

# WATER RESCUE DOG EXCELLENT TEST HANDBOOK FOR JUDGES, STEWARDS & TEST COMMITTEE MEMBERS

## SECTION 1

### Applications for WRDX Tests

When completing an application to hold a Water Test, please indicate to the WDC Water Test Application Contact person **whether** the WRDX level will be offered at this Water Test. If the Water Test is to cover a two-day period, please indicate which day(s) the WRDX level will be offered. Please include signed acceptance forms from any changes of judges for the WRDX portion of the test, if applicable. Please clearly indicate to the Water Test Application Contact which judges will judge each level of the Water Test day/weekend. Please be sure the premium list advises exhibitors **of the schedule for each division to be tested and** that WRDX dogs in season will be judged after all other **divisions** have been tested. Please also note the maximum number of dogs to be tested per day, as set forth in the Water Test Regulations is 30. On average, it takes approximately 30 minutes to test each WRDX entrant. This should be one of the factors used to arrive at stated maximum number of entries for any given day in a Water Test weekend. **WRDX may have a separate entry limit but the limit for the whole test may not exceed 30 for each day.**

## SECTION 2

### Test Site Specifications

The Water Test Regulations for a WD/WRD water test require usable waterfront to be a minimum of 75 feet, with the water extending at least 200 feet from the shore.

For the WRDX **division** the site **must** have a minimum of **75** feet of waterfront **but the water markers must be at least 100 feet apart** and the water should extend at least 300 feet from the shore.

In marking the beach area for the WRDX **division**, a center pole is used with poles on either side 35 feet apart to use as markers for the Multiple Person Rescue (Exercise #2). However, it is extremely important to place the water markers wider than the test site. **An optional plan for water markers can be found on the water test time line on the NCA web site.**

Retrieval of water markers at the WRDX **division** causes the dogs to fail. Safety is an additional consideration for placing the side water markers (and thus increasing the usable waterfront area) much farther apart than for use in a regular WD/WRD event. If the side water markers are either tied down or tied to one another (as in many test sites), the likelihood of the dog becoming tangled is much greater. The shoreline to the sides of the usable waterfront should also not be so close as to tempt the dogs to take the stewards to the sides of the test site, rather than back to the boat. In other exercises, the **other** shoreline(s) should not be closer than the center of the test area where most exercises are completed.

Prior to the start of the test, a center flag is set up with two additional beach flags/markers set 35 feet away from the center flag. It is highly recommended that a second set of beach flags/poles be set in front of the original markers to give a better line of sight for the water stewards. Side markers are set in the water on both sides at 75 ft., 100 ft, and 150 ft. This is wide enough to not interfere with the stewards in exercise #2.

### **SECTION 3 Equipment**

It is strongly suggested that judges review the WRDX required equipment, as indicated in the WRDX regulations, with the test committee **before the** test weekend by phone call, letter or e-mail.

**Judges should inquire of the test chair whether the committee has on hand** the required level of hand/arm protection **as indicated in the WRDX Test Regulations, whether the raft to be used is a four person raft** that will sit flat on the surface of the water **as required in the regulations**, and **whether anchor systems to be used** can be brought up or untied BEFORE the dog reaches the boat in each of the required exercises. **Judges should also inquire** as to whether all calling stewards meet the restrictions for “overly familiar”, as currently approved by the NCA Board.

## **DURING THE TEST**

### **SECTION 4 Pre-Swim**

Either the judges or a steward should ensure that 15 minutes total is allowed for all WRDX dogs to pre-swim. Only a bumper is allowed to be brought into the testing area. **Dogs are allowed to familiarize themselves with the boat platform.** No food is allowed in the testing area. This is also an opportunity for judges to make notes with regards to the depth each handler must be in the water in order to touch their dog **before and after** the dog is at his/her wading depth. Since the exercises REQUIRE contact by the handler **at or before** wading depth, the depth where the water touches the handler’s body or wet suit may be noted at this time. If the handlers are primarily throwing bumpers from shore, **judges** may ask them to wade in to where their dogs are almost standing and note the distance where the water reaches **the handlers** legs, wet suits, etc. on the exhibitor sheet for that dog.

