



Rafting Program Policies

Policies and procedures relating to Project GO's rafting activities

© 2012 Project Great Outdoors, all rights reserved.

Project Great Outdoors, Inc. is a California 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. Our mission is to guide youth towards broader perspectives and self discovery through adventures in the great outdoors. Programs are offered to underserved youth in northern California and western Nevada.

For additional information about Project GO, training, and volunteer opportunities, please contact our office:

Project Great Outdoors
P.O. Box 360
Coloma, CA 95613
1-888-827-8859
www.projectGO.org

Rafting Program Policies

Policies and procedures relating to Project GO's rafting activities

Preface

The following pages contain policies and procedures adopted and modified by the board of directors since and our risk-management committee since 1999. This document is current as of the 2012 season, but if you are reading this in later years the policies may have been updated. Please check with the Project GO staff to ensure compliance with current policies.

These policies have been designed to help serve our mission. If a situation arises that is not addressed herein, please use common sense and consider our mission to guide youth towards broader perspectives and self-discovery through adventures in the great outdoors,.

Raft Trip Policies

All Project GO trips are subject to the following rules and policies:

- 1) A river trip must have an approved Project GO Head Guide on the trip.
- 2) Each participant must wear a Coast Guard approved type III or type V flotation device.
- 3) Each participant must sign (or have signed by a legal guardian, if under 18) an informed consent and waiver of liability form.
- 4) Each participant must attend a thorough safety talk outlining basic safety procedures including but not limited to: how to properly wear a PFD, how to pull someone into a raft, how to avoid foot entrapment and how to correctly and safely hold a paddle.
- 5) One person in each boat must be certified in CPR and basic First Aid.
- 6) All trips must consist of at least two boats.
- 7) If a trip has more than seven boats, it must be broken into "pods," each with at least two boats, but no more than seven. Each pod should be separated by at least one hour.
- 8) Each pod must carry a "sweep kit" consisting of a minimum of 200' of static line and other equipment to achieve mechanical advantage and set anchors.
- 9) Each pod must carry a first aid kit suitable for the conditions.
- 10) The Head Guide has the authority to cancel a trip at his or her discretion. Factors can include, but are not limited to weather, the flow (high or low), the skill level of the guides or the attitude of the participants if deemed unsafe.
- 11) Illegal drugs and alcohol are strictly forbidden before and during a Project GO trip.
- 12) Project GO trips abide by all state, county and municipal regulations, including those in the county's river etiquette policy on the following pages.

River Etiquette

This information was developed by Eldorado County and is provided here for your convenience. Respect the quiet zone. This is the most important thing you can do to maintain good relations with residents.

Travel

- Keep your group's boats together. The maximum group size is seven rafts or 12 kayaks.
- The upstream boat generally has the right-of-way. If you are intentionally playing or surfing, yield to oncoming rafts.
- Ask for permission before you pass a slower group. Pass only in a safe stretch of river.
- On busy weekends:
 - there will probably be a continuous line of rafts ahead of you. Stay in the current line and don't pass at all. Passing won't save much time, and only increases contact and congestion.
 - Try to create space for your group by slowing down whenever other

groups are not right behind you (is space or time the more important factor?).

- If you want to re-enter the river current, look back upstream and wait for a break in the traffic.
- If you are a slower moving group on the gorge, eddy out below Fowler's, above Satan's and above Lower Haystack to allow other groups to pass.
- If you are going to water fight in the gorge, move your group out of the current

Spacing

- Maintain at least 30 seconds between your group and the group ahead of you. At the top of a rapid, this is 150-200 feet (old version language).
- Group size regulations require enough space for another boat between two groups of the same outfitter:
- Chili Bar: the boat ahead of you must be out of sight before leaving Chili Bar pool.
- Meatgrinder Rapid at lower (<1200 cfs) releases: allow the last boat in the group ahead of you to get beyond the wrap rock above rhino rock before your group enters the rapid.
- Trouble Maker: the last boat of the group ahead should clear gunsight rock before you enter the tongue at the rapid's entrance.
- Highway Rapid at fish flows: allow the last boat in the group ahead of you to get beyond the top section of the rapid before your group enters the rapid.
- Fowler's Rock: the last boat of the group ahead should be out of sight before you enter the tongue along the gravel bar at the top of the rapid.
- Satan's Cesspool: the last boat of the group ahead should be beyond lost hat before you leave the calm water of the pool.

