

# The Chesapeake Paddler



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## Thrill of paddling with whales needs no translation

*At Saguenay Fjord, minke, belugas, porpoises, and seals. Pack your best French.*

By Bill Upton

If you've ever wanted to kayak with whales, Saguenay Fjord in Canada is a great place to explore. It's about three hours north of Quebec and consists of a sixty-five-mile long fjord that ranges from one to two and a half miles wide and empties into the Saint Lawrence River.

There's a year-round population of beluga whales and a seasonal population of larger whales recognized as the largest concentration of whales on the east coast. The larger whales are more common along the St. Lawrence River with peak times of August and September.

The plan was to head north to the Adirondacks (ADK) for a few days, on to Canada and then back to New England for a family wedding. Others have reported on ADK kayaking trips. I'll just add that a side trip to hike Ampersand Mountain is a great way to get a 360 degree view of the area. The trail starts in a small parking area near Middle Saranac Lake. It's 4.8 miles round trip; the steep trail gains 1700 feet to the summit at 3352 feet. Try to pick a day when the trail is dry to make it easier to navigate the many rocks.

Planning a kayaking trip to Saguenay poses a few challenges. Researching online is confusing at first because the area is administered by a combination of the Saguenay-St. Lawrence Marine Park (<http://parcmarin.qc.ca/home/>) and Quebec's Saguenay Fjord National Park (<https://www.sepaq.com/pq/ssl/>).



*Low tide at Paradis-Marin kayak launch. At high tide, water comes up to the concrete. All photos/Bill Upton*

Saguenay-St. Lawrence Marine Park is a Canadian federal park with the primary responsibility of protecting the water and marine life in and around the fjord. They have some visitor and interpretive centers along the St. Lawrence. Saguenay Fjord National Park is a Quebec provincial park that administers the hiking, camping, kayaking and other activities along the shores of the fjord. Aside from having two parks in the area, the provincial park, which is comparable to a state park, is called a national park just to confuse things a little more.

Here's a quick way to tell the

two parks apart online and on brochures. The marine park uses a triangular logo and the national park has Sepaq, the company that administers the park, listed somewhere.

For whale watching along the St. Lawrence, Nelson and Caroline Labbe's 2009 trip report (search Saguenay in the CPA forums or <https://www.cpakayaker.com/forums/topic/whales-and-the-saguenay-area-of-canada/>) has most of the information you need. The fjord itself looks intriguing for kayaking, but resources online are scarce.

Kayaking information on the Internet for both park sites sends users to one of the many outfitters in the area and googling trip reports only brings up articles about taking guided trips from those companies. My hope was to get information on kayaking the fjord in person once I got there. One caution, on park maps the same graphic, a question mark, is used for staffed park visitor centers and unstaffed kiosks.

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# THE CHESAPEAKE PADDLERS ASSOCIATION, INC.

*The mission of the Chesapeake Paddlers Association is to provide a way for people to enjoy sea kayaking within the Chesapeake Bay area and to promote safe sea kayaking practices through educating the local sea kayaking community and the interested public.*

## Officers

<b>Coordinator</b>	<a href="mailto:coordinator@cpakayaker.com">coordinator@cpakayaker.com</a>
Bill Smith	407-489-7191
<b>Membership, subscriptions</b>	<a href="mailto:membership@cpakayaker.com">membership@cpakayaker.com</a>
Sue Stevens	410-531-5641
c/o CPA, P.O. Box 341, Greenbelt, MD 20768	
<b>Secretary—Sue Stevens</b>	<a href="mailto:secretary@cpakayaker.com">secretary@cpakayaker.com</a>
<b>Treasurer—Rich Stevens</b>	<a href="mailto:treasurer@cpakayaker.com">treasurer@cpakayaker.com</a>
<b>Steering Committee</b>	<a href="mailto:steering_committee@cpakayaker.com">steering_committee@cpakayaker.com</a>
Shelly Wiechelt	
Katherine Neale	
Lisa Arrasmith	
Ralph Heimlich	240-472-8825
Paula Hubbard	407-619-2896
<b>Librarian - John Gibbs</b>	703-922-7686 <a href="mailto:nanteet@aol.com">nanteet@aol.com</a>
	<a href="#">Library</a>
	<a href="#">Gear Page</a>
<b>Gear Volunteer</b>	
Marla Aron	
<b>Webmaster/E-Mail List Administrators</b>	
Paula Hubbard, Catriona Miller	<a href="mailto:webmaster@cpakayaker.com">webmaster@cpakayaker.com</a>
Ralph Heimlich	
Rich Stevens	
<b>Newsletter Team:</b>	<a href="mailto:news_editor@cpakayaker.com">news_editor@cpakayaker.com</a>
<i>Co-Editors—</i> Bill Upton & Ralph Heimlich	
<i>Paddler Profiles -</i> Bob Browning	410-661-6725
<i>Mailing and Distribution</i>	Sue Stevens (digital)
	Jenny Plummer-Welker (hardcopy)