### **SECTION 5 Time Limits**

All time limits listed with the exercises are suggestions. By the very nature of the WRDX exercises, the dogs will either be continuously working if they commit to swimming depth or jumping from the boat in the permitted time period; or they will fail the exercises by turning back without completing **the exercise.** Dogs may also be called off of an exercise for safety reasons, or if the judges do not consider the dog physically capable of working for any longer period of time due to being in distress. Otherwise, the dogs should be permitted any reasonable period of time to complete an exercise, without regard for whether one dog is a faster or slower swimmer than another.

## **SECTION 6**

### **Beach Stewards**

Beach stewards make sure the equipment is ready for each entrant. They may also have additional chores such as taking and returning the entrants leash. Before the first exercise they need to bring the entrants 8 foot line with bumper to the rowing steward and help to attach it to the front of the rowboat as well as help remove it after the exercise. They may also help to steady the boat when the handler and dog are boarding. They hand the 125 line to the handler before the Line to Shore exercise and take it off the beach after the exercise.

## **SECTION 7**

### **Exercises**

All stewards in the boats or in the water must be wearing coast guard approved life jackets and secure foot protection. Life jackets are optional for beach stewards but they must wear foot protection.

#### **Exercise #1 Abandoned Boat**

One rowing steward is needed, ballast steward is optional.

Preparation: The eight-foot line with bumper attached should be pre-attached to the bow of the boat, with the line and bumper placed in the boat for use by the rowing steward.

The rowing steward takes the boat out 75 feet, parallel to shore, anchors the boat; and then rests the oars on the boat. The boat may move freely around the anchor in the current or wind.

It is crucial that the steward watch for the dog to approach the boat, since the anchor is to be detached or brought up BEFORE there is any chance that the dog would be able to either try to retrieve the anchor line, or to become tangled in any lines or poles used for the anchor system. Once the anchor is detached the rowing steward will quietly place the bumper off the seaward side of the boat being sure to time this so that the bumper is in the water before the dog goes behind the boat. The rowing steward does not touch or move the bumper or line again. The rowing steward then faces away from the dog and does not make eye contact.

The judges and rowing steward should have discussed before the first dog is tested how close the dog should be to the boat before the anchor system is no longer in use. Wind and currents may dictate some sites requiring the boat being left in place longer than those with calm bodies of water. However, the dog should NEVER be close enough to the boat for any safety or retrieving concerns to occur when the anchor system is detached or brought up into the boat.

The rowing steward should ride quietly in the boat from this point until the dog beaches the boat and the judges whistle completion of the exercise.

The bumper with floating line is removed from the bow of the boat at the completion of the exercise.

## Exercise #2 Multiple Person Rescue

One rowing steward, anchor system set to hold the boat at 150 feet from shore (may be stationary or anchor kept in the boat), one ballast steward, three calling stewards. Two beach stewards to steady the boat and to push the boat off when the dog and handler are safely aboard after indicating readiness.

Preparation: Prior to the start of the test, it should be determined which calling stewards will call the dogs from each of the three positions, and which hand signals will be used by the rower to keep the stewards in place.

The rowing steward brings the boat to shore, where two beach stewards steady the boat. When the handler is aboard and indicates readiness to proceed, the beach stewards will push the boat off, being careful to use a fluid motion so as not to jostle the dog off of the platform. The rowing steward takes the boat out so that the back of the platform is 150 feet from shore, the boat platform is facing the shoreline, and either attaches the anchor system or drops the anchor from the side of the boat. **It is important that this anchor be heavy enough and long enough to steady the boat in windy and rough conditions since the boat will be out at 150 feet from shore and possibly in deep water.**

The rowing steward also employs the use of the oars to keep the boat as much in position and platform facing the shoreline as is at all possible. Altering the way the boat faces, or letting the boat drift from the original position may change the exercise significantly for the dog.

While the boat is being rowed out to 150 feet from shore, the 3 calling stewards will swim out quietly, and to their designated positions.

