



Level 5: Advanced Open Water Skills Assessment

Assessor's Guide

Multi-Paddler Field Grid

Single Paddler Field Grid

Skills Only Field Grid

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Delivering the L5 Advanced Open Water Skills Assessment

Assessment Overview: The L5 Advanced Open Water Skills Assessment course benchmarks the paddler's ability at the highest level of the ACA's Coastal Kayak development program. Paddlers may take an assessment course to measure their skills to recognized standards, for personal growth, or to meet prerequisites for L5 instructor development. Therefore, instructors providing the course must strive to conduct the course authentically.

Paddler Competencies, Assessed Skills, and Developing Skills: Each assessment category includes a paragraph describing the paddler's competency, a list of required Assessed Skills, and optional Developing Skills. You are to use the description of the paddler's competency as an overarching guideline that applies to all skills for the category. Assessed Skills are skills you must observe for the paddler to pass the assessment. Developing Skills are optional, but success demonstrates that the paddler performs at a high level, befitting a leader or instructor in advanced waters.

Core and Venue Specific Skills: L5 paddlers explore, learn, and play in various locations, offering incredibly dynamic paddling environments with exposure to difficult sea conditions. This assessment course focuses on applying "Core Skills" in L5 venues and conditions.

You will choose two sets of Venue Specific skills to assess during the course. Your options are "Surf," "Rock Gardens and Sea Caves," "Tide Races," and "Expedition Paddling." The venues and associated skills have been set to an equivalent level of challenge, allowing for regional accessibility while maintaining the L5 standard. It is not required to assess your students in all four categories; only two are needed.

In summary, all "**Core Skills**" categories and two "**Venue Specific Skills**" categories must be assessed. As the course provider, you shall structure the course to allow paddlers to demonstrate skills and knowledge authentically, and paddlers shall demonstrate their skills to be safe, effective, and efficient to pass.

Assessor's Venue Choice and Environmental Conditions: The choice of venue is critical to making an authentic assessment of your student and is vital to the overall success of your course. For this course, you are to select a location "with exposure to conditions where an area of retreat is accessible." No landing zones can be used during the assessment. The location you select shall be conducive to assessing all skills in the "Core Skills" categories and the skills in your two chosen "Venue Specific" categories.

The parameters for acceptable conditions have been set to ensure a fair assessment of the participant's ability relative to the standard. The parameters for this course are wind speeds between 15 and 25 knots, waves between 3 and 5 feet (1 - 1.5 meters), surf between 3 and 5 feet (1 - 1.5 meters), and tidal current greater than 4 knots. Any three of these four conditions must be experienced during the assessment to qualify the course. If conditions exceed any of these parameters during the course, you are to use your best judgment to decide if it is safe to operate on the water. If a participant cannot meet the standard for a skill due to a momentary increase in conditions, you cannot assess that skill as "below" standard. Instead, you should give the student another opportunity to perform the skill once conditions are back within parameters.

Determining Success: This guide describes an outcome-based standard for Assessed Skills and what "Exceeds," "Meets," and is "Below" this standard. The participant must meet or exceed the standard for all Assessed Skills to pass the assessment. If a participant is below standard for any Assessed Skill, they are to be given an action plan that outlines areas for practice and a recommendation of when to return for the assessment. Assessors will enter either "Meets" or "Below" in the CMS Paddler Evaluation form and are to provide more detail in the comment fields.

Participants who plan to attend a Level 5 Advanced Open Water (AOW) Instructor Development Workshop or Certification Workshop must pass the L5 Skills Assessment to qualify for these courses. Paddlers who largely exceed standards for Assessed Skills and can successfully perform Developing Skills are performing at the level expected to pass an L5 AOW Instructor Certification Evaluation.

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L5 Paddler Core Competencies and Assessed Skills

Assessors shall evaluate the paddler for their competency in each of the following "Core" categories while in the chosen venue.

Core: Boat Handling

L5 Competency: The paddler purposely maneuvers to make moves and position themselves in L5 conditions. They can blend and adjust strokes and incorporate edging fluently to make technical moves. The paddler reflexively utilizes body, boat, and blade to prevent and recover from a near capsized. And, upon capsizing, they consistently execute a successful roll in L5 conditions. They demonstrate significant comfort and consistency while applying skills across venues in L5 conditions.

Demonstrates the ability to make progress, turn, and hold position in differing wind and wave directions.

- Exceeds: Uses wind and waves to their advantage in combination with kayak handling to make progress against the wind, maximize downwind runs, turn upwind and downwind, and achieve useful positions for safety and play.
- Meets: Maintains directional control and can make progress against the wind. Holds position and can regain position if lost in relation to ranges/position fix. Combines appropriate strokes, speed, and edging to make upwind and downwind turns and accelerates to catch a wave or reach a target.
- Below: Unable to maintain directional control, or loses progress when paddling into wind or waves, or cannot turn their kayak upwind or downwind, or cannot maintain position, or displays visual discomfort.

Utilizes strokes and maneuvers to reach an intended target, avoid hazards, maintain or shape a course, or accomplish a specific task.

- Exceeds: Makes effective stroke choices and varies shaft and blade angle and cadence (for example, when catching waves or breaking through an eddyline). Uses strokes effectively when maintaining or shaping a course (for example, successfully attains to upstream eddies, breaking in and out of the eddies, surfing with directional control). Consistently incorporates rudders for lateral movement of their kayak and making dynamic moves (for example, turns on a wave face).
- Meets: Reaches intended target with little loss of directional control and combines sweep and propulsion strokes and edging to stay on course or quickly regain their course. Demonstrates effective use of rudders and sideways propulsion for directional control to avoid obstacles and move their kayak sideways to an intended target.
- Below: Cannot reach the intended target or stay on course due to loss of direction control or inability to make progress. Or unable to use rudders to effectively change or maintain course. Or cannot move sideways to avoid obstacles and resorts to corrective strokes (for example, stopping, backing up, sweep strokes) instead of draw strokes to maneuver into position.

Incorporates edging and blade support while making technical maneuvers.

- Exceeds: Reflexively blends supportive strokes and bracing when moving in rough water. Avoids capsized and consistently recovers if stability is lost.
- Meets: Able to maintain stability when making dynamic moves such as diagonal runs, bottom and top turns, and attainments. Consistently demonstrates the ability to recover when stability is lost.
- Below: Cannot recover when stability is lost or is inconsistent with their ability to recover. Or, when underway, the paddler cannot consistently recover stability and maintain momentum, resulting in an avoidable capsized.

Able to roll from both set-up and non-setup positions on either side of the kayak.

- Exceeds: Consistently rolls on the first attempt while paddling in L5 conditions.
- Meets: Can roll while paddling in L5 conditions. If the paddler swims, they may be given another opportunity for success while rolling in L5 conditions.
- Below: Swims two or more times during the assessment due to missed rolls.

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Core: Rescues and Towing

L5 Competency: The paddler demonstrates competent rescue and towing skills in L5 conditions. They possess a 360-degree sphere of awareness and are present and flexible while under pressure. They understand rescue priorities and can execute situation-appropriate rescues. They move rescues from dynamic water to positions of less risk when necessary and keep the group organized until the risk is no longer imminent.

Performs one or more of the following assisted re-entries with an able swimmer: Side-by-Side, Scoop, T-Rescue, Swimmer Deck Carry.

- Exceeds: Demonstrates two or more situation-appropriate rescues and moves the rescue to a position of less risk when necessary.
- Meets: Chooses an appropriate rescue for the situation and moves the rescue to a position of less risk when necessary.
- Below: Unable to rescue the swimmer or perform the rescue in an area of high risk.

Performs one or more of the following assisted re-entries to aid an impaired swimmer: Scoop, Unresponsive Paddler, Swimmer Deck Carry.

- Exceeds: Demonstrates two or more situation-appropriate rescues and moves rescue to a position of less risk when necessary.
- Meets: Chooses an appropriate rescue for the situation and moves the rescue to a position of less risk when necessary.
- Below: Unable to rescue the swimmer or perform the rescue in an area of high risk.

Performs one or more of the following self-rescues: Re-enter and Roll, Paddle Float, and Scramble.

- Exceeds: Demonstrates two or more self-rescues and moves into a position of less risk when necessary.
- Meets: Demonstrates a self-rescue and moves into a position of less risk when necessary.
- Below: Unable to self-rescue.

Applies one or more of the following towing strategies: In-Line Tow, Rafted In-Line Tow, Anchor Tow, Contact Tow, Bulldozing, Toggle Tow.

- Exceeds: Demonstrates application of two or more situation-appropriate towing techniques, maintaining usefulness and moves the rescue to a position of less risk when necessary.
- Meets: Chooses an appropriate rescue for the situation and moves the rescue to a position of less risk when necessary.
- Below: Unable to rescue the swimmer or perform the rescue in an area of high risk. Or the paddler chooses an unsafe towing strategy.

