

Stand-Up Paddleboard Rental Program  
OPRA Foundation Program Development Grant Report  
The Olander Park System, Sylvania, Ohio  
Nov. 13th, 2020

**Grant Objectives:**

The objective of this grant project was to help fund the purchase of equipment related to a stand-up paddleboard rental program at Olander Lake, a 28-acre body of water located at The Olander Park System's (TOPS) main property in Sylvania, Ohio. The total rental program startup costs were estimated at \$3500.00, for which \$1750.00 was requested from the OPRA Foundation.

The purpose of starting the stand-up paddleboard rental program was:

1. To help attract more, youthful patrons to the park by offering new and trendy recreational options.
2. To provide another source of recreational fitness at the park.
3. To introduce non-paddleboarders to the sport by offering a chance to try the equipment in a safer, easier setting than other nearby bodies of water, including Lake Erie and the Maumee River.
4. To better utilize the aquatic features/natural resources that help to make Olander Park unique.
5. To help provide an additional revenue stream for the existing rental business at the Bait and Boat shop at Lake Olander.

**Background:**

Stand up paddleboarding is one of the biggest growth sports in North America over the last 8 years. In 2011, there were 1.2 million participants in the U.S. In 2015 there were more than 2.8 million participants! It is expected that that number will continue to rise significantly through at least 2020. Technical innovations, like inflatable stand up paddleboards, and decreasing equipment costs have made this sport more attractive to consumers, helping to fuel the growth.

Despite the sports' growing presence, there are few resources and opportunities in and around the Sylvania area for local residents to paddleboard safely. Additionally, there are fewer opportunities for individuals to try paddleboarding without having to make a large initial capital investment in a board and paddle. Locations in northwest Ohio for large paddleboarding sites are limited. The 28-acre Olander Lake, with its large expanse of straight, smooth water and lack of current, provides an ideal setting for park patrons to enjoy this growing sport.

**Project Activities and Timelines:**

- July 2018 - Grant Application submitted to OPRA Foundation
- August 2018 - OPRA Foundation Program Development Grant Awarded

- September 2018 - Grant Funding Received - \$1750.00
- October 2018 - Begin researching stand-up paddleboard types, brands, and suppliers.
- December 2018 - Put together the recommended purchase list of all items necessary for startup of the rental program.
- January 2019 - Purchase all equipment for the program from Amazon.com
- February 2019 - Finish receiving all items from purchase orders
- March 2019 - April 2019 - Perform modifications of bait shop, assemble and test equipment, finish new equipment rental guidelines and forms, and train staff.
- June 2019 - First paddleboard rentals (late, due to the cold/wet spring and the need for warmer water/air temps)
- October 2019 - Final SUP revenues and rental statistics available

### **Activities and Key Decisions:**

Since stand-up paddleboarding is relatively new to the Toledo-area, a lot of leg work was done to research and determine how best to set up the new rental program. The first issue was equipment choice. There are two main options for stand-up paddleboards - rigid and inflatable. This fundamental choice greatly affected downstream decisions like choosing a winter storage location, initial product shipping costs, and anticipated maintenance schedules. TOPS staff called paddleboard distributors, talked to paddleboard rental operators in other cities, solicited opinions and helpful tips from paddleboard yoga operators, and mined the internet for product reviews and information. All of this went into a spreadsheet that detailed pros and cons as well as costs. An internal committee of stakeholders then met to determine which equipment would best fit the park's needs, wants, and budget.

TOPS chose to go with inflatable stand-up paddleboards - known as iSUPs - for several reasons. They are a very cost efficient option, saving as much as 50%-65% over rigid SUP's. Inflatable SUP's also have a much smaller footprint in storage vs. rigid paddleboards - this was a key factor in our purchase. The cost to ship six inflatable paddleboards was free, vs. several hundred dollars to ship the same number of rigid paddleboards. The down sides to iSUPs are the possibility of puncture or leaks, the need to check and maintain inflation levels, the extra inflation equipment (pumps) necessary, and the training requirements for the boat and bait shop staff.

Another key decision was to purchase all of the necessary equipment on the internet from Amazon.com. This was beneficial for a number of reasons. First and foremost was the ability to shop a wide selection of stand-up paddleboards from many manufacturers and get optimal pricing. Also factoring in was the ability of Amazon to deliver all of the items to Olander Park via FedEx or UPS free of charge. Amazon's return policies helped to mitigate the risk of buying equipment without ever having seen it in person.

The garment racks for the life jackets were specifically selected with 4" casters so that the lifejackets could be moved (inside/outside) to allow them to be stored more easily and to let them dry out in the sun when wet. The life jackets themselves were chosen because of their design and Coast Guard compliance. The design is less restrictive than common, inexpensive life jackets because they have curved vest shapes for the arms. This prevents chafing while paddling and significantly adds to user comfort.

Safety whistles were purchased as well. The whistles were specified as a "no pea" design - this allows the whistle to work when the user is in the water and the whistle is wet.

Finally, the (2) electric pumps and related electric cords/adapters were purchased to help speed up inflation/deflation of the paddleboards. Pumping a single SUP by hand requires 15+ minutes of moderate exertion for the staff member involved. With 6 paddleboards, this is time consuming and tiring. The electric pumps allow the boat and bait shop operator to inflate all 6 paddleboards without fatigue, in significantly less time (~6 minutes per SUP).