The Quiet Zone

- Never water fight in the quiet zone. If people try to start a water fight, move your rafts far enough apart to discourage the water fight.
- Noise while surfing blue house hole or playing games in Coloma Lake (pool above Old Scary) must be kept at conversational levels.

Communication

- Know and use the five basic hand signals (stop, OK, eddy out, swimmer, point-positive)
- Set upstream safety whenever lines are in the water.
- Except in emergencies, get close enough so you do not have to yell.

Summary

Think about positive communication, consideration of others, and consequences of what you are doing.

Types of Project GO trips:

All four types of trip follow our guidelines, and so must have a head guide, a minimum of two boats, etc.

YouthTrip: A Youth trip is one that directly serves our mission by taking underserved young people on the river. These trips have priority in scheduling over all others. We charge an estimate of “shared-cost” based upon the size of the group that we work with: \$145 for groups of up to 10. \$225 for groups with between 11 and 15. \$465 for groups between 16 and 30. Some groups may have their fees subsidized by outside funders.

TrainingTrip: A Training trip indirectly serves our mission and directly serves one of our values by helping our volunteers increase their proficiency. These trips are associated with basic guide training or other on-river training activities, and are scheduled and organized by Project GO. Participants pay the shared cost, although Project GO, at the discretion of staff may subsidize some of the expense.

OutreachTrips: An outreach trip is one organized by Project GO staff for the express purpose of educating individuals and organizations about Project GO. These trips may be organized for members of the media, current or potential major donors, and youth group leaders who are considering booking a trip through Project GO. These trips are run on a “shared-cost” basis, though Project GO may subsidize them, at the discretion of staff. In keeping with county regulations we do not solicit donations as a prerequisite for participation.

GuideTrips: Guides who wish to improve their skills and get some river time may organize Guide Trips. Project GO equipment may be used on these trips in accordance with PGO’s gear borrowing policy. A guide trip may “tag on” to any other PGO trip in order to ensure compliance with all of our trip policies, but requires the permission of the head-guide of that trip. A Guide Trip that has “tagged-on” to another Project GO trip is expected not to interfere with the primary trip. The guide trip should make its own shuttle arrangements. Guide trips are run on a shared-cost basis.

PGO Guide Status

There are four basic guide designations in Project Great Outdoors, and each carries with it certain responsibilities and privileges: Assistant Guide (AG), Guide (G), Senior Guide (SG) and Head Guide (HG). In order to maintain status, a guide must meet several administrative requirements, which are checked and maintained by Project GO staff. Each status also has a basic skill level requirement, which is judged by Project GO Senior and Head Guides. Once per year guides are asked to self-assess, and may at their choice reduce their status, or request an increase. If requesting an increase, the Project GO Training committee will select two senior or head guides to perform an evaluation.

Administrative Requirements

- (1) All volunteers must have a signed Memorandum of Understanding for the current season on file. This MOU indicates understanding of Project GO’s

- mission, vision and values, and an agreement to follow Project GO policies and procedures.
- (2) All volunteers must have a signed seasonal liability release form on file.
 - (3) All Guides, Senior Guides and Head Guides must have current First Aid and CPR Certification.
 - (4) All Guides, Senior Guides and Head Guides must have attended PGO rescue skills seminar or have taken Project GO's basic whitewater guide training within last 2 years, unless trip the head guide provides exception, which may be granted on a per trip basis if head guide deems guide has sufficient training and/or experience to warrant such an exception.
 - (5) All Senior and Head Guides must have current certification in Swiftwater Rescue.

Skill Level Requirements

Assistant Guide (AG) The Assistant Guide may guide a boat only when a Senior or Head Guide is in the boat. This is the status conferred upon completion of Basic Guide Training, and is the de-facto status of guides for other organizations.

