

Greetings Club SAKE,

The protocols for dockside practices have been finalized, and can be accessed on our web site at <https://clubsake.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/FINAL-Dock-Practice-Protocols.pdf>. Dockside practices will begin in April, as soon as the Health Coaches have been trained and a few more supplies have been put in place. Club SAKE will be able to sign up on Team Cowboy when these sessions get going. WAM members should look to their leadership for news on when and where their dockside opportunities will take place. Survivor's coaches cannot manage the full team on the 2-paddler model, but will consider returning when the 8-paddler model is proven out, subject to TSNW approval. For the time being, Survivor members are welcome in Club SAKE sessions.

The question on everyone's mind for next steps is, "When can we return to full dragon boat practices?" There are a number of reasons to be hopeful that this can happen soon, including:

- Progress in the rollout of vaccines
- Falling case counts and death rates
- Promising observations that vaccines may reduce asymptomatic transmission of the virus
- Washington's upgrade to Phase 3 protocols

At the same time, there continue to be factors that are giving public health authorities reasons to be cautious:

- The uncertainty regarding some troubling variants
- Incomplete evidence regarding asymptomatic spread in vaccinated people
- Unknowns about length of time the vaccine confers antibody protection

Our new Health Advisor, Nancy Carney, has immediate access to the latest in scientific evidence via the CDC, the VA, and colleagues and publications through her job. As she works with the Board to determine next steps, we will be transparent in how the process is going, and we will post updates to the new Covid-19 page on the web site. In the meantime, as much as we might like to return to the water, we are bound by the recommendations of the State.

At this moment, the guidelines from the State of Washington continue to require masking and maintaining a physical distance of a minimum of 6 feet, regardless of vaccination status. In a dragon boat, this means that paddlers would need to be seated zig-zag and in alternating rows. This would mean no more than 5 paddlers in a standard boat, and 3 paddlers in a small boat. There are parts of the country where waters are calm enough for clubs to do this, and some are doing so. Unfortunately, our Lake Washington waters are rough and unpredictable, and this is why our club safety guidelines require no fewer than 7 paddlers plus steer to operate, and 4 plus steer for small boats, conditions allowing. The long and short of it is that compliance with guidelines from the State precludes us from being safe in the boat.

The spring is coming, and there is tremendous hope in the air for the progress that is being made against this virus. We hear you asking, "Why is this taking so long?" We ask for your patience while Nancy does the work in her new position, and to remember that it takes time to write the safety protocols for any activity we open. We are as anxious to get back to dragon boating as you are, and we are doing the best we can while keeping the safety of our community and our public health obligations in mind. As conditions change, we expect there will be new guidelines from the State. We will assess what, if anything, they change as they come.

We are hoping the end is near and we can see each other again in training. Until then, as always, feel free to reach out if you have questions or concerns, and we will see you at the AGM on the 27th.