- Drowner #1 will line up with the 1<sup>st</sup> markers on shore, and with the side water marker set 100ft. from shore.
- Drowner #2 will line up with the center markers on shore, and with the side water marker set 75ft. from shore.
- Drowner #3 will line up with the 3<sup>rd</sup> markers on shore, and with the side water marker set 100ft. from shore.

They will wait quietly in the water until signaled by the judges. Each of the drowning stewards will be alert at all times to hand signals pre-arranged for use by the rowing steward in case they may be drifting out of position. **This is very important to remember.** In addition, they should often look very briefly over their shoulders to check the beach marker they should be lined up with, as well as very briefly to the sides to check the side water markers corresponding with their position. The rowing steward watches to be sure that the boat is steady in position, that the stewards remain in position, and also watches the judges in case pre-arranged arm motions alert the rower to problems with the stewards in the water, retrieval of water markers, etc.

When the judges are satisfied that all are in position and that the handler is ready, a brief arm signal will be given to the stewards in the water by the judges to begin calling the dog for help. From this point forward, the calling stewards will watch the rower, who will relay any signals from the judges to the callers, or who will signal the calling stewards as being out of position.

Each calling steward will call the dogs in a manner consistent with being in distress. It is permissible to praise the dogs coming toward the stewards, as this would certainly occur in instances of real rescue. However, words of praise should always be intermingled with those asking for the dogs to “help”, “come”, “save me”; etc., as during a real rescue situation. The dog’s name is not to be used. The stewards need not call in the same manner as one another.

The dogs will naturally focus on a steward, heading towards the steward to bring him/her back to the boat. Stewards might expect the dogs to swim around them, in order to give them a greater opportunity to grab hold. However, stewards should always be ready to take hold of the dog any time the dog is close enough to the steward in the same manner as the life-ring exercise in a WRD **test**.

In some instances, the dogs will be swimming just past a steward on the way to pick up a second, or even third steward. For this reason, calling stewards should be vigilant in grabbing hold of the dog should the dog be close enough to them at any time. If one steward is picked up and it is clear that the dog is heading for a second steward, rather than back to the boat, the first steward picked up should move to hold on to whichever hip area of the dog will allow the second steward to take hold of the opposite hip area in the easiest way as they approach/get close to the second steward.

It is suggested that when a dog opts to bring in all 3 stewards the stewards will be in a towing formation of one on each hip area of the dog and the final steward **either holding the center of the dog or hanging onto the life jacket of one of the other stewards. All 3 stewards should be sure they are floating on top of the water and not hanging down.** Judges should be observing the dogs for any sign of distress should the dogs opt to try to bring in 3 stewards at once.

Some test sites would allow for a fully conditioned dog to perform the exercise in this manner. Other test sites would make such an attempt very hazardous for the dog.

The stewards will not aid the dog through the use of swimming strokes in returning to the boat.

Should the dog at any time turn and head back to the boat with either one or two victims, any remaining stewards will soften their voices considerably until the dog reaches the boat, and the handler touches hands with the stewards brought to the boat in that one trip.

When the handler touches the stewards, the remaining calling stewards should **immediately** resume the previous volume and intensity in calling for help in order to attract the dog away from the **stewards** and handler at the boat.

Those stewards brought back to the boat should quietly move to the opposite sides of the boat from one another, and remain behind the platform to give the dog and handler room to work with the rest of the stewards. The rescued stewards can also assist in steadying the way the boat platform faces to aid the rowing steward in keeping the platform of the boat pointing towards shore.

Rescued stewards should avoid conversation, which would create a severe temptation for the dog to return to the boat to check up on them, as opposed to going to or working with any remaining stewards at a distance from the boat. The instinct of the dogs in wanting to take care of those they have rescued cannot be taken lightly. For this reason, the rowing steward also uses hand signals, rather than verbal commands when needing to give directions to the stewards.

Calling stewards should be looking up to the rowing steward frequently to watch for hand signals or further direction. It may be anticipated that the dogs will swim around the boat between rescue attempts to check all sides for **stewards** needing assistance, especially since this is required in another of the exercises within the WRDX test. Therefore, it is very important that the rescued stewards avoid eye contact and conversation with the dogs once they have touched hands with the handler and have moved quietly to the sides of the boat.

