



Rafting Program Policies

Policies and procedures relating to Project GO's rafting activities

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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.

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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 2010 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 five boats, it must be broken into "pods," each with at least two boats, but no more than five. Each pod should be separated by at least one hour.
- 8) Each pod must carry an "Rescue" 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 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. The baseline “charge” for a trip is \$25 per participant, though larger groups, deserving groups with demonstrated need, and groups participating in “pilot programs” where we test new curriculum may pay less. 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, including a \$7 per participant contribution to Project GO’s insurance, BLM and county fees.

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 1 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.

