



MAPA Newsletter

Mid-Atlantic Paddler's Association

Heading into Fall / Winter paddling.

MAPA had a really nice season of outrigger paddling. Our new base location at Hampton University turned out to be a good central location for paddlers. Russell and Jim P organized practices for three times a week, and we saw several new paddlers join the club. MAPA continued to utilize Bennett's Creek as a premium location for paddling marathon canoes, and there were good turnouts for Friday afternoon distance paddles at Bennett's. This MAPA Newsletter issue includes race write-ups from several club members. You won't want to miss out reading about Salli O'Donnell's Yukon 1000 race in her story starting on page 3. We also cover Paddle for the Bay, Chickahominy, Seaford, Bennett's KIS, and Suwannee River Challenge.



MAPA Force Five crew racing in PFB

Fall / Winter Practices

Typical Schedule:

Wednesday: 4:30 pm Newmarket Creek

Friday: 3:30 pm Bennett's Creek

Sunday: 7:30 am Bennett's Creek

Be sure to check FB & web-site for changes



MAPA Force Five crew racing in PFB 2018

RACE REPORTS

1. Yukon 1000 by Salli O'Donnell
2. Paddle for the Bay by Tim Jones
3. Chickahominy
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5. Suwannee River Challenge by Rusty McLain



Phil Mutton paddling surfski during Chickahominy Race.



Yukon 1,000 — Salli O'Donnell



After a long day of airports, planes, delays and lost baggage, we arrived at our hotel in the small mining town of Whitehorse in Canada's Yukon Territory. It was not long before midnight on Thursday, July 19th and we were already exhausted. My paddle partner Paul Cox – who flew in from Atlanta, GA and I from Norfolk, VA - connected in Vancouver for the final flight into Whitehorse. We were about to embark on what is billed as “the longest canoe race in the world,” the Yukon 1000.

Friday morning we met the Kevlar Seaward Passat that would be our home and “wheels” for a good 8 days. This is a type of boat that neither Paul nor I had ever been in; we had a lot of “getting to know it” to do! After a few hours of deciding how and where all the gear, food and water we would need for this race would be configured, we took it on a 12-mile test ride. After discovering and fixing some major issues with rudder control (thank you Team Kiwis!), we felt a bit more comfortable. The rest of that day was spent gathering supplies and food for the race. This is truly an unsupported race in that we must carry all we will need for the full extent. There are a few little pockets of civilization along the 1000 mile course but we are not allowed to take advantage of any of them unless we've an emergency, which also means we forfeit the race.

Saturday was full of boat adaptations, race and safety briefings, gear checks, satellite phone configs and tests (which were later sealed and only could be used in emergencies) and last minute purchases. My favorite boat adaptation was my footboard. Being mostly a surfskier, the idea of having to use widespread foot pegs for 1000 miles was not thrilling. I searched the surrounding area until I found a decent plank of wood that would span the pegs, then I duct-taped closed cell foam pads to its base on either end - it made a fantastically strong and stable footboard for me to drive against.

Sunday morning the race began at 7am. The water on this part of the Yukon River is crystal clear and pleasantly cold (when it is hot out). Within the first mile, we settled into 3rd place and for the next 20 or so miles, we had a nice push from the river. Then came Lake Laberge, a 30+ mile stretch of open, slow and potentially choppy water but at the far end it necked back down to the river and we were cruising at 10 to 11 mph! Unfortunately those speeds didn't last too long but it sure was reinvigorating to have them and periodically over the next few hundred miles we would see them again.

Late in the afternoon, we came across the 2nd place team, Team Hobo Squad. They had stopped to get a bite to eat and were surprised to see us come by. They scrambled to get back in their boat and eventually caught up to us - they were definitely faster. We went back and forth a couple of times but by mandatory stop/camp time they were ahead of us. As part of the race rules, we must stop and make camp for a minimum of 6 hours every day. The race managers said the beginning of this 6-hour stop must fall between 11pm and midnight, but they would allow a little leeway on either side of that hour. The Hobos stopped around 10:45 and, although they offered us to join them, we pushed on to find our own spot...and later wished we had accepted their offer! About 30 minutes later – tired, wet and cold – we found our spot. Paul changed into dry camp clothes and I threw on a wind breaker. We unloaded our gear and set up camp.