When the dog has rescued all **stewards**, or the exercise has been signaled to end by the judges for other reasons, the rowing steward will detach or pull up the anchor and will row the boat either to the shore with the handler aboard, or; if the handler elects to swim in with the dog, will row out of the testing area. The rescued stewards will swim back to shore **as quickly as possible to be out of the way to start the next exercise**. The rescued stewards should not expect to be towed in to shore by the dog, **which** would then have been given the erroneous message that it is permissible to take the stewards to the shore, rather than to the boat.

### **Exercise #3 Unconscious Victim**

One steward, wearing the required hand/arm protection set forth in the WRDX Test Regulations. Full wet **or dry** suit is required, unless the weather/temperature is so hot that the steward would be too uncomfortable/overheated. If a full wet **or dry** suit is not worn, the steward must still wear a **jacket or sleeves** of wet suit material on both hands. **The gloves and/or arm protection must be of sufficient length to reach the elbows.**

Following a signal from the judge, the steward should quietly swim out to the 75 ft. side water markers, and in line with the center beach markers. The steward does not make contact with, nor speak to the dog or handler either while waiting to enter the water, or when swimming out to the designated water marker. Once in position, and upon receiving an arm signal from the judges, the steward must float on his/her back naturally, without swimming strokes, starting out with feet pointed towards shore, letting the current move him/her. The steward's arms and legs should be floating as still as possible on top of the water. The hands of the steward will be "palm up" on the surface of the water **and the arms will be straight out at a ninety degree angle with the body**. Every attempt should be made by the steward to keep his/her eyes closed.

The steward will expect the dogs to approach and to take hold of one or the other of the steward's gloved hands, arms, or the life jacket. The dog may or may not circle the steward one or two times, requiring patience on the part of the steward. Depending upon which hand or where on the life jacket the dog takes hold of the steward, the **steward** may find himself turned in a slow circle and then towed back to shore. The handler has been instructed to wade into the water to the prescribed depth, determined earlier by the judges, when the dog and steward are on the return trip, and to take hold of the steward **PRIOR** to the dog reaching its wading depth. This will make certain that the steward is not dragged up on shore by the dog.

If, at any time, the dog scratches the steward, or attempts to climb on the steward **or swim over the steward's legs**, or, if the steward feels pain when the dog takes hold of his/her gloved hand/arm, or feels pain at any time in the towing process, the steward may stand up **or call out** to terminate the

exercise. It is never required of the steward to tolerate discomfort at any time. The handlers are aware of this, and will have taught their dogs a gentle hold. The superior protection of the **dry or wet** suit extended length gloves, now required at all **WRDX** tests, ensures at least a decently comfortable tow in by the dog in case of accidental positioning of the dog's canine teeth set at sensitive areas of a person's palm.

The steward will remove his/her hand/arm or life jacket from the dog's mouth with the assistance of the handler, when the handler takes hold of the steward, and may then stand up. The judges will whistle the exercise completed as soon as the handler takes hold of the steward.

#### **Exercise #4 Capsized Raft**

One rowing steward, one ballast steward (if necessary), one calling steward.

Preparation: A canoe, kayak or rowboat will have a rowing steward with a second steward aboard to enable an inflatable raft (able to sit flat on the water when overturned, and with no lines hanging from it after being turned loose for the start of the exercise) to be towed by guide rope (s) to the center of the testing area.

The calling steward will ride quietly in the inflatable raft. If conditions allow, the calling steward may use their arms to paddle the inflatable raft into position instead of being towed. Upon receiving an arm signal from the judges, the steward in the kayak, canoe or rowboat will set the raft free, and the rowing steward will exit as fast as possible from the testing area, as the raft is not expected to remain in its released position for very long in most test conditions.

The steward in the raft will watch for the arm signal from the judge to begin the exercise. This signal will be given as quickly as possible for the above test site/wind/current reasons. The timing must be such that there are no delays in the towing craft very quickly leaving the area, the judge signaling to the calling steward and the calling steward beginning the exercise immediately.

