



Farmington Valley Rowing Association

Club Overview & Safety Information
2026 Handbook

Dear Member,

We're so glad to have you as part of FVRA! The Farmington Valley Rowing Association Inc. (FVRA) is a non-profit 501 (c)(3) member and volunteer supported organization that provides a comprehensive community-rowing program designed for a diverse population. FVRA's Board of Directors (BOD) is responsible for the overall management of program offerings, club finances and daily operations. A member of the United States Rowing Association, FVRA was founded in 1982, in part, by parents of children who were on the Simsbury High School crew team. FVRA was formally incorporated in 1989 to promote the sport of rowing in the Farmington Valley area through recreational, competitive and educational programs. FVRA rows on the Farmington River in Windsor, CT.

FVRA is proud to offer a sport for both experienced rowers and those new to the sport. The club provides learn-to-row opportunities as well as sculling and sweep programs for novice, intermediate and recreational rowers. For competitive rowers, our masters racing team offers an advanced program with opportunities to compete in spring and distance race events throughout the year. All FVRA members are voting members of the club. Club members are encouraged to participate in our annual membership meetings and several social events that occur throughout the season, including the annual spring and fall club meetings and seasonal fundraisers. Remember to sign up for the FVRA newsletter and check the club website for program offerings and scheduled events.

Thank you for joining FVRA and we hope you have a great year. Please take the time to read through this book and learn our safety guidelines, details about access to Camp Shalom and study our river course map.

See you on the water!

The FVRA Board

Additional information and updates can be found on our website at www.fvra.org

Table of Contents

FVRA and Camp Shalom Guidelines.....	4
FVRA Member Stewardship.....	5
On-Water Safety.....	5
Equipment Usage.....	7
Getting Out on the Water.....	8
Sculling Certification Protocol.....	10
Rainbow Reservoir Water Course Map.....	12
Additional Resources.....	13

FVRA and Camp Shalom Guidelines

Property Access

Please respect our relationship with the JCC and follow the access rules. Members of the club can access Camp Shalom only during set hours while camp is in session (as listed below) and must adhere to the following rules and guidelines. Public access is not allowed.

Rowing Times

When camp is **not** in session, before June 15th and after August 20th, access is available during the day throughout the week. All members will be notified by email of any camp rentals or events that may limit rowing.

When camp **is** in session, rowing is only allowed during the following times:

- Monday – Friday (5:30-7:30 am) (5:00-8:00 pm)
- Saturday and Sunday (5:30 am-8:00 pm)

This agreement has been made so that there is no interference with JCC camp offerings and programming. Practices may be moved or cancelled when weekend activities and special events are offered by the JCC.

Parking

All vehicles must park in the gravel and grass lot at the end of Merriman Road. Access to drive into camp may be provided if a rower is car-topping a boat or moving equipment for an event off-site. **Please respect the residential area and observe the speed limit on Merriman Road regardless of when you are heading to or leaving camp.**

Respect

Early morning rowers should enter the property quietly as the camp Director lives on the premises at the top of the hill. Rowers may not roam the camp property or otherwise make use of the property outside of club activities.

Keep Camp Clean

Please keep the grounds clean by picking up any garbage and either disposing of it in an available trash bin or taking it with you. Do not leave clothing, water bottles or other items out in the waterfront area. There is space to store items while rowing on the desk in the back corner of the boathouse. If you find trash in the river there is a river debris trash bin by the dock. Please do not place any food in the river debris bin.

FVRA Member Stewardship

All club members are required to volunteer twice a year to help maintain the grounds and facilities at Camp Shalom. This is our way of giving back to the JCC.

All club members are also required to volunteer to assist with at least two programming offerings during the year. As a volunteer supported club our learn to row, recreational and clinic offerings help to bring in new members and support the club financially. Our members are a huge part of the success of our programs and with your help we can continue to grow the club and spread the joy of rowing for years to come.

Be a steward of FVRA:

- Be observant, safe and courteous
- Take care of our equipment, the river and camp
- Welcome and guide new rowers

On-Water Safety

Safety Protocols

- All rowers must be able to swim and are required to sign a USRowing waiver prior to participating on the water.
- It is recommended that rowers wear a Coast Guard approved personal flotation device (PFD) while in a boat. From October 1 – May 31 those rowing unsupervised by a safety launch are required to wear a PFD **at all times** per CT DEEP regulation.
- If you are rowing in a small boat you must row with at least 1 other person (buddy system) and it is highly recommended that you bring a cell phone with you. Club

boat bags are available in the boat house to be borrowed during your row if needed.