For safety, we had to position our food and water away from our boat and tents. In doing so, I noticed numerous moose tracks and bear prints, a skull and other bones, fur etc. I mentioned this to Paul and he, too, had come across some on the other side of his tent...we were NOT in a good place! After looking around more, we realized we were in a “killing field” (aka a good place for bear and moose to enjoy their supper) and knew we had to reposition. Aack, that night we learned a lot about properly scouting out our potential campsite before investing too much time and energy into it! Oddly, that first night was our most mentally challenging night as it seems from that point on our rationale appeared to be more intact.

For the next couple of days, we went back and forth with the Hobos because they occasionally took breaks to get out of their boat, we didn't. On the 2nd night, we camped with them on the same little island just past Fort Selkirk although they reached it first. It was on that 2nd day they asked if we ever stopped and, in retrospect, we should have lied and said that we did often! They quickly adjusted their strategy and we did not see them – or any other racer - until the morning of the 4th day.

By this point, the waters of the Yukon River had already been insulted by the confluence of the White River. Around Race Mile 364 (afternoon of Day 3), it was mesmerizing and sad to see the silty plumes of the merging White River obliterate the beautifully clear Yukon waters. From that point on, not only did we listen to the hissing of the silt as our boat glided along and our paddles dipped in but we had to find clear sources of river or creek water to filter as the silt was so pervasively thick that it clogged Paul's water filter in less than 2 seconds. To make matters worse, we ran into our first of several fires at the White River confluence. Visibility was not good, smoke was thick, burnt flotsam everywhere, water now silty white and hissing – not my most favorite portion of the race.

Day 4's anticipated highlights were passing Dawson City (Race Mile 440) and entering the United States (Race Mile 532). Dawson City is the race's only supported drop out point. Up to then, we knew if we had any issues and needed to pull out of the race, as long as we could hobble to Dawson City, we'd be taken care of. After seeing the Hobos off and on in the distance on the morning of Day 4, we stopped to filter some water at a clear creek just past Dawson; we did not see the Hobos again until that night. We paddled through another huge section of fires and smoke and finally crossed into Alaska, 11 miles farther we arrived at Eagle. It was within the mandatory stop window that we climbed up the steel stairs to Eagle, found the phone and called US Customs to announce our arrival into the United States. Not wanting to make camp there, we pushed off for the island across the way and came across the Hobo's camp. They invited us and we joined them for a windy, windy few hours of rest.

Day 5 was full of fires, wind and rain. We thought we saw the Hobos late in the day (they confirmed they did see us) but that was the last glimpse of them until the finish. That night we found a comfy little place to camp, enjoyed taking in the beautiful surroundings, then tucked ourselves away for a nice little rest. Little did we know how dramatically different the next couple of days would be.

Up until this point, the Yukon River carves a path through mountains and bluffs but on the morning of Day 6 we hit Circle, AK (~Race Mile 700). For the next couple hundred miles the Yukon River meanders through an area referred to as “the flats.” There are no mountains nor bluffs to slow down the winds and the river itself works its way around multitudes of islands and sloughs that are transformed annually by the spring's ice movements. The river gets very wide, several miles wide, with competing currents that you had to fight against not to be taken down a path adding miles to your race. Unfortunately, we did not read this section well and by the afternoon of Day 6, we were passed by Team Kokura and later by Team Independence Poland. We went back and forth with Poland and even camped together on the same little beach that night but since they arrived there first, they left there first the next morning. After that, we saw no one until our finish on Day 8.

By the way, we did see much wildlife along the way – eagles, moose, bears, beavers, links, and wolverines. There were 31 teams that applied for this race, 14 teams accepted and 13 teams completed it. At the finish, the race managers were there to greet us with a Yukon River chilled beer, a race T-shirt, a commemorative coin, pictures, interviews and assistance in unloading our gear. The logistics they endured to put on this race for us was phenomenal and I only hope I can return and do it again.

