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DEVELOPMENT OF KAYAK TOURISM AT LAGUNA BÁVARO PUNTA CANA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



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Credits

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TECHNICAL REPORT

DEVELOPMENT OF KAYAK TOURISM AT LAGUNA BAVARO, PUNTA CANA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

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In cooperation with
Consortio Dominicano de Competitividad Turística
Dominican Sustainable Tourism Alliance
La Altagracia Tourism Cluster
Fundación Ecologica y Social Natura Park, Inc.

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DISCLAIMER

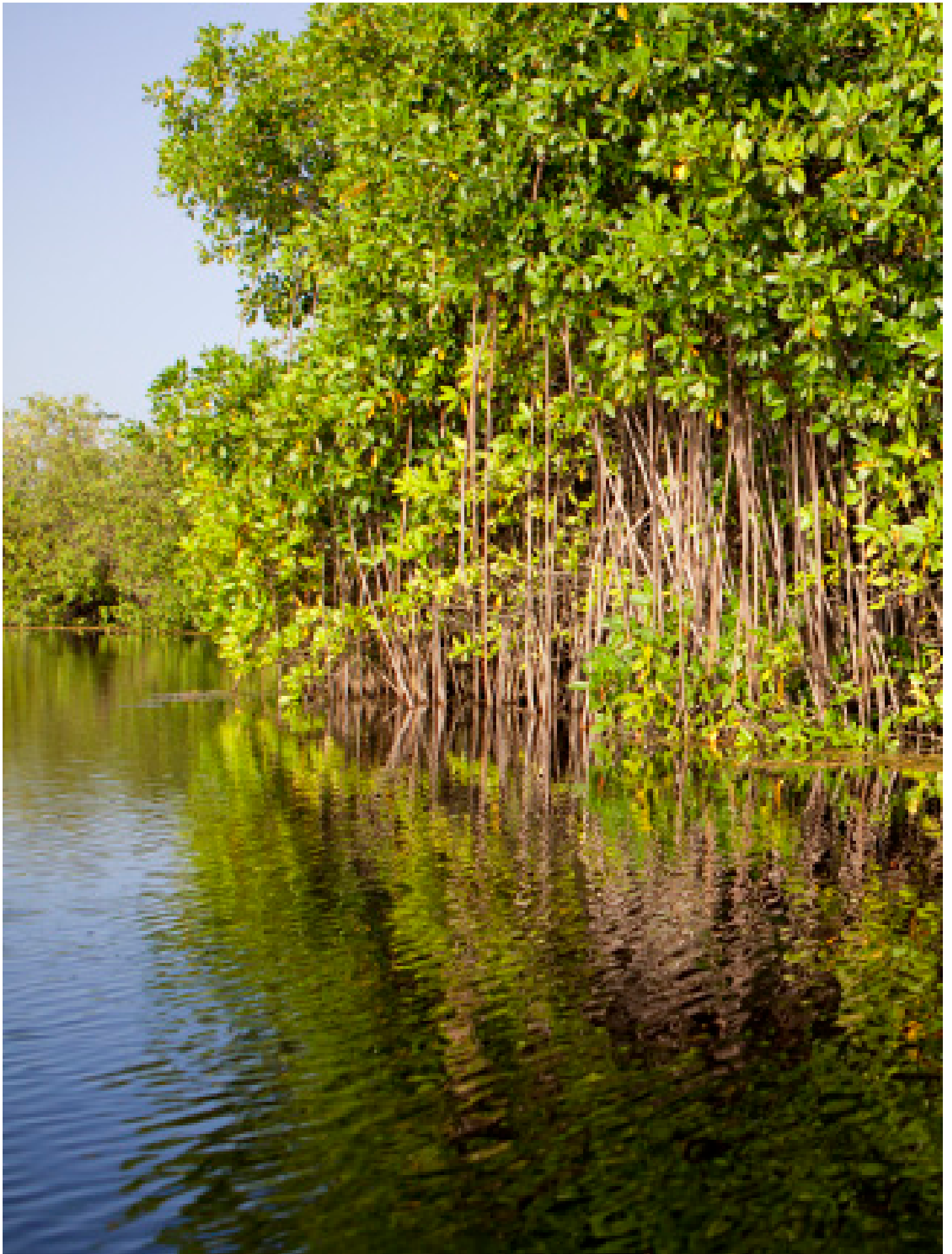
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of technical assistance to Laguna Bavaro Refugio de Vida Silvestre September 11-17, 2011 by a team lead by Jerry Bauer from the US Forest Service International Institute of Tropical Forestry (IITF). Team members included Jerry Wylie, kayak instructor trainer, Jorge Brocca, Director of the Hispanola Ornithological Society, Liliana Peralta, IITF graphic designer, and Bienva Bauer, IITF volunteer.

