



**Mount Vernon Crew**

# **Crew Parent Survival Guide**

**2009**



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## General Information

So, your child has decided to row Crew. Welcome to a whole new world filled with its own language and unique atmosphere. This guide will hopefully answer many of your questions.

Here are a few items you may need to best enjoy the regattas.

### Items you may need:

#### Parents:

- camping/folding type chair -one with a carrying bag/strap is best
- insect repellent, sun screen
- hiking type shoes/boots, hat
- jacket (early mornings are chilly near the river)
- rain gear (it usually rains in the early morning at the river)
- binoculars ( to watch the races)
- water, snacks, hand sanitizer
- something to do ( some times there is a long delay between races or the races involving our kids)
- money for a souvenir t-shirt your rower will surely ask you to get (even if the regatta is at the same place as you were last week-it is a different race-therefore a different shirt)
- print out of schedule of races ( available off the VASRA website the night before)

#### Rowers:

- blanket/sleeping bag for the tent
- uni, JL (please mark your items with your name or initials)
- a few dollars for snack/drinks
- things to do (i.e. IPod's, cards-but please remember that these items will probably be unsecured in the tent area at some point during the day)
- water, snacks
- sunscreen
- warm clothes (for early morning or in case of an accidental fall into the river)

### How a Regatta works:

Volunteers from the crews participating (with the exception of the referees and a few coordinators) run all regattas. Therefore, all crew teams are assigned volunteer positions at each regatta they row that must be filled. In the fall/winter the Coach of each crew team determines which regattas the team will attend. The Volunteer Coordinators from each crew team meet in January to receive their assignments for the season based on the number of rowers the coach has estimated the team will have that season and which regattas they are rowing in. The number of positions assigned to each crew is approximately 1 position for every 10 rowers. The Volunteer Coordinator

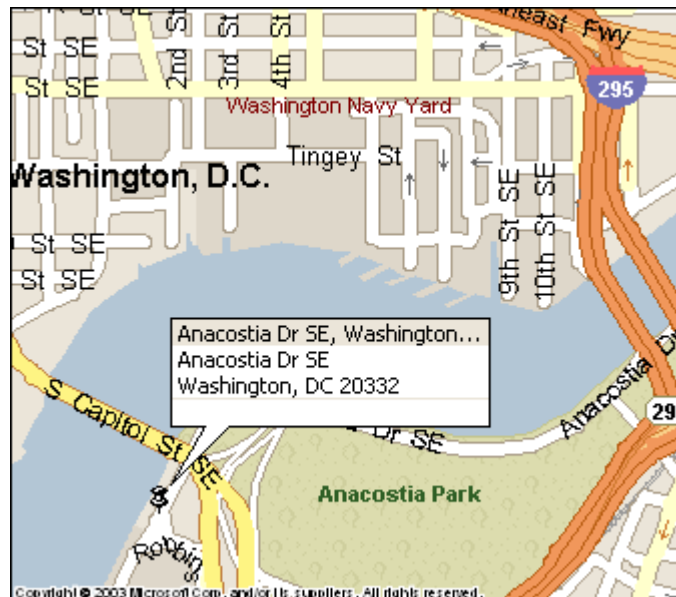
then must fill the positions with parents and notify the Head Coordinator of all names. Changes in volunteers must be sent in by the Wednesday prior to the regatta. If we do not fill these positions our team is fined and if it becomes consistent that we are not pulling our share of the work at these regattas, we can be banned from rowing in any regatta.

On regatta day, the coxswains and coaches must attend a mandatory meeting several hours before the race begins. Safety issues, the racecourse, and any other pertinent information are discussed. Coxswains are then given a plastic colored band to wear around their wrist, indicating to the referees that they have attended this meeting. Races typically start about 9 AM with a race beginning every 8 minutes if all goes well. Normally, the courses are set up so you don't see the beginning of the race but rather the viewing stands are near the end of the course. Lightning or thunder near the course will delay the race a minimum of 30 minutes each time it is seen/heard but if there is only rain, the regatta proceeds.