- When out on the water, it is recommended to wear high visibility clothing (bright colors such as yellow, pink, etc) to improve your ability to be seen by other boaters and people on shore.
- Scullers should review the safety checklist available on our website at the beginning of each on water season, <https://fvra.org/safety/>
- All FVRA members must watch the USRowing Safety video once each calendar year (See Additional Resources for link to watch)

Traffic Pattern & Right-of-Way

Always follow the traffic pattern outlined in the course map included in this book. Keep the shore closer on your starboard (left) side.

Even though you have the right-of-way as per Coast Guard regulations, always stay clear of other boaters. When in doubt of another boat's intention, either stop or slow down and maintain your course so that they know where you are going.

Please fully review the traffic pattern and course map included in this book. It also includes locations to safely land in the case of an emergency.

Weather

It is very important that all rowers know the forecasted weather for the day before heading to the river. Important environmental conditions to take into consideration include:

- **Temperature:** Follow the 90 degree rule. The sum of the water temperature and air temperature must be at least 90 degrees. As an example, if the current water temperature is 40 degrees Fahrenheit and the air temperature is 80 degrees Fahrenheit the total is 120, which exceeds the 90 degree threshold and would be considered acceptable for rowing. Keeping this in mind will improve your chances of survival should you fall into the water.
- **Wind:** When going out on the water, check that the wind is no more than 15 mph. This is especially important for smaller boats such as single and double sculls as it increases the risk of their boats filling with water due to waves. Windfinder.com is a great place to check for current conditions from Bradley International Airport

just to the east of Rainbow Reservoir. (See QR code in the Additional Resources section to load the site)

- **Fog:** If there are foggy conditions on the water make sure you can see the shoreline opposite from the camp. If you can't, **don't go out**. While out on the water always keep your buddy and the shore insight. Move slowly and be prepared to stop quickly should another boat or obstacle appear. Conditions can change very quickly as fog moves down the river so have a plan should the fog become thick. Take note of any other boats heading out, or already out, on the water when you launch. Let people know which way you'll be heading on the water (up or down stream)
- **Sunrise/Sunset:** If you are rowing around sunrise or sunset you must use lights on the bow and stern of the boat to increase your visibility during dusk hours. These lights can be found on the desk in the boathouse where the sign-out book is located. Make sure the lids of each light are securely closed and the lights are firmly attached to your boat using both the suction cup and back up attachment rope before leaving the dock.

Equipment Usage

- **Sign out/Sign in** – All boats must be booked for a specified time on the FVRA online sign out spreadsheet AND signed out in the boathouse log book before going out on the water. The link to the online sign out sheet will be provided to all members approved for club boat use and with a current club membership. After your row, sign the boat back in on the boathouse log book. Using this sign out/sign in system allows other rowers to join rows, see what equipment is available and creates a record if anything should happen.
- **Before using equipment,**
 - Check the boat and oars to make sure they are in good working order.
 - Check the oars for loose collars, cracked shafts and chipped or cracked blades.
 - Review the boat thoroughly to make sure bow and stern caps/plugs are in place and tight, look for cracks or damage to the hull and make sure the skeg is firmly in place.
 - Check that the oarlocks rotate smoothly and are free of sand and debris.
 - Check wing nuts on the foot stretchers and nuts on the riggers (don't forget the top nuts) and adjust them as needed.
- **After your row**, wash down and dry all equipment before putting it away. Equipment that is well maintained will last longer. Towels are available in the boat rack area.

- **Sand** – give your best effort to prevent sand from entering the boat. Wipe down slides before getting in the boat, **do not step in the boats with your shoes on** and keep oars and other equipment off the beach as much as possible. Sand degrades the boats but is also a part of where we row and we have to commit to keeping the boats clean.
- **Broken equipment** – Please notify the board at info@fvra.org and leave a note in the sign out book in the boathouse if you find broken equipment or if anything breaks during use.

Getting Out on the Water

Pre-Launch

Whether you are in a single or an eight, each person is 100% responsible for the whole boat and 100% accountable for their own oar, rigging, foot stretchers, seat and slides. Check to make sure that all equipment is functioning properly before leaving the dock. If you aren't sure, ASK!



If the launch is going on the water, assist with preparing the launch as needed (bring the boat down to the water, attach the motor, etc.)

