



# Saugatuck Rowing Club

## Safety Protocol

2020-2021

Saugatuck Rowing Club provides an exceptional rowing program for youth and adults of all levels of rowing experience in a safe and professionally staffed environment. This document outlines the specific roles and responsibilities for coaches and rowers to ensure the highest degree of safety in our challenging marine environment.

### I. ORGANIZATION

#### 1. Safety Committee

Saugatuck Rowing Club has established a Safety Committee of coaches and rowers to review and update the **SRC Rules of the River** and **Safety Protocol**, as well as adjudicate in the event of safety violations and collisions. The Safety Committee's review will take into consideration best practices, updates to the US Rowing's recommended safety procedures and changing environmental conditions unique to our location and facilities.

- In the event rowers or crews are observed to be in violation of the **Rules of the River** or **Safety Protocol**, are rowing in a manner that may result in danger to the rower, crew or other crews, or in the event of a collision, the observing rower or crew shall submit a written summary of the incident to the Chair of the Safety Committee for further review.
- Following a review of such incident by the Safety Committee, certain actions may be taken by the Safety Committee ranging from reprimand or in the event of more egregious violations, temporary loss of rowing privileges.

#### 2. Coaching Staff

The SRC coaching staff shall be responsible for upholding, respecting, educating and enforcing the *Safety Protocol* and the *Rules of the River*.

Coaches may to make short-term modifications to the Rules of the River such as redirecting rowers to avoid obstacles at low tide, but only if necessary during their coaching session to ensure safe passage. No short term modifications shall be construed nor interpreted as a permanent change to the *Rules of the River* or *Safety Protocol*.

### **3. Group Captains**

Group Captains shall assume responsibility for learning the Rules of the River and the Safety Protocol, and for helping to educate rowers within their groups. Captains will alert their respective Coaches to safety issues as they arise. Group Captains are authorized to make all safety calls on behalf of their group in the absence of their Coach provided that such calls do not violate the Rules of the River or the Safety Protocol. Exceptions may be made for safe navigation at dead low tide.

## **II. SAFETY RULES**

### **1. Registration and Acceptance of Risk**

Prior to using club facilities for the purposes of rowing on the Saugatuck River, all SRC members and guests shall sign the Club Waiver which details the risks associated with rowing and the precautions that should be taken prior to engaging in any rowing related activities. The Club Waiver will include an affidavit stating that:

- The rower is in good health and has been cleared by a physician for vigorous exercise;
- The rower affirms that he/she is capable of swimming 50 yards, treading water for 10 minutes and able to put on a lifejacket while in the water;
- The rower understands the risks associated with the sport of rowing;
- The rower has reviewed and acknowledged the Saugatuck *"Rules of the River"*
- The rower understands the requirements for use of Club or private equipment, including the Sculling Proficiency Test, Log In/Out procedures, and weather-related rowing restrictions.

### **2. Education and Certification**

SRC group programs may be segmented by skill (Beginner, Intermediate and Experienced) and desired level of intensity (Recreational and Competitive).

Beginner-level programs will instruct rowers on all aspects of rowing safety, including equipment usage, emergency procedures and the Club Safety Policy before allowing rowers to use Club equipment.

Intermediate and Experienced programs will review Club Safety Policy at the beginning of each season.

Prior to using Club equipment, participating in a group program, rowers must demonstrate their ability to recognize standard rowing terminology and commands, including:

- Bow/Stern, Port/Starboard
- Weigh Enough / Ready-All Row
- Stroke seat, bow seat and seat numbers in between
- Tie-in/Untie, Back, Hold Water

### 3. Care of the Boathouse and Club Equipment

Each rower in a club boat shall assume reasonable responsibility for the care and cleanliness of the boathouse and club boats before, during and after their outing.

- Club boats and oars should be sprayed with fresh water after each outing, including both inside and out, seats, tracks foot stretchers and riggers. Treat club boats as if they were your own. If a club boat is found to be covered in salt, the lead coach should be immediately informed. Failure to care for club equipment may result in loss of rowing privileges.
- Maintaining the boathouse is *everyone's* responsibility. Treat it as your living room. It should not be used as a dumping ground for water bottles, backpacks, spare parts, old clothes, or excess inventory. We each have a responsibility to do our fair share to maintain the boathouse which often means picking up after others. The Juniors are not solely to blame!