## Pirate Groups

<b>Pirates of Algonkian</b>	<a href="mailto:pirates_algonkian@cpakayaker.com">pirates_algonkian@cpakayaker.com</a>
James Higgins	571-659-3319
<b>Pirates of Arundell</b>	<a href="mailto:pirates_pier7@cpakayaker.com">pirates_pier7@cpakayaker.com</a>
Rich Stevens	
Béla Máriássy	410-507-4972
Greg Welker	301-249-4895
Sue Stevens	410-531-5641
<b>Pirates of Baltimore</b>	<a href="mailto:pirates_baltimore@cpakayaker.com">pirates_baltimore@cpakayaker.com</a>
Jean Wunder	410-949-4416
Suzanne Farace	
Bob Shakeshaft	410-939-0269
<b>Pirates of the Eastern Shore</b>	<a href="mailto:pirates_easternshore@cpakayaker.com">pirates_easternshore@cpakayaker.com</a>
VACANT — PLEASE CONSIDER VOLUNTEERING	
<b>Pirates of Georgetown</b>	<a href="mailto:pirates_georgetown@cpakayaker.com">pirates_georgetown@cpakayaker.com</a>
Jesse Aronson	571-969-1539
Tom Heneghan	571-969-1866
Rob Pearlman	240-688-6340
Larry Ichter	703-915-7446
<b>Pirates of the North</b>	<a href="mailto:pirates_north@cpakayaker.com">pirates_north@cpakayaker.com</a>
Bob Shakeshaft	410-939-0269
Gary Foster	
Joan Sweet	
Jerry Sweet	
<b>Pirates of Occoquan</b>	<a href="mailto:pirates_occoquan@cpakayaker.com">pirates_occoquan@cpakayaker.com</a>
Jim Zawlocki	703-378-7536
<b>Pirates of Patuxent</b>	<a href="mailto:pirates_patuxent@cpakayaker.com">pirates_patuxent@cpakayaker.com</a>
Jenny Plummer-Welker	301-249-4895
Don Polakovics	301-247-8133
<b>Pirates of Potomac</b>	<a href="mailto:pirates_potomac@cpakayaker.com">pirates_potomac@cpakayaker.com</a>
John Gibbs	
Bob Maynes	<a href="mailto:rwmaynes@mindspring.com">rwmaynes@mindspring.com</a>
	703-527-5299
	703-582-4137 cell
<b>Pirates of Sugarloaf</b>	<a href="mailto:pirates_sugarloaf@cpakayaker.com">pirates_sugarloaf@cpakayaker.com</a>
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We accept display advertising that relates to the interest of our readers. Monthly rates are as follows:

size	cost	dimensions (col)
1/8 page	\$20	2.4" x 3.5" (1)
1/4 page	\$32	4.9" x 4.7" (2)
1/2 page	\$50	7.5" x 4.7" (3)
Full page	\$80	7.5" x 9.75" (3)

A 5% discount will be given for ads supplied as electronic files in acceptable formats (i.e., .tif, .gif, .jpeg, bit-map). Email or call for more information and for 10-month discount. See advertising contact in masthead.

Public service announcements and personal ads to sell kayaks/ accessories are printed at no charge; non-members pay \$10 for 3 months. Ads dated three months before the date of this issue will be pulled unless a new request is received by the 15th of the month prior to the next issue. And if it has sold...tell us!