- Has met administrative requirements 1 and 2, above. In addition:
 - Has completed Project GO's Basic Guide training, or demonstrated knowledge and skill equivalent to that of an individual who has recently completed Project GO's Basic Guide Training.

Guide (G). A Guide may guide a boat on a client trip.

- Has met administrative requirements 1-4, above. In addition:

Trip Preparation

- Familiar enough with safety talk to answer client questions and provide detailed explanations.
- Familiar with basic trip logistics for CBAR and Gorge Runs
- Understands design and construction of whitewater rafts
- Can properly inflate rafts
- Can appropriately and safely rig gear in boat
- Is familiar with Project GO equipment care, storage and transportation procedures.

Guiding

- Able to competently guide a raft at ordinary flows on the South Fork of the American River:

Specific competencies include:

- Uses safe and effective guide strokes
- Combines paddle strokes with crew commands to effectively move the raft
- Picks lines and follows them through class III rapids
- Can catch an eddy when required
- Has awareness of appropriate boat spacing
- Builds rapport with crew

- Positions crew in raft appropriately
- Communicates clearly with crew and other guides
- Uses industry standard signals
- Can free a stuck raft in most situations without assistance from another guide or boat

Judgment/Experience

- Sufficient judgment/experience in the opinion of the Senior or Head Guides doing the evaluation to be an asset, not a liability, in an emergency situation
- Confidence and competence are in alignment
- Able to give and receive feedback effectively

Senior Guide (SG). A Senior Guide may guide a boat on a client trip, can ride along to provide oversight for an Assistant Guide, and has the authority to recommend status changes from AG to G. Advanced medical training is suggested, but not required.

- Has met administrative requirements 1-5 above, and meets all (G) criteria above. In addition:

Trip Preparation

- Gives complete and appropriate safety talk
- Can obtain a flow forecast

Guiding

- Able to competently guide a raft at higher than ordinary flows on the South Fork of the American River.

Head Guide (HG). A Head Guide may guide a boat on a client trip, can ride along to provide oversight for an Assistant Guide, and has the authority to recommend status changes from AG to G, from G to SG, and from SG to HG. Advanced medical training is suggested, but not required.

- Has met administrative requirements 1-5 above, and meets all (G) and (SG) criteria above . In addition:

Judgment/Experience

- Sufficient judgment/experience to be an effective leader in an emergency situation.
- Sufficient judgment/experience to maintain reasonable awareness of all boats, volunteer and clients on a trip.

Changing Status

It is not necessary to work through all of the four statuses. Intermediate steps can be skipped so long as the appropriate recommendations are received and recorded. Status change requires written recommendations from Senior or Head Guides as detailed below.

These written recommendations may be actual letters sent to the current Project GO

address, emails sent to the program director or appropriate staff, or notations on trip and/or head-guide reports. Before a status change becomes effective, the recommendation must be received, recorded and acknowledged by staff who will verify that the administrative requirements have been met. For this reason, no status change is “official” until the change is noted in the guide roster, and the guide in question has been notified of the change.

G: This requires the written recommendation of two current senior or head guides.

SG: This requires written recommendation of two current head guides.

HG: This requires written recommendation of two current head guides.

The Recommendation

Only SGs and HGs can make recommendations for status advancements. It is understood that even the best guide does not perform perfectly all the time, and while this should be taken into consideration when assessing an individual’s skill level, it is NOT an excuse to promote someone who is not ready. The process of “checking-off” guides may be the most important role a Senior or Head Guide fills.

These recommendations are to be made only after having spent enough time on the river with an individual to have assessed that individual’s competency in the three specific areas of assessment: Pre-trip preparation, Guiding, and Judgment/Experience. The recommendation must contain the following elements:

- A statement that you have spent sufficient on-river time with the individual to make an informed recommendation.
- A statement that you have spoken to the individual and communicated the requirements/responsibilities of the new status.
- Statements confirming proficiency in all three areas of assessment, Pre-trip preparation, Guiding, and Judgment/Experience.

Letters need not be long, so long as they include the elements above. If you cannot make the above statements honestly, then you cannot write the recommendation. Here are examples of two acceptable recommendations, the first represents the bare minimum, the second closer to the “ideal.”