### 4. Rules of the River

It is incumbent of all coaches and rowers to read and fully understand the **Saugatuck Rules of the River** – a document that clearly spells out rower obligations and safe navigation of the Saugatuck River. The Rules of the River are sacrosanct, and creative interpretation is not allowed. In particular, rowers are expected to navigate the river and properly pass all buoys in accordance with the Rules of the River.

**Note:** Rowing on the wrong side of a navigation buoy is NOT an option. You are expected to pass each buoy on its proper side.

- *If your heading would result in rowing on the wrong side of a buoy, you are expected to slow or stop and change course in order to pass the buoy on its proper side*
- *If there are other slower boats blocking your path, you must to slow down in order to pass on the proper side of an upcoming buoy even if you are in competition.*

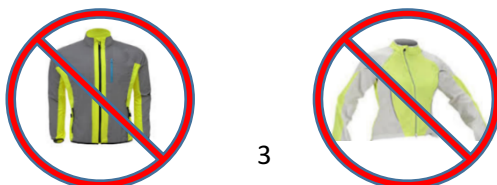
### 5. Rowing Attire

All rowers in both coached and un-coached boats using club or private equipment are required to wear **Hi-Viz Yellow** or Hi-Viz Orange tops at all times when on the water. White, Tan, Pink or Red do not qualify as Hi-Viz. This includes warm-up jackets, rain jackets and training tops or any outermost layer worn by the rower. This rule and applies to all rowers in all boats no matter where you sit in the boat.

**YES:**



**NO:**



## 6. Safety Equipment

All boats, both Club-owned and privately owned, must be equipped with safety gear appropriate for the prevailing rowing conditions and training scenarios, including:

### a) Marine Lighting

The Saugatuck River is an active marine waterway with commercial and private marine traffic at all times of the day. To ensure that our rowers are highly visible to other boating traffic, all rowing shells on the water launching before dawn or at dusk are required to have proper marine lighting which meets the following standards:

- **Red/Green bow light** in a standard marine configuration: Red to port and green to starboard. Mounted on the foredeck or in the bow card slot. Clearly visible ahead.
- **White stern light** mounted on the foot stretcher or stern deck facing aft and clearly visible from astern.

Remember, marine lighting is not designed to project light; it is designed to illuminate your boat and indicate your prevailing direction.



In addition to the above, it is recommended that rowers to consider the use of headlamps, clip-on lights and lights affixed to riggers or oars. These lights may be used in addition to and not as a replacement for your bow and stern lights.

### B) Other Safety Devices

Saugatuck strongly recommends the use of the following safety devices for all rowers, but particularly those rowing without a coach or alone. These include a Whistle, Inflatable Life Vest, Cellphone and a Mirror for navigation. Whistles can be easily tucked in a pocket or attached with Velcro. Inflatable life vests can be secured to the rigger. Both can be purchased on Amazon.com.



## **7. Rower and Equipment Logs**

All rowers, whether using Club or private equipment, must log their departure & return time and intended destination in the designated Logbook. This is a critical component of safety should a sudden weather condition arise while rowers are on the water.

## **8. Weather**

Fog, rain, wind, air temperature, strong currents and floating debris may result in weather advisories which warrant special attention. SRC reserves the right to suspend or limit rowing activity based on prevailing conditions:

It is the responsibility of each rower to check weather advisories as well as current weather conditions on a reputable weather app or website.

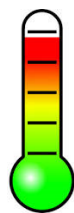
### **Electrical Storms:**

- Do not row if there is an electrical storm in the area.
- If you are about to launch and hear thunder or see lightning, or quickly darkening skies, do not launch. Leave the dock area and return to the boathouse.
- If you are on the water and see lightning or hear thunder, head back to the boathouse.
- If you are on the water and notice your hair standing on end with static electricity, head for the nearest shore.
- If the storm is upon you, take your boat ashore and wait for the storm to pass. Crews should wait 20 minutes from the last audible lightning or audible thunder before launching after a storm, in addition to checking weather radar sites.

Coached groups who launch by themselves and meet their Coach at a designated landmark shall defer to their Group Captain before launching when prevailing weather conditions may warrant restrictions.

### **Heat, Humidity and Cold**

SRC strongly recommends that rowers take precautions when exercising in extreme heat and humidity. Be certain to carry extra water. Many rowers will also infuse their water with electrolyte tabs. FISA classifies the risks of exercise in extreme heat as follows:



- 77F-90F: Moderate Risk
- 90F-100F: High Risk
- 100+F: NO ROWING

No boats will launch if the air temperature is below 32 degrees.

