

South Padre Island Newsletter - Winter 2011/12



"SPI Windsurfing was founded to retain and improve present water access locations, as well as to create a safe, fun, and clean environment for all water sports."

Hi everyone, its time to plan your trip to the North Flats to enjoy some of the best wind in the US. 2012 is here and the winds should be too!!! We hope you all had a great fall and winter and we look forward to seeing your smiling faces soon. Here's the latest news from your club.

The 2012 stickers are available now and please remember to purchase/renew your Annual South Padre Island Windsurf and Kiteboarding Association membership before going to the Flats. Bay access is hard to come by these days, so help the association fight the good fight for your right to ride the wind here on SPI. The annual rate remains \$25.00 per car, and the monthly rate is \$15.00 per car. For more information, the annual membership form and the Liability Release Form (which MUST be signed and turned in) go to our website at: www.spiwindsurfing.com. The SIGNED release form is a lease requirement per the owners of the North Flats property. Please don't postpone or forget about it!!! Any questions about your registration or the release form email Herman at: sbssso@sbcglobal.net and be sure to put SPI Windsurfing in the subject field.

So this brings up a good topic of conversation. **Are we too crowded during the high seasons?**

A question that comes up repeatedly at our monthly meetings is whether we are getting to crowded and is it time to limit memberships. It's arguably evident that we have the busiest windsurfing and kiteboarding location in the US. We have nearly 800 members and that's not including the guests that are allowed to come in the same vehicle and they too can sail or kite. Add those people in and we can be near 2,400+ people per year that visit the NF's. So the question remains that during the busy seasons (Nov and April/May) are we over saturated. So we are asking you the members to discuss this amongst your selves and if you overwhelmingly believe we are maxed out during the high seasons then let us, the BOD, know. Also discuss amongst yourselves some solutions to the overcrowding. Do we limit the members? Do we limit or do away with the monthly memberships? If so does that really do anything since it only costs \$10 more (the difference between a monthly and an annual is only \$10, people will just pony up the extra \$10). Do we eliminate the free guest allowance and make every windsurfer and kiter become a member or pay for access? Will that actually limit the number of people that come here? Maybe this is all moot and everyone feels we can still accommodate more people, but someday (if not now) we'll get to crowded and that will completely spoil the place we have all worked so hard to preserve and keep open. Please discuss this and let us know your thoughts.

As discussed in the last SPIW newsletter there has been a kiter safety committee established for the flats to try to improve the safety and enjoyment of all users of the North Flats sailing area. I am sure most everyone has been out on the water and seen another sailor coming towards them. In most instances the question arises who is going to do what? When most people are asked what the rules of the road are, they don't know. Most people say the sailor upwind has the right of way. While this sounds good, it is not accurate.

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In the fall the safety committee deployed two sets of signs. The first is a welcoming sign at the entrance to the flats. The second set is on the palapas and has rules for the water. **Please** take a minute to read all the rules and adhere to them. If everyone knows the rules and you meet someone coming the other direction, you can pretty much know what they are going to do. Following is an overview of a few of the rules:

1. **No** transitions or jumping within the rectangle between the two red buoys and the shoreline. This endangers those entering or leaving the beach. This pertains to the kiting area's.
2. When two sailors/kiters are coming toward each other, the sailor/kiter who has the wind on the left side (left hand forward) shall keep out of the way of the other. The sailor/kiter with the right hand forward should maintain the course and speed. No one has right of way. Both sailors have a responsibility to avoid any collision and if they follow the rules, the actions will be predictable and improve safety.
3. When launching kites, the kiter shall be positioned more than one kite line length from the cars to prevent kites landing among vehicles.
4. Any kiter who is turning, jumping or performing any similar maneuver must ensure no other sailor/kiter is placed in harms way as a result of such maneuver. Always check behind and to the sides before making any such maneuvers.
5. When kiters passing another kiter on the water, the downwind kiter should keep their kite as low as possible and the upwind kiter should keep their kite as high as possible while still maintaining control. In this manner, any collision of the kites will be avoided.
6. No self launching or landing. Most accidents occur during this process.

While we have adopted a safety committee, safety is the responsibility of everyone. Take the time to read all the rules and adhere to the new signs placed at both the north and south launches as well as at the entrance. Be safety conscious and if you see someone doing something that violates the rules, say something politely, but firmly. Many aren't aware of the correct methods to ensure a safe experience. Lets all police ourselves for the good of all of us. The more safety conscious we all are, the more pleasant the experience and the less chance of an accident that can cause injury including death. PLEASE HELP!!!

We would like to mention that your club is more than a windsurfing/kiteboarding club. We also help support other issues that deal with South Padre Island. We have donated funds to the local Humane Society and to a new program on the island that is helping to control our Feral cat population. This is a small island that has some big animal issues and with your help we are helping the local community to deal with these issues. They thank us for our patronage and in return we stay at the front of being a supporter of community issues. This in turn helps us continue to enjoy our island.

We have For Sale:

Club T-shirts and really cool hats Support your club!

PS – Volunteers needed to sell the T's and hats and to work the gate during the busy times.

See you all soon! Have fun out there, be safe and enjoy!!

SPI Windsurfing, South Padre Island, www.spiwindsurfing.com

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