

# ROCK RIDGE CREW GUIDE TO REGATTAS



The intent of this guide is to give parents new to rowing some basic information about how to prepare for race days. Being a new “rowing parent” means being a little overwhelmed. You will be: learning a lot of new terms (if you want to understand your rower); learning how to survive and enjoy a regatta, and; learning to be patient with just not knowing what is happening at times.

The most fun, and the best way to learn more about rowing, is by attending Regattas - do not make the mistake of letting your rower go off to “their sport.” All parents, family and friends are encouraged to attend to watch and cheer on their rowers in action with plenty of viewing room along the Occoquan Reservoir. The basic advice is: plan to go early, stay all day if at all possible, and bring everything you need with you.

## FAQS:

### 1. Where and when will our regattas be held?

All regattas (except the Mathews and James River Regattas) for the Rock Ridge Crew Spring 2019 season are at Sandy Run Regional Park (Occoquan).

Address: **10450 Van Thomson Road, Fairfax Station, VA 22039**

Rowers/coxswains and their families are responsible for transportation to Occoquan. See Sign-Up Genius for carpooling. Arrival time is communicated by coaches in advance of each regatta, based on race schedule.

#### Spring 2019 Rock Ridge Crew Regattas:

3/23	Polar Bear (Varsity and JV)
3/30	Regional Park
4/6	Mathews*
4/13	James River** (back up is Darryl Winslow)
4/27	Al Urquia
5/4	VSRC Day 1 (States for Novice, JV)
5/11	VSRC Day 2 (States for Varsity, JV)

\* Located in Williams Wharf Landing, Mathews, VA

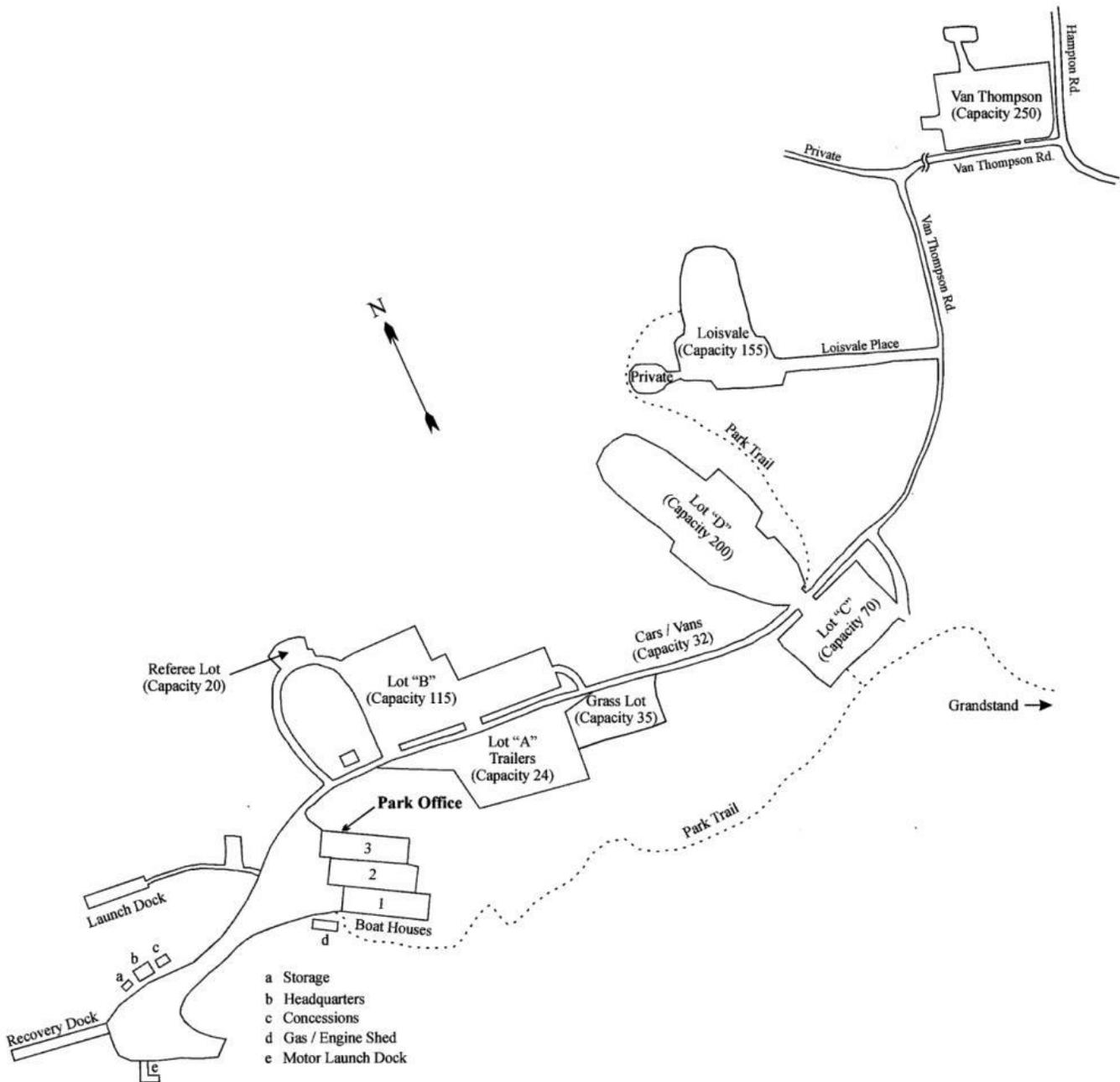
\*\* Located in Robious Landing Park, Midlothian, VA