Effectively manages their tow system and can release it under load, both upright and upside down.

- Exceeds: Deploys tow system cleanly, demonstrates the ability to release tow system while underwater and roll up, and stows towline quickly.
- Meets: Deploys tow system cleanly, demonstrates the ability to release tow system while underwater and roll up, and stows towline quickly.
- Below: Towline does not deploy, or cannot release tow system while underway, or stow towline.

Able to rescue a swimmer who has been separated from their kayak and reconnect the swimmer to their kayak.

- Exceeds: Makes the most efficient choice of rescue priority for the situation and reconnects the swimmer to their kayak with or without a towline.
- Meets: Reconnects the swimming paddler to their kayak.
- Below: Unable to reconnect the swimming paddler to their kayak.

Able to assist another paddler's recovery from capsized by presenting their kayak or paddle.

- Exceeds: Moves their kayak into position and maintains position to effectively assist another paddler's recovery from multiple orientations (for example, bow presentation, stern presentation, side-by-side, paddle presentation).
- Meets: Moves their kayak into position, maintains or regains position to effectively assist another paddler's recovery.
- Below: Causes failed recovery attempts due to their inability to position their kayak or maintain the position of their kayak.

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Demonstrates the role of an active and effective swimmer when rescued.

- Exceeds: Maintains contact with their kayak and gear during a rescue, flips kayak right-side up, and holds decklines while maneuvering to stay clear of an approaching rescuer.
- Meets: Maintains contact with their kayak and gear during the rescue and flips kayak right-side up while awaiting instructions from the rescuer.
- Below: Does not maintain contact with their kayak and gear during rescue or cannot re-enter their kayak.

Recovers without their primary paddle upon capsizing.

- Exceeds: Rolls their kayak using a spare paddle upon capsize.
- Meets: Rolls their kayak using the spare paddle within two attempts. One attempt may be a re-enter and roll using their spare paddle.
- Below: Is unable to roll the kayak using their spare paddle.

Developing Skill: Deploys multiple techniques and strategies for each of the above rescues.

Core: Awareness and Seamanship

L5 Competency: The paddler has a heightened awareness of the environment and understands the challenges inherent to L5 venues and conditions. They choose appropriate venues and adjust their plans when necessary, demonstrating sound decision-making based on risk/reward analysis. They support group members and help keep others within their limits by communicating and positioning themselves appropriately.

Understands hydrology of the marine environment and demonstrates the ability to assess and choose appropriate paddling venues.

- Exceeds: Can effectively share with the group what is happening and why regarding environmental factors. Makes sound decisions for themselves and their group based on their analysis of the environment, available data, and resources.
- Meets: Can effectively communicate what is happening in the environment around them (effects of wind, swell, tides, currents, shorelines, and bathymetry) and why. Makes sound decisions based on their analysis of the environment, available data, and resources (chart, weather forecast, tidal information, swell forecast, local knowledge). Maintains an openness to comprehend, adapt, and apply what is happening.
- Below: Unable to comprehend how these variables act upon each other. Or is locked into prior expectations or information.

Practices Leave No Trace and demonstrates appropriate interactions with ecosystems and wildlife.

- Exceeds: Knows LNT Principles and unconsciously models best practices of the LNT Principles. Knows NOAA Marine Wildlife Viewing Guidelines and respectfully informs group members of best practices.
- Meets: Applies best practices of LNT Principles and NOAA Marine Wildlife Viewing Guidelines.
- Below: Is unaware of, or does not adhere to, LNT Principles and NOAA Marine Wildlife Viewing Guidelines.

Understands causes, prevention, recognition, and treatment of cold and heat-related issues, including hypothermia and hyperthermia.

- Exceeds: Properly prepared and takes necessary preventative action for self and group. Recognizes signs and symptoms of hypothermia and treatment for cold-related issues. Recognizes signs and symptoms of hyperthermia and treatment for heat-related issues. Knows when to call for Emergency Medical Services.
- Meets: Properly prepared and takes necessary preventative action to prevent cold water shock and hypothermia for self. Recognizes signs, symptoms, and treatment, including when to call for Emergency Medical Services.
- Below: The paddler is unprepared for paddling conditions or does not recognize signs and symptoms of hypothermia or hyperthermia. Or does not take appropriate action to improve the situation.

Demonstrates appropriate decision-making and flexibility in leadership and followership on the water.

- Exceeds: Demonstrates ability to accurately evaluate themselves, their team, and the environment each day, hour, and moment of the journey. Makes route choices with the group members' ability to perform in the venue in mind. Modifies route or venue when necessary to keep group members within their capabilities.
- Meets: Understands personal and group capabilities relative to the environment and makes decisions accordingly. Paddles as a cohesive member of the group and positions to provide support. Makes route choices and decisions that keep themselves within the remit for L5.
- Below: Makes route choices and decisions that takes themselves beyond the remit for L5 or into an unsafe environment.

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Demonstrates appropriate group awareness.

- Exceeds: Demonstrates a high level of responsibility for, and accountability to, themselves and their team. Demonstrates awareness of hazards and keeps group members in positions to avoid them. Communicates effectively, maintains a line of sight, and positions themselves to be always useful to the group.
- Meets: Paddles as a cohesive group member and positions to provide support. Demonstrates awareness of hazards and keeps themselves in a position to avoid them. Establishes a safe position while maintaining communication and line of sight to other group members and maintains a position of most usefulness to the group.
- Below: Is unaware of hazards, or loses communication or line of sight with group members, or does not maintain a position of most usefulness to the group.

Maintains properly outfitted, packed, and trimmed kayak and has working knowledge of paddling equipment.

- Exceeds: The kayak is properly outfitted, packed, and trimmed for conditions, and the paddler uses equipment to take care of the needs of themselves and the group.
- Meets: Kayak is outfitted, packed, and trimmed for conditions. The paddler demonstrates access to and proper use of equipment needed for tasks given in the assessment. The paddler can complete all assessed skills with their chosen kayak.
- Below: Kayak does not have proper floatation or rigging, or the paddler is ill-equipped or not sufficiently dressed for the conditions. Or gear choices are detrimental to the success of the group. Or the kayak is not properly trimmed, so it is constantly lee-cocking or weather cocking due to the unbalanced packing of the kayak.

Performs repairs allowing the paddler to safely paddle to an access point.

- Exceeds: Carries the equipment necessary to perform repairs for other group members and demonstrates knowledge of performing likely repairs.
- Meets: Carries the equipment necessary to perform repairs on their kayak and demonstrates knowledge of performing likely repairs (kayak cracks/dings, drysuit tear, lost hatch cover, foot peg issues, etc.).
- Below: Does not carry the equipment necessary to repair their kayak to paddle to an access point.

Carries appropriate visual and auditory signaling device(s) and understands their use and limitations.

- Exceeds: Carries a variety of signaling devices and can instruct others on proper use and limitations.
- Meets: Carries a VHF radio, whistle, mirror, white light, and flares* and can demonstrate the use and understands limitations. **Flares are not required if traveling by plane to the assessment or where their possession or use is illegal (for example, China).*
- Below: Does not carry appropriate visual and auditory signaling devices or understand their use.

Can tie Bowline, Clove Hitch, Figure 8, and Trucker's Hitch knots.

- Exceeds: Demonstrates the ability to teach and troubleshoot other group members' knot work. Knows more knots than these four, as well as the proper usage of the knots.
- Meets: Can tie the required knots and knows proper usage of the knots.
- Below: Cannot tie the required knots or does not know the proper usage of the specific knot(s).

Core: Incident Prevention and Management

L5 Competency: The paddler has an incident-prevention mindset both on and off the water. They make good choices and demonstrate competent decision-making. They can lead and assist with managing incidents in L5 conditions. They can identify appropriate safe zones and work with other paddlers to ensure the entire group's safety.

Safely transports, unloads, and carries kayaks at the launch site.

- Exceeds: The paddler recognizes unsafe transport and carrying of the kayaks and steps in to assist others when loading, unloading, and carrying the kayaks.
- Meets: Kayak is properly secured to an appropriately anchored roof rack or trailer. The method by which the kayak is unloaded minimizes the risk of injury to themselves and others.
- Below: The method by which the paddler transports their kayak is a hazard to other vehicles, or the unloading or carrying method puts the paddler at risk.

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Actively participates in planning and debriefing sessions.

- Exceeds: Helps facilitate effective planning and debriefing sessions and provides “leader level” insight during these sessions.
- Meets: Is active and engaged in planning and debriefing sessions, demonstrates understanding of the plan for the day, and is helpful in processing lessons learned from the debriefing session.
- Below: Does not participate in pre-trip planning or post-trip debriefing sessions.