Races are numbered and are usually announced as being "on the water" (for example, race number 4, boys novice 8, is on the water.) A schedule helps as it lists the events and corresponding number of each race. If you don't want to print a schedule off the internet the night before a regatta, one is usually posted in front of regatta headquarters, regatta headquarters and in the program. All times and scheduled races are subject to change. If all else fails, ask the person next to you, somehow, someone nearby always knows which race is "on the water". Final results of race placement and times are posted at regatta headquarters.

## The Anacostia Regatta:

Regattas at the Anacostia require a good understanding of the maps to get to the rower drop off and viewing sites, prior planning for both food and facilities needs and lots of patience.



### **Parking:**

Parking at the launch dock site and volunteer sign in may be difficult, especially if you do not have a military decal on your vehicle. Due to security issues at Washington Navy Yard, it is difficult for vehicles without military stickers to park inside the Navy Yard (this is near the trailer staging area and launch site). If you would like to attempt parking within the Navy Yard, there is a parking garage just inside the gate. Parking is free but it will be slow going in and out of the gate due to many crews carrying their shells along the same road as well as guards attempting to monitor gate access. **Bring photo ID.**

Parking is plentiful in Anacostia Park (on the other side of the river) where the viewing area is but do **not** park on the grass near the rec center. You will be ticketed. You can, however, park along the road or in the gravel parking lot and walk to the finish line/viewing area.

### **Rower Drop Off:**

Rowers can be dropped off near the Washington Navy Yard O Street Gate and proceed in by foot.

### **Getting to the Viewing Area:**

After getting your rower dropped off, you will need to head across the river to Anacostia Park to view the races. Although you can leave your car in the Navy Yard and walk to the viewing site, it is at least a mile walk to get to the viewing area. There may be a shuttle service that provides a one way ride over and back to the viewing area. Check just outside the gate going into the boat launch area to see if one is available.

### **Viewing Area:**

There is no seating of any type at the finish line/viewing area. It is literally a grassy area and a wall that drops down into the water. Chairs or blankets to sit on are recommended here. You will NOT be allowed to view the race from the launch dock (on the Navy Yard side of the river) or either of the two bridges that go over the racecourse.

### **Facilities:**

There are no port-a-potties at or near the finish line/viewing area. The only facilities are located in the rec center before or just beyond the finish line. They are usually unlocked and available. They are normal restroom facilities and have been well stocked-just not conveniently located.

### **Concessions:**

There are no concession stands on the viewing side of the river. It is advisable to bring snacks with you.

### **Volunteer sign-in:**

- If you have signed up to take one of our team's assigned positions at the regatta, you **MUST** first sign in at the volunteer sign in area. It is located near the launch dock on the Washington Navy Yard side of the river. Even if you are assigned a job at the finish line- you must FIRST sign in at the Volunteer sign in table. If you do not sign in, we will not get credit for you being there and will be charged for a no-show.
- It is helpful to know your volunteer position number when signing in. (print the email reminder and bring it with you-it will have the position # on it). Please be flexible-you may be sent to a different position if there is a greater need.
- It is recommended that you arrive an hour to an hour and a half prior to your assigned starting time to allow for parking, signing in and getting to your position.
- Volunteers cannot wear red clothing. Red signifies "STOP" on the water and a team may see your red clothing and stop rowing.
- For the safety of our rowers and smooth running of the regatta -Cell phone use is NOT allowed by volunteers during your assigned time.

## The Georgetown Regatta:

Regattas at Georgetown require a good understanding of maps to get to the race site, prior planning for both food and facilities needs and lots of patience.



### **Parking:**

Parking in Georgetown is difficult if you do not arrive early. As with any parking in the Washington DC area, be mindful of meters and signs regulating parking.

### **Rower Drop Off:**

Thompson Boat Center in Washington, DC is where the rowers meet and is located just off the Rock Creek Parkway at the foot of Virginia Avenue, NW. The boat trailers are located in the parking lot by the water.

### **Getting to the Viewing Area:**

From commercial parking finding a place to watch the regatta will be easy. There is easy access by foot from most all parking locations to the finish line and to Regatta headquarters. Just head towards the river.

