the OBC Board of Directors.
- 2.) OBC boats rowed in regattas must be rowed by OBC members only unless a petition is submitted to and approved by the OBC Board of Directors.
- 3.) OBC boats rowed in regattas must be registered as OBC entries unless a petition is submitted to and approved by the OBC Board of Directors

Multiple crews may desire to reserve the same boat for a regatta. Items 4 and 5 establish guidelines for avoiding and resolving conflicts:

- 4.) OBC rowers training consistently in a specific boat should be able to compete in that boat. Such crews should have priority over pick-up crews. On the other hand, a single crew should not necessarily “own” a boat for every regatta in a season. As much as possible, crews should try to remain aware of others training in the same boats and to anticipate and resolve conflicts before signing up for boats. (Example: two crews training in D07 decide to “take turns” with the boat at regattas whose event schedules don’t allow them to share it.)
- 5) When a crew is unable to reserve their preferred boat because another signs up for it first, the two crews should converse and come to an understanding about who should compete in the boat at the regatta. If they cannot do so, they may petition the board to mediate a resolution. *This should be done in a timely fashion so that crews can reserve a second-choice boat.* The board will consider, in order of importance, 1) the length of time each crew has been training in the shell, 2) the number of regattas for which each crew has used or

plans to use the shell, 3) the timeliness of the petition, and, perhaps, 4) the competitiveness of each crew.

Taking Boats Out and Returning Them

What should I do before taking a boat out?

Check the shell for damage and missing parts. If you see damage, report it to the commodore (see contact info on bulletin board and on web site), and post a note to the whiteboard. If the boat should not be rowed, tape a “Do Not Row” note to the middle of its hull. Select another shell to row.

Sign out the shell in the OBC log.

If you are rowing an X25, keep the seat bungeed until you put the shell in the water. Wrap the bungee around the foot stretcher.

If you are taking an OBC 4x or 4- from Boathouse 2: Sign out the shell in the Boathouse 2 *and* Boathouse 1 logbooks. If you have to remove the rolling rack from the bay, affix it to the wall outside with the nylon rope provided (otherwise it may roll).

May I change the rigging on boats?

Shells: You may adjust the tracks, foot stretchers, and oarlock spacers. No changes to riggers.

Oars: Do not change the rigging of oars.

What should I do after taking a boat out?

If you are rowing an X25, bungee the seat to the tracks at the dock. Lost or damaged seats are expensive to replace.

Rinse and wipe the boat at the water station by the regatta headquarters shed. Check the hull for damage. Turn the water fully off and hang rags to dry.

Return the shell and oars to the racks.

Sign the equipment in.

How do I report equipment damage?

If you see equipment damage,

- Email the commodore at (see contact info on bulletin board or web site). Provide an account of what happened. Describe the damage. Include your phone number.
- Write a notice on the whiteboard.
- If a shell should not be rowed, tape an easy-to-see “Do Not Row” note to its hull.

Rowing Safely

For more comprehensive safety information and guidance, please read “Know Before You Row” and “Flip Packet,” posted on the OBC web site’s Safety Resources page.

What are the navigation patterns on the reservoir?

Launching from and returning to Sandy Run: When launching, stay to the Fairfax side of the blue buoy. Returning to Sandy Run from upstream, remain on the Prince William side until you are downstream of the blue buoy, then cross the river to Sandy Run, keeping the buoy to port.

**Proceeding upstream, keep to the Fairfax side.
Proceeding downstream, keep to the Prince William side.**

Specifically...

Do not try to hold the shortest course from headland to headland. Doing so may put you on the wrong side of the river.

Proceeding upstream past Jacob’s Rock, stay between the yellow environmental buoy and the Fairfax side as you make the turn.

Proceeding upstream past Fountainhead, keep to the Fairfax side and do not cut the turn short.

Shells should not row abreast unless they can keep to the proper side of the river.

The river is navigable upstream to Bull Run Marina (about 9 miles) and downstream to 1000 meters above Occoquan Dam (about 1.5 miles).

What hazards should I look for?

Fishing boats and kayaks: Always look out for fishing boats and kayaks. Do not expect fisherman or kayakers to call out warnings even when collisions are imminent.

Occoquan Dam: Rowing within 1000 meters of the Occoquan Dam (downstream from the boathouse) is prohibited *and dangerous*.

Ryan’s Dam: When water levels become low, submerged sections of Ryan’s Dam (upstream from Fountainhead) on the Fairfax side may become a danger. This hazard is usually marked with a small flag or stick.

Submerged tree trunks: When water levels are low, be mindful of submerged obstacles on the inside of any turn, especially at Fountainhead and Jacob's Rock.

Floating debris: Debris often becomes a hazard after heavy rain or storms. When debris is heavy, members are discouraged from launching.

What if there is debris on the river?

Be prudent when deciding whether to launch when debris is heavy. Damaged boats are expensive to repair. Boats are usually not repaired until the winter break. Therefore, a damaged shell may be out of circulation for several months. Members who incur boat damage on high-debris days are asked to pay the deductibles on boat repairs.

What are the weather related rules?

Cold weather rules:

December 1 - January 31: Sandy Run Park is closed; no rowing.

February 1 - March 31: Members may take out 2x, 4x or 4- shells only. No club singles may be taken out during this period, *even in unseasonably warm weather conditions*.

NVRPA Cold Weather Restrictions: When the air temperature is below 40°F or the water temperature is below 50°F, you may not go out unless accompanied by a launch that remains within 35 meters of the shell, with no more than 2 shells per launch. Because OBC does not own launches, you are responsible for making private arrangements.

April 1 - November 30: When the air temperature is below 40°F or the water temperature is below 50°F, prompting "NVRPA Cold Weather Restrictions" above, rowers in all OBC shells (1x, 2x, 4x, or 4-) must row together in groups of two or more boats. Alternatively, you may go out accompanied by a launch that remains within at least 35 meters of your shell.

Lightning and Storm Rules: At the first sound of thunder, you must return to Sandy Run docks. If the storm is upon you, take your shell ashore and wait for the storm to pass.

If the lightning detector goes off (one long blast), you may not row until the "all clear" is given (3 short blasts). If you are on the water, return as quickly as possible to Sandy Run docks. See the Sandy Run Park rules for complete information on the Lightning Prediction System and procedures.

<http://www.nvrpa.org/parks/sandyrun/>

OBC Code of Conduct

OBC members are expected to demonstrate good sportsmanship and courtesy in their interactions with all rowers and other boaters, coaches, coxswains, officials, and spectators at Sandy Run, on the Occoquan, and at rowing venues elsewhere; to act as stewards of club equipment by treating it with care on and off the water; and to promote safety on the reservoir by following navigation and weather-related guidelines. The OBC Board of Directors reserves the right to determine if violations of this code of conduct have occurred, and to take action, up to and including the decision to terminate the membership of a club member if, in the opinion of the Board of Directors, violations of this code warrant such action.