Launches and lands in a safe manner.

- Exceeds: Performs a leadership role in launching and landing the group in L5 conditions.
- Meets: Demonstrates the ability to launch and land their kayak successfully in L5 conditions.
- Below: Is unable to launch or land successfully in L5 conditions. Exits their kayak on the land side when landing.

Communicates and directs others calmly in stressful situations.

- Exceeds: Uses clear and concise communication, which is well-received by teammates and facilitates execution of the rescue. Demeanor de-escalates situations that may otherwise be, or become, stressful.
- Meets: Communicates in a way that teammates respond to appropriately and facilitates execution of the rescue.
- Below: The group is unresponsive to directions, or the atmosphere of stress is escalated. Or directives given during rescue are unclear or result in added confusion during the rescue.

Works with others to perform rescues and move the group to a position of less risk.

- Exceeds: Able to adapt and follow the lead of others and the environment even when different from their preferred methods (except where absolute safety is contradicted). Can facilitate a meaningful debriefing and “lessons learned” session post-incident.
- Meets: Actively engages in the solution regardless of role. Demonstrates flexibility to adapt to changing leadership and environment. Is an active participant in the post-incident debriefing and “lessons learned” session.
- Below: Disregards input and direction from others in the group, forces solutions, or does not participate in post-incident debriefing or “lessons learned” session.

Demonstrates proper use of VHF radio and the ability to hail appropriate resources.

- Exceeds: Demonstrates the ability to instruct others on the proper use of a VHF radio and different uses for hailing assistance appropriate to the situation or incident.
- Meets: Demonstrates ability to use VHF radio appropriately to hail fellow paddlers, other vessels, Coast Guard, or other resources according to the situation. Can find weather information. Uses proper radio call etiquette and knows key terminology (Securité, Pan Pan, Mayday).
- Below: Does not carry a VHF radio, or does not know how to use VHF radio, or uses inappropriate radio etiquette.

Core: Trip Planning and Navigation

L5 Competency: The paddler successfully plans, plots, and executes routes in L5 conditions and venues. Chosen routes will incorporate a holistic view of all the variables within the venue and contain contingency plans. They demonstrate the ability to adjust their route while underway and paddle to alternate aim points, whether paddling with good or limited visibility.

Gathers, understands, and utilizes appropriate forecasts (weather, marine, surf, current, and tidal).

- Exceeds: Comes prepared with all pertinent forecast data and can assist others in finding data for the area. Demonstrates ability to interpret weather and swell forecasts and tidal predictions to anticipate conditions ahead of time.
- Meets: Can provide all pertinent forecast data for the day when the assessor requests.
- Below: Cannot provide pertinent forecast data for the day when the assessor requests.

Incorporates wind, waves, and swell into route plans and trip choices.

- Exceeds: Gathers forecasts and understands how wave and swell characteristics (size, direction, period) can be influenced by wind conditions. Applies a more in-depth understanding of wind forecasts (strength, trend, and direction) and can infer the effect on the group's plan from relief maps and headlands.
- Meets: Uses forecasts to determine if a route is feasible and adjusts the trip plan to deal with adverse conditions when necessary.
- Below: Unable to gather or use forecast data on wind, wave, and swell conditions to determine if the route is feasible or fails to adjust the trip plan to deal with adverse conditions when necessary.

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Incorporates tidal planning and calculations of stages of tide, current strength, and drift into route plan and trip choices.

- Exceeds: Able to calculate the depth of tidal waters over time, amount of drift due to tidal current, and current speed and direction when given resources and the task upon the assessor's request. Applies calculations to a route plan that includes a crossing of tidal current that spans at least 3 hours. Makes decisions on the water based on these calculations and can explain concepts to others in a clear and understandable manner.
- Meets: Able to calculate the depth of tidal waters over time, the amount of drift due to tidal current, and current speed and direction when given the task and resources ahead of time. Applies calculations to a route plan that includes a crossing of tidal current that spans at least 3 hours.
- Below: Unable to calculate the depth of tidal waters in relation to the chart, drift, and current speed. Fails to incorporate tidal planning into their route plan or trip decisions.

Plots, plans, and executes a successful "Route Plan" considering variables of the day.

- Exceeds: Demonstrates a high level of understanding when route planning and produces a comprehensive float plan with risk assessment analysis. Risk assessment analysis displays an understanding of the compounding factors that complicate L5 paddling venues.
- Meets: Successfully completes a tabletop navigation exercise that incorporates an understanding of charts, forecasts (weather, surf, current, and tidal predictions), and knowledge of the paddling group. Produces a float plan demonstrating an understanding of risk mitigation through effective trip planning.
- Below: Is unsuccessful in completing the tabletop navigation exercise or does not complete a float plan.

Demonstrates use of chart and compass when paddling their "Route Plan."

- Exceeds: Level of understanding is such that they can lead a group in L5 conditions and explain navigation concepts to other paddlers. Continuously shows an understanding of their location and is future-minded about destination and speed of travel and can successfully navigate to an alternate aim point when underway.
- Meets: Works out the route details using a chart, compass, and environmental data. Incorporates piloting and dead reckoning while navigating by chart and compass. Stays on course while paddling from point to point in L5 conditions and can verbalize location and plan when requested by the assessor. Demonstrates the ability to adjust route on the fly and paddle to an alternate aim point.
- Below: Does not use a chart or compass properly while attempting to paddle the given course. Or cannot maintain course in L5 conditions or struggles to answer questions about location or observed features.

Understands the Nautical Rules of the Road and aids to navigation, and demonstrates safe paddling in relation to boat traffic.

- Exceeds: Leads a connected group safely through an area of active boating, correctly honoring aids to navigation and including major shipping channels. Has a "Plan B" route in mind if the planned route proves hazardous due to excessive boat activity.
- Meets: Demonstrate understanding of shipping lanes, rules of the road, buoys, fixed markers, and other hazard warnings. Stays connected to the group and paddles a safe and effective route through active boating areas, correctly honoring aids to navigation.
- Below: Knows some rules or no rules. Or paddles a haphazard route through areas of boat traffic and aids to navigation.

Demonstrates the ability to navigate in limited visibility (for example, fog or darkness).

- Exceeds: Carries the equipment necessary to navigate in limited visibility conditions. Able to complete a route designed by the assessor using a chart, compass, and aids to navigation. Leads a connected group and paddles a safe and accurate route of at least 1.5 nautical miles in L5 conditions.
- Meets: Carries the equipment necessary to navigate in limited visibility conditions. Able to complete a route designed by the assessor using a chart, compass, and aids to navigation. Stays connected to the group and paddles a safe and accurate route of at least 1 nautical mile with responsibility for route finding in L5 conditions.
- Below: Does not have the equipment necessary to navigate in limited visibility conditions. Or is unable to reach aim points or paddles a haphazard route while paddling in limited visibility due to miscalculation or inability to decipher aids to navigation.

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L5 Paddler Venue Specific Competencies and Assessed Skills

Assessors shall evaluate the paddler for their competency in two of the following "Venue Specific" categories. The choice of assessment venue shall enable the assessor to see all the assessed skills for the chosen categories.

Venue Specific: Expedition Paddling

L5 Competency: The paddler utilizes knowledge and resources to plan a successful multi-day journey in L5 conditions. They make appropriate expedition decisions (landing, launching, camping locations, go/no-go) considering self, paddling group, and anticipated weather and water conditions. They are appropriately equipped for a multi-day journey and can perform all skills in a fully laden kayak.

Note: You will be assessing these skills during a multi-day expedition. The location you select for the expedition shall have access to surf, rock gardens, or tide races. When assessing (one of) these Venue Specific skill categories, participants are to be evaluated without camping equipment in the kayak. Example: The assessor may plan a 3-day assessment trip where the group lands and makes camp near an area suitable for "Rock Gardens and Sea Caves." In this example, the group may land, make camp, and launch with unladen kayaks properly equipped for a rock gardening session. It is acceptable then to assess the skills in the "Venue Specific: Rock Gardening and Sea Caves" module. Notice that the final assessed skill in this section is to perform all "Core Skills" in a fully laden kayak.

Provides evidence of multi-day journeys that involve overnight camping.

- Exceeds: Provides evidence of multi-day journeys with exposure to L4 conditions.
- Meets: Provides evidence of multi-day journeys with some exposure to L3 and L4 conditions.
- Below: Does not provide evidence of a multi-day trip where some exposure to L3 and L4 conditions was present.

Demonstrates ability to plan a successful multi-day journey using available and appropriate planning resources.