The calling steward will then loudly call out for help as he/she capsizes and overturns the raft in one motion. **If weather or current conditions warrant the steward may begin in the water and flip the raft over his/her head while loudly calling for help.** The steward will hold the shore side of the raft up approximately 3 inches to be certain the raft is held as much as possible parallel to shore. The calling steward continues to call the dog for help, using words consistent with being in distress, such as "help me", "come and save me", etc. The calling steward does not use the dog's name.

The calling steward must lower the raft to lie flat on the surface of the water as the dog approaches to **within** 10 feet from the raft. It may help for the steward to have measured this distance prior to the start of the test, in order for a uniform approximate distance to be used for each dog. The calling steward may expect the dog to swim in under the raft from any side, and should be prepared to immediately grab hold of the dog for the ride out from under the raft. The calling steward does not have the dog grab hold of him/her. The calling steward immediately grabs hold of the dog and prepares to be brought out from under the raft quickly.

The dog is permitted to exit any side of the raft. **For the stewards safety**, the steward is permitted to lift up on the side of the raft **after** the dog **has exited** from under the raft to avoid any down-turned handles or to ensure the steward's life jacket does not catch in any way on the raft. The rescue is a success when the dog swims out from under the raft with the steward in tow.

The dog will then tow the steward, riding quietly behind, having moved back to hold onto the hindquarters (but not the tail) of the dog. **The steward will remain free floating and hold onto the dog until the dog reaches wading depth and the steward touches hands with the handler.** The handler will wade into the water when the steward and dog are on the return trip from the raft and will touch hands with the steward **when** the dog reaches his/her wading depth. The judges will immediately whistle completion of the exercise, at which time the steward may stand up.

### **Exercise #5 Line to Shore**

One rowing steward, one ballast steward, one calling steward, two beach stewards.

The calling steward must not go into the water; however, he/she will be required to hold onto the wet dog after completion of the exercise until the boat returns with the handler. Two stewards are required to hold the boat steady in the water while the dog and handler get aboard. They will push the boat off when the handler indicates readiness. **An anchor system is** necessary. This may either be an under the surface of the water system to clip onto when the boat reaches the desired distance from shore, or may be an anchor dropped from the boat.

**A beach steward hands the 125 foot line to the handler.** The handler brings the 125 ft. line, which may be on a winding device or in a container with him/her to the boat. When the handler indicates readiness to the judges, the beach stewards will push the boat off, so that the rowing steward may row the boat out so that the back of the platform is 100ft. from shore. An anchor system may be used to enable the rower to keep the boat in position with the platform facing the shoreline, and the boat held at the 100ft. distance.

The handler indicates readiness to proceed and the judges signal the handler to give the dog the rope and to jump from the boat. The calling steward should have approached the shoreline to stand quietly near the water in the center of the test area as the boat was being rowed out. The calling steward will watch for the dog to have left the boat with the line in his/her mouth, to have surfaced the water, and is just **STARTING TO SWIM TOWARDS SHORE** before beginning to call the dog. The steward will not call the dog by name. The calling steward will loudly call for the dog to bring the rope to him/her **and may also use arm motions.** Praising words may be used in between commands for the dog to come with the rope.

The judges will note that, while it is natural for the dogs to stand and look back to their handlers for further instructions once they reach their wading depth, the dogs should not turn back and begin swimming towards the boat before the completion of the exercise. Therefore, it is extremely important that the rowing steward keep the boat at the full distance until completion of the exercise.

The dog will deliver the line to the steward on shore. It is not the responsibility of the steward to determine commands or words that might be used to get the dog to hold onto the line long enough for the steward to take hold of the line. However, the steward should take hold of the line as soon as he/she is able to reach it while still on shore. The dog does not have to give up the line **or leave the water**.

