

San Juan County Park Vessel Launch Permit and KELP 2010

San Juan County Parks and Recreation wants to assure that all motor, sail and human-powered vessel operators, launching from San Juan Park, located on the west side of San Juan Island, are informed of the laws protecting killer whales and other marine wildlife as well as laws and guidelines for responsible boating and paddling behavior within the San Juan County Marine Stewardship Area.

From May 1 – September 30, 2010, a new vessel launch permit system for recreational users will be implemented at San Juan Park. Prior to launching, all vessel operators, including paddlers, launching from the Park into Haro Strait will be required to obtain a permit to launch. Commercial companies that already operate within a permit system will have additional stipulations in their contracts. The new permit requirements were vetted by the San Juan County Parks Commission and consistent with San Juan County Code.

New Recreational Vessel Launch Permit Information:

Recreational launch permits are required May 1- September 30, 2010. To obtain the permit recreational users are required to attend a Vessel Code of Conduct training, which will be offered from 8am-8pm daily at the San Juan Park office. The payment of a fee is required, and will be waived for individuals with a San Juan County drivers' license or voter registration card. Single day use is \$ 7.00 per vessel. Registered campers are allowed multiple day use for \$7.00 per vessel. An annual Season Pass can be obtained for \$35.00. A completed Vessel Launch Permit must be kept with operators when launching and on the water. In addition, a dated color permit tag must be securely attached in visible place on the vessel's deck.

Vessel Code of Conduct Training Information:

San Juan County Parks and Recreation contracted The Whale Museum's Soundwatch Boater Education Program to provide the Vessel Code of Conduct training. Soundwatch promotes responsible boater behavior around marine wildlife. The Kayak Education and Leadership Program, KELP, is a Soundwatch program that targets recreational and commercial kayakers on issues specific to paddlers. The required training given by Soundwatch KELP educators will include information on the laws protecting killer whales and other marine wildlife as well as laws and guidelines for responsible boating behavior. WA State vessel laws and Be Whale Wise guidelines, and a specific Kayaker Code of Conduct, crafted collaboratively with the San Juan Island Kayak Association with input from NOAA Fisheries and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, will be the focus of the training for all vessel operators.

Human-Powered Vessel Operators' Information:

Paddling is a quiet and potentially low-impact way to explore the San Juan County Marine Stewardship Area. Even so, kayakers and operators of other human-powered vessels still have the potential to disturb marine wildlife. Human-powered vessel operators have unique challenges of limited maneuverability, limited sight distance, and a variety of safety concerns all requiring special consideration to remain in compliance with laws and to reduce their overall risks of disturbing marine wildlife. The required Vessel Code of Conduct training promotes the Kayaker Code of Conduct to address the unique challenges of human-powered vessel operators.

Commercial Company Permit Information:

Commercial Kayak Tour Companies using San Juan County Parks have an ongoing permit contract with San Juan County Parks and Recreation. From May 1 to September 30, 2010 additional terms have been added: All trip guides and guests must complete a County Parks approved Vessel Code of Conduct training prior to using San Juan Park. This can be accomplished in two ways. Guides may attend a commercial company guide Vessel Code of Conduct training, be placed on an approved guide list and be responsible for educating their guests and collecting guest-signed Kayaker Code of Conduct pledges documenting their training prior to use of the San Juan Park. Alternatively guides may choose to bring their guests to the Vessel Code of Conduct trainings taking place daily from 8am to 8pm at the San Juan Park office and the Soundwatch KELP educator will train both the guide and their guests prior to launching, and both will be required to sign pledge forms. All permitted commercial company vessels launching from San Juan Park are additionally required to identify themselves by placing a disk, measuring at least 5" in diameter, of contrasting color to the deck/hull seam on the bow end of their kayaks.

For More Information:

San Juan County Parks and Recreation
<http://www.co.san-juan.wa.us/parks/>
360-378-8420

Soundwatch/Kayak Education and Leadership Program
<http://www.whalemuseum.org/programs/soundwatch/soundwatch.html>
360-378-4710 ext 31 or 33