- Exceeds: Gathers and utilizes resources (for example, charts, synoptic and marine forecasts, local information) appropriate for paddling in a remote area on the assessment trip. The trip plan is flexible, considers likely risks and compounding effects of multiple days of paddling in L5 conditions, and includes contingency plans. Knowledge check indicates a high level of planning competency, field forecasting ability, and a leadership mindset.
- Meets: Gathers and utilizes resources (for example, charts, synoptic and marine forecasts, and local information) appropriate for paddling in a remote area or on an assessment trip. The trip plan considers likely risks and the compounding effect of multiple days of paddling in L5 conditions and includes contingency plans.
- Below: Does not come prepared with needed planning resources, or is unable to apply forecasts and local knowledge to the trip, or does not consider the breadth of the journey when planning each day.

Makes appropriate expedition decisions both before and during the trip.

- Exceeds: Maintains a holistic approach to decision-making during the trip, considering venue, conditions, and group well-being. Demonstrates appropriate energy management regarding group pacing, distances, and provisioning (fueling for the journey and planning for delays). Utilizes contingency plans when necessary and effectively communicates their approach to the group.
- Meets: Chooses realistic times and distances, route decisions, and when to launch and land. Demonstrates appropriate energy management regarding pacing, distances, and provisioning (fueling for the journey and planning for delays). Has alternate plans in place and demonstrates the ability to modify their plan as necessary effectively.
- Below: Chooses unrealistic determinations concerning times, distances, and group ability. Or makes poor route choices or remains committed to their original plan when change becomes necessary.

Chooses appropriate launching and landing locations based on topography, tides, waves, and the character of breaking surf.

- Exceeds: Chooses to launch and land in places that are achievable for themselves and others in the group. Manages the launching and landing process through effective positioning and clear communication.
- Meets: Chooses to launch and land in places that are achievable for themselves and others in the group.
- Below: Chooses unrealistic places for themselves or other group members to launch and land. Or, the choice of site has unintended consequences for the following days of the journey.

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Is appropriately equipped for a multi-day journey in the planned environment and well-versed in using their equipment.

- Exceeds: Carries appropriate equipment to care for themselves and group members on and off the water. Equipment is accessible and appropriate for solving problems they are likely to encounter.
- Meets: Carries an appropriate personal kit for a multi-day journey with other paddlers. Exhibits proper equipment selection, packing, and availability of emergency equipment for journeying in remote environments. Equipment is accessible and appropriate for solving problems they are likely to encounter
- Below: Lacks equipment needed to care for themselves on and off the water. Or equipment is not accessible.

Demonstrates knowledge and proper use of a VHF radio and appropriate remote communication tool(s) for the expedition location.

- Exceeds: Carries a VHF radio and appropriate remote communication tool(s) and can instruct others on proper use and limitations.
- Meets: Carries a VHF radio and any appropriate remote communication tool (for example, satellite phone, SPOT, etc.). Can demonstrate the use and understands the limitations of VHF radio and other devices carried.
- Below: Does not carry a VHF radio or appropriate remote communication tool or understand their use.

Demonstrates knowledge of emergency planning, ability to coordinate extractions with rescue services, and ability to assist when requested.

- Exceeds: Knows all extraction points and locations of emergency services along the route. Plans extraction points and is prepared with contact information for rescue resources. Uses appropriate communication tools and follows proper emergency call etiquette. Establishes an extraction point and moves rescue to a position of usefulness. Ably assists rescue services when requested.
- Meets: Is prepared with knowledge of emergency services along the route, has gathered contact information for potential EMS sources, and includes information in their float plan. Uses appropriate communication tools and follows proper emergency call etiquette. Establishes an extraction point, moves rescue into position, and assists rescue services when requested.
- Below: Has not prepared for an emergency, or fails to coordinate the rescue attempt properly, or is unable to assist when requested.

Demonstrates all “Core Skills” with a fully laden kayak.

- Exceeds: Functions at a high level in L5 conditions with a fully laden kayak.
- Meets: Functions competently in L5 conditions with a fully laden kayak.
- Below: Needs help to perform competently in L5 conditions with a fully laden kayak.

Venue Specific: Tide Races

L5 Competency: The paddler demonstrates an understanding of the tidal environment. They can paddle through a tide race in control and play in the tide race. They understand the challenges of paddling in areas of current and position themselves appropriately to ensure individual and group safety.

Identifies features of a tide race.

- Exceeds: Understands the relationship between current (flow direction, speed), wind (direction, velocity, duration), waves (direction, height, period), and landforms (seabed, headlands). Uses available data and understanding of these relationships to predict race features before arriving at the site.
- Meets: Correctly identifies features in a tide race (eddy, eddyline, current, standing waves, overfalls), including areas of safety and recovery.
- Below: Is unfamiliar with, or cannot identify, the features of a tide race.

Creates a plan for the tide race.

- Exceeds: Creates a group plan for paddling through and playing in the tide race. The plan considers safe flow, the effects of wind and waves, the position of maximum usefulness, and rescue planning.
- Meets: Creates a plan for paddling through and playing in the tide race. The plan considers safe flow, the effects of wind and waves, the position of maximum usefulness, and rescue planning.
- Below: The created plan does not consider safe flow, effects of wind and waves, group positioning, or rescue planning.

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Effectively paddles a course through the race and can return to the top of the tide race.

- Exceeds: Able to safely lead a group through a tide race and maximize features in the race to achieve a position of maximum usefulness. The group can return to the top of the race.
- Meets: Chooses a successful course through the tide race and uses features of the race for control, returning via eddies or surfing to move upstream efficiently.
- Below: Cannot determine their route through the tide race or are out of control while paddling in a tide race. Or, does not use eddies or waves and paddles against the current when moving upstream.

Demonstrates controlled peel-outs and eddy turns; uses eddy line to enact directional changes.

- Exceeds: Varies kayak position, angle of approach, kayak edge, speed, and strokes to make both wide and tight turns on eddylines.
- Meets: Maintains directional control and stability while breaking in and out of eddies. Reaches a target or “aim point” given by the assessor.
- Below: Loses directional control or stability when crossing eddylines.

Demonstrates use of forward and reverse ferry glides to reach an intended target.

- Exceeds: Varies kayak position, angle of approach, kayak edge, speed, and strokes to ferry glide across the flow and attain upstream.
- Meets: Maintains angle and reaches the target.
- Below: Loses angle or does not reach the target.

Demonstrates the ability to attain around a headland or other obstruction.

- Exceeds: Uses precise kayak handling and strategy to attain an upstream eddy. Coordinates timing of the attainment move with swell or waves to surf into the upstream eddy.
- Meets: Uses kayak position, angle of approach, speed, and stroke choice to attain an upstream eddy successfully.
- Below: Is unable to attain into the upstream eddy.

Demonstrates control while surfing waves in a tide race.

- Exceeds: Executes directional change(s) while forward surfing and demonstrates the ability to exit the wave under control.
- Meets: Establishes a position of control while forward surfing and demonstrates the ability to exit the wave under control.
- Below: Cannot catch waves or establish a control position on the wave face.

Demonstrate appropriate rescue and towing skills and moves rescue to an area of less risk when necessary.

- Exceeds: Provides overwatch with appropriate positioning. Reaches rescue efficiently, performs rescue effectively, and moves rescue into eddy or other areas of less risk when necessary.
- Meets: Reaches rescue efficiently, performs rescue effectively, and moves rescue into eddy or other areas of less risk when necessary.
- Below: Cannot reach, perform, or manage rescue.

Completes a journey across the current requiring calculation of tidal drift using vector analysis.

- Exceeds: Demonstrates a high level of understanding when planning the route and produces a comprehensive float plan with risk assessment analysis. Able to calculate drift for a route of at least 4 nautical miles where current reaches 4 knots. Leads a connected group on the journey, explaining strategy and tactics used for executing their plan.
- Meets: Accurately calculates tidal drift (direction and distance) and incorporates drift into their route plan for a route of at least 4 nautical miles where current reaches 4 knots. Reaches the “aim point” with a connected group and can explain their approach for planning the route.
- Below: Unable to calculate drift or an incorrect calculation leads to failure to reach the “aim point.” Or does not accurately assess risks or communicate risks involved in their float plan. Or does not keep the group connected during the journey.

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Venue Specific: Surf

L5 Competency: The paddler demonstrates the use of forecasting tools in combination with charts and maps to predict areas of surf and breaking waves. They demonstrate control while launching, landing, paddling through L5 surf zones, and while surfing. They can self-rescue in the surf zone, perform assisted rescues, and tow where and when appropriate.

Identifies surf zone features and hazards.