Info on Mathews and James River regattas will go out on separate e-mails via TeamSnap.

### 2. Where do I park?

Parking at Sandy Run costs \$20 per car and is extremely limited. Bring cash. Depending on how early you arrive, you may have to park in a satellite lot and either take a shuttle bus or walk to the main Sandy Run parking lot. Please carpool to Sandy Run on regatta days if you

# SANDY RUN REGIONAL PARK



can. Map of parking lots and trail to grandstands below. Also check out [www.nvrpa.org](http://www.nvrpa.org).

Important note! THE SPEED LIMIT IN THE PARK IS 15MPH. This is strictly enforced by park management.

**3. Once I park, where do I go now?**

Look for the Rock Ridge Crew hospitality tent! We have two 10'x10' pop up tents which shelter the food tables and our rowers. You can also set up your lawn/camp chairs. It is a place to hang out, ask questions, have some coffee/food, and cheer on the rowers. You will not see the racecourse from our tent. The Grandstand (see pic) is where you can view the race. The area in front of the boat houses by the docks (bottom of a gravel hill) is where rowers will launch or when they are returning to the docks after finishing their race.

***Please pay attention as you walk around a regatta. People carrying the boat always have the right of way because boats weigh a lot, and they can't maneuver as well as you! Overall, just be aware, and be prepared to hop out of the way and/or duck.***

**4. How do I know what time my rower's race is?**

The Head Coach will tell them the approximate time they are expected to race. Times can move around depending on competitor no shows, weather and other factors outside the coaches' control, so be prepared to be flexible.

The approximate race times of each event are available on <http://www.regattacentral.com> on the Friday before or morning of the regatta. You can download a "heat sheet" before the regatta or look on your phone/tablets. The heat sheets list the times of the races, as well as the lane assigned to each boat. Wait until the night before or the morning of the regatta because these can change. Times of race can even change during the day.

**5. Why does my rower have to get to a regatta so much earlier than the start time?**

Regattas can start as early as 8:00 am, but the crew team, especially the coxswains, may need to be there earlier than 6:00 am in order to attend mandatory meetings and to prepare the boats for racing. It is EXTREMELY important to be on time and ready to row at the time announced by the Head Coach.

Rowers (and this term includes coxswains) are expected to be in attendance for the ENTIRE regatta. The only exception is if your rower is scheduled for Saturday practice at Algonkian. Races are usually spread throughout the day. Even when not racing or preparing to race, rowers are expected to be available to unload and rig boats, check in, race, cheer each other on, eat a lot of food after their race, help de-rig, and load the trailer at the end of the day. The rowers also need to warm up, get final instructions from the coach and get into a racing frame of mind. It is a full day. If you cannot stay the full day, you can still know when to watch your rower race. Check out [www.regattacentral](http://www.regattacentral.com) link for more information.

**6. How early should I arrive at the regatta to see my rower compete?**

Go as early as possible. You should give yourself an hour before your rower's race to be safe. Parking is at a premium at every regatta. You have to wait for the money collectors and wait to be parked. This is one time that bringing cash is important. Also, the earlier you arrive, the more likely you will have a spot to park. Definitely park in the designated areas, or you will receive a ticket and/or be towed. Later in the day, it may even take longer if you are parked in the outer lots that require you to take a shuttle or walk to the main park.

**7. What time can we leave the regatta?**

Regattas may last until 3:00 or 4:00 pm, and the team is expected to stay at the site until the

racing has finished or they are dismissed by their Coach. Rower will be given permission to leave only when all post-regatta activities have been completed and boats have been cleaned and racked. Also, after the regatta, your rower may be required to meet back at Algonkian Park to assist in unloading the boats from the trailer.