### **Viewing Area:**

There is no seating of any type at the finish line/viewing area. Chairs to sit on are recommended here. There is, however, an extensive boardwalk along the river that has several restaurants with out door seating once they open but you'll be farther away from the water and the finish line and not be able to stay there for the entire regatta.

### **Facilities:**

There are no port-a-potties at or near the finish line/viewing area. The only facilities are a few port-a-potties located near the trailer parking/launch area.

## **Concessions:**

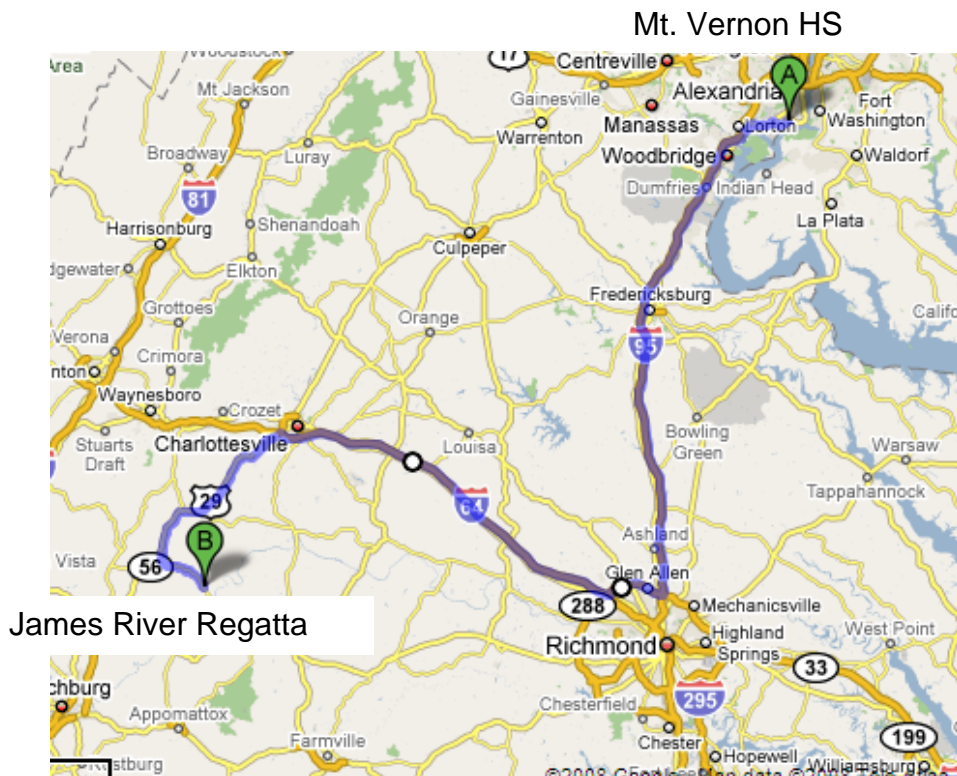
There are no concession stands near the viewing area. However, a few minutes walk (uphill) from the park are plenty of fast food type restaurants (Subway, Starbucks). During the lunch hour these were very crowded with extremely slow service. I recommend you plan ahead and bring your own snacks or go off peak times.

## **Volunteer sign-in:**

- If you have signed up to take one of our team's assigned positions at the regatta, you **MUST** first sign in at the volunteer sign in area. It is located near the launch dock at the large boat house building. Even if you are assigned a job at the finish line- you must FIRST sign in at the Volunteer sign in table. If you do not sign in, we will not get credit for you being there and will be charged for a no-show.
- It is helpful to know your volunteer position number when signing in. (print the email reminder and bring it with you-it will have the position # on it). Please be flexible-you may be sent to a different position if there is a greater need.
- It is recommended that you arrive an hour to an hour and a half prior to your assigned starting time to allow for parking, signing in and getting to your position.
- Volunteers cannot wear red clothing. Red signifies "STOP" on the water and a team may see your red clothing and stop rowing.
- For the safety of our rowers and smooth running of the regatta -Cell phone use is NOT allowed by volunteers during your assigned time.

## The James River Regatta:

Regattas at James River require early morning departure and a good understanding of directions (or a really good navigator!).



### **Parking:**

There is limited parking at this regatta and confusing directions from parking lot staff. There is no charge to park.

