



## RCA MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY REVIEW PROPOSAL

### Q AND A – updated January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017

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***1. Why did the Committee decide that the \$20 base fee and \$3.25 seat fee was the best choice for the model starting in 2018?***

ANSWER:

There were three main reasons why the Committee decided on a \$20 base fee with a \$3.25 seat fee.

1. Managing the financial risk to RCA.

Despite much hard work by the Committee, only the base membership (number of registered participants) of RCA can be considered a reliable number at this stage. The regatta participation numbers are estimates at best and appear to fluctuate considerably from year to year. As a result, it was necessary to find a balance between a Base Fee and Seat Fee that would allow RCA to cover operating costs but still be manageable for participants. The Committee examined all the options and felt the \$20 Base Fee and \$3.25 Seat Fee was the best compromise.

The use of RegattaCentral for all Canadian sanctioned events will permit the collection of more accurate event participation numbers in the future. It would then be possible to re-examine the fees via the RCA Dues and Fees Committee.

2. Fairest approach for all participants.

The current RCA participant registration fee for a competitive rower is \$50 annually, and \$10 for a sport rower. If a sport rower wishes to participate in even a single regatta, they must currently pay an upgrade fee of \$40 to be able to enter. Under the new model, all athletes will be allowed to compete. The Seat Fee supports a "pay as you play" approach so those athletes who only do a single race, are not paying the same as an athlete who does 5 or more races. The fairest approach for all.

3. Regatta system development

The RCA operating costs for 2018-2020 includes additional development by RegattaCentral to ensure their system meets Canadian needs. This includes proper disbursements of funds to organizing committees, PRAs and RCA plus all screens in French and English and so on. The RegattaCentral system will also include APIs to designated third-party regatta management/progression systems.

RCA is aware that there are other regatta systems that offer excellent service which is why RCA issued a Request for Expressions of Interest (REI) in December of 2015. RegattaCentral was the successful proponent of that REI. There were no other current regatta system providers to submit proposals but only proposals to develop a custom system for RCA. RCA considered both options.

***2. In the report you mention that there are "numerous complexities" associated with the implementation of a "regatta fee" as opposed to a "seat fee". Can you give a couple of examples?***



ANSWER:

### **Example 1:**

A coach submits a Mens 8+ three months prior to the regatta and pays the per-regatta fee for each of the nine athletes in addition to the standard entry fee.

A month later another coach from the same club registers a Womens 4+ which includes the same coxswain as the Mens 8+. The registration system doesn't invoice the coach for the coxswain's per-regatta fee since it was collected and paid for by the first coach.

A week later the first coach returns to scratch the Mens 8+. At this point several issues arise; the coach will expect to get a refund, including the per-regatta fee for the coxswain even though that coxswain is still entered in the regatta. Assuming the system refunds the coach's payment, the system must now also attempt to either automatically charge the second coach for the coxswain's fee or notify them that they must login and submit payment (which then creates a requirement for downstream compliance and auditing to ensure payment).

### **Example 2:**

Due to illness the morning of a regatta the line-up of a crew is changed by the coach. This change may or may not be recorded in the registration system depending upon how well staffed the regatta as well as how rigorously it enforces its rules. (RegattaCentral notes that in their experience regattas run the gamut from 'very rigorous' to 'very lax'.)

The club (or, in some cases the athlete) who has paid for the registration will likely expect their per-regatta fee to be refunded. Likewise, because the fee is 'per athlete per regatta' the fee of the athlete who replaced the ill rower will also need to be collected. In an ideal world, regatta staff could handle all of these tasks at the time the change is reported by the coach. However, even well-staffed regattas are likely to defer such tasks until after the regatta, which then necessitates a variety of tools, reporting, and auditing to be used by RCA, the Provinces and the regatta to manage these tasks after the regatta; a time when most regatta staff are typically winding down their responsibilities for that year's event.

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### **3. Why are all events charged the same "Seat Fee"? Shouldn't the fee be higher for a national event vs a smaller local event? Why not assign events to categories such as "National", "Provincial" and "Local" and charge accordingly?**

ANSWER:

The Committee reviewed many options for categorizing regattas and fee options. For example, basing the categories on stage of development, the goal or purpose, number of days and so on. We also looked at generalized categories such as "National", "Provincial", "Regional" and "Local". In all cases Committee members came up with examples that did not fit comfortably in one category or another. There were also concerns that some organizing committees may try to justify their event as a different category to reduce costs to participants. This would require additional bureaucracy to review an event and its category.



Multiple Seat Fees would also mean additional development costs on the RegattaCentral side. This would add to the overall operating costs and ultimately affect the Seat Fee. As a result, the Committee decided that a single Seat Fee for all sanctioned events was the most straight forward solution.

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**4. We use Regatta Data, RegattaMaster or another system to manage progressions and race results. Will we now be required to use some other system?**

ANSWER:

As noted on page 8 of the report, and referenced in Question 1 above, custom APIs to connect the RegattaCentral event registration system to race results, timing systems and 3rd party applications is included in the development costs. There is already an API to Regatta Master and, it is easy to link other systems like Regatta Data in the same way.

Please contact the Committee if you wish to have other systems connected in this way.

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**5. How does RegattaCentral manage ages of athletes? In some cases, we want to use the actual age but in others we want to use the age the athlete will turn in that year.**

ANSWER:

RegattaCentral uses the concept of 'age models' which are configurable and reusable year-over-year and allow setting a custom pivot date for defining age.