## **9. Four-Oar Rule**

When water temperatures fall below 50 degrees Fahrenheit in East Norwalk as reported on the website, [www.seatemperature.org](http://www.seatemperature.org), boats with fewer than four oars in the water shall be restricted from rowing. That means no singles and no pairs. This rule shall apply to all rowers at all times. **No Exceptions.**

When the Director of Rowing has confirmed that the water temperature is above 50 degrees in East Norwalk on a consistent basis the Four Oar restriction will be lifted.

## **10. When Rowing Alone**

For rowers in singles, doubles and pairs who are unaccompanied by a coach or part of a coaching session, it is recommended that you do not proceed past Cedar Point into Long Island Sound. It is also strongly recommended that a boat rowing alone take a VHF radio with them.

## **11. Dock Etiquette**

1. Adjust foot stretchers and riggers on slings before you bring your boat to the dock
2. Limit time spent on the dock to 1 minute when other crews are waiting to land or launch.
3. Boats returning to the dock (landing) have right of way over those waiting to launch.
4. Boats being transported to the dock must YIELD to those boats being transported back to the boathouse. Extra caution is required at mid to low tide, when the ramp angle impedes visibility.
5. Boats MUST launch downstream. No exceptions.
6. When returning, boats must return from Upstream with their bows pointed Downstream.

## **12. Water Etiquette**

1. Always be on the alert for other boats and obstructions
2. Call out to others when there's a risk of collision.
3. Be thoughtful and considerate of your fellow rowers, even when you believe you are in the right

## **13. Flipping**

It is often said that there are two types of scullers: those who have flipped and those who will. Getting back into a single is challenging. As such, it is recommended that every single sculler take the time to learn how to get back into a single after flipping. The best way to do so is to practice in shallow water.

If you observe someone else flipping and you are the nearest to that person, you are required to row over and offer your assistance. Under no circumstances are you to leave the immediate area while a fellow rower is in the water. If you have a VHF radio, contact your coach. If you have a whistle and the rower is in distress, do not hesitate to use it. And remember that your hull can serve as their buoyancy. In an emergency, you can also row a person to shore.

### **13. Enforcement**

It is the responsibility of every rower to review, understand and put into practice both the **Safety Protocol** and the **Rules of the Estuary**. These guidelines have been established for your safety. Each Coach is responsible for helping to enforce the rules and has a responsibility to speak up when violations occur.

- Minor violations such as failure to make use of proper marine lighting before sunrise or navigation errors which inevitably occur should be discussed politely among members of your crew or with the opposing crew.
- Major violations such as rowing down the wrong side of the river or collisions between boats no matter how inconsequential must be reported to a Saugatuck coach.
- Flagrant or consistent disregard for the Safety protocol or **Rules of the River** or failure to report major violations may result in loss of rowing privileges.

### III. NAVIGATIONAL RULES AND TRAFFIC PATTERNS

*All rowers are required to abide by the Navigational Rules as described below. Failure to follow the navigational rules may result in loss of rowing privileges or disciplinary measures.*

#### 1. Terminology

- UPSTREAM** Heading north from Saugatuck toward Town Bridge, or returning to Saugatuck from Cedar Point.
- DOWNSTREAM** Returning in a southerly direction from Town Bridge to Saugatuck, or heading south from Saugatuck down river toward Cedar Point.
- RIGHT OF WAY** Effective this year, “Right of Way” shall no longer apply to boats heading up or downstream. Safe passage is everyone’s responsibility. Accordingly:
- 1) The Rules of the River shall always apply.
  - 2) It is the primary responsibility of every rower, no matter which direction you are heading, to remain on your proper side of the river.
  - 3) It is the primary responsibility of every rower to look, yield and avoid collisions at all times.
  - 4) You are required to pause at every chokepoint, then look for oncoming boats. At a chokepoint, first in, first out.
  - 5) Key chokepoints are as follows:
    - Upstream when passing through the Narrows
    - Downstream between the bridges
    - When passing under the Railroad bridge
    - Heading in both directions at Stony Point
- WESTERN SHORE** The Saugatuck boathouse and docks sit on the Western Shore of the Saugatuck River. Also referred to as the NORWALK SHORE.
- EASTERN SHORE** The opposite side of the river from the Saugatuck boathouse. Also referred to as the FAIRFIELD SHORE.
- GREEN CAN** A **GREEN FLAT-TOPPED** marine buoy that defines the opposing side of the navigable channel.
- RED NUN** A **RED, PEAKED** marine buoy that defines one side of a navigable channel.





