

Introduction: Sandy Run Regional Park is an excellent facility for rowing. The facility is jointly managed and run by [NOVA](#) Parks and VASRA (Virginia Scholastic Rowing Association). VASRA installs and maintains a fully buoyed, six lane course, an anchored start platform, a dedicated, enclosed Finish Line facility and concession services (during Saturday, High School regattas). There is a grandstand viewing area to view the races.

VASRA Regattas are staffed primarily by volunteers. Remember that they are volunteers spending their time so that your child may row - **PLEASE TREAT THEM WITH COURTESY AND RESPECT.** The only people paid to be at the park on a regatta day are the Park Staff, the people parking cars and the shuttle bus/van drivers. Conducting a regatta efficiently and safely requires close to 100 volunteers, and will almost definitely require that you volunteer during your child's rowing career. Volunteering is handled through your school's rowing club.

The [race course](#) runs from SE to NW, and lies in a valley that does a fairly good job sheltering it from winds (strong headwinds and cross winds can be problematic on the start platform).

Money\$: Cash is King at the Occoquan (we can't always accept credit cards). The nearest ATM is on Route 123 in the shopping center where the Giant (and Starbucks) is located. Shuttle from off-site parking is \$15 round trip, and Shuttles to the Grandstands are \$5 each way. Concessions are primarily cash only (if connectivity is available, they may be able to take Venmo or Zelle payments). VASRA has concession stands in the Boathouse area and the Grandstands that sell drinks (hot and cold), snacks, and other breakfast and lunch items. VASRA also offers Regatta themed t-shirts for sale at both concession stands. Cost is \$20 for Short Sleeve and \$25 for long sleeve.

Heads Up! Did you know that the most common injury at rowing regattas is a head injury? While some head injuries are caused by "catching a crab" (an oar entering the water incorrectly that might hit the rower in the face - and possibly eject them from the boat), the majority are caused by riggers (part of the contraption that connects the oars to the boat). If you are in the boathouse area, please pay attention to the boats and where they are going. The coxswains will try and avoid hitting anything, but some of the boats are really long and they can't be looking everywhere at once.

How Should I Dress? Please wear layers of warm clothing and bring an extra set of clothing if you will be volunteering near the water. Chances are good that there will be wind coming off the water, and you will feel colder than what the thermometer says the

temperature is. There are many days where we will see swings of over 20 degrees. A waterproof outer layer is always a good idea. Comfortable, enclosed footwear is best. Many of the trails you will be walking on are dirt or gravel (and hilly).

What Should I Bring?

- Folding chairs, stadium seat cushions, or a blanket to sit on (the grandstands are concrete)
- Sunscreen, sunglasses, & hat
- Binoculars & a camera
- Snacks & water
- Tissues & hand sanitizer
- A book or reading materials for in between races
- Umbrellas or other rain gear if it looks cloudy — weather changes quickly at the river, and the grandstand sunshade is not water-tight.
- Ca\$h.

What Can't I Bring into the Park: Dogs, open flames, drones and alcohol are prohibited on race days.

Block Scheduling (What it Is and Why you care). VASRA operates most regattas on Block Schedules. With block schedules, all of the 8s row in the AM or PM and all other events are in the opposite time block. The reason why we do that is so that the athletes and parents don't have to be at the regatta for an entire day (some of our regattas run 10+ hours). Before block scheduling, teams would race in heats 1st thing in the morning and the finals late in the afternoon, Our schedule (see Key Dates on our [Home Page](#)) indicates which regattas are using block scheduling (and if the 8s will be in the AM or PM). This is helpful information to know when you are signing up for volunteer assignments.

How do I know when my child is racing? VASRA posts heat sheets on the VASRA home page (www.vasra.org) on the Thursday evening or Friday morning prior to Regattas. The release is announced on the VASRA Results Google Space (Sign-Up by joining the VASRA Results [Google Group](#)) . Changes to the schedule are also posted on the Google Space . There are often multiple releases of updated schedules - sometimes even on Saturday morning. There are some recommendations suggesting that you go to Regatta Central to get an idea of when a race may be - that isn't a good idea - we often move races around to accommodate equipment sharing or double-rowing, and our final schedule rarely reflects the order of events listed on Regatta Central. You can always find the latest "Schedule of Events" on our homepage

at www.vasra.org under the heading “Regatta Heatsheet”. The schedule is a live google sheet and will change (even during the regatta). The “Schedule” becomes the “Results” sheet (same link) after the coaches meeting on Friday evening.