### **Rower Drop Off:**

Rowers should head towards the water and look for our team trailer and tents

### **Getting to the Viewing Area:**

Once you have parked, you can walk towards the river until it dead-ends at the regatta site. Look for our team canopies and trailer.

### **Viewing Area:**

There are a few picnic tables but no other seating at this regatta. Chairs or blankets are recommended here.

### **Facilities:**

There are bathroom facilities up near the parking lot and a few port-a-potties closer to the launch site.

**Concessions:**

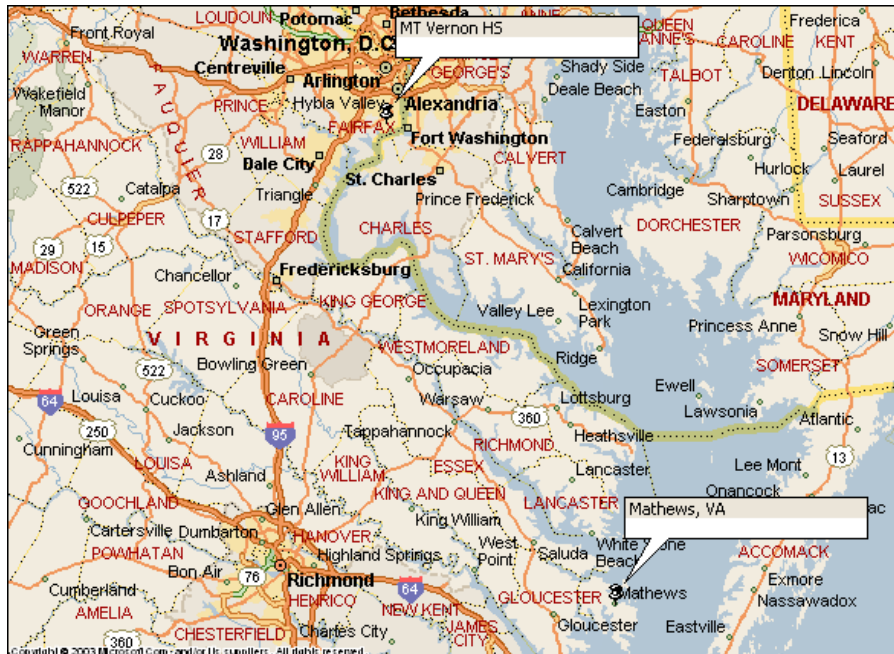
There is a very small concession area near the launch dock selling bottled water and pizza slices. I recommend that you bring food and drinks to this regatta.

**Volunteer sign-in:**

Because we are traveling to this regatta, we are not assigned any volunteer positions to fill. Relax, enjoy the day!

## The Matthew's Regatta:

Regattas at Matthew's require very early morning departure times and a good understanding of directions (or a really good navigator!). Also, be prepared for a very windy, cold day as the viewing area is a sandy beach.



### **Parking:**

Parking at Matthew's actually is very organized. Volunteers collect the parking fee and direct you into a grassy field. They pack the cars in pretty tightly so there will not be much room to maneuver. You can then either walk along the road (app. 10 minutes) to get to the staging and viewing area or take a free shuttle.

Note: If you remove your car from the parking area, you must pay again to park.

### **Rower Drop Off:**

You can drive down the road past the parking area to drop off your rower but with all the trailers, buses, and other vehicles in the parking lot, turning around may be difficult. It is advisable to let your rower walk or take the shuttle.

### **Getting to the Viewing Area:**

Once you have parked, you can go left to walk along the road until it dead-ends at the regatta site. Continue walking through the fenced area, past all the trailers and crew tents to get to the viewing area.

### **Viewing Area:**

There is no seating of any kind at this regatta. Chairs are a "must have" as blankets quickly get soaked in the wet sand. If you get there early, set up your chair near the water's edge for the best view of the races. You'll soon notice that the piers fill up with spectators blocking your view for parts of the race. The railed concrete wall at

the finish line is used as a rotating viewing area with people watching their race then moving so that the next race's spectators can watch.

