

# Stand-up Paddleboarding— Floating, Fishing and Fun

by Carl Haensel photos by the author

If you've been out recently on lakes and rivers around Pennsylvania, you may have seen one of the latest types of boats on the market, the stand-up paddleboard. New to the boating market in the last few years, it can be described as a cross between a surfboard and a kayak. Unlike other small boats, paddleboards are designed to be paddled comfortably while standing up. While they may look ungainly, they are relatively easy to master, stable and lots of fun on the water. Although they are stable, paddleboarding is still a "get wet" sport. From wading out to launch your board in shallow water to the ever-present possibility of falling off, don't go out on a board assuming you'll stay perfectly dry. Keep in mind that since paddleboards are classified as watercraft, you'll need a life jacket when you're paddling at all times. You'll also need a launch permit or boat registration as well, depending on the areas that you choose to paddle and launch.

## Choosing a paddleboard

There are a number of different types of paddleboards on the market. We'll divide these into three categories to simplify your boat options. Inflatable paddleboards start off the list. They are extremely transportable, since they can be deflated, and can be topped off with extra air easily prior to use. Advanced paddlers may notice that they are not quite as responsive in their handling and turning but are very comfortable. Rotomolded plastic paddleboards are another option. They are constructed in the same manner as many kayaks. Somewhat heavier than other options, they are sturdy craft that are optimal for areas where you may encounter rocks, which they will glide off easily. They usually have a few more options for attachment and



*Paddleboards are light and easily transportable, and they are great for paddlers of many ages. This inflatable paddleboard has a central handle that allows one person to carry it with ease.*

storage and make good fishing vessels. Some are designed to have the option of sitting while paddling as well. Fiberglass or plastic over foam models are the last and most common type of paddleboard. They have a wide variety of hull shapes and are a good option for most recreational paddlers. With all boards, the wider the board, the more stable your craft. Narrow boards will be faster but less stable. There are also differently sized boards based on the weight and size of the paddler. When purchasing or renting a paddleboard, make sure to get a paddle to match. Your paddle will be longer than with other craft, and a length that is about 8 inches longer than you are tall is usually about right, though there are differing opinions on the best length.



Easy to store and easy to transport, inflatable paddleboards are a great ride and option for the space-conscious paddler, though they don't offer the performance of rigid-hulled models. A paddler tops off the air in an inflatable boat just prior to setting out on the river.



Paddleboards with fins track well on open waters and are easier to paddle in the wind. However, you can hit rocks with fins on rivers or shallow areas, which can jostle your boat. Some boards have fins that are removable and replaceable.



Long paddleboard paddles are often built to be adjustable and collapsible for ease of transport. Choose a paddle that fits your body size appropriately prior to heading out, usually a length about 8 inches taller than the paddler.

## Hitting the water

Before you hit the water, a few tips will make your paddleboarding experience enjoyable. First, don't bring anything electronic, unless it is in a high-quality small, dry bag clipped to you or the board. This includes cell phones, cameras and car keys. If you fall into the water, you'll want to know that everything that is important will stay dry. Next, consider your footwear. Your feet are your connection to the board, and you do not want to slip. Some paddlers like to go barefoot, while others wear sandals with an enclosed toe and heel. Protective footwear will make it easier to get in and out of the boat, especially if there is an unscheduled exit. ☐

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## Fishing from a paddleboard

Anglers will find paddleboards a useful tool for fishing around Pennsylvania. For anglers that like to visually search for fish, there is nothing better than having a perch on top of the water while you silently approach your quarry using a paddle. It works well to wear a light tackle vest or pack to keep a small amount of gear that you need easily accessible while fishing. The rotomolded hull versions of paddleboards are often better equipped for fishing with the ability to attach a few items to the hull of the boat.

## Pennsylvania Water Trails



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| 1. Middle Allegheny River Water Trail         | 11. Conodoguinet Creek Water Trail             |
| 2. Three Rivers Water Trail                   | 12. Swatara Creek Water Trail                  |
| 3. Youghiogheny River Water Trail             | 13. Conestoga River Water Trail                |
| 4. Upper Monongahela Water Trail              | 14. North Branch Susquehanna River Water Trail |
| 5. Clarion River Water Trail                  | 15. Lehigh River Water Trail                   |
| 6. Kiski-Conemaugh River Water Trail          | 16. Schuylkill River Water Trail               |
| 7. West Branch Susquehanna River Water Trail  | 17. Delaware River Water Trail                 |
| 8. Middle Susquehanna River Water Trail       | 17a. Tidal Delaware Water Trail                |
| 9. Lower Susquehanna River Water Trail        | 18. Pine Creek Water Trail                     |
| 10. Raystown Branch Juniata River Water Trail | 19. Juniata River Water Trail                  |
|   | 20. Yellow Breeches Creek Water Trail          |
|   | 21. Conewango Creek Water Trail                |