

The Honorable Jay Inslee
Governor of the State of Washington

May 4, 2020

Dear Governor Inslee,

We, the paddlesport outfitters of Washington, stand ready to be partners in realizing our united mission to safely navigate a path towards normalcy as local communities, states and the nation continue to respond to the SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) outbreak. We recognize that public safety must be our collective priority and we are willing to implement changes to our operations that can be adapted to match the four phases for reopening the state's economy which will be guided by Covid-19 outbreak data. As the weather warms, and as more of the public increasingly looks to recreate outside, the paddlesport outfitters would like to contribute to the solution by providing healthy opportunities for local families and households. We request that our guided tour operations be included in the allowable activities along with the easing of outdoor recreation restrictions in Phase 1, beginning on May 5th.

Paddlesport outfitters and guides provide a structured, controlled, and above all, safe way for Washingtonians to recreate. Our operations will also provide much needed economic growth and jobs in a healthy outdoor working environment. In addition, our guided excursions into the natural world and the environmental education we provide will remind residents that we all need to continue to be good stewards of the natural resources in our great state.

As outdoor recreation professionals, risk management is what we do every day and many of us immediately began to alter our operations as COVID-19 spread; until we all simply stayed home. With the robust guidance now provided by the CDC, WHO, and the Washington Department of Health we are in an even better position to provide a safe work environment for our staff and a low-risk activity for Washington State residents. Our professional and disciplined presence on state lands and on the water also tends to encourage responsible behavior of both our clients as well as the private individuals recreating around us.

During Phase One, we would like to request consideration for the precedent set by the golf industry. Given that our customers participate in separate kayaks, and the distance that these kayaks require to maintain due to their physical dimensions (six feet from paddler to bow and to stern, >7 feet side to side with paddles in motion), we would like the opportunity to have more than one household in our groups. Kayaks have a difficult time approaching each other closely on the water and physical distancing will be easy to maintain. Most of the time participants will be 20-50 feet apart while paddling. Guides can direct participants to maintain distance throughout the tours.



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Additionally, we would like our needs to be considered as we move from Phase One to Phase Two. During Phase Two we would like to operate our overnight tours again, following the guidelines set forth for Phase Two.

We are confident that all operators can provide a safe and healthy environment for their staff and the public. We can reduce pressure on land-based resources as well. Most importantly, we can provide a healthy outlet for families and households who have been sacrificing so much to help Washington stay strong during this crisis. Please find enclosed our statement and we thank you for your continued leadership during such trying times.

Respectfully yours,

Erik Schorr/ Anacortes Kayak Tours - Skagit County

Alex LaLonde/ Body Boat Blade - Skagit County

Megan Schorr/ Blue Otter Outfitters - Skagit County

Pam Auxier/ Exotic Aquatics Scuba & Kayaking - Kitsap County

Brandon Bertelsen and Dylan Marks/ Methow River Raft & Kayak - Okanogan County

Sally and Tim Thomsen/ San Juan Kayak Expeditions - San Juan County

Nathan Brandow/ Outer Islands Expeditions - San Juan County

Brian Goodremont/ San Juan Island Outfitter - San Juan County

Tom Murphy/ Outdoor Odysseys Sea Kayaking - San Juan County

Jason Gunter / Discovery Sea Kayak Tours - San Juan County

Jeff Zbornik Shearwater Adventures - San Juan County

Johannes Krieger - Crystal Seas Kayaking - San Juan County

Krista Loercher/Whidbey Island Kayaking - Island County

Blaine DeWalt / Ballard Kayak and Paddleboard -King County

Greg Whittaker/ Alki Kayak Tours - King County

Sam Kaviar/ Kayak Nisqually -Thurston, Pierce, and Jefferson Counties

Tori Ayres/ Dragonfly Kayak Tour - Whatcom County

Kristi Kucera / Moondance Sea Kayak Adventures -Whatcom County

Jon and Jeanie Wilmot/ FLOW Adventures - Spokane County

Steve Hiegel Port Townsend Paddlesports- Jefferson County

Tammi Hinkle Adventures Through Kayaking- Clallam County

Bill Corson- Outdoor Adventures and Adventure Rafting Snohomish and San Juan Counties