Yukon 1,000 Photos



Paddle for the Bay — Tim Jones



The first Saturday in August has been the traditional day for the running of Paddle for the Bay. It still is, despite tropical storms, cancellations, racing conflicts, etc. The race was started by Lillie Gilbert in the early 1990's as an ocean race for sea kayaks. Hardly anyone had surf skis (let alone OC-1's or SUPs) around here then.. The original race course ran from the 1st Street/Rudee inlet beachfront to Fort Story, and paddlers dealt with ocean conditions as they were. There was only one year, 1992, I believe, when the race was moved to the bay because the surf was too rough. I remember one year a board surfer charging up the beach and throwing a tantrum about kayaks launching from (his) beach into the surf area. I believe he threatened to sue someone.

Since MAPA took over the race, the venue has been the Chesapeake Bay at Sarah Constant Park. This is partly for risk management reasons (fewer worries about inexperienced paddlers having to launch and land in ocean surf), and partly because of the excellent support provided by the lifeguards of the City of Norfolk. Kudos to Dan Jones and his crew for continuing support. As Hampton Roads paddlers have branched into OC-1's, Surf Skis, and Stand up paddleboards, the race has continued to provide a low-key racing challenge on a summers day. While not the white knuckle challenge of a bay crossing or a downwinder, or the unremitting grind of a long endurance race, it is a nice chance for local paddlers to race and fellowship.

This year's race was again blessed with fairly decent weather (not too windy, not too hot). A competitive group of surf skiers was paced by Heather Davis, who was first overall. Chuck and Tara styled it in a tandem surf ski, and MAPA entered two OC-6s. Other results can be found on the Facebook. Again, big thanks to the SUP community, who just love to race. Of course, thanks to the Chesapeake Bay Foundation for their work in support of our paddling venues. Thanks to volunteers like April Runnebohm Jones, Vic Sorensen, Susie Johnston, Jim Farrington, Jim Perry, and Russell Brooks.

Seaford Challenge in the books

We had a good turnout of surf ski and outrigger paddlers for the Seaford Challenge in Yorktown. Peter Morgan finished first overall and first in the surf ski class (photo above). MAPA fielded two OC-6 teams and both competed well in the approx. 7 mile race around the Goodwin Islands. The weather was in the high 70's with very little wind.



Peter Morgan paddling toward the finish line.



Lee steers the Force Five for the last few meters.



The mirage crew steered by Rusty race back to the finish.

Chickahominy Race

Two six-person outrigger canoes, some surf skis, and several stand-up paddlers competed in this year's Chickahominy Race.



MAPA KIS Race, September 13, Bennett's Creek Park by Rusty McLain

Charlie, Rusty, Vic, Jim F, Susie were in attendance on a perfect day. Once again as is often the case at Bennett's Creek the tide and wind were in opposite directions, as if in some cosmic power play to negated paddlers from receiving any benefit from either. Susie in her OC-1 started early to start enjoying her paddle as soon as possible. All four C-1's were within a few seconds of each other as we reached the large wide section of the river just before the Route 17 bridge. Rusty had the great idea to cut inside the huge crane barge that had been working on building a pier for a new over 55 community being built behind the Food Lion on Route 17 to cheat the incoming tide. Now we had been cutting between this barge and shore under the new pier pilings for weeks without an issue. No so on race day, Rusty let Charlie go first into the gap between the barge and the pilings, however today there was a dock float blocking the opening and to make matters worse, they had put temporary crossbars between the pilings so they could install the pier joists. These crossbars were only about 2 feet above the water so Rusty made a quick turn and headed into the shallow water gap between shore and the innermost pilings. Jim F, said ah hell no, and backed up and went back and out and around the barge. Charlie decided to duck down and squeeze under the crossbars, the first two were got under fairly easy, the last one was about 6" closer to the water which wouldn't have been possible for most humans but he got under it and finally through. Vic was the only smart one electing to go on the outside of the barge from the git go. Vic was first around the obstacle; Rusty emerged several seconds behind Vic and Charlie a few more seconds behind Rusty. Jim F lost the most time having to backtrack and go around the barge and getting stuck on the shore side. Rusty with the inside line close to shore and missing most of the incoming tide, was first to the bridge, with Charlie and Vic right behind. Charlie passed Rusty just before heading into the first cut to go around the outer island, increasing it slightly as we headed through the shallow passageway before coming back out into the main channel near the osprey nest. There is a reason they call Charlie the "Marsh Master" he is fast in those conditions and he can make those sharp turns. The race order remained unchanged, in the deep water heading back to the bridge with the tide and against the wind, Rusty made up a little time, Charlie was most likely just taking it easy because he could. When we headed into the little creek river left just after passing back under the Route 17 bridge, we decide the course would be around a little island not far up the creek. An island that we had never gone around in practice as we always chose to head up into the more winding passages. Rusty was only 10 seconds behind Charlie when we headed behind this little island, so he got a pretty good look at how Charlie managed the downed tree that blocked the entire passage. There was a gap under the trunk of the tree on the left side that was big enough for one boat to pass through if you ducked down and kept your arms and paddle in as you passed under. It was mere child's play for Charlie compared with contortions he went through getting under the temporary crossbars on the pier earlier. From this point on Charlie opened up his lead to 47 seconds winning easily with an impressive time of 57 minutes. Rusty, Vic and Jim F finished behind MAPA's own "Marsh Master" and Susie enjoyed her paddle.