## THE CHESAPEAKE PADDLER

The Chesapeake Paddler is published 10 times a year, with combination issues in Nov/Dec and Jan/Feb. The deadline for submitting copy is the 15th of the preceding month. Articles and illustrations (graphics, photos) should be submitted as separate attachments to: [news\\_editor@cpakayaker.com](mailto:news_editor@cpakayaker.com)

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## News From the CPA Coordinator - Bill Smith

With the Veterans' Day Chickahomony-Chippokes weekend behind us, we've arrived at the time of year when most paddlers either put their paddling gear away for the season or plan trips south where the weather is still warm enough to enjoy the kayaking experience. I like to get out a few times during the winter, but wearing all the winter gear takes a lot of the joy out of paddling and finding companions willing to go out when the weather and the water are chilly is more difficult. Armchair paddlers find it easier to stay indoors, research on the Internet, study area maps, and imagine paddles they'd like to do when the weather gets better. Why not take advantage of this time to plan for next season, bring your ideas to the February planning meeting, and participate in some of the training events scheduled for the coming winter? I have described some of them below. However, I urge you to continue to check the CPA calendar as the list is not complete; some events were in the planning stage when this column was written.



Our holiday party is again being hosted by Ralph and Beth Heimlich on December 14th starting at 7 p.m.; <https://www.meetup.com/The-Chesapeake-Paddlers-Association/events/266107651/> They generously host each year, so please express your appreciation when you see them. The party is a lot of fun, so I hope many of you plan to attend. The club provides some meats, but otherwise the dinner is potluck and BYOB. The annual white elephant gift exchange can be very entertaining, especially when you open something you like. Since anyone awaiting their turn can opt to steal, there is no guarantee you will get to keep it. Though the gift should in some way be kayak-related, it is a theme often broadly interpreted. It can be a great way to get rid of a superfluous item.

SK 101 is scheduled for March 1<sup>st</sup> at the Cult Classic Brewery. Like last year, this year's event will be chaired by Shelly Weichelt and her committee, including Rick Leader, Denise Parisi, and Laurie Collins. This team introduced some new ideas to sustain interest through the daylong curriculum. If you know anyone who is even mildly curious about taking up the sport, invite them to attend SK 101; we all know a few of those people. When the water is warmer, this year's event may follow up with an on-water day of training and play.

Catriona Miller is the leader for a Cold Water Workshop planned for Jan 19 at Cult Classic Brewery. Look for a 2020 season planning meeting in February. Paula Hubbard is planning to teach a navigation class. It grows more popular each year, so sign up early when it is announced. Paula usually follows up with a day of practicing navigation skills on the water. Expect workshop opportunities in making Greenland paddles, making spray skirts and tuliks, and using Kayak GPSes. Watch Meetup for details.

Bill Upton and Ralph Heimlich will take over publishing the newsletter at the start of the new year. For the past three years the newsletter has been produced by Beth Boyd and Lois Wyatt, this edition being their last. Thank you, Beth and Lois, for your service.

The Steering Committee now has a vacancy. Composed of six members in good standing, they are responsible for making decisions for the club in one face-to-face annual planning meeting in February and via email communication the rest of the year. Please consider serving our paddling community by volunteering to join the Steering Committee. Email Bill Smith or any member of the SC for further information.

I hope everyone has a great holiday season.

~ *Bill Smith*

## Reporting Accidents & Incidents

While CPA seldom experiences accidents or incidents, any that occur should be reported as soon as possible and in detail to the Coordinator and the Steering Committee. The Coordinator or Treasurer will forward these documents to our insurance agents. Fillable .pdf forms for reporting incidents are online [here](#). The first page contains the complete procedure for completing the report. ♦

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Traveling from the Adirondacks is about 400 miles to the private Paradis-Marin campground, the prime whale watching spot. Travel is pretty quick on the highways through New York, to Montreal and then Quebec if you can avoid rush hours in the cities. Once in Quebec City, the interstate abruptly ends and turns into Route 138, a local street with lots of traffic lights. Once out of the city, it's a two-lane road with occasional passing lanes and slow going because of construction.

After a couple hours I reached the fjord. Then it's a short ferry ride across the fjord entrance to the village of Tadoussac and another 16 miles north to Paradis-Marin (<http://www.campingparadismarin.com/>) campground, right on the St. Lawrence River. From the moment I arrived until I left, there was a steady stream of minke whales that I could hear from shore. On the first day there was a storm with gale winds and after that overcast skies with showers and light winds.