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Statement from Paddlesport Outfitters of Washington

We want to be part of the solution! The paddlesport outfitters of Washington provides a unified voice for professional tour operators and paddlesport liveries in the State of Washington. We embrace the new opportunities for the future of our industry in these unprecedented times. With the COVID-19 threat deeply affecting all aspects of life in Washington State, we can provide an essential outlet for people to exercise outdoors and escape the confines of their homes in a safe and healthy manner. Our areas of operation are the quiet stretches of water in Washington State, providing critical relief of pressure on the land-based resources of the state. The physical dimensions of our watercraft and the paddles needed to propel them provide a naturally occurring ability for physical distancing that exceeds the recommended distances recommended by the CDC and WHO. The fresh air, open space, and meaningful encounters with the natural environment provide social and emotional health benefits to citizens who venture out on the sea.

The paddlesport outfitters of Washington are committed to working together with the State of Washington and with each other to support best practices that will provide a healthy environment for our staff and customers, and to provide a controlled environment in which citizens can recreate outdoors. Despite being naturally distanced, outdoors, and physically active, we understand that there are still extra precautions that outfitters must put into place to further increase the safety of participants, staff, and third-parties that we may encounter. As Risk Management professionals, we are well prepared to undertake this responsibility. The following CDC and WA state health guidelines recommend the following operations which we will incorporate:

For Employee Safety

1. In the language they understand best, train staff in identifying COVID-19 symptoms, use of PPE, proper handwashing, and how to maintain physical distancing in the workplace.
2. Establish CDC and DOH recommended protocol for surveying staff for wellness when employees arrive at work.
3. Employees need to self-isolate and inform a supervisor immediately if they develop a fever.
4. Do not allow symptomatic people to physically return to work until cleared by a medical provider.
5. Develop and implement policies and procedures for workforce contact tracing following employee positive COVID-19 test.
6. Stagger shifts, if necessary, to allow for physical distance in the workplace. Where physical distance cannot be maintained provide physical barriers, PPE, or appropriate protection.
7. Provide appropriate PPE for staff.
8. Establish CDC/L&I/DOH recommended protocols for frequent disinfecting of high use common areas and surfaces.



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9. Owners and managers should keep up to date with all changes in health information that are happening daily and communicate any updates to their staff.

For Public Safety

1. Whenever possible, encourage online reservations and online waiver signing. Where online reservations are not possible, develop protocols to enable proper distancing and sanitary conditions for working with customers at the point of sale.
2. Keep customer information logged in case of future contact tracing needs.
3. Whenever possible, develop outdoor check-in procedures to avoid the need for customers to enter our facilities. Provide visual references for adequate distance.
4. Create adequate space for physical distancing during tour check-ins, and when outfitting customers. Use visual markers for reference.
5. When outfitting participants with lifejackets, staff will maintain physical distance. When physical distance is not possible staff will wear appropriate PPE.
6. Where necessary, stagger tour departures to minimize contact between staff and groups of participants.
7. Maintain small tour group sizes compliant with CDC and State recommendations.
8. Stage kayaks on the beach or docks to maintain proper distancing during launching and landing.
9. Develop cleaning protocols that allow for proper disinfection of kayaks, paddles, and lifejackets after use using CDC and EPA approved products.
10. When required to transport customers, strictly follow CDC guidelines regarding passenger drivers.
11. Encourage customers to cancel if feeling unwell and ensure that they can reschedule with no penalty when they are feeling better.

We are all in this together, Washington! The paddlesport outfitters of Washington will be working diligently on your behalf to help mitigate any health risks that might occur during these unprecedented times. We recognize that our success depends on all of us working together to create a unified voice that will help lift our communities out of this crisis and back into a more prosperous state of existence.

Thank you,

Kristi Kucera Vice President, Recreation Northwest
Your partners from the paddlesport outfitters working group of Washington
With Support from *Washington Outdoor Business Alliance*