- Exceeds: Understands the relationship between fetch, wind (direction, velocity, duration), waves (direction, height, period), and landforms (seabed, headlands). Uses available data and understanding of these relationships to predict whether the surf zone is appropriate for sea kayak surfing.
- Meets: Identifies features and risks of a surf zone (for example, soup, impact, outside, rip, and longshore currents).
- Below: Unable to describe what they observe in the surf zone beyond “breaking waves.” Is unaware of the risks associated with paddling sea kayaks in the surf zone.

Develops a strategy for surfing breaks with various wave characteristics.

- Exceeds: Possesses a high understanding of different types of breaks and approaches to surfing waves in these surf zones. Provides overwatch and direction during surf sessions.
- Meets: Understands the different types of breaks (shore, point, bar breaks) and strategies and tactics for surfing long boats in the break. Identifies wave types (dumping, spilling), shapes, and parts of the wave (trough, face, crest), and strategies and tactics for kayak handling in the surf. Establishes a group plan with appropriate spacing, line-of-site, and communication.
- Below: Is unfamiliar with, or cannot identify, different types of surf breaks and parts of the waves. Or surfs in a haphazard manner due to a lack of awareness or control, amplifying the risk to themselves and the group.

Is aware of surf etiquette and applies concepts with situational awareness and appropriate positioning.

- Exceeds: Understands surf etiquette and applies concepts with situational awareness and appropriate positioning when moving through the surf zone and catching waves. For example, receives compliments from other surfers at the break.
- Meets: Understands surf etiquette and applies concepts when positioning and paddling through the surf zone. For example, ensures the safety of all surfers in the area through positioning and decision-making.
- Below: Is unfamiliar with surf etiquette or does not apply concepts when positioning in and paddling through the surf zone. For example, is responsible for avoidable collisions with other paddlers or surfers.

Is appropriately equipped for paddling in the surf.

- Exceeds: Kayak and gear setup is suitable for paddling in the surf and can explain surf-specific choices.
- Meets: Kayak and gear setup is suitable for paddling in the surf and can complete all assessed skills.
- Below: Kayak and gear setup is not suitable for paddling in the surf, resulting in damage beyond normal wear and tear or inability to complete all assessed skills.

Demonstrates control while launching, paddling through the surf zone, and landing.

- Exceeds: Can safely direct a group through the surf and breaking waves. Clearly communicates the chosen route and maintains a position of maximum usefulness. Is intentional, patient, and strategic in their location and timing of launching and landing.
- Meets: Independently launches and lands their kayak. Successfully executes strategy for reaching the “outside” from the beach and returns through the surf zone under control, landing high on the beach. Identifies and avoids larger sets and paddles through the zone, demonstrating wise tactics.
- Below: Requires more than two attempts to independently launch or land without assistance (for example, unintentionally surfs, broaches, or capsizes when launching or landing). Or cannot determine their route through the surf and breaking waves. Or is unaware of their position relative to other paddlers and hazards, or regularly experiences unintentional surfing.

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Demonstrates control while surfing and exiting the wave.

- Exceeds: Demonstrates a high level of control while surfing and makes directional changes, diagonal runs, top and bottom turns, and intentional vertical moves, and links these maneuvers to extend their surf ride. Can consistently pivot in the foam pile to regain directional control from a side-surf.
- Meets: Able to establish a position of control on the wave face and refine or change direction while forward surfing. Able to control a back surf at the appropriate moment in the surf zone. Able to exit the wave under control with awareness of position in relation to the next wave. It is expected that most rides do not end in a side-surf, but when a side-surf occurs, the paddler can regain balance and directional control.
- Below: Unable to establish position or direction on the wave. Or exits only when the wave loses energy or has an unintentional broach.

Demonstrates appropriate assisted rescue and towing skills specific to the surf zone.

- Exceeds: Demonstrates swimmer urgency and intention when assessing rescue options and adapts approach as needed through a spectrum of options (for example, swimmer support, contact tows, assisted rescues). Recognizes changing conditions and adjusts accordingly.
- Meets: Reaches swimmer efficiently, performs rescue effectively, and moves rescue to an area of less risk when necessary. Can move an unable paddler to shore through the surf zone. Understands risk versus reward when assessing rescue solutions based on surf characteristics.
- Below: Cannot reach, perform, or manage the rescue. Or is locked into a single-choice or dogmatic approach (for example, "We never do assisted rescues in the surf.").

Demonstrates appropriate self-rescue skills specific to the surf zone.

- Exceeds: Uses the wave energy to roll when capsized to manage risk and advance to shore. Can identify hazards while in the water and adjust accordingly.
- Meets: Consistently rolls up when capsized in the surf zone. Can effectively swim and move their kayak to shore when capsized in the impact zone or performs a re-entry and roll. Negotiates the soup zone with the skirt off and water in the cockpit.
- Below: Unable to swim and move their kayak to shore following a capsize in the surf zone. Or struggles to gain composure and make appropriate decisions while out of their kayak in the surf zone.

Venue Specific: Rock Gardens and Sea Caves

L5 Competency: The paddler uses forecasting tools in combination with charts and maps to predict appropriate locations for rock garden and sea cave exploration. They select and run play features and can paddle through rock gardens and sea caves safely and efficiently. They can self-rescue in rock gardens, perform assisted rescues, and tow where and when appropriate.

Identify zones and features of a rock garden (safe zones, transition zones, danger zones, play features).

- Exceeds: Understands the relationship between wind (direction, velocity, duration), waves (direction, height, period), tide height, and landforms (seabed, headlands). Uses available data and understanding of these relationships to predict features before arriving at the site. Can consistently and correctly identify zones and features in a rock gardening venue or environment they are encountering for the first time or given unfamiliar conditions.
- Meets: Correctly identifies zones and play features within a rock garden environment. Understands how conditions contribute to each feature's relative safety and risk.
- Below: Unfamiliar with or cannot identify zones or features within a rock garden environment.

Is appropriately equipped for paddling in rock gardens.

- Exceeds: Kayak and gear setup is suitable for paddling in conditions, and the paddler can explain rock garden-specific choices (for example, plastic kayak, whitewater paddle, bow, and stern grab lines).
- Meets: Kayak and gear setup is suitable for paddling in rock gardens, and the paddler can complete all assessed skills.
- Below: Kayak and gear setup is not suitable for paddling in rock gardens resulting in damage beyond normal wear and tear, or the paddler cannot complete all assessed skills.

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Demonstrates the ability to traverse zones of a rock garden safely.

- Exceeds: Able to safely lead a group through a rock garden and maximize features in the environment to maintain a line of sight and achieve a position of maximum usefulness.
- Meets: Chooses a successful course through the rock garden and utilizes appropriate strokes, timing, and features to stay on course.
- Below: Cannot determine their route through the rock garden or is out of control while paddling in a rock garden.

Demonstrates the ability to run an appropriate play feature (for example, rock slot, pour-over).

- Exceeds: Identifies, assesses for safety, and successfully runs an appropriate play feature. Achieves position of maximum usefulness before and after running the feature to support group members.
- Meets: Identifies potential play features and runs an appropriate (minimal risk to high reward ratio given L5 conditions) play feature while maintaining stability and directional control.
- Below: Unable to maintain stability or directional control while running an appropriate play feature.

Demonstrates the ability to explore sea caves safely.

- Exceeds: Able to safely lead a group on a sea cave exploration while maintaining line of sight and achieving a position of maximum usefulness.
- Meets: Identifies suitable caves for exploration, applies appropriate timing when entering and exiting, and maintains stability and directional control in a confined space.
- Below: Unable to maintain stability or directional control when entering, exiting, or paddling within a confined space.

Demonstrates the ability to land on and launch from the rocks.

- Exceeds: Identifies an appropriate location for a rocky landing and independently lands on and launches from rocks.
- Meets: Independently lands on and launches from the rocks.
- Below: Unable to land on, or launch from, the rocks without assistance.

Demonstrates appropriate rescue and towing skills and moves rescue to an area of less risk when necessary.

- Exceeds: Provides overwatch with appropriate positioning. Reaches rescue efficiently, performs rescue effectively, and moves rescue into an area of less risk when necessary.
- Meets: Reaches rescue efficiently, performs rescue effectively, and moves rescue into an area of less risk when necessary.
- Below: Cannot reach, perform, or manage rescue.

Transports a swimmer to an area of less risk.

- Exceeds: Demonstrates two or more ways to transport a swimmer into an area of less risk.
- Meets: Chooses an appropriate transport technique for the situation and moves a swimmer into an area of less risk.
- Below: Unable to transport a swimmer into an area of less risk.

Conveys a swimmer's kayak to an area of less risk.

- Exceeds: Demonstrates two or more ways to transport a swimmer's kayak into an area of less risk.
- Meets: Chooses an appropriate transport technique for the situation and moves a swimmer's kayak into an area of less risk.
- Below: Unable to transport a swimmer's kayak into an area of less risk.