Paradis-Marin campground no longer takes reservations, but the office is open late for check-ins. Most sites are out in the open but the ones in Loop 3 (sites in the 30's) are reasonably private. If the weather is bad, the bathhouse near the kayak launch has covered picnic tables



*If you go, don't miss this outstanding bakery in Grande-Bergeronne village.*

Monde (<https://www.meretmonde.ca/en>), has some great tent sites for about the same price as Paradis-Marin. If you want to really glam it up, they have some deluxe cabins with river views. There is a launch, but if you aren't taking one of their tours, you have to have a Paddle Canada certification to use it. If you end up staying there, you can make the short drive to launch at Paradis-Marin for a day use fee.

Paradis-Marin has the only other launch in the area. It starts as a steep, gnarly concrete track. If it's high tide, waves break right on the concrete and funnel between large boulders making a tricky launch. At lower tides, the concrete walk opens to a gravel beach. Next to the launch, the local kayak rental business has a gravel beach at all tide levels. It was closed when I was there so I was able to use their beach to take breaks at high tide. For the cold water temps and rain showers, I wore a dry suit.

A local kayaker said the prime whale watching was from the lighthouse just south of the campground to about five miles north to the village of

Les Escoumins. On the two days of fair weather I had, I only had to go out a few hundred yards to watch the show. Belugas went by every couple hours and minke whales went by every few minutes. South of the campground, there are marine park protection zones for the whales and tighter restrictions on kayaking. You have to keep a steady speed and can't just linger as you can off Paradis-Marin. North of the campground, the eco-tour outfit had a steady stream of kayakers whale watching, too.

Kayakers from near and far head to Paradis-Marin, and they were the best source of information when I was able to manage with my forgotten high school French and their limited English. One lady was on her way home from a Greenland Kayak symposium on Peaks Island, Maine. Another couple had been

whale watching and was heading to Baie Eternite on the south side of the fjord. It has a national park campground they planned to use as a base camp with a large protected bay for paddling.

Locals also recommended what turned out to be one of the best bakeries I've ever encountered, Boulangerie Cochone. It's just a few



*The view of Saguenay Fjord from Tadoussac ferry.*

for cooking, hot showers, an outdoor sink for doing dishes, a library for whale watching information and a great view. It was my second home to escape the rain.

When I was there it was almost deserted. Some of the regulars said that even after Labor Day there were times when it is full. If it is, an eco-tour kayak operation just north of Paradis-Marin, called Mer et

[Continued on next page](#)

# Pirate Captains Honored for Outstanding Service



Rita Scherping, at left, and Liz Marancik are all smiles upon receiving their plaques at the CPA annual meeting. Photo/D.J. Manalo.

## [Saguenay Fjord, con't](#)

miles down the road toward Tadoussac in the village of Grande-Bergerone. I just wish I knew enough French to figure out the bakery menu better.

After two days of whale watching on the St. Lawrence, it was time to check out the fjord on the way back. There's a good vantage point on the north shore of the fjord not far from Paradis-Marin. Heading back to Tadoussac on Route 138, take a right on Route 172 and go about 22 kilometers to the Beluga Discovery and Visitors Center at the Baie Sainte-Marguerite sector of the national park.

From the visitors' center, it's a quick three kilometer walk to a lookout with impressive views over the fjord. There are some nice hiker/biker campsites at the fjord that would be worth a future trip.

This was a spot where I thought I could get more information on kayaking the fjord and Baie Eternite, but no one at the information desk spoke English. They did have a print version of a kayak water trail and a park map but only in French.

After making my way back to Tadoussac and a quick ferry trip across the fjord, I made one last try to find out about kayaking in the fjord. I stopped in a Marine Park visitors' center in the village of Saint-Fidele. It's about 50 km south of Tadoussac and I had missed it on the way in. Once again, no one spoke English and could only refer me to the kayak outfitters in their brochures.

## 2019 Bob Shakeshaft

For extended service as one of Chesapeake Paddlers Association's longest-serving Pirate Captain (12 years). Bob has served as Captain of the Pirates of the North at Havre De Grace since May 2008 (taking over from Wendy Baker-Davis) and has led and participated in many CPA events and activities since joining in 2004.



