

Boating Guide

Updated March 8, 2024

Training

All new personnel operating a PIE boat need to

1. Read the [MBL Boating Policy](#). Note that field station boat use may differ slightly.
2. Read the [MBL Boating Manual](#).
3. Complete the [online boating course](#) and send a copy of the certificate of completion to Sam Kelsey at skelsey@mbledu.
4. Schedule and complete a field checkout with Sam Kelsey
5. Receive confirmation from Sam Kelsey that you are a certified boat user

Field Checkout

In order to use PIE boats you must complete a field checkout with Sam Kelsey. During the field checkout, you will review the information listed below and you will be asked to demonstrate the following:

- Verify the boat plug(s) are in place
- Start the engine
- Perform a test drive
- Dock
- Secure the boat to a dock or mooring
- Stow all gear and clean thoroughly

Reservations

The boats are available by reservation only and priority usage goes to PIE LTER projects. To check if the boat is available, use the [PIE Calendar](#). To reserve a boat, fill out the [Boating & Housing Request Form](#). Last-minute reservations are available if the boat is not in use. If the boat is in use during the day you would like to use it, reach out to the person who reserved it or Sam to see if sharing the boat is possible.

Float Plan

All boat users must make a [float plan](#) prior to departure. A float plan consists of documentation about the details of your trip and designates a shore contact who is aware of your plans and responsible for checking in if you lose communication. You should let your shore contact know when and where you're going, when to expect you back, and when you actually get back. You can create a float plan online [here](#).

Weather

Weather changes quickly on the marsh, so check the [marine weather forecast](#) both when you're making your plans and again immediately before departure. If there are storms or high winds in the forecast, you should delay or cancel your trip. Do not go out on the water if there is lightning in the area or if there is a small craft advisory. Remember that marine weather is often different than the land-based forecast. In the summer, pop-up

thunderstorms are common, so it is useful to have a weather alert on your phone to notify you of changing weather conditions.

Tides

The marshes at PIE experience a 10-foot 6-hour tidal cycle and it's easy to get stuck on an outgoing tide if you don't plan ahead. Use the [NOAA tide predictions](#) to plan your trip, but remember that if you are going up the river, the tides may be delayed by as much as an hour and a half. At low tide, many areas of the marsh are inaccessible, and the banks are difficult to climb up. If you have questions about planning around the tides, please reach out to Sam Kelsey or a senior researcher for advice.

Equipment

The boat must be equipped with the proper equipment. You are required by law to carry registration, flares, a fire extinguisher, and a whistle or horn. The boat boxes on both PIE boats carry all of this in addition to emergency phone numbers and spare tools. If you are going out at night, you are also legally required to use a boat light. You should also plan to bring an oar or paddle, a bilge pump, a bucket and scrub brush, 2 full tanks of gas, an anchor and line, and a charged cell phone in a waterproof case.

Life Jackets

You must wear a life jacket at all times in PIE boats. There are general use life jackets in the basement bathroom at the Rowley house and there are usually extra life jackets in the boats. You are legally required to carry one life jacket per person on the boat. Inflatable life jackets are only legal if being worn properly.

Safety

You should be prepared for a variety of weather conditions on the marsh, including cold weather, hot weather, sun, and rain. It's a good idea to bring water, food, sunscreen, bug spray, warm clothing, and rain gear in a dry bag. Long pants and long sleeves, closed toed shoes, and a hat will protect you best from biting insects, poison ivy, and sunburn.

Before Leaving

1. Make a float plan and communicate your plan with your shore contact.
2. Check the marine weather – delay or cancel if storms or high winds are forecast (remember that marine weather is often different than the standard land-based forecast).
3. Check the tide charts (remember PIE has a 10' daily tidal range and you can get stuck on an outgoing tide).
4. Ensure the vessel has the proper equipment.
5. Boat box (with registration, phone numbers, flares, fire extinguisher, whistle or horn, and spare tools)
 - Oar or paddle
 - Bilge pump
 - Bucket and scrub brush (for cleaning and emergency bailing)

- 2 full tanks of gas
 - Anchor and line
6. Wear clothing to protect from sun, weather, and biting bugs.
 7. Bring water, food, rain gear, a first aid kit, and warm layers.
 8. Bring any medically necessary items such as epi-pens, insulin, or inhalers.
 9. Make sure your phone is fully charged.
 10. Check that the boat plug(s) are in place.
 11. Wear a life jacket when on the water.
 12. If you're going out in the dark, bring a boat light.

Upon Return

1. Secure boat to dock with a proper hitch.
2. Verify return with shore contact.
3. Unpack.
4. Coil all lines and stow gear.
5. Clean the boat with brush and fresh water (when possible, salt water is ok if not near hose).
6. Refill gas tanks (there should be 2 per vessel).

Emergency Contacts

General Emergency	911	
Rowley House	978-948-5016	
Marshview House	978-948-4127	
Sam Kelsey	508-289-7735	
Anne Giblin	508-289-7488	
Aileen Jensen (MBL office)	508-289-7496	
Perley's Marina	978-948-2812	Boat repairs
Paul's Auto Truck Service	978-356-0205	Emergency trailer repairs or towing
Rowley Harbormaster	978-750-5132 508-387-2450 (emergency cell)	
US Coast Guard (Gloucester)	978-283-0705	
Rowley Police	978-948-7644	
Newbury Police	978-462-4440	
Divers Alert Network (DAN)	919-684-8111	SCUBA diving emergencies