**8. What do I wear to a regatta?**

At Sandy Run, the parking lots, the Rock Ridge Crew hospitality tent, and the racecourse are not in close proximity. Yes, you will walk a lot at these events so wear good walking/hiking shoes. Also, dress in layers and bring rain gear. The weather at the Occoquan is generally cooler, and is known to change quickly. It can also be muddy, so rubber boots come in handy. Other important items: A hat or cap of some sort for sun/rain, sunglasses (because of the glare off of the water) and sunscreen. Bring a water bottle and travel mug to reduce our use of disposable cups.

**9. What should I bring to a regatta?**

Many parents bring their own lawn/camp/folding chairs, seat cushions (the stands are concrete) and/or blankets. You will want binoculars-you won't be able to tell which boat is which otherwise. Another essential supply is a reliable camera. Unless you have fantastic telephoto lens, taking good photos on the water is challenging at best. Your best chance to take pictures is when the boats are being prepared for a race, moving the boat to the water, loading the boat in the water, or while rowers are just "hanging out". Bring reading materials or hobbies to occupy yourself since it can be a long time between races. Restroom facilities are port-a-potties (the ones by the grandstand are somewhat "better"). Therefore, a roll of toilet paper, hand wipes or hand sanitizers and some tampons/sanitary napkins, sealed in a plastic bag, can be life savers when needed. No dogs or other pets are permitted at Sandy Run on regatta days.

**10. How about food and drinks?**

A few days before most races, you will receive an email requesting some sort of food item. That is for the rowers and family members to eat and drink on the long Regatta days. Please bring your food item when you drop your rower off. If you want to become more involved, one great way is by volunteering at the food tent for a day. The rowers require a LOT of calories and liquids after races, and it is always amazing how the food tent is fairly empty by the end of the day. Also, any types of open flame (grill, sterno, charcoal, etc) are not permitted at Sandy Run. No smoking allowed too.

**11. How do I help my rower get ready?**

Please put the races on your calendar and make sure the uniform is CLEAN by Friday night. While this seems self evident, rowers are so tired at the end of a long regatta that they can roll that uniform into a muddy ball and forget all about it. You don't want to be finding it that way at 5:30 am on Saturday morning, having sat that way for a week.

Racing attire: VASRA requires that all crew members wear matching uniforms (or parts of uniforms) from the waist up. In cold weather, this rule does not apply. The Head Coach will let them know what is expected if there are any other requirements.

Also, at the end of almost every regatta there is a pile of unmarked clothing. While we do our best to collect it all and bring it back, your rower will most likely never find it if it is not marked

with his or her name. Your rower should always bring extra clothing, especially socks. They should bring extra sweatpants and a sweatshirt as well. A warm blanket might also be handy if it is chilly. Another helpful tip is to pack a couple of large garbage bags (labeled with duct tape and their names) so that if it rains, they can pull them out to stash their gear in, and their gear stays dry - the duct tape/name is so that it doesn't get mistaken for trash! Handwarmers may be nice for your rowers and for you during the races earlier in the season. It is also recommended that your rower should bring their homework. There is a lot of downtime at the regattas, and it can be a good time to get some school work done.

**12. Are races ever canceled due to inclement weather?**

Yes, but it is highly unusual. Generally, a regatta will proceed unless and until the officials determine that is unsafe. Regattas can be held in the rain and in the cold – so remember, bring clothes appropriate to the weather and bring more layers than you think you will need along with towels and blankets if you would like.

**13. Why doesn't my rower know what boat they will be in yet?**

You should know that your rower will most likely not know which boat he or she will be rowing in until two days prior to the event. The coaches are constantly monitoring performance, and do switch things up. For what it is worth, if your rower misses practices, his or her performance cannot possibly be evaluated, as it should be. Coaches are obligated to put their fastest crews together by boat. This often changes. It is an inherent part of a rowing coach's job and not intended to cause your rower distress.



**14. Where I can view the race?**

Most people will be at the viewing stands (aka **Grandstands**) which is near the finish line. From the upper parking area at Sandy Run, it is a 0.6 mile hilly walking trail to reach the Grandstand (about a 15-20 min walk). The footing can be tricky when it is wet, or sometimes when it's not wet. When you come to a "T" in the path, you will go left to the grandstands (if you make a right, it will take you to the lower boathouses). The trail is scenic and it is a beautiful walk, but not for everyone. **DO NOT WALK** on the road to the Grandstand. The road is solely for the shuttle vans and is unsafe to have the pedestrians on it.



A shuttle van is available from Parking Lot C for a nominal fee of \$3 that will take you to the Grandstands. Even from the drop-off point, there is a walk involving hills, so wear sensible shoes. The Grandstand offers a great view of the last 500m of the course. You will need binoculars to see the first 1,000m. You may wait two hours to see a five-minute race, two minutes of which you can see without binoculars. But it's an exciting two minutes and well-worth the wait.