**Actual vs. Proposed Budget:**

TOPS set aside \$1,750.00 to match the \$1,750.00 from the OPRA Foundation Program Development Grant. Here are the initial proposed vs. actual expenses to date:

Description	Proposed Budget			Actual Budget		
	Est. Cost ea.	Qty.	Est. Line Total	Act. Cost ea.	Qty.	Act. Line Total
Inflatable 11' Paddleboard	\$450	6	\$2,700	\$359.89	6	\$2159.34
Extra Paddles	\$50	6	\$300	\$35.99	4	\$143.96
Extra Ankle Tethers	\$20	6	\$100	\$15.49	4	\$61.96
Anchor	\$20	6	\$100	\$29.99	6	\$179.94
SUP Storage Bag	included	6	\$0	\$0	6	\$0
Life Jacket Storage Rack	\$100	1	\$100	\$40.99	2	\$81.98
Life Jackets						
Youth	\$10	4	\$40	\$17.94	4	\$71.76
Adult	\$10	6	\$60	\$35.64	8	\$285.12
Adult XL	\$10	0	\$0	\$31.13	4	\$124.52
Electric Pumps	\$0	0	\$0	\$69.99	2	\$139.98
Extension Cord - 100'	\$0	0	\$0	\$69.99	1	\$69.99
Elec. Adapter for Pumps	\$0	0	\$0	\$20.47	1	\$20.47
Safety Whistles (18 pk.)	\$0	0	\$0	\$10.99	1	\$10.99
Storage Rack for SUPs	\$0	0	\$0	\$0	1	\$0
Shipping	\$100	1	\$100	0\$	1	\$0
	Proposed Total ====>		\$3,500.00	Actual Total ====>		\$3,350.01

### **Evaluation of Outcomes and Key Takeaways:**

As a first year program, this program could be considered only marginally successful. The total revenue from paddleboat rentals compared to the existing rowboats, kayaks, and paddleboats was much less. The following table denotes the revenues:

Rental Equipment	2018 Revenues	2019 Revenues
Paddleboards (\$8/hr)	\$0.00	\$792.00
Rowboats (\$5/hr)	\$1,220.00	\$1,567.50
Paddleboats (\$5/half hr)	\$1,915.00	\$2,582.50
Kayaks (\$8/hr)	\$1,517.00	\$2,100.00
Revenue Totals	\$4,652.00	\$7,042.00

There are a number of reasons that led to this surprisingly unexpected tepid outcome. The first issue that affected the 2019 paddleboard rentals was the extremely wet and cold spring weather that delayed any usage until mid-June. This resulted in 3 weeks of potential rentals that likely went to other types of watercraft, while missing out on the graduation party season (and it's associated teenage demographic!). Olander Park has a policy in place that the water temperature needs to be greater than 60 degrees F and the air temperature needs to be at least 70 degrees F in order to rent paddleboards. (Note: this is the same policy as our swim area). This meant that most of the rentals occurred after the weather warmed up starting in late June.

The second issue that may have led to the slower uptake in paddleboards was the price premium that was charged for the rentals of the paddleboards. In comparison to rowboats, paddleboards cost almost twice the rate per hour to rent.

The third issue is that other watercraft options at Olander Park allow the patrons stay dry compared with paddleboarding. This is an issue because the rental area has no showers, no changing rooms, and no lockers for clothes storage.

On the positive side, the new paddleboards were used in a couple of summer programs. TOPS conducted two 'Learn to Paddleboard' programs and six 'Paddleboard Yoga' programs during the summer of 2019, with good attendance. The paddleboards were also very popular during our late September "I Love Olander Day" celebration, where all of our watercraft are free on the last day of Olander's aquatic season.

So, the list of takeaways looks like this - Olander Park should consider more infrastructure like showers, lockers, and changing rooms to support the paddleboard rentals. The park could also do more to advertise to the desired demographic - teens and young adults.

**Equipment Photos:**







### **2020 Report Update:**

The Olander Park system has noticed after the 2020 season that the Stand-Up Paddleboarding program has not taken off as much as expected. While certain aspects have maintained popularity (such as SUP Yoga classes), the overall usage is not at the level hoped for. Reasons cited by patrons include the heavy aquatic vegetation in the lake (due to seasonally warm and dry conditions), lack of changing facilities, and the amount of effort and balance required to operate them compared to kayaks or rowboats - especially in windy conditions.

The inflatable paddleboards are compact and easily stored over the winter - one of the main reasons for their purchase. However, the concern over durability was realized in 2020, as several of the main fins were damaged when set on dry land, or when the paddleboard was grounded in shallow water. Additionally, one of the paddleboards suffered a major leak at the back end due to a separation at the mid-seam. It was difficult to fix and required purchasing special materials to repair. The inexpensive paddles did not hold up well to the constant height adjustments needed from patron to patron, and some are now locked at a certain height. On another paddleboard, one of the D-rings with the elastic cord used for holding personal belongings has torn off. Olander Park expects to repair these paddleboards and return them to service for 2021, but the expense for new paddles was not considered originally for year 3 of operation.

Given the scarcity of storage space, the inflatable paddleboards are still probably the best choice for Olander Park. Other parks with facilities that have more space will find a higher initial cost, but better longevity, with rigid paddleboards. Expectations are now set that we will have to

replace the paddles and some fins every 2-4 years. This period may increase or decrease based on usage levels going forward.