

OCCOQUAN BOAT CLUB HANDBOOK

(Updated and approved by the OBC Board, March 8, 2017)

www.rowobc.org

Facebook group: Occoquan Boat Club

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ABOUT OBC, THE PARK AND THE BOATHOUSE

Occoquan Boat Club is a sculling club 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 may reserve shells through an outside vendor.

The Occoquan Reservoir is one of many sources of drinking water to the majority of Northern Virginia residents and therefore the water is protected. Swimming in the water at Sandy Run or in the Reservoir is strictly prohibited.

Upstream of the Occoquan Dam, the river is long, narrow, winding, and well protected from wind by trees. Wildlife sighted includes deer, beavers, bald eagles, herons, and wild turkeys. For navigation and reference, our main 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)

These landmarks are noted on a map just inside the boathouse.

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) or via email at SandyRunRow@nvrpa.org. The park is closed December and January.

Rowing out of Sandy Run are ten high schools, one university (George Mason), and several clubs (OBC, Sandy Run Scullers (SRS), Northern Virginia Rowing Club (NVRC) which is primarily sweep rowing, Oakton Masters, Stillwater Rowing (juniors), and Resilient Rowing (juniors)).

NEW MEMBERS

How do new members demonstrate competence?

OBC requires that new members come to the club with at least a basic set of sculling skills and be able to demonstrate those skills in a 1x. As a new member, you will need to schedule an orientation and sculling assessment through the Vice President. The member orienting you will require you to:

- Remove a 1x, and oars from their racks, carry them to the docks, and launch.
- Scull upstream within the sight of the docks, turn 180°, and possibly perform other maneuvers.
- Return to the dock, land the shell stern first (this is OBC policy), carry the shell to the slings for a rinse and wipe down, then carry the shell and oars and return them to their racks.

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

OBC does not administer a flip test. Members should, however, make themselves familiar with the techniques to getting themselves back into a flipped shell.

Does OBC offer coached or organized rowing programs?

OBC does not customarily offer regular, coached rowing programs. However, the club may offer a limited number of lessons for new members who are already scullers, but who need additional instruction to be able to demonstrate the competencies described above.

The need for these lessons will be determined by the sculling assessment and the membership chair.

Many members organize informal outings in small groups. For instance, members often meet on weeknights and Sunday mornings to row and practice race pieces. OBC will send out via email information on how to get involved in these groups or practices. Also, if you use online social media, make sure you are connected to the Club on Facebook, where information is often cross-posted.

OBC members who are also coaches may offer one or more sculling camp sessions during the summer. Depending on the session, the camp may be targeted to novice or to experienced scullers.

Check the OBC website for information.

KNOWING WHEN YOU CAN ROW

All rowing is subject to the policies and procedures for Rowing Safely, beginning on page 7 below.

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. You may see sweep boats returning to the docks during lower light, but those boats are from other groups and are accompanied by a coach in a launch.

What times of year may I row?

Members may sign out designated OBC shells between April 1 and December 1, weather permitting.

Sandy Run Park is closed December and January.

Subject to the cold weather rules and other restrictions for Rowing Safely (beginning on page 7 below), between February 1 and March 31, no OBC 1x may be taken out. However, members may take out 2x, 4x and 4- shells.

What are the rowing restrictions when there's a regatta taking place on the reservoir?

Sandy Run hosts 16 high school, college and masters regattas per year. See the Sandy Run Website for the regatta schedule (<https://www.novaparks.com/parks/sandy-run-regional-park> under the “regatta schedule” tab). On days that high school regattas are held at Sandy Run (typically Saturdays in the springtime through May), members may row up to 30 minutes 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. Bring your ID to present at the gate so you won't be charged for parking.

GETTING IN AND OUT OF THE PARK

How do I get into the park and boathouse?

OBC members may 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 OBC membership to your appointment.

Note that the park gate is generally kept closed (but not locked) on weekdays until 2:00 pm and all day on weekends. Therefore, leave the gate as you find it 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?