**15. Should I yell out my rower's name when they go past?**

You can, but is unlikely that they will be able to hear just you. The best bet is to coordinate a group cheer. We do not have a designated seating area, but wear your Rock Ridge Crew spirit

wear or Rock Ridge colors so we can find each other and cheer our rowers on! Rowing is a team sport and the kids learn to take pride in their accomplishments as a team. Generally, there will be groups of Rock Ridge Crew parents, siblings, grandparents and friends in groups along the shoreline, screaming, "Go Rock Ridge!" and similar sentiments. All of us cheer for all the kids; the idea is to be the loudest cheering section at the regatta!

**16. Can I bring food and drinks to the Grandstand?**

Yes, you are allowed food and drink at the grandstand or anywhere at the regatta, but no alcohol please (park's rules). There are concession stands at both the boathouse and the grandstands. The regatta sponsors typically provide grilled foods, snacks and drinks as a fundraiser. You'll also find vendors at both locations selling t-shirts and rowing accessories.



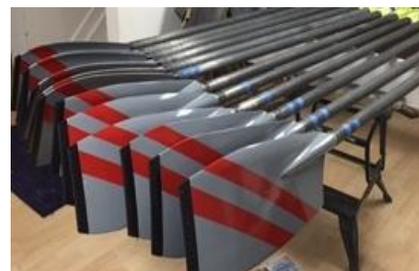
**17. What's the difference between racing in the fall and racing in the spring?**

There are two main types of races – head races and sprints. During all races, spring or fall, rowers strive to get the fastest time. In the fall, races are longer (5K or 5000 meters long) and are called Head Races. They are timed so it is very hard to tell who is winning because boats start at the same place, but at staggered times. You do not know who wins until the end once result times are posted.

In the Spring, the races are 1.5K (1500 meters - about a mile) long. You can really see who is winning because there are usually 5-8 boats in designated lanes starting the race at the same time. They can be more exciting, because you can see the head to head battle and who has won at the end of the race (and you don't need to wait for the results to be posted.)

**18. The boats are really far away – how can I tell which one is the Rock Ridge Crew boat?**

If you printed out the heat sheet from the regatta website prior to the race, you can check a specific race to see which lane Rock Ridge is in. If you did not, there is usually a parent around who has and will let everyone know. Also, every rowing team has their oars painted in a unique way and wears a unique team uniform. Generally, these designs can be seen from fairly far away. Rock Ridge Crew oars are grey with 2 red stripes. See picture on right.



**19. So I'm looking at the heat sheet (race schedule), what do all these abbreviations mean?**

Rock Ridge Crew rowers row in eights and fours, which are abbreviated as 8+ and 4+ on the schedules. An 8+ is a 60' racing shell for 8 rowers and one coxswain (cox) the 4+ is a 45' racing shell for 4 rowers and one coxswain. The coxswain steers the boat and controls the race strategy. When looking at the schedule you will see W-1-4+, M-2-4+, M-N-8+, or W-Jr-4+ and so on. These stand for the following:

W-1-8+ = Girls 1<sup>st</sup> boat (racing an 8+) - (fastest boat on the girls' team)

M-2-4+ = Boys 2<sup>nd</sup> boat (racing an 4+) - (second fastest boat on the boys' team)

M-N-8+ = Boys' Novice (racing an 8+) - (boy's novice team)

W-Jr-4+ = Girl's Junior boat (racing as a 4+) – (girl's four with no seniors)

Often you will see "Jr." before a race, as in: W-Jr-4+ and signifies high school age participants with no seniors. A novice is defined as any rower in their first 12 months of rowing. For more

information on the above, and to understand positions in the boat more thoroughly, see the link to the VASRA Handbook [http://vasra.org/2019\\_Handbook.html](http://vasra.org/2019_Handbook.html).

**20. Is there anything I can do to help out at the end of the day?**

End of the Day pack up can be a tiring job at the end of a long day, so we would appreciate some people committing to help with packing up the gear, taking down the tents and help with general clean up.



**21. Where can I learn more about rowing terminology and tactics?**

[www.usrowing.org/About/Rowing101.aspx](http://www.usrowing.org/About/Rowing101.aspx)

Rowing 101, posted on the US Rowing website.

Excellent glossary of rowing terms, for a sport that is full of interesting language. Also, there is a "Viewer's Guide," "Race Watching Tips," and a host of other information to read when you are trying to understand just what your rower is involved in.

All in all, you will most likely find that Regattas become your life during "the season" and you wouldn't have it any other way. Hopefully, you will want to become even more involved as time goes on. There is always a place to pitch in - you can volunteer in the Hospitality Tent for a race, you can flip burgers, you can help with fundraising, and the list goes on. Our Rock Ridge rowers really depend on our support throughout the year!