I recommend that Jane Smith be awarded the status of Guide for Project GO. I have seen and worked with Jane on the river for enough time to feel confident in my assessment. We had a conversation about what it means to be a Guide for PGO, and she understands the responsibilities and is looking forward to meeting them. I have evaluated her abilities in pre-trip preparation and guiding ability, and have found that her abilities meet or exceed Project GO’s standards. She has enough experience to be an asset on a trip, and I look forward to having her as a teammate! Please feel free to call me directly should you have any questions.

I am writing this letter to support Samantha Thwart with her application to become a head guide for Project GO. Samantha took on the HG role during my last trip

with her on the SFA. During this trip, I observed Samantha working well with the other guides on the trip. For example, she included them in a pre-trip discussion that addressed projected weather and flow level, safety and paddler concerns, and guide roles and responsibilities. She also encouraged all of the guides to express any concerns about the trip or its participants. Samantha was thorough in her assessment and packing of safety gear and with reviewing the liability release forms for completion and for participant health issues. Samantha also informed the guides about the health related issues for the group and encouraged the participants to share their health issues with their guides. Samantha provided a well organized safety talk before we started our river trip. Samantha made sure that every boat was properly rigged and inflated and that each boat contained sufficient water and a throw bag. While on the river, Samantha checked with the guides regarding their abilities to work with their paddlers, any developing safety issues, and their success with guiding their crews. After the trip, Samantha facilitated a post-trip safety debrief so that all guides could express any safety issues that developed during the trip. She also checked and returned all safety related equipment to their proper locations. Overall, Samantha showed a level of on- and off-river competence and awareness that is consistent with what I expect from fellow head guides; therefore, I recommend that she be granted head guide status.

Project GO Gear Borrowing Policy

Insurance regulations and liability issues prevent Project GO from lending equipment to any person or organization except under the following circumstances.

A Project GO guide will receive 1 “boat-day” for each youth trip or approved day of volunteering that he or she actively participates in. A “boat-day” includes the use of a boat for one day, plus enough paddles and PFDs to fully outfit that boat. Boat days are not transferable, and must be redeemed by June 15 of the following year.

Boats and equipment must be used in accordance with all of PGO's rafting trip policies, therefore it is only possible to redeem a single “boat-day” if the boat tags onto an existing PGO trip, or if accompanied by a private boat rowed or paddled by an individual meeting PGO requirements.

Boat days may be redeemed on other rivers, assuming all PGO rafting policies are followed, but travel time must be accounted for in the redemption of boat-days.

Gear must be reserved in advance, through staff and in all situations Project GO Youth, Training and Outreach trips have precedence over guide trips using PGO gear.

Gear is loaned with the expectation that it will be returned in the same condition in which it was borrowed (clean, dry and river-ready). The gear borrower agrees to replace or repair and damaged or lost equipment at his or her expense.

Jobs and Responsibilities on a Project GO Trip

There's a lot of work involved in getting a project GO trip down the river. Making sure that our mission is served adds to the load. In an effort to make things run a little more smoothly, and to ensure that no one person shoulders too much of the burden we've created a number of "roles" that should be filled on each and every trip. On a small trip, one person may take on several of these roles. Regardless, it is important that the roles be established early in the trip, like at the gear locker or even before that. Each role is important and if each one is done with excellence, the trip will be successful, our mission will be met and clients will have an excellent experience.

One more note about everyone's responsibility: BE ON TIME. If the meeting time for a trip is 8:00am, don't roll into camp at 8:00, then go to the bathroom, park your car, buy some coffee, and expect that to be OK. You need to be ready to go at the meet time.

TRIP LEADER

The trip leader is in charge of a trip. In the ideal situation the trip leader helps recruit the volunteers (with the help of PGO Staff). The trip leader is charged with completing and compiling all trip paperwork, and doing the trip accounting. Every program trip has a trip leader. The trip leader may also be the head guide and/or lead facilitator.

Pre-Trip: Work with Program Director to resolve any staffing issues. Communicate with Head Guide and Lead Facilitator.