Things to do:

1. **SIGN OUT YOUR BOAT:** All boats must be booked for a specified time on the FVRA online sign out spreadsheet. When launching one person in each boat going out must also note launch time and estimated return on the sign out book in the boathouse.
2. **Coxswains:** take a coxswain bag and double check that it has all the necessary tools and first aid needed. Remind your rowers to check their seats. Don't forget your cox box!
Rowers: check your seat. Make sure the slides are free of sand, hardware is tight and your foot stretchers are in the right place.
3. **Be sure you have a PFD** if necessary (Oct 1 – May 31) and that water temp + air temp = 90 deg or more
4. **Take note of the weather.** Be aware of coming storms, wind and temperature changes. If you hear thunder/see lightning and you're on the water, GO IN

IMMEDIATELY or take shelter at the nearest shore if the situation is unsafe to continue rowing.

5. **Observe the water traffic** and take note of any other boaters. If there are powerboats, note their speeds, general direction and if they are towing water skiers. During the summer people often swim off of the old dam walls just downstream from camp.

On The Water

1. Listen for oncoming traffic. Be aware of powerboats and treat them with respect, giving them plenty of room.
2. Dealing with wakes:
 - a. If the approaching wake is higher than the gunwale (the side edge of your boat), the shell should be turned parallel to the wake. Rowers should stop rowing and lean slightly away from the approaching wake, with oars on the wake side lifted slightly.
 - b. If the wakes are lower than the gunwale and widely spaced, continue to row without a course adjustment. Shallow and closely spaced wakes that are lower than the gunwale may be taken at a 90 degree angle with the bow directly toward them.
3. Under no circumstances should a rower in the water leave his/her shell. Even if a swamped boat is within a swimmable distance from the shore, the rower should swim the boat to the shore. **Do not leave your flotation** even if you consider yourself a strong swimmer.
4. Rowers in multi-person shells should always be quiet and attentive to the coxswain or coach.
5. **Always** row with a buddy and keep each other in sight.
6. Familiarize yourself with the course map noting areas of shallow water, stumps, rocks, seasonal problem areas and landmarks. Stay clear of the old dam abutments and other man-made or natural obstacles making frequent checks on both sides. (See attached course map)
7. When docking, approach slowly after checking that the course is clear of boat traffic in both directions and you don't hear any power boats approaching. Be aware of the speed and direction of the current and wind, which at times can make docking very difficult. If the current or wind is strong, always approach the dock so that you will be guided towards it rather than pushed away. ie. If the wind is going upstream, dock on the downstream side of the dock (the side farthest from the beach) so you can be blown in. *If you are looking at the water from shore the river flows from right (upstream) to left (downstream).*

Post Row

1. Wipe your boat down and check for damage. Call 860-712-1106 (Katie) or email info@fvra.org for any damage so it can be addressed in a timely manner.
2. **SIGN BACK IN.** Please write any new hazards that you see in the boat sign out log in the boat house so rowers coming after you know to look out for them. If the hazard is large or seems permanent email info@fvra.org so the hazard can be properly evaluated and added to the club safety map.
3. Tie your boat down securely on the rack where it is stored making sure the strap you are using is looped around the inside beam of the rack. This protects boats from blowing off of the rack during storms.
4. Replace all tools including cox bags, cox boxes, oars, etc. back to their storage areas.
5. Turn off all lights and lock the boathouse.
6. Return the boathouse key to the lock box.



If the launch has gone out on the water, assist with taking it out, locking it up, bringing in safety items, etc.

Sculling Certification Protocol

Use of the FVRA sculling equipment for uncoached rows on Rainbow Reservoir or at a race requires that the person steering the equipment has gone through the steps for certification as outlined here. In order to be certified to steer the 2x or 4x in either a practice or race, the individual rower has to have demonstrated sufficient proficiency in their understanding of navigation, adherence and awareness of safety protocols and serve as an advocate for the equipment.

Scullers can become certified as a level 1, 2 or 3 sculler and can advance between the levels by gaining experience as part of one on one sculling coaching, during practices with coach observation or by rowing with a qualified “mentor” sculler.

Scullers steering a 2x or 4x need to have significant experience to be able to avoid hazards, keep their teammates safe and carry out an effective practice or race. They are not only the eyes and ears for the boat but also carry out practice and race plans. They are simultaneously a coxswain and a rower. Scullers must be calm and confident in their abilities, and able to adjust and pre-plan for obstacles ahead of them.

All rowers in a 2x and 4x must always wear a piece of high-vis clothing and take a sculling/coxswain bag with them. The bag needs to include the necessary medical safety items, basic tools as well as a cell phone in case of emergency. Scullers need to

be familiar with the FVRA Rainbow Reservoir water course. Promotion to new levels of certification are made at the discretion of the FVRA coaches.