The team conducted kayak training for six guides (Annex A) and developed recommendations for signage and maps as recommended in their previous report on sustainable tourism at the Refuge (Bauer, Brocca and Wylie 2011). This work was in support of the Dominican Sustainable Tourism Alliance, a multi-year program funded by the US Agency for International Development and La Altagracia Tourism Cluster. Logistical support was provided by Elena Cruz, Executive Director of the Altagracia Tourism Cluster.

2.0 TRAINING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of this training was to provide the skills to lead a trip for beginner paddlers on a protected lagoon. The guides' ability to rescue capsized clients should be at the 100% level (no errors), whereas their ability to manage groups and demonstrate proper paddling technique can be at the 80 or 90% level to be acceptable. This is intended to be the introductory training for the kayak guides. Additional training in kayaking and environmental interpretation is needed and anticipated.

Specific objectives are for each student, at the end of the kayak training, to be able to:

- Know the area in detail and plan different types of tours
- Screen clients' health and skills required for participation
- Identify potential hazards
- Understand on and off-water group organization
- Provide a pre-launch briefing
- Demonstrate basic paddling skills
- Demonstrate effective rescue & towing skills
- Repair and maintain boats and equipment
- Demonstrate basic chart and compass use
- Safely and effectively lead a small group tour





3.0 DESCRIPTION OF TRAINING

The present 2 ½ day kayak training was modified from the American Canoe Association's Trip Leader program (www.americancanoe.org).

The following subjects were discussed during classroom sessions and field exercises:

- Introduction to kayaks, paddles, and safety equipment
- Safety procedures for guides and tourists
- Assessing client's abilities and limitations
- Pre-launch briefings
- Outdoor etiquette
- Planning tours
- Checking life jackets
- Launching/landing
- Organizing groups on the water
- Signals and verbal communication
- Rescue and towing skills
- Basic paddling skills
- Basic first aid
- Care, cleaning and repair of equipment
- Tips for on-water photography and video

The first morning session was in the classroom where we held a general introduction, demonstrated the use of equipment and discussed kayak photography. Special emphasis was placed on safety issues for both the guides and tourists. In the afternoon we used a Spanish language DVD to introduce all the basic strokes and maneuvers (www.KayakPaddling.net). Spanish and English Kayak vocabulary was also practiced (Annex B).

On the second day we practiced all strokes and maneuvers and basic rescues and did a 2-hour practice tour on the Sendero Aquatica in the afternoon. This was the first time many of the trainees had been in a kayak.

In the last session, on the morning of the third day, the group discussed details of pre-trip orientation and briefings, including proper paddle positions and life jacket fitting. This was followed by a short tour with everyone in double kayaks, practice rescues with two clients in the water, and a review and test of all basic strokes.

4.0 RESULTS OF TRAINING

After approximately 8 hours of on-the-water training, all guide candidates were able to properly fit life jackets, enter and exit a kayak from a dock, control their boats using basic strokes and maneuvers, tow a kayak and a swimmer in the water, and recover two people from the water after a capsized. In addition, they could demonstrate the proper hand position and use of a kayak paddle.

However, the training fell short of accomplishing all objectives. There was insufficient time for exploring and becoming familiar with all of the area's attractions, doing more than basic rescues near the dock (which was also used by students for observing activities on the water), or for having each candidate lead a tour. In addition, some things could not be accomplished with the boats that were available.