At Locker: You are in charge! Lead team meeting and assign roles if that hasn't yet been done. Make sure Head Guide and Lead Facilitator are given a moment at team meeting to discuss their specific issues/concerns. Take cash from trip envelope for distribution as required.

At Put In: Keep an eye on the schedule, and make sure the whole team is doing their job. Provide money to host and shuttle as required.

End of Day: Coordinate with Head Guide to complete paperwork. Lead feedback loop, or ensure that someone else does.

HEAD GUIDE

The Head Guide is responsible for trip safety, and has the authority to cancel a trip for any reason, even at the last moment. It is common for the Head Guide to also be the trip leader on small trips, but on larger trip the responsibilities of both roles are too great. On issues involving safety, the Head Guide's word is LAW. On all other issues, the Trip leader has the final say.

Pre Trip: Obtain flow forecast. Evaluate conditions and guide experience.

At Locker: Check flow. Determine boat and guide configuration. Check sweep kit for completeness. Check med-kit for completeness.

At Put-In: Get guest liability release forms from Host and check for completeness and medical conditions. Put forms in med kit. Rig safety and rescue gear. Ensure appropriate safety talk is given. Ensure participant PFDs are correctly fastened and hold guide meeting to discuss incident management procedures etc. Let Lead facilitator say a few words.

On River: Provide incident management as required. Help keep good pace and boat spacing

At Lunch: Check in with all guides regarding their comfort level and crews. Make adjustments if necessary.

End of Day: Retrieve liability release forms from first aid kit and give to trip leader. Coordinate with Trip Leader to complete and file paperwork.

HOST

The Host is the Trip Leader's "right hand" in interfacing with the client group on the day of a trip. The Host will keep a lookout for the client group, and be the first to greet them when they arrive. The Host should give the client group leaders a quick overview of what the day will look like, tell the group where the rest rooms are, where to park, and collect the liability release forms. The Host will also pay for parking and put-in if not "on account" and ensure that all vehicles at put-in have parking tags as required by the venue.

At Locker: Get the "Host Kit" from the locker. Ensure it is stocked.

At Put-In: Locate the client group, collect signed liability release forms, confirm final head count. If not on account with put-in venue, pay for parking and put-in and ensure all cars at put-in have appropriate parking tags.

End of Day: Reload host kit.

SHUTTLE

Shuttle is responsible for arranging the logistics of moving vehicles as required to ensure everything and everyone winds up where they ought to. On most trips, Project GO uses a bus or van to transport our clients. This is scheduled by Staff after consultation with the trip leader and/or Head Guide. On some trips, especially small ones, a bus is just too expensive, so client cars will need to be shuttled to take out. No matter what, cars and trucks sufficient to hold the guides and the gear must be waiting at takeout.

At Locker: Get "shuttle kit" from locker. Ensure it is stocked. Make sure to bring a tarp and some towels.

At Put-In: Work out head count and car situation with help from Host. Make shuttle plan and communicate to all who need to know it. Get take-out gear (tarp, towels, guests' dry clothing) in appropriate vehicle. Provide maps & shuttle FAQ from shuttle kit to drivers. Collect keys and lock into single vehicle at take-out. Make sure you have a key for THAT vehicle. Pay for parking and ensure all takeout vehicles have tags as required.

At Take-out: Retrieve and distribute vehicle keys. Do final head count to ensure no one is left behind.

End of Day: Reload Shuttle Kit.

GEAR

Gear is responsible for seeing to it that all required gear gets to put in, and gets put back in the locker correctly.

At Locker: Work with Head Guide to determine what equipment and gear needs to be loaded. Supervise the loading of gear.

At Put-In: Designate beach space to be used by PGO trip. Work with all to get boats inflated, topped, and rigged. Sweep beach and lock extra gear in vehicle or back in locker.

At Lunch: Make sure boats are securely tied off and make sure they are splashed.

At Take-out: Designate PGO area in parking lot. Facilitate cleaning, drying and rolling of

boats. Coordinate loading of gear with Shuttle.

End of Day: Return all gear to locker and report damaged or missing gear to Trip Leader for inclusion in trip report.