The steward may move down the shoreline to meet the dog. The judges will whistle completion of the exercise as soon as the steward has hold of any part of the line. The steward should then immediately take hold of the dog's collar to detain the dog on shore or in shallow water pending arrival of the handler riding back in the boat. In this way, the dog is not permitted to incorrectly assume that he/she may return to the boat at any time. Instead, the handler should come to the dog to avoid the chances of the dog performing the exercise incorrectly (swimming back to the handler) in future performances.

### **Exercise #6 Hidden Victims**

Two calling stewards, one rowing steward, one ballast steward.

The two water stewards ride out on the platform of the boat, rowed by a third steward to 75ft and parallel to shore.

**(It is recommended, to save time, to put the next dog's line with bumper in the boat at this time. That way, when this exercise is finished, the boat steward can remain at 75 feet from shore and attach the line to the boat which saves the time of rowing into position. If this option is chosen the boat must also be in this position when the first dog to be tested enters the test area so that it is that same for every dog. The steward serving as ballast would lean forward onto their legs and remain still).**

Once the boat is in place, the rower should attach the anchor system, or drop the anchor into the water. Each of the two water stewards then exit quietly from the platform and move to the seaward side of the boat. One water steward is at the bow of the boat, and the other is towards the stern. The stewards hold onto the lip of the boat and await instructions from the rower.

The rowing steward gives a brief arm signal when the stewards are in place, whereupon the judges will signal back to the rowing steward to quietly tell the calling stewards to begin calling for help. The stewards should call as if in distress **but their bodies and splashing should not be visible from shore. If the stewards cannot be heard well from shore they may also bang on the boat**. The rowing steward should, at that time, bring the oars into the boat, and should remain quietly in the boat, avoiding eye contact with the dog.

However, when the dog approaches the boat, the anchor system should be detached or the anchor pulled up to avoid the dog attempting to retrieve or get tangled up in the line. Should the dog come around the boat with only one of the two stewards in tow, the rowing steward re-attaches or drops the anchor again once the dog is **well away** from the boat with the steward to keep the boat in place until the dog approaches the boat once again to get the second **steward**.

The calling stewards should call in a manner consistent with being in distress; but without using the dog's name. Once the dog has appeared in sight of the stewards, praising words may be interspersed with those commanding the dog to come and save them. As soon as the dog reaches close enough for

one or the other steward to take hold of the dog without losing his/her grip on the lip of the boat, the steward should grab the dog and work his/her way back to the outside hip of the dog to make room for the other steward to take hold of the inside hip in case the dog elects to bring back both stewards at once. If the dog comes close enough to the second steward for him/her to grab hold of the dog without losing his/her grip on the lip of the boat, that steward should also take hold of the dog and work his/her way back to the inside hip.

Depending upon how close the dog swims alongside the boat to come around the corner, one of the stewards may have to push off a little to avoid being scraped too closely along the boat. The stewards will avoid conversation with one another or with the dog to avoid distracting the dog at work, which will be focused upon reaching the handler.

The handler will wade in to the pre-determined distance when the dog is on the return trip with the steward (s) in tow. The steward(s) may stand and walk out of the water as soon as the handler touches the hand of the steward(s). The judges will whistle **completion of the exercise when** the handler touches the hand of the **second** steward(s).

This clears the way for the handler to immediately command the dog to swim back to the boat if the dog brought only one steward in at a time. The rowing steward must be watching the **handler** carefully to be able to tell the remaining calling steward to begin calling **as soon as** the handler directs the dog to go back to the boat **or the judge signals to begin calling again.**

There should not be a delay between the time **the first steward** stands up and leaves the water and the judge signals the rower to tell the remaining steward to begin calling again. Although the handler may not touch the dog to keep him/her in the water waiting for further instructions, neither can the handler be reasonably expected to ask the dog to commit to swimming depth, moving back towards the boat within 20 seconds if the calling steward is not calling for the dog. The judges, calling and rowing stewards must be alert for the sequence of the remainder of the exercise should a dog bring in only one steward at a time.

The handler remains at the pre-determined depth in the water until the dog returns with the second steward, arriving close enough to touch hands with the **handler**. The judges will immediately whistle completion of the exercise, at which point the steward may stand up and leave the water.