CPA Coordinator Bill Smith displays Bob Shakeshaft's plaque. Photo/D. J. Manalo.

## 2019 Rita Scherping and Liz Marancik

For extended service as two of Chesapeake Paddlers Association's longest-serving Pirate Captains (7 years). Rita and Liz served as Queens of the Pirates of Sugarloaf at Riley's Lock since May 2012 (taking over from James Higgins) and led and participated in many CPA events and activities since joining in 2008 (Rita) and 2006 (Liz). ♦

I thought kayaking with dolphins at Cape Henlopen was the ultimate, but this experience surpassed it. Paddling on the St. Lawrence and having minke whales go by every few minutes – then add beluga whales, seals and porpoises for good measure. There's a special thrill when they surface and I hear the “whoosh” of their breathing that never gets old. It is worth the long drive! ♦

## Trip photos:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/4oDM2mJvqGxpwpTy5>

Other information on whales in the area:

<https://baleinesendirect.org/en/>

# Southern St. Mary's waterways sparkle in September

*Planning a late season paddling trip requires radical hope. Sometimes, the kayak gods smile.*

By Lois Wyatt

Our consistently dry and summer-like September made for some great days paddling and nights camping. When trip leaders dream and plan outings in advance, they hope for ideal conditions but also know the importance of backup ideas for adverse conditions. Rare indeed is the trip when the ideal is also the real, to be savored and appreciated, as it was for our weekend in southern St. Mary's County. The group included Ralph Heimlich, Jenny Plummer-Welker, Greg Welker, Jim Allen, Jay Perry, Catherine and Greg Martin, and Lois Wyatt.

Saturday morning, we launched from the campsite directly onto St Jerome's Creek. Would we venture out into Chesapeake Bay? First step, check it out and decide. Fortunately, conditions were so benign that most of our day was out there. In the calm of the morning with an outgoing tide, we headed south past Point Look-in to the fishing pier of Point Lookout State Park. On our return, we had an incoming tide, gentle breezes at our backs, and resulting small waves. Not wanting our day on the bay to end too soon, we pushed past the mouth of St Jerome's to the next land feature north known as Point No Point. No landing on the inviting sandy beach, though, because Point No Point hosts an antenna, radar dome, and old building we presumed to be military. With that U-turn, we followed the shoreline back past the house with distinctive red roof marking the entrance to St Jerome's. We had a lovely 17-mile Saturday on the water.

Sunday was to be warmer and humid, so we were grateful for the cloud cover that kept temperatures comfortable. With the more challenging wind forecast, we headed for a launch near the mouth of Smith Creek on the Potomac side of St Mary's peninsula. Out we ventured to see the hazy distant Virginia shoreline and paddle north



*New kayak launch area at St. Inigoes Ramp onto Smith Creek. Photo/Ralph Heimlich*

into the St Mary's River past Joint Base Webster Field property. Posted signs warned us not to venture closer than 75 feet to the shoreline, the irony being that the faded signs with small print were impossible to read until we were about 25 feet away. We turned east into St Inigoes Creek, but, anticipating the lunch bell and the need for some public beach landing, our stay was short. Back at the mouth of the St Mary's, we heeded the siren call of the large fish weir. The structure and the nets were in good condition, but I didn't see any

live fish in the enclosures, only a few dead ones floating on top. As the afternoon breezes picked up, we headed back into Smith's Creek. While half the group chose to return to the ramp, others again extended our time on the water by exploring one arm of the creek for

a total outing of 13.3 miles.

As for the camp nights, temperatures were comfortable. The whole sky was vivid; the Milky Way, splendid. I brought the right gear. I packed up a dry tent Monday morning. It was a picture-perfect weekend of kayaking and camping. For those of us who could stay



*Pound net off of the beaches at St. Inigoes State Forest on the St. Mary's River (Greg Martin and Greg Welker). Photo/Ralph Heimlich*

an additional day, a magnificent Monday of paddling awaited. Greg Welker led a Monday paddle with Christine Riegel and Aht Viravaidya joining us to launch from Forest Landing Cove. Along Cuckold Creek onto Patuxent River, we passed under the soaring Route 4 Bridge and Solomons Island into Town Creek. As the kayak gods continued to smile on us, we had one more glorious day on the water. ♦