LUNCH

Lunch is responsible for bringing everything required to serve lunch, for packing and rigging the lunch cooler, for giving the lunch talk, and perhaps most importantly, cleaning the dishes and cooler, and putting all of it away at the end of the trip!

At Locker: Load Project GO cooler(s), table(s) and “lunch kit” (cutting board, sharp knives, spreading knives, forks and spoons for serving, garbage bags, hand sanitizer and ziplock bags).

At Put-In: Get lunch and snacks from group. Load into appropriate coolers (on river; take-out). Distribute snacks to participants or guides as appropriate. Make sure lunch cooler is rigged.

At Lunch: De-rig and help carry lunch from boat. Pass out pre-lunch snacks. Facilitate preparation of lunch and give pre-lunch talk. Help pack-up and rig lunch cooler.

At Take-out: Distribute take-out snacks at a time that does not conflict with trip operation.

End of Day: Return, distribute or throw away extra food. Empty, clean and dry coolers. Put coolers in locker with lids open. Clean all utensils and cutting boards, restock lunch kit.

LEAD FACILITATOR

The Lead Facilitator helps our guides and clients get the most from our time together. This happens by speaking with the client group ahead of time to assess the group’s goals, by designing an overall facilitation plan that will meet those goals and by helping individual guides work with their crews to maximum effect. The Lead Facilitator usually runs opening games and initiatives and the closing activity.

Pre Trip: Contact client group to assess goals and formulate rough facilitation plan.

At Locker: Load any equipment required for initiatives. At morning team meeting, share plan and group goals with PGO personnel.

At Put-In: Check in with client group and discuss goals. Make suggestions to leaders as appropriate. If appropriate, lead games and initiatives. Communicate observations and suggestions about the group to guides

At Lunch: Lead game or activity if advisable /helpful. Check-in with individual guides to offer help and suggestions.

At Take-out: Ensure closing activity happens.

End of Day: Return materials to locker and participate in or lead volunteer closing / feedback loop.

Standard Operating Procedures for Communication and Incident Management

This is not intended to be a complete incident management plan, but simply a list of basic procedures that are used on Project GO trips. Any deviation from these guidelines should be discussed and agreed upon at the Guide meeting prior to put In.

1) Communication

a. Hand Signals

i. Head Guide will discuss and demonstrate at Guide Meeting

1. Eddy Out

2. Point Positive

3. Hurry up

4. Tighten boat spacing

5 First aid required

b. Whistle Signals

i. One blast: Attention! Look at me!

ii. Two blasts: Look upstream

iii. Three Blasts: Look downstream

iv. Three Repeating: Risk to Life and Limb

1. Eddy out on both sides of river, and gather resources.

2) Incident Command

a. Head Guide is in charge

i. May delegate roles. This should be agreed upon at Guide Meeting

b. Incident Commander

i. May be head guide

ii. Choose person with experience and judgement

c. Medical Incident Commander

i. Person with the highest current level of medical certification

ii. Make sure they are familiar with med kit and its location

d. Rigger

i. Person most familiar with ropes, knots and mechanical advantage

e. Gopher

i. Person who will get information to and from the Incident Commander

f. Crowd Control

i. individual charged with keeping clients and outsiders safe and out of the way

g. Designate backups, in case primaries are incapacitated.

3) Boat Spacing

a. Keep boats within 30 feet of one another in most cases.

b. Keep up with the boat in front of you.

c. Look back, and stop trip if you lose contact with boat behind you.

d. Enter rapids far enough apart to not bump into each other, but close enough to rescue swimmers

e. Do not eddy out after every rapid. Instead, Slow down, look back and make

sure the boat behind you is O.K.

i, If they need help.... do it!

ii, If they are O.K, keep moving

4) Rescue Procedures

a. Throwbags are for use from shore, NOT from a boat.

i. unless boat is securely tied to shore

b. Reach, Row, Throw, GO... in that order

c. Do not endanger yourself or take unnecessary risks

d. If ropes are deployed, set upstream safety to warn other boaters

e. Set downstream safety if the situation warrants it.

f. Be familiar with the use of "Snag Plate" in PGO throwbags.

g. In emergency situation, make sure at least one boat eddies out on each side of the river.