**Facilities:**

At the left parking lot just inside the park there are several port-a-potties. The line to use them is always long. There are also several near the concession, launch dock area but regatta staff try to keep these open for rowers only (for use before they launch).

**Concessions:**

There was a large concession area to the right, just before you entered the fenced area of the park. They sold typical cook out food, drinks, hot coffee and chocolate, which was reasonably priced. There is a lot of confusion at the stand with no clear line to enter or which way the line was moving.

**Volunteer sign-in:**

Because we are traveling to this regatta, we are not assigned any volunteer positions to fill. Relax, enjoy the day!

## The Occoquan Regatta:

Regattas at the Occoquan require early morning arrival in order to park anywhere near the regatta site and a decent hike to the grandstand viewing areas. Biting insects and rain are common at this regatta. Falling behind in the schedule is also very common, mainly due to the difficulty in getting the boats down to the start line and lined up.



### Parking:

Parking is a huge issue at Sandy Run Regional Park, where the regatta is held.

### Things to know about parking:

- **ARRIVE EARLY--** if it is near 10 AM and you are not already parked inside Sandy Run, chances are high you will not have parking available. If overflow parking is available (usually on bigger regattas) use it. Parking in overflow is free, however there is a per car fee to ride the shuttle into the race site. Overflow parking is approximately 4 miles from the entrance to Sandy Run so walking from parking to the regatta site is not an option here. The shuttles will run continuously but it will easily add 30 minutes to your arrival time inside the park
- If you arrive early and can park inside Sandy Run, it will cost you \$10 (last year) per car. It doesn't matter if you have your rower in the vehicle, all pay. Have your money ready when entering the park to keep traffic moving. Also, please remember that the people collecting money and directing you to parking are volunteer parents of other crew teams-just doing their assigned position for their team.

If it is close to your rower's required arrival time and you have not yet secured parking, you may enter the park to drop off your rower. You will be allowed to drop off the rower down near the hill and turn around to exit the park. You will still have to pay the parking fee but tell the parking lot volunteer that you are doing a drop off only and they will give you a timed ticket. When you exit the park in a timely manner, stop at the money collector, show your ticket and they will refund your money so that you can find off-site parking.

## **Rower Drop Off:**

Once you have made it into the park, your rower will need to go down the hill toward the water/boat launch site to find the team. Some crew teams set up near their boat trailers on the left as you begin down the hill. A few lucky teams (that arrive early enough) secure an area on the grassy spot slightly closer to the water on the right as you head toward the launch site. Look for our trailer or the team tent and you should see the rest of the team nearby. Rowers-be aware of the required arrival time given by the coaches. Late arriving could mean missing the boat-literally!!!

## **Getting to the Viewing Area:**

At the Occoquan there are 3 ways to get to the viewing area:

- Take the Van- inside the park, just before heading down the hill to the water/boat launch site, there is a parking lot on the left (marked with an A-handicap parking on the site map). Toward the left rear of the lot, there is a shuttle van that will take you near the grandstand site for a nominal charge per PERSON. This is a one way fare. If you need to get to the viewing area quickly, this is the best way to go. The van will drop you off behind the judges area/finish line and you will need to then walk up the trail to the left (takes app. 5 minutes) to the viewing area. You can also pay again to have the van will also take you back to the parking lot from this location.
- Take the upper trail- in the same lot, on the right, is a foot trail entrance. This trail will bring you down to the drop off area that the van uses behind the coaches area/finish line. It is a downhill dirt trail and takes about 15 minutes.
- Take the lower trail- down the hill, past the crew trailers, just after two of the boathouses on the left, is another foot trail. This dirt trail goes along the river and has several hills. It will take approximately 20-25 minutes to walk this trail to the viewing area. CAREFUL: If it is raining or has rained recently, this trail becomes extremely slippery and flooded in places with large puddles.

## **Viewing Area:**

There is a concrete stadium type seating area set back from the river's edge. Higher up seating is better as the grassy area between the stands and the river tends to fill with people making the lower seats difficult to see much of the race. There are also a few sets of very small wooden bleacher type seats closer to the water. If open, these are the better viewing seats. Another option (again getting there early is better) is to bring your own chair and set up near the water's edge. Early arriving parents from our team try to save space at the fence along the water's edge for team parents.