OBC maintains a current inventory of the fleet page on the OBC website at www.rowobc.org/fleet/inventory. There is also a poster above the whiteboard at the boathouse for current shell numbers and types.

As the club’s most fragile boats, the Vespoli heavyweight 4x/-, the Vespoli 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 possesses 33 pairs of sculling oars and two sets of sweep oars. All OBC oars are kept in the wooden racks at the front of the boat 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. Unauthorized 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 in a 2x or a 4x 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 and row with a current member.
 - No person shall row as a guest more than twice per season.
 - Members with less than one year’s sculling experience may not take guests on outings.
 - For exceptions to the above, consult an OBC Board 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 prohibited from using any OBC equipment.

Anyone younger than 18 years of age is prohibited from using OBC equipment unless accompanied by an 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 online reservation system are on the Equipment page (www.rowobc.org/fleet and select “reserving shells”) 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
4. OBC rowers training consistently in a specific boat should be able to compete in that boat. Such crews have priority over “pick-up” crews (crews having non-OBC member rowers). 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 number of current OBC members in the crew, 2) length of time each crew has been training in the shell, 3) the number of regattas for which each crew has used or plans to use the shell, 4) the timeliness of the petition, and, perhaps, 5) the competitiveness of each crew.

All members are expected to comply with these policies for **each** instance a boat is used.

All inquiries and petitions for boat usage within the aforementioned guidelines and policies must be directed **10 days prior** to any relevant regatta to: OBC President via email at president@rowobc.org.

TAKING BOATS OUT AND RETURNING THEM

What should I do before taking out a boat?

1. Check the shell for damage and missing parts.

If you see damage:

- Report it to the commodore at commodore@rowobc.org
- Post a note to the whiteboard. If the boat should not be rowed, tape a “Do Not Row” note (which can be found under the sign-in desk at Boathouse 1) to the middle of its hull.
- Select another shell to row.

2. Sign out the shell in the OBC log.

3. If you are rowing an X25, keep the seat bungeed until you put the shell in the water. Secure the bungee away from the track or slide.

4. If you are taking a 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 at Boathouse 2.

May I change the rigging on boats?

Shells: **No.** You may adjust the tracks, foot stretchers, and oarlock spacers only. Do not ever change the riggers.

Oars: **No.** Do not change the rigging of oars.

What should I do after docking a boat?

1. If you are rowing an X25, **re-bungee the seat to the tracks** at the dock before you lift it out of the water. Unsecured seats can fall out of the boat when it is lifted out of the water. Lost or damaged seats are expensive to replace.

2. Rinse and wipe down 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.

3. Return the shell and oars to the racks. Sign the equipment in on the same log(s) you used to sign out.

How do I report equipment damage?

1. Report it to the commodore at commodore@rowobc.org. Provide an account of what happened. Describe the damage. Include your phone number.
2. Write a notice on the whiteboard.
3. If a shell should not be rowed, tape an easy-to-see “Do Not Row” note to its hull, which can be found under the sign-in desk at Boathouse 1.

ROWING SAFELY

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

What are the navigation patterns on the reservoir?

Launching from and returning to Sandy Run: When launching, stay to the Fairfax side of the orange buoys. Returning to Sandy Run from upstream, remain on the Prince William side until you are downstream of the orange buoys, then cross the river to Sandy Run, keeping the orange buoys 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 the chain or orange buoys about 1000 meters above Occoquan Dam (about 1.5 miles).

What hazards should I look for?

Always look out for other vessels, which commonly include but are not limited to other rowing shells, rowing coaches in launches, fishing boats, Stand-Up Paddleboards (SUPs), canoes and kayaks. Do not expect any other person to call out warnings even when collisions are imminent.

Occoquan Dam: Rowing past the chain or orange buoys upstream 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 may be marked with a small flag or stick, but rowers must always exercise caution in the event such a hazard is not marked.