5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR KAYAK TOURISM

1. Additional Kayak Training and Final Assessment - There are several areas where additional training and practice is needed to provide adequate supervision and safety for kayak tours. These should be successfully completed and assessed before tours begin. They include the following:

- All strokes and rescues introduced in the preliminary training should be practiced individually or by the group once a week for at least three hours.
- Rescues in more difficult settings, such as thick aquatic weeds and in small mangrove channels where maneuverability is limited, and rescues where the guide has also capsized.
- Paddling and doing rescues with longer and narrower boats when they are available.
- Bracing for support in narrow boats using a high-quality paddle.
- Boat maintenance and repair with the actual boats they will be using.
- Chart and compass use after the water trail map is developed.
- Giving a pre-trip briefing in English.
- Leading an actual tour.
- Review of basic first aid.

2. Kayak Equipment - Currently the Tourism Cluster is awaiting delivery of paddles, two double Ocean brand sit-on-top kayaks for clients and one single kayak for the guide. These kayaks were purchased by IITF with AID funds and will be donated to La Altagracia Tourism Cluster to help jump start the kayak commercial operation. This will allow for a tour of up to four clients. Equipment that was used during the training and given to the Tourism Cluster includes five high-quality life jackets, five kayak seats, one long line tow belt, one short tow leash, a first aid kit, and one waterproof map case. In addition, there is also a small folding saw, large camp saw, and large clippers for cleaning blocked passages through the mangroves.

The purchase of additional kayaks is recommended, including one single kayak for a guide and four or five more double kayaks for clients. This would accommodate up to 14 clients in seven kayaks at one time with two guides.

3. Kayak Ramp - A kayak launch ramp should be constructed at the site identified earlier (Bauer, Wyle, Brocco Laguna Bávaro report 2011). This launch ramp is of utmost importance for the safety of guides and tourists. Also, the water reeds need to be cut back so a clear path from the land to the lagoon is open. The boat dock should not be used as a kayak launch site due to safety issues.

4. Kayak Maps - Two maps are needed to illustrate the kayak tour route and its key attractions. A large map with regulations and recommendations for a safe and enjoyable tour should be installed at the ramp where the kayaks are launched, and a small 8 ½ x 11 inch version can be used in a waterproof case during the tour. The smaller map could also be sold as a souvenir in the gift shop. These maps are presented in Annex C.





5. Tour Group Size - For safety, it is recommended that tours be limited, at least initially, to a maximum of six people in five boats per guide. This could be three doubles, one double plus four singles, or five single kayakers. (Although the single kayakers are limited to guides, most double kayakers can be paddled by a single person sitting in the middle position.)

6. Guide Leader - One of the students could be hired part-time to provide overall supervision and leadership for the kayak tourism program at the Refuge. Before tours begin, this person can organize and assist other guides with practicing all strokes and rescues once every week.

7. Liability Insurance - Insurance should be obtained to protect guides and La Altagracia Tourism Cluster from claims resulting from accidents. An insurance release form is commonly used as the first part of this legal protection. An example of standard release form is presented in Annex D for possible use as a model.

8. Guide Uniforms - To properly identify the guides and to create a brand and visitor confidence, each guide should wear a uniform. These should consist of a t-shirt with the Laguna Bavaro kayak logo, fast-dry shorts, a hat, and sunglasses.

9. Kayak related souvenirs and products – The gifts shop should sell souvenirs and products of interest to kayak tourists. Souvenirs could include a map of the kayak route, and a hat and t-shirt with kayak logo. See Bauer, Wylie, Brocca (2011) for examples of some of these souvenirs. Kayak-related products could include sunscreen, sunglasses, water shoes, water proof cameras, and safety whistle.



6.0 REFERENCES CITED

American Canoe Association. www.americancanoe.org.

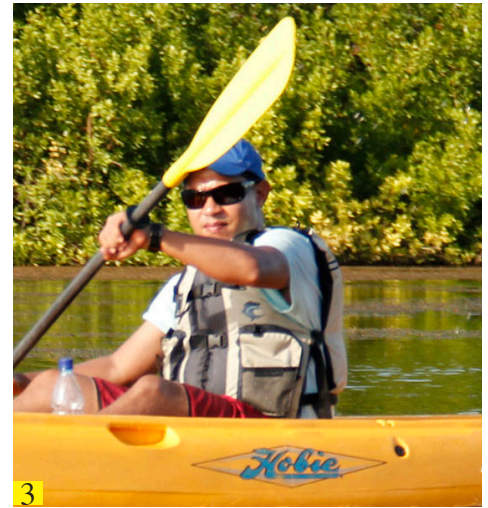
Bauer, Jerry, Jorge Brocca and Jerry Wylie. 2011. Recommendations for Tourism and Biodiversity Conservation at Laguna Bavaro Wildlife Refuge Dominican Republic. Report prepared by the US Forest Service International Institute of Tropical Forestry for the USAID/Dominican Republic in support of the Dominican Sustainable Tourism Alliance.

