

Paddler Profile: Greg Welker

by Bob Browning

Lives in: Bowie, Maryland

Real job: Retired from Maryland State Highways, now doing part time consulting in Highway Construction Engineering/Management.

Do you regularly attend a Piracy? I attend the Pirates of Arundel, and occasionally the Patuxent Pirates in order to paddle with my wife Jenny. It is really interesting to attend the different piracies. Each has their own "flavor".

Number of years paddling: Paddling since 1991

How did you get involved in sea kayaking? I was involved in wildlife photography, and needed a way onto the water. So I bought a sea kayak instead of a canoe. On one of my early paddles I met a CPA member on the water. I kept repeating the CPA contact phone number he gave me all the way back to the ramp...

What boats do you paddle?

- Kayaksport Vivianne/19 ft/red over white, as my camping kayak. Rudder and a skeg, plus outrigger sail rig.
- Impex Outer Island/18 ft/green over white, as my play/rolling sea kayak. Accidentally did my first hand roll demoing the boat, so I bought it - Skegged.
- Kruger Seawind/17 ft/white over white. A partially decked sea canoe with sprayskirt, it is my favorite boat. It will handle much of the water we paddle with sea kayaks. Rudder, and equipped with a BSD sail rig.

Rudder or skeg? If you're going to sail, you really need a rudder. Otherwise, skegs seem more prone to problems than rudders on club trips. Most long distance paddlers I know use ruddered boats due to the efficiency of not having to make corrective strokes.

Type paddle used: What's a Euro? With my ruddered boats, I like a single blade bent shaft ZRE racing canoe paddle. Add a Greenland paddle for rough water or downwind runs. I save the Euro for the pack canoe.

Do you do any other type of paddling besides sea kayaking? Jenny and I both paddle ultralight canoes that we use in the Adirondacks. My other activity on the water is sailing the Vivianne and the Seawind as part of the east coast Sails Angels canoe/kayak sailing group.

Do you regularly do any other outdoor activities? If not on the water, I bike camp and backpack. I am working my way through the big rail trails on the east coast and section hiking the lower half of the Appalachian Trail as time allows.

How often on average do you paddle between May and October? In 2015, I was in my canoes and kayaks 117 days. From May-October I was on the water 73 times. Jenny and I both keep logs of our boating, noting location, time, distance, boat used, etc.

Do any winter paddling? Yes, but Jenny and I pick our days and locations carefully depending on the wind and weather. No ice breaking.

Favorite local paddling location: My go-to location is the Patuxent River, usually from Selby Landing. It's about 10 minutes from the house. Otherwise, I look at my charts and make a decision based on the forecast. Two hours can get me to the bottom of Southern Maryland and the Patuxent river mouth or Mallows Bay, or across the bay bridge to the Chester River. I like long paddles. 20-30 miles with the Greenland is nice, 30-40 miles with the single blade. So I look for places conducive to that type of paddling.

Favorite CPA trip you've ever been on and why: A certain skills clinic CPA held many years ago at Dares Beach. The waves were picking up,



Greg Welker

Photo by Shannon Bishop

and everyone else got off the water except this one lady. I decided I needed to meet her, and later she married me. Someone once said, "Do what you love, and your love will find you."

Coolest paddling trip you've ever been on anywhere and why? Sea kayaking the North Carolina lower Outer Banks. Our CPA group saw no one else for five days, ate shrimp and mussels, and watched wild horses and sunsets.

Scariest/most dangerous trip/experience and why? I almost scalped myself on the coaming of a loose boat in surf during a kayak surfing trip in Delaware once. That hurt a lot. CPA rules come from bad experiences. I am the reason CPA has a helmet rule for surfing.

Future bucket list trip: More of Florida – the Everglades and the west coast rivers and shoreline.

Three things you like most about paddling? 1. Time alone in my boat. 2. Exploring new shorelines with my paddling partner. 3. Camping out of the boat.

What do you like about CPA? Our culture of sharing knowledge – whether it is teaching paddling skills, helping with boat repairs, or showing people interesting places to paddle by leading trips on the waters you know.

One unusual, non-paddling thing other people find interesting about you? No idea. You'll have to ask someone who knows me.... ☺

We would like to know about you! Contact Bob Browning if you are interested in a being featured in the Paddler Profile or if you know of someone else he can contact. Contact Bob at: BBBrowning43@verizon.net