Suwannee River Challenge by Rusty McLain

Got a call from my Brother Gary talking about a race near his new job in Lake Park GA. The Suwannee River Challenge had three distances 26 miles – the Marathon, 52 miles the Challenge and the 232 mile non-stop adventure. Who doesn't love a 10 hour drive and long race and another 10 hour drive home. I opted for the Challenge, 52 miles on a fantastic scenic river made famous by Stephen Fosters classic song," Way Down upon the Suwannee River". I attended the race meeting the night before held at long time race supporter, local outfitters American Canoe Adventures (ACA1.com) in White Springs FL John and his wife run the place and were very knowledgeable about the river, the conditions and the challenges we might face and they are down to earth great folks. Rod Price race organizer talked about the logistics for the 232 miler. I will be back to see them and paddle the Suwannee again to enjoy the river. The 52 mile challenge started at the Fargo Boat Ramp on the northeast side of the Route 441 bridge, 231 miles from the Gulf of Mexico. The adventure paddlers started at daybreak 14 miles upstream. Due to hurricane Michael that recently passed this area just to the north and west many folks had elected not to come this year.

Fortunately the hurricane passed by the areas quickly; unfortunately it didn't increase the water levels of the Suwannee River at all. Only two people elected to do the 52 miler, myself in my C-1 and Anita from Florida in her new Stellar SR. Anita had done the race a bunch of times before but this was her first time in a SurfSki. The dark river water at the start was moving some, but not so much that it was difficult to maintain our position on the start line. We left at 7:26 am and I started my GPS as we departed. The river in this area is not very wide 35 to 50 feet across and very twisty and turny. Spanish moss hung from most of the trees that drooped over the river and there was a great deal of fog on the water making the start kind of dark, spooky and surreal. Soon the sun, low in the sky, would align with a section of the river and the fog and glare of the sun was so bright you couldn't see. Not to worry, the river would turn again and sun wouldn't reach into the river bed. On one particular corner there was a high sand bank interspersed with vines as I paddled around the long arcing bank I was startled by movement on the bank it was my shadow, but due to the angle of the sun reflecting off the glassy water my shadow as 6 feet high up the bank. I thought to myself, hey that guy has good technique. A short while later I saw two deer scamper up the bank.

My first hour was done and I had gone 5.75 miles, the next hour was even faster now I had traveled 13.1 miles, a quarter of the race was behind me. Strainers, downed trees, and trees growing up in the middle of the river kept me on my toes as well as two more deer. I snorted trying to clear my nose (remember that's why I always race in my lime green PaddleMe sportswear shirt) and looked up in time to see a 6 foot long alligator flop and slap the water as he left his sunning spot on a sandy beach. He stayed on the surface for a bit sizing me up as I approached then he dove into the dark water. I guess he didn't like my snot colored shirt.