What do those abbreviations mean on the heat sheets? VASRA regattas support races in several different skill levels and boat configurations: Usually you will see events schedules using the format (Gender-Designation-Number of Rowers - M-1-8). If there is an X after the number of rowers, it designates that it is a sculling event vice a sweep event. In a sculling event, each rower has two oars. In a sweep event, each rower has 1 oar. Boats do not normally have coxswains in sculling events. The number of rowers will be 8, 4, 4X, 2X or 1X. The different skill levels you will see on the schedule are:

- 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th (perhaps 5th). Larger programs have enough rowers to enter multiple boats in the same category, so you will see designations such as M-1-8, M-2-8, etc. With a few exceptions for new programs, schools have to follow the progression in order (they can't have a M-2-8 without a M-1-8).
- JR. Nobody in the boat can be a Senior or older than 17.
- N. Novice. All of the rowers must be in their first year of rowing. They do not have to be a Freshman. There have been instances of upperclassmen being new to rowing, or a few programs allow 8th graders to row.
- FR. Freshman. All rowers in the boat must be in the 9th grade.

Where do I watch the Regatta?

There are Grandstands located near the finish line. They are concrete, so it is suggested that you bring a cushion. There is also room in front of, and to the side of the grandstands where you can set up a lawn chair. There is also a small viewing area next to the Finish Line Building that is reserved for coaches (don't be surprised if you choose to sit there and are asked to move).

- **How do I get to the GrandStands?**
 - There is a shuttle bus that runs from the “C” lot to the Finish Line (\$5.00 each way). It is a short walk from the Finish Line to the Grandstands.
 - There is a walking trail. You can enter the trail from the “C” lot or from the boathouses. It is approximately 1 mile from the Boathouses and ½ Mile from the “C” lot
 - [Map of the Park](#)
- **Is there anywhere else I can watch the races?**
 - Not really. There are no paths or sitting areas beyond the Grandstands.

- There is a point of land (we call it The Point) beyond the Grandstands, but it is limited to athletes, coaches and VASRA volunteers from the Prince William side of the Occoquan.
- **For Safety, please stay off the docks**

Trivia:

- A boat does not have to finish in the lane they start in. If they leave their lane and interfere with a boat in another lane, they may be penalized.
- In an event with coxswains, the only person that has to be in a boat when it crosses the finish line, is the coxswain. The ultimate insult in rowing (yes, there are videos) is for all rowers to abandon a shell before it crosses the finish with just the coxswain in the boat as it crosses (you won't see this at the Occoquan because swimming is not allowed).
- Not all boats are rigged the same. You will normally see several different configurations of oars on the same type of boat at a typical regatta.
- It is a common practice for winning crews to throw coxswains off the dock. Since the Occoquan Reservoir is a source of drinking water for Fairfax County, swimming (and coxswain throwing) are prohibited.

Problems: While Sandy Run is an excellent facility for the sport of rowing, there are facilities issues that may be problematic for the athletes and spectators. Knowing these issues in advance may help you plan ahead to enhance your experience.

- Poor Connectivity
 - Cell Phone Service will be sporadic or non-existent on the days of large regattas (we overload the cell towers)
 - VASRA has resorted to the use of Google Groups and Sheets to disseminate information (smaller text only updates have a better chance of being received). You can join the VASRA Results Google Space by joining the VASRA Results [Google Group](#).
- [Parking:](#)
 - Clicking on the heading above will take you to the VASRA Parking page.
 - **VASRA loses money on parking.** Parking is not a get rich quick scheme. Parking fees pay for the parking facilitators (currently West Springfield Football boosters), and the shuttle van provider(s).
 - VASRA Officers spend a lot of time pursuing alternatives to make parking better. If you choose to complain, please leave your contact information so that we can contact you to be the new parking coordinator.
 - Car pooling is highly encouraged
- Lack of Space

- We are victims of our own success. The growth in the sport of rowing has resulted in scarce resources at Sandy Run.
- There isn't sufficient space for boat storage.
- We do not have assigned tent spaces. It is first come, first served, and there isn't a lot of space to set up tents.
- Possible Lack of Potable Water:
 - Sandy Run relies on wells and pumps to provide potable water to the athletes and spectators.
 - The park doesn't have the resources to maintain the equipment needed to provide water year round.
 - Each spring, depending on the weather, the pumps are restarted, and the water has to be tested.
 - During cold springs, the water may not be flowing at the start of the season.
 - Notification is sent out if potable water is not available
- Bathroom Facilities
 - The majority of the bathroom facilities are portable toilets
 - There are four permanent facilities (waterless) located behind the Finish Grandstands.
 - There may not be running water and the hand sanitizer may be out or not functioning - highly suggest you bring antiseptic wipes or hand sanitizer
 - The toilet paper tends to run out during large regattas - suggest you bring a roll of your own.
- Dogs are not permitted on regatta days - please leave them at home