

# KASK Committee Blog - September 2022

[e-Newsletters](#) / By Dallas Veitch

I am writing this perched high in the Sierra Nevada mountains of California, my permanent residence, 300km from the ocean and ironically the birthplace of my kayaking journey. Five years ago, having spent 20 years making the drive from coastal San Francisco to the mountains at every opportunity, I decided to actually move there. I purchased a small recreational kayak for exploring alpine lakes and set off, with an old lifejacket and far too long paddle. Over the course of the summer, paddling became part of every day and I became increasingly confident. I was pretty competent, I thought. One afternoon, I was out in the middle of a lake at nearly 3000m when a late summer squall came out of the usual blue California sky. Suddenly, the wind howled down across the mountain tops, whipping up impressive waves seemingly instantly. I struggled to get back to shore in those conditions. My skeg was down, because I thought it should always be down, and I only knew how to paddle forward. Turning was a challenge. The waves rocked the kayak and icy water dumped into the enormous open cockpit. Rain stung my cheeks and drenched my cotton T-shirt. After a real battle, I made it back to shore and sat huddled and shivering beneath the lodgepole pines, surveying the maelstrom. "Perhaps there's something about kayaking that I don't know". I thought.

After the incident on that alpine lake, I sought out instruction, joined a club, and discovered a passion. The 3m recreational boat was soon cast aside in favor of a sea kayak proper, and I was quickly involved in the vibrant paddling community in the San Francisco Bay Area. On arriving back in New Zealand as a Covid exile, I turned up at the 2020 Meet the Paddlers in Waitangi as a participant and found my Kiwi tribe.

All of this is why I am so excited to be involved in the Meet the Paddlers program, developed and implemented by Steve Flack. I am thrilled to announce continued funding from Maritime NZ for kayaking safety workshops across the country this summer. The name has changed – KayakSafe NZ rather than Meet the Paddlers, to reflect the primary goal of the workshops - but the intent is the same: to educate people like me on kayak safely. People who simply don't know what they don't know. People who make mistakes out of ignorance, not stupidity. Mistakes that can be deadly. KayakSafe NZ wants to prevent those mistakes.

Of course, the ancillary benefit of these workshops is their ability to connect kayakers with their local clubs and paddling community where, if interested, they can obtain training on kayaking skills and support. Last year, local clubs and the sea kayak and community in New Zealand as a whole benefited from this stream of new members.

We are planning on running eight workshops from Northland to Otago, all run by volunteer regional leads and helpers. This is a tremendous commitment on the part of KASK members and I'm sincerely grateful for their time and effort and enthusiasm. Workshop dates and locations will be added to the KASK website when they are confirmed, so please keep your eyes peeled. And step up to volunteer at an event. You never know how your effort may alter the trajectory of someone's life.



The rec boat at Convict Lake, 2600m. Note the old life-jacket and very long paddle! I REALLY needed a workshop with KayakSafe NZ.

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<http://www.kask.co.nz>