Sculling certification is acquired through observation of skills by an FVRA coach in the appropriate boat for the level.

Level 1

Equipment: Racing 1x (Peinert 25 and 26) or a Tub (Suzie Q, Quest, Joey M, or similar)

On Land Documentation:

- Current Signed USRowing Waiver and active USRowing Membership
- Paid Member of FVRA
- Signed Swim Waiver
- Knowledge and correct demonstration of sign in and sign out process at boathouse and on website
- Knows who to contact in case of an emergency or needed equipment repairs
- Has watched [USRowing Safety Video](#) in the last calendar year
- Has thoroughly reviewed the FVRA Handbook (this document)

On-Water Skills:

- Can carry boat to and from racks/water (either alone or with 1 person assistance)
- Can get in/out of boat and launch boat unassisted (except tubs)
- Can efficiently and fully turn boat in both directions
- Can demonstrate basic rowing skills
- Can back the boat at least the length of the dock
- Can dock boat alone
- Understands and follows the river traffic pattern
- Has awareness of shallow areas and obstacles
- Understands and follows FVRA water and safety procedures
- Agrees not to have any distractions while rowing (i.e. music)
- Understands and demonstrates safe steering technique
- Understands the need to wear weather appropriate clothing (i.e. bright colors, warm layers, non-cotton, etc.)
- Agrees to use the buddy rowing system for all non-coached rows

Level 2

Equipment: Racing double

The stroke seat of a racing double can be filled by any member of FVRA that is learning to scull or is level 1 certified as long as the bow seat is filled by a level 2 certified sculler or coach.

To be certified as a level 2 sculler (and be able to row in the bow seat of a 2x) a rower must:

1. Bow a racing double at practice on Rainbow Reservoir which is observable and evaluated by a coach or level 3 mentor sculler.
2. Perform at least 8 observed practices of cumulative experience in the bow seat of a double or in a racing single.

Level 3

Quads are fast boats rowed without a cox and special attention must be paid to safety concerns. A quad must always be accompanied by an approved coach or level 3 mentor sculler during the entire row.

Any FVRA member may row in a quad if they are accompanied by a coach or designated mentor sculler. FVRA members may learn to steer/"toe" a quad at the discretion of, and only if accompanied by, a coach or level 3 mentor sculler either in a launch or in the boat.

Equipment: 4x (Umbra Sumus)

Upon recommendation by the appropriate coach and/or level 3 sculler and approval by a coach, proficient steerers who have been approved to race in a 2x and have had at least 8 coached supervised rows may be approved to take out a quad unsupervised. Everyone rowing in the quad must wear high visibility clothing during each row.

Level 3 Sculler

After sufficient practice steering, and with the recommendation of two or more level 2 and/or level 3 scullers, a member may request level 3 certification. This allows the member to steer the quad on Rainbow Reservoir.

Level 3 Mentor Sculler

After sufficient practice as a level 3 sculler, a rower may request to become a level 3 mentor sculler. At this level racing team members can teach others to steer and can make recommendations for qualification to a level 2 or level 3 sculler.

Additional Requirements for 4x

When a quad is supervised by a coach, the coach must be in a position to closely monitor the quad's course and proximity to other watercraft at all times, enforcing immediate correction if the boat presents a hazard to others on the water. The launch must carry standard safety equipment including an adequate number of life jackets for rowers on the water, emergency blankets, basic emergency medical supplies and tools (Kippy Kits). The coach is responsible for overseeing all aspects of the row

Weather: All FVRA sculling safety guidelines apply to the quad, with the following exceptions: The quad may not be rowed in low visibility situations without an accompanying launch as outlined above. Low visibility situations include fog where the shore is not clearly visible from the dock, before sunrise or after sunset.

Rainbow Reservoir Water Course Map

Updated 2024

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Xmw2BwyCVgP9AZ14FnKeb0ckKQN3AAK5/view?usp=sharing>

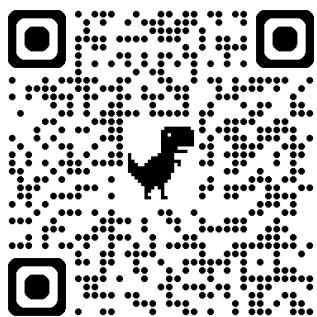
Additional Resources

USRowing Safety Video

<https://youtu.be/okM78KjpVn8?si=6orik9qA3GXoeC9X>

Additional Resources

Windfinder.com



accuweather.com