Can effectively swim and move their kayak to an area of less risk following a capsized among the rocks.

- Exceeds: Able to swim among the rocks and demonstrates more than one technique for moving their kayak to an area of less risk.
- Meets: Paddler chooses an appropriate technique to independently move themselves and their kayak to an area of less risk.
- Below: Paddler cannot effectively swim among the rocks or move their kayak to an area of less risk.

Demonstrates use of throwline rescue technique(s) from the kayak and land.

- Exceeds: Able to efficiently deploy a throwline and effectively hit the target in a single throw from both kayak and land.
- Meets: Able to efficiently deploy a throwline and effectively hit the target within two throws, from both kayak and land, in under 3 minutes.
- Below: Cannot hit the target in under 3 minutes or two throws.

L5 Advanced Open Water Skills Assessment - Multi-Paddler Field Grid

Assessor 1 _____	ACA # _____	Assessor 2 _____	ACA # _____
Paddler 1 _____	ACA # _____	Paddler 2 _____	ACA # _____
Paddler 3 _____	ACA # _____	Paddler 4 _____	ACA # _____
Paddler 5 _____	ACA # _____		

Location _____ **Was the venue within requirements?** Y / N

L5 Paddling Venue Specific Skills (choose two):

- Surf
 Rock Gardens and Sea Caves
 Tide Races
 Expedition Paddling

Conditions Winds 15-25 knots **Actual** _____ Waves 3-5 feet **Actual** _____
 Surf 3-5 feet **Actual** _____ Tidal Current > 4 **Actual** _____

Key: "E" Exceeds Standard / "M" Meets Standard / "B" Below Standard

Core: Boat Handling - The paddler purposely maneuvers to make moves and position themselves in L5 conditions. They can blend and adjust strokes and incorporate edging fluently to make technical moves. The paddler reflexively utilizes body, boat, and blade to prevent and recover from a near capsize. And, upon capsizing, they consistently execute a successful roll in L5 conditions. They demonstrate significant comfort and consistency while applying skills across venues in L5 conditions.

Assessed Skills	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
Demonstrates the ability to make progress, turn, and hold their position in differing wind and wave directions.					
Utilizes strokes and maneuvers to reach an intended target, avoid hazards, maintain or shape a course, or accomplish a specific task.					
Incorporates edging and blade support while making technical maneuvers.					
Able to roll from both set-up and non-setup positions on either side of the kayak.					

Notes:

Core: Rescues and Towing - The paddler demonstrates competent rescue and towing skills in L5 conditions. They possess a 360-degree sphere of awareness and are present and flexible while under pressure. They understand rescue priorities and can execute situation-appropriate rescues. They move rescues from dynamic water to positions of less risk when necessary and keep the group organized until the risk is no longer imminent.

Assessed Skills	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
Performs one or more of the following assisted re-entries with an able swimmer: Side-by-Side, Scoop, T-Rescue, Swimmer Deck Carry.					
Performs one or more of the following assisted re-entries to aid an impaired swimmer: Scoop, Unresponsive Paddler, Swimmer Deck Carry.					
Performs one or more of the following self-rescues: Re-enter and Roll, Paddle Float, and Scramble.					
Applies one or more of the following towing strategies: In-Line Tow, Rafted In-Line Tow, Anchor Tow, Contact Tow, Bulldozing, Toggle Tow.					
Effectively manages their tow system and can release it under load, both upright and upside down.					
Able to rescue a swimmer who has been separated from their kayak and reconnect the swimmer to their kayak.					
Able to assist another paddler’s recovery from capsize by presenting their kayak or paddle.					
Demonstrates the role of an active and effective swimmer when rescued.					
Recovers without their primary paddle upon capsizing.					
Developing Skill					
Deploys multiple techniques and strategies for each of the above rescues.					

Notes:

Core: Awareness and Seamanship - The paddler has a heightened awareness of the environment and understands the challenges inherent to L5 venues and conditions. They choose appropriate venues and adjust their plans when necessary, demonstrating sound decision-making based on risk/reward analysis. They support group members and help keep others within their limits by communicating and positioning themselves appropriately.

Assessed Skills	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
Understands hydrology of the marine environment and demonstrates the ability to assess and choose appropriate paddling venues.					
Practices Leave No Trace and demonstrates appropriate interactions with the ecosystem and wildlife.					
Understands the causes, prevention, recognition, and treatment of cold and heat-related issues, including hypothermia and hyperthermia.					
Demonstrates appropriate decision-making and flexibility in leadership and followership on the water.					
Demonstrates appropriate group awareness.					
Maintains properly outfitted, packed, and trimmed kayak and has working knowledge of paddling equipment.					
Performs repairs allowing the paddler to safely paddle to an access point.					
Carries appropriate visual and auditory signaling device(s) and understands their use and limitations.					
Can tie Bowline, Clove Hitch, Figure 8, and Trucker’s Hitch knots.					

Notes:

Core: Incident Prevention and Management - The paddler has an incident-prevention mindset both on and off the water. They make good choices and demonstrate competent decision-making. They can lead and assist with managing incidents in L5 conditions. They can identify appropriate safe zones and work with other paddlers to ensure the entire group's safety.

Assessed Skills	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
Safely transports, unloads, and carries kayaks at the launch site.					
Actively participates in planning and debriefing sessions.					
Launches and lands in a safe manner.					
Communicates and directs others calmly in stressful situations.					
Works with others to perform rescues and move the group to a position of less risk.					
Demonstrates proper use of VHF radio and the ability to hail appropriate resources.					

Notes:

Core: Trip Planning and Navigation - The paddler successfully plans, plots, and executes routes in L5 conditions and venues. Chosen routes will incorporate a holistic view of all the variables within the venue and contain contingency plans. They demonstrate the ability to adjust their route while underway and paddle to alternate aim points, whether paddling with good or limited visibility.

Assessed Skills	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
Gathers, understands, and utilizes appropriate forecasts (weather, marine, surf, current, and tidal).					
Incorporates wind, waves, and swell direction into route plans and trip choices.					
Incorporates tidal planning and calculations of stages of tide , current strength, and drift into route plan and trip choices.					
Plots, plans, and executes a successful "Route Plan" considering variables of the day.					
Demonstrates use of chart and compass when paddling their "Route Plan".					
Understands the Nautical Rules of the Road and aids to navigation, and demonstrates safe paddling in relation to boat traffic.					
Demonstrates the ability to navigate in limited visibility (for example, fog or darkness).					

Notes:

Venue Specific: Fill out at least two of the following Venue Specific assessment categories

Venue Specific: Expedition Paddling - The paddler utilizes knowledge and resources to plan a successful multi-day journey in L5 conditions. They make appropriate expedition decisions (landing, launching, camping locations, go/no-go) considering self, paddling group, and anticipated weather and water conditions. They are appropriately equipped for a multi-day journey and can perform all skills in a fully laden kayak.

Assessed Skills	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
Provides evidence of multi-day journeys that involve overnight camping.					
Demonstrates ability to plan a successful multi-day journey using available and appropriate planning resources.					
Makes appropriate expedition decisions both before and during the trip.					
Chooses appropriate launching and landing locations based on topography, tides, waves, and character of breaking surf.					
Is appropriately equipped for a multi-day journey in the planned environment and is well-versed in using their equipment.					
Demonstrates knowledge and proper use of a VHF radio and any appropriate remote communication tool(s) for the expedition location.					
Demonstrates knowledge of emergency planning, ability to coordinate extractions with rescue services, and ability to assist when requested.					
Demonstrates all “Core Skills” with a fully laden kayak.					

Notes:

Venue Specific: Tide Races - The paddler demonstrates an understanding of the tidal environment. They can paddle through a tide race in control and play in the tide race. They understand the challenges of paddling in areas of current and position themselves appropriately to ensure individual and group safety.

Assessed Skills	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
Identifies features of a tide race.					
Creates a plan for the tide race.					
Effectively paddles a course through the race and can return to the top of the tide race.					
Demonstrates controlled peel-outs and eddy turns; uses eddy line to enact directional changes.					
Demonstrates use of forward and reverse ferry glides to reach an intended target.					
Demonstrates the ability to attain around a headland or other obstruction.					
Demonstrates control while surfing waves in a tide race.					
Demonstrate appropriate rescue and towing skills and moves rescue to an area of less risk when necessary.					
Completes a journey across the current requiring calculation of tidal drift using vector analysis.					

Notes:

Venue Specific: Surf - The paddler demonstrates the use of forecasting tools in combination with charts and maps to predict areas of surf and breaking waves. They demonstrate control while launching, landing, paddling through L5 surf zones, and while surfing. They can self-rescue in the surf, perform assisted rescues, and tow where and when appropriate.

