

Sailing on the Willamette

Willamette Sailing Club, located on the river at the north end of Willamette Park, has been the center of small boat sailing in the Portland area since 1961. WSC is currently home to 285 members ranging in age from 8 to over 80. There are typically anywhere from 5 to 50 WSC-based sailboats on the river between the Sellwood and Ross Island bridges every day during the summer and 4-5 days a week during spring and fall.

All WSC-hosted sailing activities are open to the public (members and non-members) and include

- **Dinghy racing** Monday and Wednesday evenings in spring and summer; Sunday afternoons in fall and winter. Participants in 2009: approx. 100.
- **Junior sailing program** teaching basic sailing and racing skills to kids ages 8-18 Tuesday and Thursday evenings in summer. Participants in 2009: approx. 25.
- **Family sailing nights** Friday evenings in summer. Participants in 2009: approx. 50.
- **Adult sailing lessons** (group and private) weekends and weeknights throughout the summer. Participants in 2009: approx. 150.
- **Youth sailing lessons and river adventure camps** five days a week in summer, morning and afternoon sessions. Participants in 2009: approx. 350.
- **High school sailing program** serving kids from 20 Portland public and private high schools Monday and Wednesday afternoons in spring and fall, plus weekend regattas with other high school teams from throughout the northwest. Participants in 2009: approx. 55.
- **College sailing program** for PSU and Lewis & Clark College Tuesday and Thursday afternoons in spring and fall, plus weekend regattas. Participants in 2009: approx. 25.
- **Physical education credit classes for K-12 and college students.** Participants in 2009: approx. 40.
- **Adaptive sailing opportunities.** This summer WSC partnered with the Oral Hull Foundation to host a free sailing adventure camp for 25 blind novice sailors.

Plans for the 2010 season include the continued expansion of all current activities plus a powerboat safety training program and a junior lifeguard program to teach life saving and water safety skills to youth.

In addition, WSC is a certified Clean Marina providing inexpensive dry moorage for 250 small boats. All WSC learn-to-sail programs are supervised by US Sailing-certified instructors with Red Cross first aid and CPR training. All powerboat operators must have current Oregon Boater cards and comply with all state and federal laws and club safety regulations.

For more information on sailing activities at WSC, contact LauraLee Symes at 503-246-5345 or administrator@willamettesailingclub.com.

River Issues Important to WSC Sailors

WSC members, and river sailors in general, are concerned with preserving a safe and comfortable environment for sailing on the Willamette River. The primary threats to this environment are

- Increased powerboat congestion on the stretch of river between the Sellwood and Ross Island bridges, especially the proliferation of high-speed jet skis, wakeboard boats and jet boats.
- Frequent reckless and unsafe operation of powerboats around sailboats, especially the failure to maintain proper speed and distance and to recognize the impact of large wakes on small sailboats.
- Lack of enforcement of the boating laws, especially right-of-way rules and those prohibiting unlawful and dangerous operation.
- The rapid in-fill of river sediments flowing downstream and creating increased navigation hazards in our sailing area, especially the shoreline directly north of the Willamette Park launching ramp and the southern ends of Ross and Toe Islands. This, compounded by the increasing difficulty and expense of getting dredging permits, constitutes a critical threat to the future of sailing activities on the Willamette River.

We are eager to work with representatives of the wider boating community and state and local authorities to seek sensible solutions to these problems.