ANNEXES

ANNEX A

LIST OF PARTICIPANT

No.	Apellido / Nombre	Sexo	
		Hombre	Mujer
1	Dionelis Beltre		X
2	Marilene Evangelista		X
3	Neister Féliz	X	
4	Cristian Matos Cruz	X	
5	Joel Ramírez de la Rosa	X	
6	Jilbert Rijo Pedro	X	



Remar/Remo - Paddle
Hoja de remo - Paddle blade
Palo – Paddle shaft
Cara de Fuerza (de hoja) - Power face (of paddle)
Cara Posterior (de hoja) - Back side (of paddle)
Golpe - Strike/Stroke
Apoyo - Brace/Support

Chaleco de Salvavida - Life Jacket
Apretado - Tight fit
Rescate - Rescue

Vertical - Vertical
Horizontal - Flat
Paralelo - Parallel

Adelante - Forward
Pare - Stop
Gire - Spin/Turn
Vuele Izquierda - Turn left
Vuele derecha - Turn right
Curcuro - Circle
Atras/Reverso - Back/Backward/Reverse
Detras - Behind

Timon - Rudder
Silla - Seat
Posterior/Cola - Posterior/Butt/Tail
Hombros - Shoulders
Cadera - Hip
Rodilla - Knee
Nariz - Nose

Levantar - Lift
Llevar - Carry

Ave - Bird
Laguna - Lagoon
Nido - Nest
Peces - Fish
Tortuga - Turtle

KAYAK LAUNCH SITE



INFORMACIÓN

Sendero Acuático





Para su mejor disfrute:

- Debe estar acompañado por un Guía.
- Siempre utilizar el chaleco salvavidas.
- Respete la tranquilidad de las especies que habitan el Refugio.