Assessed Skills	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
Identifies surf zone features and hazards.					
Develops a strategy for surfing breaks with various wave characteristics.					
Is aware of surf etiquette and applies concepts with situational awareness and appropriate positioning.					
Is appropriately equipped for paddling in the surf.					
Demonstrates control while launching, paddling through the surf zone, and landing.					
Demonstrates control while surfing and exiting the wave.					
Demonstrates appropriate assisted rescue and towing skills specific to the surf zone.					
Demonstrates appropriate self-rescue skills specific to the surf zone.					

Notes:

Venue Specific: Rock Gardens and Sea Caves - The paddler uses forecasting tools in combination with charts and maps to predict appropriate locations for rock garden and sea cave exploration. They select and run play features and can and can paddle through rock gardens and sea caves safely and efficiently. They can self-rescue in rock gardens, perform assisted rescues, and tow where and when appropriate.

Assessed Skills	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
Identifies zones and features of a rock garden (safe zones, transition zones, danger zones, play features).					
Is appropriately equipped for paddling in rock gardens.					
Demonstrates the ability to traverse zones of a rock garden safely.					
Demonstrates the ability to run an appropriate play feature (for example, rock slot, pour-over).					
Demonstrates the ability to explore sea caves safely.					
Demonstrates the ability to land on and launch from the rocks.					
Demonstrates appropriate rescue and towing skills and moves rescue to an area of less risk when necessary.					
Transports a swimmer into an area of less risk.					
Conveys a swimmer's kayak to an area of less risk.					
Can effectively swim and move their kayak to an area of less risk following a capsize among the rocks.					
Demonstrates use of-throwline rescue technique(s) from the kayak and land.					

Notes:

L5 Advanced Open Water Skills Assessment - Single Paddler Field Grid

Assessor _____ ACA # _____ Paddler _____ ACA # _____

Location _____ Was the venue within requirements? Y / N

L5 Paddling Venue Specific Skills (choose two):

Surf Rock Gardens and Sea Caves Tide Races Expedition Paddling

Conditions Winds 15-25 knots **Actual** _____ Waves 3-5 feet **Actual** _____

Surf 3-5 feet **Actual** _____ Tidal Current > 4 knots **Actual** _____

Key: “E” Exceeds Standard / ”M” Meets Standard / “B” Below Standard

Core: Boat Handling - The paddler purposely maneuvers to make moves and position themselves in L5 conditions. They can blend and adjust strokes and incorporate edging fluently to make technical moves. The paddler reflexively utilizes body, boat, and blade to prevent and recover from a near capsize. And, upon capsizing, they consistently execute a successful roll in L5 conditions. They demonstrate significant comfort and consistency while applying skills across venues in L5 conditions

Assessed Skills	B/M/E	Note
Demonstrates the ability to make progress, turn, and hold their position in differing wind and wave directions.		
Utilizes strokes and maneuvers to reach an intended target, avoid hazards, maintain or shape a course, or accomplish a specific task.		
Incorporates edging and blade support while making technical maneuvers.		
Able to roll from both set-up and non-setup positions on either side of the kayak.		

Notes:

Core: Rescues and Towing - The paddler demonstrates competent rescue and towing skills in L5 conditions. They possess a 360-degree sphere of awareness and are present and flexible while under pressure. They understand rescue priorities and can execute situation-appropriate rescues. They move rescues from dynamic water to positions of less risk when necessary and keep the group organized until the risk is no longer imminent.

Assessed Skills	B/M/E	Note
Performs one or more of the following assisted re-entries with an able swimmer: Side-by-Side, Scoop, T-Rescue, Swimmer Deck Carry.		
Performs one or more of the following assisted re-entries to aid an impaired swimmer: Scoop, Unresponsive Paddler, Swimmer Deck Carry.		
Performs one or more of the following self-rescues: Re-enter and Roll, Paddle Float, and Scramble.		
Applies one or more of the following towing strategies: In-Line Tow, Rafted In-Line Tow, Anchor Tow, Contact Tow, Bulldozing, Toggle Tow.		
Effectively manages their tow system and can release it under load, both upright and upside down.		
Able to rescue a swimmer who has been separated from their kayak and reconnect the swimmer to their kayak.		
Able to assist another paddler's recovery from capsize by presenting their kayak or paddle.		
Demonstrates the role of an active and effective swimmer when rescued.		
Recovers without their primary paddle upon capsizing.		
Developing Skill		
Deploys multiple techniques and strategies for each of the above rescues.		
Notes:		

Core: Awareness and Seamanship - The paddler has a heightened awareness of the environment and understands the challenges inherent to L5 venues and conditions. They choose appropriate venues and adjust their plans when necessary, demonstrating sound decision-making based on risk/reward analysis. They support group members and help keep others within their limits by communicating and positioning themselves appropriately.

Assessed Skills	B/M/E	Note
Understands hydrology of the marine environment and demonstrates the ability to assess and choose appropriate paddling venues.		
Practices Leave No Trace and demonstrates appropriate interactions with the ecosystem and wildlife.		
Understands the causes, prevention, recognition, and treatment of cold and heat-related issues, including hypothermia and hyperthermia.		
Demonstrates appropriate decision-making and flexibility in leadership and followership on the water.		
Demonstrates appropriate group awareness.		

Core: Awareness and Seamanship (continued)

Assessed Skills	B/M/E	Note
Maintains properly outfitted, packed, and trimmed kayak and has working knowledge of paddling equipment.		
Performs repairs allowing the paddler to safely paddle to an access point.		
Carries appropriate visual and auditory signaling device(s) and understands their use and limitations.		
Can tie Bowline, Clove Hitch, Figure 8, and Trucker’s Hitch knots.		
Notes:		

Core: Incident Prevention and Management - The paddler has an incident-prevention mindset both on and off the water. They make good choices and demonstrate competent decision-making. They can lead and assist with managing incidents in L5 conditions. They can identify appropriate safe zones and work with other paddlers to ensure the entire group's safety.

Assessed Skills	B/M/E	Note
Safely transports, unloads, and carries kayaks at the launch site.		
Actively participates in planning and debriefing sessions.		
Launches and lands in a safe manner.		
Communicates and directs others calmly in stressful situations.		
Works with others to perform rescues and move the group to a position of less risk.		
Demonstrates proper use of VHF radio and the ability to hail appropriate resources.		
Notes:		

Core: Trip Planning and Navigation - The paddler successfully plans, plots, and executes routes in L5 conditions and venues. Chosen routes will incorporate a holistic view of all the variables within the venue and contain contingency plans. They demonstrate the ability to adjust their route while underway and paddle to alternate aim points, whether paddling with good or limited visibility.

Assessed Skills	B/M/E	Note
Gathers, understands, and utilizes appropriate forecasts (weather, marine, surf, current, and tidal).		
Incorporates wind, waves, and swell direction into route plans and trip choices.		
Incorporates tidal planning and calculations of stages of tide, current strength, and drift into route plan and trip choices.		
Plots, plans, and executes a successful "Route Plan" considering variables of the day.		
Demonstrates use of chart and compass when paddling their "Route Plan".		
Understands the Nautical Rules of the Road and aids to navigation, and demonstrates safe paddling in relation to boat traffic.		
Demonstrates the ability to navigate in limited visibility (for example, fog or darkness).		
Notes:		

Venue Specific: Fill out at least two of the following Venue Specific assessment categories.

Venue Specific: Expedition Paddling - The paddler utilizes knowledge and resources to plan a successful multi-day journey in L5 conditions. They make appropriate expedition decisions (landing, launching, camping locations, go/no-go) considering self, paddling group, and anticipated weather and water conditions. They are appropriately equipped for a multi-day journey and can perform all skills in a fully laden kayak.

Assessed Skills	B/M/E	Note
Provides evidence of multi-day journeys that involve overnight camping.		
Demonstrates ability to plan a successful multi-day journey using available and appropriate planning resources.		
Makes appropriate expedition decisions both before and during the trip.		
Chooses appropriate launching and landing locations based on topography, tides, waves, and character of breaking surf.		
Is appropriately equipped for a multi-day journey in the planned environment and is well-versed in using their equipment.		
Demonstrates knowledge and proper use of a VHF radio and any appropriate remote communication tool(s) for the expedition location.		
Demonstrates knowledge of emergency planning, ability to coordinate extractions with rescue services, and ability to assist when requested.		
Demonstrates all "Core Skills" with a fully laden kayak.		
Notes:		

Venue Specific: Tide Races - The paddler demonstrates an understanding of the tidal environment. They can paddle through a tide race in control and play in the tide race. They understand the challenges of paddling in areas of current and positions themselves appropriately to ensure individual and group safety.