## **Facilities:**

At the parking lots inside Sandy Run near the launch site, there are a few port-a-potties to the right as you are heading down the hill to the trailer staging areas. Also further down the hill on the right are a large number of port-a-potties before you reach the regatta headquarters/volunteer sign in areas. There are no facilities on either of the trails. At the grandstand viewing area, behind and up the hill from the stands are enclosed bathrooms. These are just a little bit nicer than port-a-potties and the line tends to be long to use them.

## **Concessions:**

There are two concession stands at the Occoquan.

- The Grandstand concession stand is the larger of the two and offers typical "cook out" type food (burgers, hot dogs, chicken), soda, chips and candy. Prices are reasonable (from \$1.50-\$2.50 for a sandwich last year). Again, lines can be long, especially near the lunch hour and they have been known to run out of sandwich supplies at times. They sell programs and t-shirts but buy early as they run out quickly.
- The boathouse concession also sells sandwiches, drinks, doughnuts and coffee but on a smaller scale than the other. You can also purchase programs and event t-shirts at this stand.

NOTE: Again, please remember workers in the concession area are also parents of crew teams fulfilling their obligations. Be understanding, especially when lines are long and tempers may be short!

At larger regattas there are usually a few crew-related businesses that have tents set up just as you reach the viewing area. They sell jewelry, clothing and other novelty items.

## **Volunteer sign-in:**

- If you have signed up to take one of our team's assigned positions at the regatta, you **MUST** first sign in at the volunteer sign in area. It is located on the right after you go down the hill, past the trailer staging area, concessions, and regatta headquarters. If you do not sign in, we will not get credit for you being there and will be charged for a no-show.
- It is helpful to know your volunteer position number when signing in. (print the email reminder and bring it with you-it will have the position # on it). Please be flexible-you may be sent to a different position if there is a greater need.
- It is recommended that you arrive an hour to an hour and a half prior to your assigned starting time to allow for parking, signing in and getting to your position.
- Volunteers cannot wear red clothing. Red signifies "STOP" on the water and a team may see your red clothing and stop rowing.
- For the safety of our rowers, smooth running of the regatta and so that the Occoquan River is not "fed" another cell phone -Cell phone use is NOT allowed by volunteers during your assigned time.

## Vocabulary

**Bow:** front of the boat (has a bow ball on the tip, and a number indicating what lane boat is in during a race.) cox faces this way. Also, the end where seat numbering begins (1-8, 1-4)

**Cox (or coxswain):** the person in the boat that counts out the stroke rate, steers the boat, encourages the rowers during a race. Does not row, can be either male or female and be in either the bow or stern of the boat.

**Cox box:** a microphone worn by the cox that connects to a speaker system along the entire shell, aids in setting stroke rate

**Crab:** when the pressure of the water on an oar causes the handle to be pushed into the rower. ("catching a crab" is not a good thing)

**Erg:** a rowing machine used to help teach technique

**Gunnel:** the sides of the boat above the water line

**Head's up:** warning- a shell is approaching and you are in danger of being hit by it,

**Launch:** a small boat with an engine that acts as a safety vehicle carrying life jackets, first aid, and members of the coaching staff, follows shells during practices.

**let'run:** (pronounced let her run) the command for STOP

**Oars:** can be spoons (older type) or hatchet style (also known as scoops or cleavers) usually 10 feet in length

**On the Water:** the start of a race

**Ports:** the rowers who have their oars on the port side of the shell (generally even numbered seats)

**Rigger:** the metal spreads connected to the gunnel, holds the oars

**Shell:** what the boats are called

**Skeg:** the dorsal fin under the shell that maintains the shell's course

**Starboards:** the rowers who have their oars on the starboard side of the shell (generally odd numbered seats)

**Stern:** back of the boat, rowers face to this end

**Stroke:** 1) the last rower in the boat, closest to the cox, sets the speed, timing and catches according to the cox's directions 2) when the oar is placed in the water and pulled through.

**Swamping:** when the shell fills up with too much water

**Way'nough:** (pronounced wane-off or way-enough) another command for STOP

revised 1/09