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

Floating debris: After torrential rains and wind storms, debris often becomes a hazard, regardless of a rower's experience level. When debris is heavy, members are discouraged from launching. Please report unusual debris to the OBC Communications Director at communications@rowobc.org

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 may be 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*.

OBC 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 “OBC Cold Weather Restrictions” above), rowers in all OBC 1x shells (1x) 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 Safety

Do not row if the weather forecast calls for thunderstorms. When the lightning detector sounds (one long blast), you may not row until the “all clear” (3 short blasts) is given.

For complete information on the Lightning Prediction System and procedures, see the Sandy Run Park rules online at <http://www.nvrpa.com/parks/sandyrun/>

At the first sound of thunder, you must return to Sandy Run docks. If you are caught on the water during a thunderstorm, immediately row to shore, beach the boat, and seek shelter. There is no safe place outside during a thunderstorm, but if you are unable to get to shelter, try these suggestions to minimize your risk:¹

- Squat low to the ground. Do the "lightning position" by kneeling or crouching with your hands on your knees—never lie flat on the ground.
- Avoid tall structures (towers, trees, fences, poles) and open areas.
- Get away from water, including pools, rivers, lakes, and beaches. If on the water, come ashore and land any boats, kayaks, canoes, or other watercrafts.
- Move into valleys, ravines, or low areas.
- Avoid water and wet items, metal objects, tents, and natural lightning rods (golf clubs, tractors, fishing rods, bicycles).
- In the woods, stay under a low clump of trees. Never stand under a tall single tree in an open area.
- If you feel your hair stand on end, drop to your knees, bend forward, and put your hands on your knees.

MISCELLANEOUS RULES AT SANDY RUN

Diving in or willfully swimming in the water at Sandy Run

Swimming or willfully diving into the Occoquan Reservoir is strictly prohibited.

Be aware of your driving at and near Sandy Run

The speed limit on Van Thompson Road as you approach the park is 25 mph. Once you enter the park grounds, the speed limit drops to 15 mph. Please observe all posted speed limits. Your privileges to drive into Sandy Run can be revoked by NVRPA management if you are considered an unsafe driver.

¹ Source: Florida Extension Office.

Dogs not permitted at Sandy Run during regattas

This rule is strictly enforced. Only trained service animals are permitted during regattas.

FOSTERING COMMUNITY AMONG OBC MEMBERS

Social OBC

OBC hosts a combination social row and spring workday: “Row for the Strawberries” on a Sunday in June each year. OBC also hosts an annual “Chili Row” the weekend after Head of the Occoquan (HOTO) and a winter social, usually in February, when members think warm thoughts of an early spring.

How to reach OBC Officers: Email is the best method

- President: president@rowobc.org
- Vice President: membership@rowobc.org
- Treasurer: treasurer@rowobc.org
- Secretary: secretary@rowobc.org
- Commodore: commodore@rowobc.org
- Communications Director: communications@rowobc.org

Volunteering at OBC

OBC boasts the lowest membership dues in the region. We have a safe and ready fleet, gorgeous environs and low water congestion. OBC keeps these dues low because of our member volunteers. For two public regattas, Occoquan Memorial Sprints (OMS) in July and HOTO in late October or early November, OBC actively appeals for members to volunteer. Both these regattas are renowned throughout the rowing community. The OMS is OBC’s annual charity regatta; revenues are used to provide youth rowing scholarships in the community. HOTO, a two-day event comprising juniors, colleges, and masters, is often ranked the 6th largest regatta on the East Coast each year. OBC maintains its low membership costs because of revenues it earns from HOTO. Both of these regattas require many hands to run efficiently and safely. We look forward to and appreciate your involvement.

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 all of the safety, rowing competency, and other rules, policies, procedures, and criteria set forth in this Handbook.

Furthermore, OBC does not discriminate against individuals on the basis of their race, sex, religion, age (subject to the membership policies described above), disability (subject to the rowing competency requirements described above), color, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, gender expression, marital status, or veteran status. Discrimination or harassment on the basis of any such characteristics will be treated as a violation of the code of conduct.

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.