

Dragon Boat Capsizing Incident in Willamette River.

Date: July 10, 2018

Time: Approximately 6:40pm

Location: On east side of river. Between Ross Island bridge & Polaris WaterSports dock

Crew: Wasabi VIP (Visually Impaired Paddlers)

Number on board: 16 padders, + Caller/Coach Jim Hinsvark & Sue Fischer steersperson (18)

Water Conditions: Choppy

Description of Incident:

Wasabi VIP (Visually Impaired Paddlers) Crew was in a Wasabi Rainforest for their regular Tuesday evening practice 6 -7pm The water conditions while heading south to the Holgate Channel and prior to the incident had been choppy from surface winds, but nothing serious. Had crossed some small wakes from a couple motorboats in the Holgate Channel, but again nothing out of the ordinary.

At approximately 6:30 we turned and headed north back to Wasabi dock along the east side of the river. As we came under the Ross Island Bridge I did take note of a motor boat moving at a fairly high rate of speed heading South along the west side of the river, but was across the river from us. As its wake approached from the left I planned my line to navigate at about a 45 degree angle. As we got into the wake the waves were VERY high and troughs Very deep. The Rainforest took on a lot of water as we came up out of the trough on the 1st and 2nd wave. When the boat topped the crest of the 3rd wave, water in the boat shifted to starboard and force of the wave hitting the port side of the bow rolled it over and capsized.

All paddlers were immediately accounted for. Several were got caught under the boat. It took another minute or two to get everyone oriented and being sure there was no one with any serious injuries. From that point Jim and I directed everyone to focus on getting the boat turned over. We were successful on the 2nd attempt. With the boat completely full of water, Jim was able to get back into the boat and pulled about 3 people out of the water and into the boat while others started to bail with whatever we could find to bail. Some of the bailers had floated away. Others retrieved many of the paddles.

Once we got ourselves oriented I looked to see if there were any other boats near us either motorized or non-motorized to help in the recovery. There were none that I initially saw, but saw a cabin cruiser a short distance away and was moving slowly towards us. Some of the VIP people were able to get the bow line of the Rainforest to a crew person on the motorboat. After some maneuvering of the motor boat around us and the Rainforest, they were able to tow the Rainforest and those still in the water close enough to the Polaris Dock between the Tilikum and Ross Island bridge.

We got up along side a slip that had tie downs with a pontoon boat in it.. A couple of young men were on the pontoon helped and helped those of us still in the water get out by climbing up a ladder dropped from the pontoon or getting to the boat ramp and walking

out of the water. We were very grateful for all the help we got from the cabin cruiser and those on the pontoon, but unfortunately I don't think we got any names to formally thank them.

After getting the Rainforest completely bailed and everyone rested, we reloaded the boat and paddled it back to the Wasabi dock.

Submitted by Sue Fischer, Steersperson
July 11, 2018