

May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020

To: City of Brockville

## **Return to shore diving protocol in COVID-19 pandemic**

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, SOS – Thousand Island is presenting this practice protocol to promote a safe return to our outdoor, or open-water activities. It is based on the principles of social distancing and minimization of contagion put forward by the Quebec/Ontario Ministry of Health. This protocol has been approved last week by the Quebec Government. Since Public Ontario Ministry of Health have been consulted on that protocol by the Quebec Sub Aquatic Federation (FQAS), same protocol could apply for Centeen Dive Memorial Park and other shore diving sites in Brockville, ON.

### **Training**

Basic scuba diving training is usually divided into two distinct sections: the pool section and the theoretical part in a classroom. Added to this is a 2-day certification in natural environment. We leave it to the certification agencies to issue the rules and adjustments necessary for learning about the various exercises in the context of a pandemic.

We recall that at all times, respect for social distancing and decontamination measures as required by the Quebec/Ontario Ministry of Health, must become a priority and be integrated into the ways of doing things.

### **Resuming of autonomous activity (general concerns)**

For recreational sports diving, here is what SOS – Thousand Island is proposing as a protocol to respect the rules and standards of the Quebec/Ontario Ministry of Health and thus allow a safe return.

As the activity is usually carried out in a team, commonly known as a pair or buddy system, additional precautions must be taken before getting in the water. The social distance of two meters being more difficult to apply, here's what we propose in the first place for preparation, clothing and gearing up:

- 1) Start with hand sanitizing with a disinfectant gel or other approved product that is safe for you and the environment. It is generally not possible at dive sites to have sinks and soap to wash your hands. Divers will therefore have to bring their own supplies of disinfectant.
- 2) Each member of the team prepares their equipment from a distance of 2 meters or more. When he/she is finished, each one moves by staying more than 2 meters apart, to go check the equipment of his/her partner and make sure that it is functional and ready to dive.



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Repeat the hands sanitization.

- 3) If one or both divers are wearing a dry suit or neoprene suit and need help from the buddy to properly close the back zipper (when zipper is on the back, you usually need help to close it tightly). The risk of contamination is minimal, but it is recommended to wear a cloth mask at a minimum. If additional assistance is required to put on the rest of the equipment, the mask must be used. Finally, divers will be able to dispose of the mask in their gear bag (ziploc bag type is recommended not to contaminate the inside of gear bag).

A "BUDDY CHECK" will have to be done from a distance of 2 meters, and each question asked will have to be answered and/or demonstrated so that the team can see and hear well. When the two divers are ready, with the diving mask on, and the regulator in their mouth, they can get closer to shore to start the dive. Use the steps that goes in the water one at the time, wait before entering or exiting the water if there is another diver going IN or coming OUT.

**\*Divers must avoid removing the regulator from their mouth at the surface to talk to their partner to avoid throwing droplets in his/her direction.**

- 4) Minimal disinfection of equipment should be done prior to diving in case an emergency arises underwater and one of the diver emergency regulator (octopus) should be used. You should no longer spit in your mask to prevent the fog, but rather use a homemade or commercial anti-fog solution. We should also avoid rinsing our mask with any residue in the water at the end of the dive (including sinus cleaning).

\*We should remember that the instructions of the various CPR and first aid agencies recommend that only compressions shall be made in the event of a cardiac arrest, and wearing of an N95 mask and a visor is required if resuscitation maneuvers are undertaken.

- 5) When coming back at the surface, while team are exiting the water, we can help our partner to remove his/her equipment while keeping our mask on and regulator in our mouth. Buddy can do the same when possible, if reg is out of the mouth, the cloth mask is necessary.
- 6) When the team has returned to the mainland, in order to take off their equipment, divers performs the same rules and techniques as for clothing. (See item 2)

**\*If you and your partner are living under the same roof, the rules above do not apply. Also, remember that at the moment, you cannot travel to the dive site in the same vehicle unless you live under the same roof.**

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### **Specific logistic points about Centeen Dive Memorial Park**

- Gear up individually at your car as much as possible to avoid the use of the benches.
- You can use the benches to put your tank on your back, as long as you're only 1 diver per side of the same bench at the same time.
- Don't block the steps if you and your buddy are not both ready to go IN.
- Don't put your gear (tanks, fins, scooter, etc.) in the steps if you're not ready to go IN.
- Wait before entering / exiting the water if there is another diver / team going IN or coming OUT.
- If one set of steps is busy with people and the other set of steps is clear, use that other set of steps.
- Make sure to take all your gear out of the steps when you're done.
- Move well away from the steps upon exit.
- The bathrooms will NOT be accessible until further notice from the city of Brockville. Please don't use the bush to relieve yourself...

It's up to us, divers, to make it happen in a safe manner. If WE ALL respect those rules and procedures until further notice, we can resume our passion for diving and stop the spread of the virus at the same time.

Be patient and be responsible.

Safe diving.

Yours Sincerely,

*Thomas Scott*

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THOMAS SCOTT, PRESIDENT  
SOS-THOUSAND ISLANDS

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