## **2. General Navigation**

SRC's navigational rules are designed to provide the rowing community with the best possible experience on the water while simultaneously obeying marine traffic rules and minimizing the potential for collisions. It is important to note that we use both the navigable waterway and the areas outside the buoys, depending on location – and these inconsistencies need to be memorized and followed at all times, both for your personal safety and that of all other watercraft.

Rowers need to actively THINK about where they are relative to the shore and other rowing traffic, and respect the tide, the current, wind speed and direction – all factors that affect navigation in small boats. Mastering the navigational rules is your responsibility and must be taken seriously.

To learn more about navigating the Saugatuck River, please refer to the PowerPoint presentation entitled “**Rules of the River**” as well as the visual diagrams stapled to the walls within the Boat Bays.

## **3. No Power Zones**

There are two locations along the Saugatuck River that are exceptionally narrow and require extreme caution when passing: The Narrows (upstream) and between the Bridges (downstream). In these two

- When passing through the Narrows and between the Bridges at or near race pace, all crews are required to power down to ensure safe passage and minimize the risk of collisions.
- The only exception to the above: timed “Head” pieces authorized and supervised by the coaches.

**Note: unless you are in imminent danger, you are required to observe the *Rules of the River* at all times.**

- You are always responsible for safe passage.
- When in doubt, yield to an oncoming boat.

## **4. Navigational Landmarks**

Landmarks are listed in order of appearance when traveling downstream beginning at Westport Town Center (Town Bridge).

**TOWN BRIDGE** The Town Bridge (Route 1/Post Road in Westport) is the farthest accessible point north (upstream) for rowing. Distance: 2,000 meters from SRC. Rowers should not attempt to reach Town Bridge below mid-tide conditions, due to heavy silting and increasingly narrow passageways.

**MUD ISLAND** 500 meters south of Town Bridge. Mud Island is not exposed above mid-high tide, but remains a permanent obstacle. Inexperienced rowers should not attempt to navigate around the far side (eastern side) of Mud Island. Experienced rowers may do so but only at high tide.

- THE NARROWS** The stretch of water extending from the Moorings to Mud Island. The Narrows stretch is a major choke point, and rowers traveling upstream should be prepared to yield to downstream crews.
- THE MOORINGS** Refers to the set of motor boat docks at the southernmost point of the Narrows 500 meters upstream from the SRC boathouse. Rowers heading upstream should pause and look upstream for oncoming traffic before passing the Moorings and entering the Narrows.
- LOW TIDE ROCKS** A series of rocks and related obstructions between Saugatuck and the Moorings on the Western or near shore of the river which are exposed at low tide and can wreak havoc on a rowing shell below mid-tide.
- BRIDGE ST. BRIDGE** The first bridge so the South (right) down downstream from Saugatuck. Crews rowing downstream **MUST** always row through the arch defined by the wooden flanks of the drawbridge which is the navigable channel of the Saugatuck River.
- At low to mid-tide, crews rowing upstream crews must also pass through this arch when returning to Saugatuck and must be particularly cautious and yield to crews rowing downstream. At mid-tide and above, crews rowing upstream en route to Saugatuck may use the center arch.
- I-95 BRIDGE** The second bridge heading South from Saugatuck. Downstream crews **MUST** use the right or Western arch at all times. Crews returning to Saugatuck must use the same arch at low-mid tide. However, at mid-high tide, crews traveling upstream may use the center arch with extreme caution as several large rocks, mooring buoys and anchored docks may obstruct your path.
- RAILROAD BRIDGE** The third bridge heading downstream is the Railroad Bridge. All crews heading in either direction **MUST** pause before passing under the bridge. All crews must use the center (navigable) arch between low-mid tide. Upstream crews may use the right or Eastern arch at high tide but should use caution.
- THE GAZEBO** Just downstream of the Railroad Bridge on the Eastern side of the river. The Gazebo defines the end of the 1,000-meter race course.
- THE RACECOURSE** Long, straight stretch of river along the Eastern shore of the river beginning at the yellow marker near the on the tip of the Longshore Golf Course peninsula and extending upstream 1,000 meters to Gazebo just below the Railroad Bridge.
- When rowing the Racecourse, especially when side-by-side with other boats, exercise extreme caution. The 2<sup>nd</sup> 500 meters of the Racecourse is the navigable waterway for all motorized marine traffic. Rowers are required to yield at all times to downstream motorized watercraft.