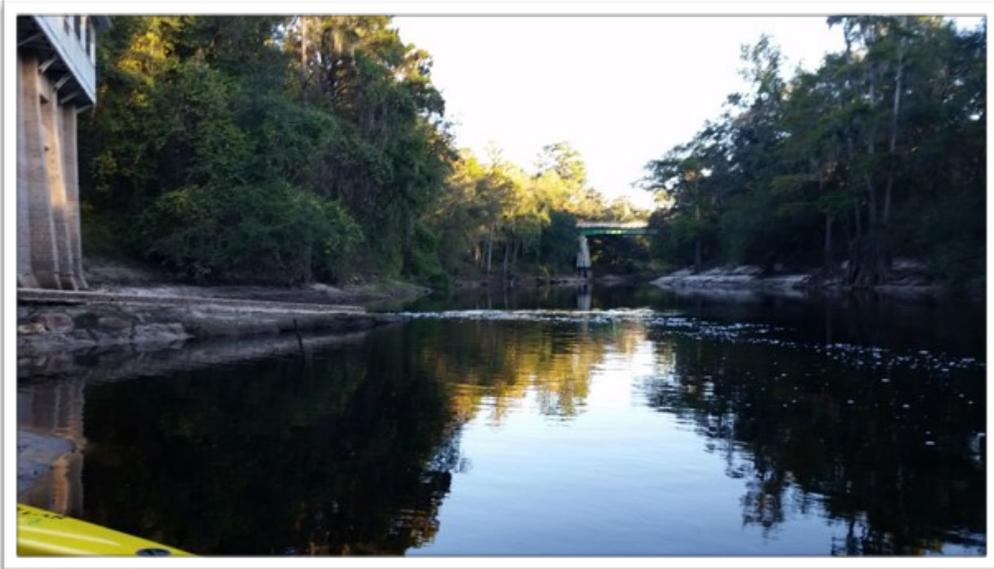
Twenty minutes later, about 70 feet ahead of me in the river I saw a large head and snout swimming from right to left. This alligator was definitely bigger than the first I'd estimate from the



tip of his nose to the back of his head to be at least 22". As I approached he turned toward me and he didn't submerge until I was 35 feet from him. When I passed by I was only about 7 feet from where he slipped below the surface, small bubbles rose to the surface. I had seen bubbles like that a couple of other times upstream of this encounter, could it be that I didn't see those alligators before they saw me? Another deer, numerous birds of various types and sizes, and a bunch of squirrels scampering on the side of the river and in the ground palms, sounding like something much bigger kept me company in the next section and the Georgia Florida line. It had been 26.2 miles when I came to the first bridge and the starting point for the 26 mile marathon. My GPS time was 4 hours and 11 minutes, not bad, hope the second half goes as well. The river has fast and slow sections, it seemed to be mostly slow sections for the next bunch of miles, but that would all change around 8 miles from the finish.

Big Shoals is the only Class III whitewater in Florida, John from ACA and Rod Price race organizer strongly suggested portaging this section, regaling us with horrific tales of racers that didn't heed the warnings and ended up banged, bruised and bloody not to mention the broken boats. The portage is on the right side of the river just a little section of beach and an opening parting the trees. Usually they have a sign noting that this is the portage, of course the shoals, the 3 to 4 drop off where the river disappears over the edge and the unmistakable sound of a mini waterfall were enough to let me know it was time to get out. The portage was only about 1/8 of a mile and had its own hazards. First was the 27" high rock ledge between the beach landing and the path. After a fun little run, the path goes right through a campsite, three tents and fire pit.

Finally the trail has been undercut by river erosion at higher levels, so at the edge of the campsite, there is a 3-4 foot drop with a bunch of pine tree roots sticking out into air. I slid the nose of my boat down onto a bush at the bottom and left the back up on the original higher part of the path. I made my way down the drop off trying not to get caught or trip in the roots. Then down the slippery rocks and more roots get to the water. There were several playboaters out at base of the biggest drop. Fast moving water at the bottom of big shoals, then section called little shoals, and three other fast moving sections I would classify as Class I+. The last of these drops came just before the railroad and Route 41 Bridge that marked 3 miles to the finish line. Usually the finish was just before the Route 136 Bridge in White Springs, but a downed tree (not hurricane Michael related) at the normal take out pushed the finish to just below the Bridge next to the discharge of the town namesake White Springs. My time was 9:06:47 and my GPS said I had traveled 53.9 miles. Would I do this race again? You bet I would.



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