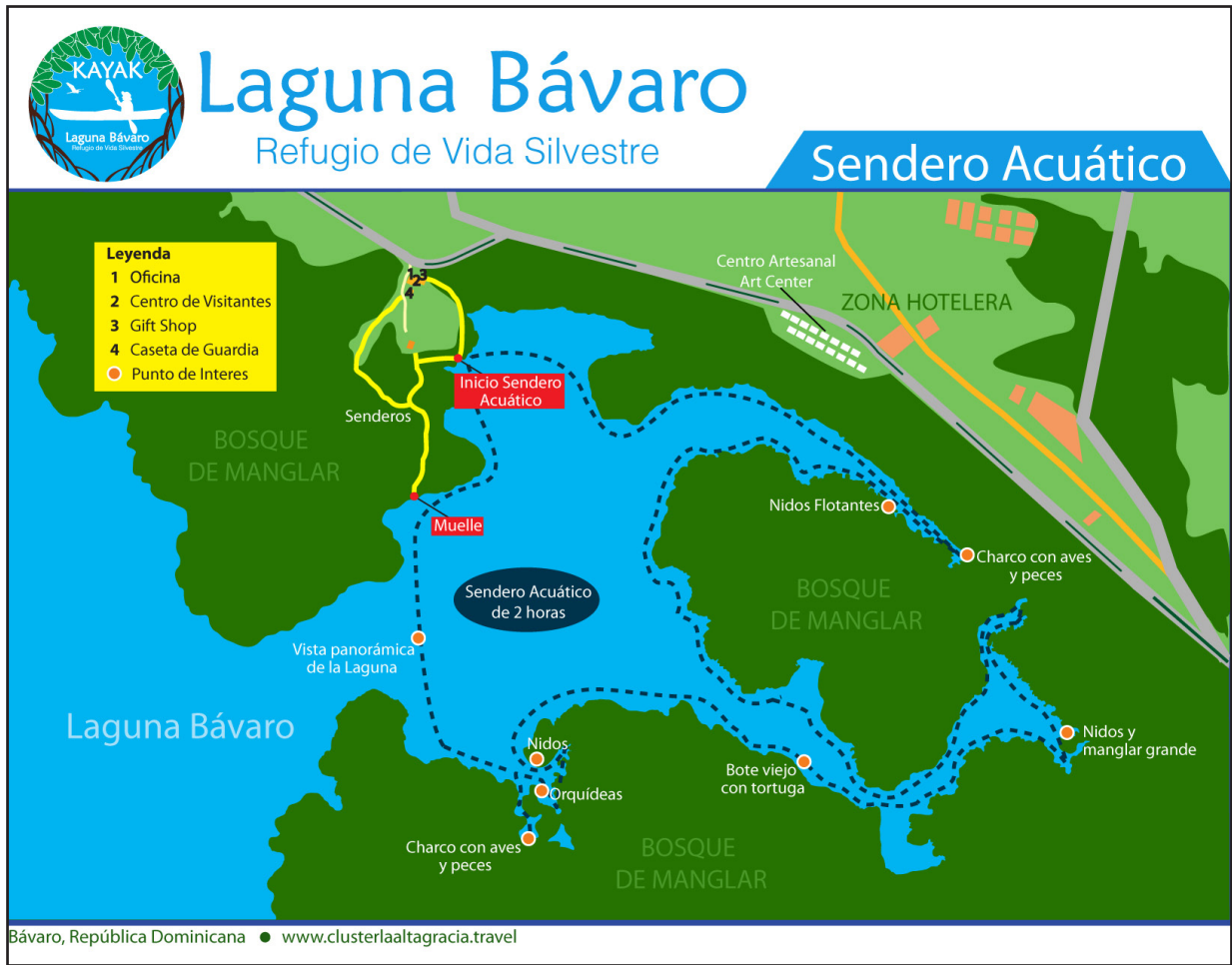








Dimensions / Dimensiones: 8.5 x 11 inches / pulgadas.



ANNEX D EXAMPLE OF AN INSURANCE RELEASE FORM

RELEASE OF LIABILITY FOR CONNECTICUT COASTAL KAYAKING, LLC

Important – Please Read Carefully before Signing

In consideration of being allowed to participate in Connecticut Coastal Kayaking, LLC (CCK) classes and tours, I, _____ (print your name), the undersigned, acknowledge, appreciate, and agree that:

1. The risk of injury from the activities involved in this program is significant, including the potential for permanent paralysis and death, and while particular skills, equipment, and personal discipline may reduce this risk, the risk of serious injury does exist; and,
2. **I knowingly and freely assume all such risks**, both known and unknown, **even if arising from the negligence of the releasees** or others, and assume full responsibility for my participation; and,
3. I willingly agree to comply with the stated and customary terms and conditions for participation. If, however, I observe any unusual significant hazard, I will remove myself from participation and bring such to the attention of CCK immediately; and,
4. I, for myself and on behalf of my heirs, assigns, personal representatives and next of kin, **hereby release, indemnify, and hold harmless** CCK, their officers, officials, agents, and/or employees, other participants, sponsoring agencies, sponsors, and, if applicable, owners and lessors of premises used for the activity (“Releasees”), **with respect to any and all injury, disability, death**, or loss or damage to person or property associated with my presence or participation, **whether arising from the negligence of the releasees or otherwise**, to the fullest extent permitted by law, and;
5. I will wear a fastened PFD (life jacket) at all times while on the water and will wear footwear that provides protection from sharp objects. I understand sandals are not recommended.

I have read this release of liability and assumption of risk agreement, fully understand its terms, understand that I have given up substantial rights by signing it, and sign it freely and voluntarily without any inducement. I have listed all physical limitations on the reverse side of this agreement that might affect my participation in kayak activities.

Participant’s Signature

Date

FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS OF PARTICIPANTS UNDER AGE OF 18

This is to certify that I, as parent/guardian with legal responsibility for this participant, do consent and agree to his/her release as provided above of all the Releasees, and, for myself, my child and our heirs, assigns, and next of kin, I release and agree to indemnify and hold harmless the Releasees from any and all liabilities incident to my minor child’s involvement or participation in these programs as provided above, **even if arising from the negligence of the releasees**, to the fullest extent permitted by law.

Parent/Guardian’s Signature

Print Name

Date