Assessed Skills	B/M/E	Note
Identifies features of a tide race.		
Creates a plan for the tide race.		
Effectively paddles a course through the race and can return to the top of the tide race.		
Demonstrates controlled peel-outs and eddy turns; uses eddy line to enact directional changes.		
Demonstrates use of forward and reverse ferry glides to reach an intended target.		
Demonstrates the ability to attain around a headland or other obstruction.		
Demonstrates control while surfing waves in a tide race.		
Demonstrate appropriate rescue and towing skills and moves rescue to an area of less risk when necessary.		
Completes a journey across the current requiring calculation of tidal drift using vector analysis.		
Notes:		

Venue Specific: Surf - The paddler demonstrates the use of forecasting tools in combination with charts and maps to predict areas of surf and breaking waves. They demonstrate control while launching, landing, paddling through L5 surf zones, and while surfing. They can self-rescue in the surf, perform assisted rescues, and tow where and when appropriate.

Assessed Skills	B/M/E	Note
Identifies surf zone features and hazards.		
Develops a strategy for surfing breaks with various wave characteristics.		
Is aware of surf etiquette and applies concepts with situational awareness and appropriate positioning.		
Is appropriately equipped for paddling in the surf.		
Demonstrates control while launching, paddling through the surf zone, and landing.		
Demonstrates control while surfing and exiting the wave.		
Demonstrates appropriate assisted rescue and towing skills specific to the surf zone.		
Demonstrates appropriate self-rescue skills specific to the surf zone.		
Notes:		

Venue Specific: Rock Gardens and Sea Caves - The paddler uses forecasting tools in combination with charts and maps to predict appropriate locations for rock garden and sea cave exploration. They select and run play features and can paddle through rock gardens and sea caves safely and efficiently. They can self-rescue in rock gardens, perform assisted rescues, and tow where and when appropriate.

Assessed Skills	B/M/E	Note
Identifies zones and features of a rock garden (safe zones, transition zones, danger zones, play features).		
Is appropriately equipped for paddling in rock gardens.		
Demonstrates the ability to traverse zones of a rock garden safely.		
Demonstrates the ability to run an appropriate play feature (for example, rock slot, pour-over).		
Demonstrates the ability to explore sea caves safely.		
Demonstrates the ability to land on and launch from the rocks.		
Demonstrates appropriate rescue and towing skills and moves rescue to an area of less risk when necessary.		
Transports a swimmer into an area of less risk.		
Conveys a swimmer's kayak to an area of less risk.		
Can effectively swim and move their kayak to an area of less risk following a capsize among the rocks.		
Demonstrates use of-throwline rescue technique(s) from the kayak and land.		

Notes:

L5 Advanced Open Water Skills Assessment – Skills Only Field Grid

Core: Boat Handling Assessed Skills	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
Demonstrates the ability to make progress, turn, and hold their position in differing wind and wave directions.					
Utilizes strokes and maneuvers to reach an intended target, avoid hazards, maintain or shape a course, or accomplish a specific task.					
Incorporates edging and blade support while making technical maneuvers.					
Able to roll from both set-up and non-setup positions on either side of the kayak.					
Core: Rescues and Towing Assessed Skills	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
Performs one or more of the following assisted re-entries with an able swimmer: Side-by-Side, Scoop, T-Rescue, Swimmer Deck Carry.					
Performs one or more of the following assisted re-entries to aid an impaired swimmer: Scoop, Unresponsive Paddler, Swimmer Deck Carry.					
Performs one or more of the following self-rescues: Re-enter and Roll, Paddle Float, and Scramble.					
Applies one or more of the following towing strategies: In-Line Tow, Rafted In-Line Tow, Anchor Tow, Contact Tow, Bulldozing, Toggle Tow.					
Effectively manages their tow system and can release it under load, both upright and upside down.					
Able to rescue a swimmer who has been separated from their kayak and reconnect the swimmer to their kayak.					
Able to assist another paddler's recovery from capsized by presenting their kayak or paddle.					
Demonstrates the role of an active and effective swimmer when rescued.					
Recovers without their primary paddle upon capsizing.					
Core: Rescues and Towing Developing Skill					
Deploys multiple techniques and strategies for each of the above rescues.					
Core: Awareness and Seamanship Assessed Skills	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
Understands hydrology of the marine environment and demonstrates the ability to assess and choose appropriate paddling venues.					
Practices Leave No Trace and demonstrates appropriate interactions with the ecosystem and wildlife.					
Understands the causes, prevention, recognition, and treatment of cold and heat-related issues, including hypothermia and hyperthermia.					
Demonstrates appropriate decision-making and flexibility in leadership and followership on the water.					
Demonstrates appropriate group awareness.					
Maintains properly outfitted, packed, and trimmed kayak and has working knowledge of paddling equipment.					
Performs repairs allowing the paddler to safely paddle to an access point.					
Carries appropriate visual and auditory signaling device(s) and understands their use and limitations.					
Can tie Bowline, Clove Hitch, Figure 8, and Trucker's Hitch knots.					
Core: Incident Prevention and Management Assessed Skills	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
Safely transports, unloads, and carries kayaks at the launch site.					
Actively participates in planning and debriefing sessions.					
Launches and lands in a safe manner.					
Communicates and directs others calmly in stressful situations.					
Works with others to perform rescues and move the group to a position of less risk.					
Demonstrates proper use of VHF radio and the ability to hail appropriate resources.					
Core: Trip Planning and Navigation Assessed Skills	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
Gathers, understands, and utilizes appropriate forecasts (weather, marine, surf, current, and tidal).					
Incorporates wind, waves, and swell direction into route plans and trip choices.					
Incorporates tidal planning, and calculations of stages of tide, current strength, and drift into route plan/trip choices.					
Plots, plans, and executes a successful "Route Plan" considering variables of the day.					
Demonstrates use of chart and compass when paddling their "Route Plan".					
Understands the Nautical Rules of the Road and aids to navigation and demonstrates safe paddling in relation to boat traffic.					
Demonstrates the ability to navigate in limited visibility (for example, fog or darkness).					

Venue-Specific: Expedition Paddling Assessed Skills	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
Provides evidence of multi-day journeys that involve overnight camping.					
Demonstrates ability to plan a successful multi-day journey using available and appropriate planning resources.					
Makes appropriate expedition decisions both before and during the trip.					
Chooses appropriate launching and landing locations based on topography, tides, waves, and character of breaking surf.					
Is appropriately equipped for a multi-day journey in the planned environment and is well-versed in using their equipment.					
Demonstrates knowledge and proper use of a VHF radio and any appropriate remote communication tool(s) for the expedition location.					
Demonstrates knowledge of emergency planning, ability to coordinate extractions with rescue services, and ability to assist when requested.					
Demonstrates all “Core Skills” with a fully laden kayak.					
Venue-Specific: Tide Races Assessed Skills	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
Identifies features of a tide race.					
Creates a plan for the tide race.					
Effectively paddles a course through the race and can return to the top of the tide race.					
Demonstrates controlled peel-outs and eddy turns; uses eddy line to enact directional changes.					
Demonstrates use of forward and reverse ferry glides to reach an intended target.					
Demonstrates the ability to attain around a headland or other obstruction.					
Demonstrates control while surfing waves in a tide race.					
Demonstrate appropriate rescue and towing skills and moves rescue to an area of less risk when necessary.					
Completes a journey across the current requiring calculation of tidal drift using vector analysis.					
Venue Specific: Surf Assessed Skills	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
Identifies surf zone features and hazards.					
Develops a strategy for surfing breaks with various wave characteristics.					
Is aware of surf etiquette and applies concepts with situational awareness and appropriate positioning.					
Is appropriately equipped for paddling in the surf.					
Demonstrates control while launching, paddling through the surf zone, and landing.					
Demonstrates control while surfing and exiting the wave.					
Demonstrates appropriate assisted rescue and towing skills specific to the surf zone.					
Demonstrates appropriate self-rescue skills specific to the surf zone.					
Venue Specific: Rock Gardens and Sea Caves Assessed Skills	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
Identifies zones and features of a rock garden (safe zones, transition zones, danger zones, play features).					
Is appropriately equipped for paddling in rock gardens.					
Demonstrates the ability to traverse zones of a rock garden safely.					
Demonstrates the ability to run an appropriate play feature (for example, rock slot, pour-over).					
Demonstrates the ability to explore sea caves safely.					
Demonstrates the ability to land on and launch from the rocks.					
Demonstrates appropriate rescue and towing skills and moves rescue to an area of less risk when necessary.					
Transports a swimmer into an area of less risk.					
Conveys a swimmer’s kayak to an area of less risk.					
Can effectively swim and move their kayak to an area of less risk following a capsize among the rocks.					
Demonstrates use of-throwline rescue technique(s) from the kayak and land.					