Upcoming Events. For the most up-to-date listings, visit the [CPA Meetup Calendar](#)

Date	Event	Summary
Sat, Dec 14	Annual CPA Holiday Party	7 pm, party w potluck dinner & White Elephant gift exchange, Heimlich home, 3873 Paul Mill Road, Ellicott City, MD 21042
Sun, Jan 19	Cold Water Workshop	1-3, Cult Classic Brewery, Kent Island, MD, w Catriona Miller
Sat, Mar 1	SK101	Cult Classic Brewery, Kent Island, MD
Fr 4/24-Su 26	SK 102	Lake Anna, VA
Sun, May 17	CPA Fun Day	Downs Park Pavillion, 8311 John Downs Loop, Pasadena, MD

## Chesapeake Paddlers Association Holiday Party



### Saturday, December 14, 7 p.m.

Come join the fun. We will have some barbecue. You bring salads, main dishes and desserts to share. We will have a White Elephant gift exchange with a kayaking theme. Bring your own libations.

If your last name begins with:

A-K bring a dessert (cake, pie, cobbler, your honey, etc.)

L-S bring a salad (green, fruit, Jell-O, pasta, squid, etc.) and some bread

T-Z bring a casserole or entrée (nothing ALIVE please!)

To feed 4 people (trust me—we'll have plenty).

Ralph will supply a couple of pans of pulled pork and brisket from Mission BBQ and non-alcoholic beverages, but you should bring your own beer, wine, or other beverage of choice (supplying booze to you lot would even break a pirate!!).

We'll have a white elephant gift exchange for those wishing to participate. Bring a wrapped, kayak-related treasure of modest value, worth less than \$10 if possible. Re-gifting is an art form!

**Location:** Heimlich residence 3873 Paul Mill Road, Ellicott City, MD 21042

Look for Kayak Santa on the lawn and follow the signs around back.

**RSVP via Meetup** at <https://www.meetup.com/The-Chesapeake-Paddlers-Association/events/266107651/?isFirstPublish=true>

***Please RSVP to aid my planning!***

# Annual Report Notes Decline in Trips, Participation

The annual report combines the minutes of the annual meeting, held on Sunday, November 3, at the Eastport Library in Annapolis, with reports from the treasurer, membership secretary, and on participation in trips and events.

The big highlight of the annual meeting were awards to long-time Pirate Captains Rita Scherping and Liz Marancik of the Pirates of Sugarloaf, and Bob Shakeshaft, captain of the Pirates of the North.

Treasurer Rich Stevens concluded that CPA continues to be in excellent financial shape although dues continue to fall somewhat. Our cash on hand increased by \$891 (3%), from \$27,205 to \$28,096. The closing balance includes \$27,700 in the CPA bank account and \$395 in the PayPal account.

Membership Secretary Sue Stevens noted that membership levels remained steady over the last nine years, with an average of 70-100 new members joining each year, but with a similar number not renewing. There are currently 596 active members in CPA. The club has been active since before 1994, predating most of our own kayaking time.

Steering Committee Member Ralph Heimlich summarized participation in trips and events for 2019. There were 81 trips and events in 2019, with 729 participants. Day trips made up 48% of all trips (down from 56% in 2016). True to our mission statement, more people participated in Training activities (193, 27% of participants) than almost any other type of trip or event except Day Trips. The number of training trips was down, as was participation, from highs in earlier years. The same number of Camper trips was held, but participation was down to 43 from highs well over 100 in 2013 through 2016. Piracies are down in numbers and participation. In general, the number of trips of all types is down from previous years, as is participation. There were 24 trip leaders in 2019, and 327 individual participants, a 55% rate of participation.

The complete annual report is available on the CPA website at <http://www.cpakayaker.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Chesapeake-Paddlers-Association-Annual-Report-2019.pdf> ◆

## The Chesapeake Paddler

Chesapeake Paddlers Association, Inc.

P.O. Box 341

Greenbelt, MD 20768-0341

REMINDER: Please check your mailing label for your membership expiration date. If you receive the newsletter electronically, you will receive an e-mail reminder prior to your membership expiring; please notify the Secretary for changes to your email address. If your CPA membership has expired, or will expire soon, please send in your dues. SEE BOX ON PAGE 2 FOR ADDRESS.