

Safety Precautions

Please read and consider the following safety precautions related to the Diamondback Dash before deciding to participate.

Oysters—Oyster bed/reef areas are found at some point along most of the routes. Also, some launch sites have oyster shell in the sediments at the launch. Be aware that contact with oysters can result in painful, difficult-to-heal cuts. Wearing shoes while you launch and while you paddle, in case you have to get out of your boat, is important to protect your feet. We have mapped the routes to avoid major oyster reef areas, but you may still find yourself paddling over some oyster areas—stay aware and avoid getting hung up on oyster shells.

Boat traffic—The Intracoastal Waterway (ICWW) and other navigational channels can experience high levels of boat traffic during summer months and good weather. Routes have been charted to keep paddlers close to the mainland or dredge spoil islands, wherever possible, and to cut straight across the ICWW and navigational channels, where necessary. Try not to linger in the navigational channel when crossing. Although power boats should give way to non-motorized boats, be aware of oncoming boat traffic, stay with your partner/s, and minimize time spent in large channels. DO NOT stop in the navigational channel to record data. If an observation is made crossing the waterway, proceed across the channel, entering data when outside the channel and noting in the “description” field that the item was observed in the navigational channel.

Tidal influences—Coastal rivers which connect to a bay or ocean, can flow in both directions based on the tide. The portions of these waterways which are closer to the ocean have a flow which is more heavily influenced by tide, relative to portions of the waterway which are farther from the bay or ocean. Because the tidal stage at any given time dictates which direction the water will be flowing (i.e. either up river or down river) and how strong the current is, it is possible that participants could be paddling against the current for substantial portions of their survey. [Checking the tides in advance](#) can help you predict what the flow and current of the waterway will be like during your chosen sampling time. Likewise, by checking the tide schedule for the area, you can schedule your sampling efforts so that you can minimize the degree to which you are paddling against the current. Typically, the current is strongest at the halfway point between high and low tide.

PFDs—Personal flotation devices work. Wear one. Even experts can find themselves in unexpected situations—not only is wearing a pfd required for project participation, but a pfd can make a huge difference in the outcome of an unexpected swamping or tipping situation.

Sun protection and water—You know your needs best, just remember that in the sun and on the water, you probably need twice as much water and sunscreen as might first seem appropriate. Apply sunscreen before and during the event, if you burn easily. Keep water accessible during paddling to ensure dehydration does not become an issue. Dress appropriately for the conditions, including lightweight long sleeve shirts, pants and a hat.

Unexpected situations— In the event that you unexpectedly find yourself in the water, it is important to familiarize yourself with how to re-enter your vessel. You can find instruction for sit-on-top vessels, [here](#), and touring/sit-in vessels, [here](#). If you need to quit your route before completing it, or if a non-emergency situation occurs for which you need support, call your on-shore contact for help in determining the needed assistance and course of action.

Emergencies—In an emergency situation, follow normal protocols for emergencies—call 911 first, proceed as directed by the dispatcher.