

**University of Maine Darling Marine Center
Shorefront Activity Guidelines**



1.0 Introduction

Due to its location on the shores of the Damariscotta River, The Darling Marine Center is an appealing place for staff, faculty, students, and guests to participate in shorefront recreational activities. The DMC supports and encourages the use and enjoyment of its maritime setting, but requires that certain guidelines be followed to promote individual safety.

The following guidelines are to be observed by all users of the DMC shorefront. Persons engaged in non-recreational (i.e. research, education, work-related) boating activities should consult the *UMAINE Watercraft Operations Policy* and/or the DMC Vessel Operations Coordinator for additional guidelines/ procedures.

2.0 General Guidelines for all Activities

As with any marine, aquatic, or outdoor activity, individuals should exercise good judgment and err on the side of caution in questionable circumstances.

2.1 Personal Fitness/ Experience

Individuals are encouraged to objectively evaluate their level of personal fitness and appropriate marine related experience prior to engaging in any shorefront activity.

2.2 No Lifeguard on Duty

There is no lifeguard on duty at any time at the Darling Marine Center. Individuals who require or prefer supervision by a qualified marine lifeguard are encouraged to find alternate shorefront access.

Individuals participating in shorefront activities are encouraged to possess or seek training in appropriate rescue and self-rescue skills.

2.3 Personal Floatation Devices

It is recommended that all individuals participating in shorefront activities wear an appropriate Personal Floatation Device (PFD). PFDs are required to be worn while onboard DMC vessels and onboard any vessel launched/operating from the DMC including canoes and kayaks.

2.4 Environmental Conditions

Individuals are encouraged to monitor local weather forecasts and be aware of changing conditions prior to engaging in, and during any shorefront activities.

Weather- Air temperature, winds, precipitation, visibility, and storm activity are all factors to be considered. Coastal weather can vary greatly from mainland conditions and changes often occur rapidly.

Water- Water temperature, waves, tides, and currents are all factors to be considered. Water conditions can also change rapidly.

Temperatures in the Damariscotta River vary from near freezing (32⁰F/ 0⁰C) in the winter to a maximum of 65⁰F/ 18⁰C in late summer. As such, exposure protection in the form of a wetsuit or drysuit is recommended for all in-water activities.

The Damariscotta River experiences a diurnal tidal cycle with an approximate range of 6-8 ft. Such a tidal cycle causes large differences in shorefront water depth and creates fairly swift tidal currents.

2.5 Marine Traffic

The Damariscotta River is widely used by a variety of commercial and recreational boating traffic, including vessels operated by Darling Marine Center personnel. Individuals are encouraged to plan activities to provide maximum distance from and avoidance of local marine traffic.

High contrast apparel, signaling devices, and/or shorefront spotters are recommended to provide maximum visibility for individuals in the water.

Individuals planning activities in the vicinity of the Darling Marine Center pier/ dock should advise the DMC Vessel Operations Coordinator and/ or appropriate DMC vessel operators of their plans prior to commencement of such activities.

2.6 Buddy System

Use of the buddy system is encouraged for all shorefront activities (i.e. two or more comparably skilled individuals in constant communication).

2.7 Float Plan/ Shore Contact

Individuals participating in shorefront activities are encouraged to complete and post a Float Plan describing at minimum their mode of operation, destination, and estimated time of return. A designated contact person should be informed of the float plan and be capable of notifying the appropriate authorities in the event the party does not return.

Float plans are required for all vessel operations, including canoes and kayaks.

3.0 **Shorefront Emergencies**

In the event of a shorefront emergency, notify others in the area and call 911 (9-911 from campus phones) if necessary. If in doubt, call 911. Attempt to make contact with the individual(s) in distress and provide them with adequate flotation or other appropriate means of assistance. A type-IV personal floatation device (life-ring) is located on the DMC dock.

Do not attempt an in-water or vessel rescue if you are not trained to do so.

4.0 Darling Marine Center Swimming and Snorkeling Guidelines

When swimming at the Darling Marine Center, please obey the following guidelines:

1. Be familiar with and obey the Darling Marine Center *Shorefront Activity Guidelines*.
2. Objectively evaluate your level personal fitness and swimming/ snorkeling experience prior to entering the water.
3. There is NO LIFEGUARD ON DUTY AT ANY TIME at the Darling Marine Center. Individuals who require or prefer supervision by a qualified marine lifeguard are encouraged to find alternate shorefront access.
4. Use of the buddy system is recommended.
5. Training in appropriate rescue and self-rescue skills is recommended.
6. Personal floatation devices are recommended.
7. Appropriate exposure protection is recommended.
8. Monitor local weather and marine forecasts and be aware of changing conditions.
9. Be aware of and monitor vessel traffic. High contrast apparel, signaling devices, and shorefront spotters are recommended to provide maximum visibility for swimmers in the water.
10. Notify the DMC Vessel Coordinator or other appropriate personnel prior to engaging in activities near the DMC pier/ dock.
11. Consider filing a Float Plan with a competent shore-based contact person.
12. Swim/ snorkel during daylight hours only.
13. Diving or jumping from the DMC pier is not permitted.
14. A cutting device or tool is recommended for snorkeling.
15. If free-diving is to be conducted in conjunction with snorkeling, the UMAINE Diving Safety Officer must be consulted.

NOTE: Free-diving or breath-hold diving is a potentially hazardous activity which can result in serious injury or death!

Repetitive free-diving and/or excessive hyperventilation can cause physiological oxygen deficiencies resulting in a condition known as 'shallow-water blackout'. Shallow-water blackout occurs when oxygen partial pressures fall below the level required to maintain consciousness. As a breath-hold diver ascends and oxygen partial pressures drop, he/she may become unconscious. If support personnel are not properly trained and equipped to handle the situation, the diver will likely drown.

Free-diving is not permitted after scuba diving activities.

5.0 Canoe and Kayak Guidelines

When operating canoes or kayaks from the grounds of the Darling Marine Center, please obey the following guidelines:

1. Be familiar with and obey the Darling Marine Center *Shorefront Activity Guidelines*. If your activities are non-recreational (i.e. research, education, work-related), consult the UMAINE *Watercraft Operations Policy* and/or the DMC Vessel Operations Coordinator for additional guidelines/ procedures.
2. Objectively evaluate your level personal fitness and canoe/ kayak experience prior to entering the water.
3. There is NO LIFEGUARD ON DUTY AT ANY TIME at the Darling Marine Center. Individuals who require or prefer supervision by a qualified marine lifeguard are encouraged to find alternate shorefront access.
4. Use of the buddy system is recommended. Inexperienced paddlers are encouraged to paddle with competent and knowledgeable buddies.
5. Training in appropriate canoe/ kayak rescue and self-rescue skills is recommended.
6. Personal floatation devices (USCG approved Type-III PFD, of appropriate size for the designated individual) must be worn while onboard DMC vessels and onboard any vessel launched/operating from the DMC including canoes and kayaks.
7. Appropriate exposure protection is recommended.
8. Monitor local weather and marine forecasts and be aware of changing conditions.
9. Be aware of and monitor vessel traffic. High contrast apparel and signaling devices are recommended to provide maximum visibility for paddlers in the water.
10. Notify the DMC Vessel Coordinator or other appropriate personnel prior to engaging in activities near the DMC pier/ dock.
11. A Float Plan must be filed with a competent shore-based contact person. Completed Float Plans should be posted in the DMC pier house.
12. Canoe/ kayak during daylight hours only.
13. Be aware of distances traveled. It is possible to paddle out further than you are capable of paddling back, especially with the tidal currents in the Damariscotta River.