

Tips for cold weather paddling:

Hey, for those that are new, you probably noticed it's getting a little colder and it's harder to get away with paddling in shorts.

There's tons of info and opinions on what to wear when it gets cold, and I'd thought I'd offer you a bit of my two cents.

Besides, what's a new sport without new gear?

First of all you might be aware for those that paddle in Commencement Bay, you need to wash your stuff regularly. I wash my gear in mesh bags after every paddle and let it air dry. I add OXY CLEAN (Costco) to every wash so that my clothes don't take on a funky odor from all the microorganisms. About every two weeks or so, I dip everything in Mirazyme, a liquid product, to get rid of any other type of funky smell. I get this at MEC in Vancouver and by mail order, but other stores may carry something like this. You just use a tiny bit in some water, dip your stuff, let it dry and it doesn't smell anymore. Bleaching does not work at all.

You can wash your PFD occasionally. Often the washing machine acts out against them. You can put it in the shower with you to wash it off. You can wash shoes this way as well.

Remember to avoid cotton clothing as we get wet when we paddle.

I go to REI for Mysterioso, a type of fleece that doesn't get weighed down when wet. You can also still keep warm. They have tops and pants but they run rather small as it is supposed to be tighter fitting. They are rather expensive, about \$65-\$70 each piece. You can also wear polar fleece if you don't want to buy anything new but I want you to know your options. Over this, I wear rain pants and an outer shell (or called a splash jacket). You can find these in kayak equipment stores, NRS mail order or other marine stores.

People tend to get neoprene paddling shoes for the winter that are different from the summer ones or else they wear socks with their sandals or socks with their shoes. I get mine from NRS, they are about \$30 and are called KICKERS. Some people like zip up shoes. I wash my shoes every time I paddle. I got acrylic athletic socks that can be used for skiing at REI and I have used wool ski socks. They both keep you warm, but the acrylic socks are easier to take care of and are cheaper. Just don't use cotton socks.

You will probably want some type of gloves for when it gets really cold. I like a type called SEAL SKINZ (NRS) because they are sized to fit you (different sizes), get wet but keep your hands warm, and don't add a lot of weight. They also help you keep track of your paddle. During the summer, I wear fingerless gloves I get from MEC. Other folks get PADDLING GLOVES from NRS.

When it's really cold, you will need some sort of hat. Think of what you would wear for skiing. Polar fleece is usually pretty good. Some people wear ear muffs. I wear a polar

fleece tube that I can use for around my neck or my head, depending on how I feel. When it's really cold I wear a hat and tube. Then usually I get hot and start taking the hat off.

You may want to consider getting some type of wetsuit. However, they are hard to get on, hard to get out of, and are supposed to be tight. And then they are expensive to boot (\$85-140). I just got some pants, just for a change from my usual Mysterioso, rain pant combo. Jury is still out.

When it is really cold, I put a short sleeved UNDERARMOUR shirt (any sporting good store) underneath my Mysterioso shirt. We just need to keep the core warm, and everything else gets wet eventually.

Some other transitional clothes I have are neoprene shorts (any marine store), hydroskin (NRS) top (kind of like a thin wetsuit), short sleeved splash jacket, and long sleeved team crew shirt.

I hope this helps you to get outfitted for the colder winter months. If you are like me, you will love the cold winter months on the water as long as you are dressed properly. We have paddled in all sorts of weather and as long as we keep moving, we don't get cold. Just google MEC, NRS and REI and you will find all the stores I mentioned.

Paddles up and I'll see you on the water.

Tina.