**BBOP Youth Paddling Program Policies & Safety Guidelines**

BBOP is committed to providing a safe, enjoyable, and educational paddling experience for all youth participants. Parents, staff, and volunteers support the goals of the program through open communication and ensuring that paddlers arrive prepared for each session.

**General Policies & Procedures**

These policies apply to all BBOP youth paddling programs:

* Instructors must be knowledgeable about the BBOP Safety Plan and emergency procedures, including the proper use of marine radios.
* Parents or Legal Authorized Representatives (LARs) must report any health concerns (e.g., allergies, asthma) during registration and update BBOP as needed.
* Participants should bring a full water bottle and an appropriate snack.
* Youth interns will always be supervised. BBOP adult staff will oversee all activities involving interns and youth paddlers.
* BBOP uses TeamSnap to communicate important news and reminders via email. Parents should ensure their email settings allow these messages and check for updates regularly.

**Standard Safety Measures**

The following safety protocols will be observed during every paddling session:

* All paddlers, both youth and adult, must wear a properly fitted, full-size PFD (waist packs are not permitted).
* Only BBOP-certified steerpersons are allowed to steer canoes carrying youth paddlers.
* Appropriate footwear must be worn to protect feet from rocks, shells, and other hazards.
* Paddlers must wear high-visibility, water-friendly clothing:
	+ Layered clothing for colder weather.
	+ A hat and/or sunscreen for sunny conditions.
	+ Coaches will not allow paddlers on the water if they are not dressed appropriately for the weather.
* Each canoe will be equipped with a safety bag containing essential safety gear and a marine radio.

**Inclement Weather Guidelines**

BBOP staff will assess several factors before launching in inclement weather, including paddler strength and experience, clothing adequacy, and current weather and water conditions. Whenever possible, rather than canceling practice, an alternative land-based activity will be arranged.

**Conditions That Require Immediate Shore Return or Cancellation:**

* **Wind speeds exceed 12 mph**
	+ Windsocks align with wind at 3.5 mph, begin filling at 7 mph, and fully extend at approximately 17 mph.
* **Whitecaps are visible**
	+ Wavelets start to break at wind speeds of 8-12 mph (7-10 knots).
* **Heavy fog** significantly reduces visibility.
* **Approaching storms**
	+ Forecasts should be monitored closely.
* **Thunder or lightning**
	+ All paddlers must leave the water immediately and remain off the water for at least 30 minutes after the last observed lightning strike.

**Never launch when visible whitecaps are present or when wind speeds are consistently above 12 mph.**

By following these policies and safety guidelines, BBOP ensures a safe and enjoyable paddling experience for all youth participants.