- THE CULVERT** On the Western/Norwalk Shore of the Racecourse, approximately 250m downstream from the Gazebo. Visible only at extreme low tide, the culvert has been known to cause great damage to unsuspecting boats. Below mid-tide rowers must move toward the center of the river to pass safely over the Culvert while not straying across the river towards the Fairfield/Western Shore.
- STONY POINT** The tip of land on the Fairfield/Western Shore approximately the 700 meters south of the Railroad Bridge. This is also the approximate location of the “**GREEN CAN**”, a frequently referenced meeting / stopping point.
- SAND BAR** A large expanse of silt, visible only during lunar low tides. The Sand Bar sits below Stony Point running East-West. At mid to low tide, crews traveling upstream must stay very close to the Red Nuns (off their Port oars) to avoid being grounded on the sand bar. ONLY at lunar low tides will the first Red Nun after Stony Point be non-passable for crews traveling upstream.
- WHITE BRIDGE** Located directly South and across the bay from the Railroad Bridge. A frequent stopping point. Note that the passage from the White Bridge to the beginning of the Racecourse is approximately 1,000 meters.
- CEDAR POINT** The tip of Saugatuck Island approximately 250 meters past White Bridge and a frequent turning point for all crews.

## IV. General Commentary

### A. Town Bridge to Saugatuck Boathouse

TOWN BR → MUD ISLAND → THE NARROWS → THE MOORINGS → LOW TIDE ROCK → BRIDGE ST BR

This section is unmarked by coast guard marine buoys. Crews traveling upstream should stay to the Eastern/Fairfield Shore, and crews traveling downstream should stay to the Western/Norwalk Shore.

### B. Saugatuck to Stony Point

BRIDGE ST BR → I-95 BR → RAILROAD BR → RACECOURSE → GAZEBO → CULVERT → STONY POINT

The three-bridge section of this stretch of waterway should be approached with caution. The navigable archways for all three bridges are tight, blind and often have shifting currents and winds, so crews should take extreme care when traveling both downstream and upstream. However, the right-of-way is with the downstream-bound crew.

Traveling upstream through the bridges at mid-high tide, crews may take the center arches of the I-95 and Bridge St. Bridges. All crews MUST use the center arch of the Railroad Bridge, regardless of the tides.

Once they have passed through the bridges, the downstream crew must stay to the starboard side of the center buoy line which is along the second half of the Racecourse. During mid to low tide times, crews should hug the buoy line to avoid the Culvert. Note that downstream crews travel outside the navigable waterway from the Racecourse to Stony Point.

### C. Stony Point to Cedar Point

STONY POINT → SAND BAR → SAUGATUCK SHORES MARINA → WHITE BRIDGE → CEDAR POINT

For this stretch of waterway, all traffic is to keep the **RED NUNS** (red marine buoys) on their right, off their port oars. Crews traveling downstream should maintain good separation between the Red Nuns and the shore and be mindful of shifting buoy positions with the tides. Crews traveling upstream should maintain a relatively tight line along the Red Nuns to avoid the Sand Bar. At extreme low-tide (lunar low), upstream crews may, with extreme caution, pass to the inside of the Red Nun closest to Stony Point to avoid being grounded on the sand bar.

At no time, should any crews traveling upstream (from Cedar Point towards Stony Point) be within the navigable waterway, defined as the area between the shore and the series of Red Nuns.

## **D. Stony Point to White Bridge (direct route across the Bay)**

### **STONY POINT → WHITE BRIDGE**

During mid to high tide conditions, the center of Saugatuck Bay is passable for rowing shells. Because this is an open expanse without a series of landmarks to define a clear traffic pattern, the ONLY direction in which one may cross the Bay is the following:

**Downstream Crews:** Proceed from Stony Point with your bow pointed directly at the White Bridge. Row in a straight course across the Bay, maintaining your point. When approaching the White Bridge, use extreme caution and look carefully for traffic traveling perpendicularly to your path. Crews traveling straight across the Bay DO NOT have the right of way.

**Upstream Crews:** After reaching the White Bridge, cross into the channel and point your bow towards Cedar Point, keeping the Red Nuns off your Port oars. Take 10-15 strokes before stopping, turning, and pointing your bow back across the bay towards Stony Point. Proceed to row in a straight line across the Bay, minding the tip of Longshore Golf Course (Hendricks Point) which will pass off your Starboard oar as there are considerable rocks and vegetation near the shoreline.