Each model within RegattaCentral defines the following attributes:

1. Minimum and maximum age per athlete permitted to race in an event. Enforcement can be set as both strict and relaxed. If relaxed is selected, then some warning text can also be set-up. This is useful for races where athletes are allowed to 'row down' even if technically they are out of range.

'Relaxed' could also be used in the case of a scholastic event in which athletes must be, 'Either a Senior or Under 18 years old as of June 30<sup>th</sup>'. In this case an athlete may be 18 and above the age limit but is a senior and thus eligible. So the entry form will allow the athlete to be included but they will be given a warning that the athlete must be a senior.

In the case where the age model has an upper or lower boundary set to 'strict' and an athlete is out of those bounds that athlete cannot be used in the entry.

2. Minimum and maximum average age of the crew. Like the above, enforcement can be set as both strict and relaxed.
3. Each event can be configured with its own age model. The age model supports a 'pivot date' which defines the month and day used to compute each athlete's age.
4. The system default is December 31st, as defined by the majority of governing bodies, but this can be customized.



- A regatta can have some events defining age and eligibility as December 31st and other events as, for example, June 30th
- According to Regatta Central, custom dates have been used in some instances for indoor regattas or junior/youth events.

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**6. Our club is primarily recreational with very few competitive athletes and a number of Learn to Row programs. What if our club chooses to only register athletes who will compete?**

ANSWER:

As is the case now, all member clubs must register all participants, including Learn to Row participants with RCA and their PRA to remain in good standing. Please see question #10 for further information on this.

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**7. Does this mean that people who want to “come and try” rowing for the first time at a “come and try” event would have to pay the RCA base membership fee and a seat fee?**

ANSWER

Rowing Canada Aviron has been looking at how best to support “come and try” events that are hosted by clubs. For the first time rower who wants to participate in a “come and try” event, there is a new proposal being worked on where no participant fee will be required. These would be sanctioned “events”; participants would need to be registered and sign an event waiver to participate.

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**8. We have already built our own customized system for collecting entries for our regatta. What if we choose to not use RegattaCentral?**

ANSWER:

As outlined in the report, all RCA events are required to be sanctioned and all sanctioned events will be required to use RegattaCentral. If the regatta OC has special requirements, they should discuss these requirements with RegattaCentral. RegattaCentral serves a wide, diverse range of events and is likely able to accommodate. If not, further customization may be necessary and the OC can work directly with RegattaCentral on this. The OC may incur customization charges, depending on the need.

**9. It would appear that the majority of sport rowers are subsidizing the competitive few.**

Although it may appear that way, under the proposed new structure the “sport rowers” who represent a higher number of our participants cover approximately 38% of the annual total while the “competitive rowers” who are smaller in membership numbers cover 62% of the projected annual costs.

It is worth noting that at present the “sport” rowers cannot race, but under the new structure that restriction will be removed. Perhaps the non-racing vs racing percentage will equalize or even shift the other way once that upgrade fee barrier to racing is removed. For example, there are currently a reasonable number of “sport” rowers who are competing in recreational categories in regattas. Those rowers will now be able to compete in any category.



**10. In order not to lose some of our recreational rowers due to rising fees, we will be looking for ways not to register members - including finding independent insurance for them.**

Rowing Canada members should be proud of how they have always taken a “for the good of everyone approach” and overall clubs and associations have been great team players and honest with respect to the registration of all of its members. There is recognition that participant numbers are important to our funders and what we leverage (RCA and PRA’s) from these funders for all of our programs and services that are provided to members, is significant.

This proposal comes from a process of extensive consultation and feedback from our members. It would be disappointing and unfair to those members who are playing by the rules if some chose to take this approach. It is also in contravention to the RCA bylaws. In order for a club to be recognized by both RCA and their province, the club must sign an affidavit which legally attests to the fact that they have registered ALL of their rowers. If necessary, although RCA would hope that it would never have to be this heavy handed, the RCA Board could declare a member in bad standing and thus ineligible to participate in any RCA sanctioned activities.

It also important to note that RCA umpires are not able to work at any regatta that is not sanctioned by RCA and if they do so, they would risk losing their license.

**11. The cost for our high performing athletes that are racing a few races at each regatta will be heavily impacted by this. The last thing i would want to see is the competition level to go down due to fee.**

For clarity the “seat fee” is per event as opposed to “per race within in event” (ie. per heat/semi-final/final).

Under the new structure, an athlete can race in 9 events per year and pay less than they are now. If the athlete races in 10 events in the year, that is an extra \$2.48. If 15 events, then it is an extra \$8.73. Based on the data that RCA was able to obtain, on average an athlete races in 2 events per year. The average (from this same data) number of events per current “competitive” athlete is 5.7 events per year. So under the new membership structure, the “average” athlete could race more on average and still be paying less than they are now.

**12. The seat fee is not acceptable. A regatta fee (or Per-day fee) would be more fair.**

The report addresses the “regatta fee” and the reasons for using a “per seat fee” model. As noted in the report (pp 6-7) the basic reasons are:

- Less costly: by using the established RegattaCentral structure, the development costs of a system for RCA would be approximately 40% less than if the system has to be adapted to use a “per regatta fee”.
- Easier to manage: the “per seat” fee model reduces the potential for confusion and added complexities for regatta organizers in terms of dealing with cancellations and refunds.



- Fairer to the participant: a “per regatta fee” does not consider the number of events that a person is racing in - each person entering a regatta would pay the same fee regardless of whether they were racing in 5 events or just racing in one. A “per seat fee” is assessed for each race/event the participant is entered. If a participant just wanted to try one race, a “regatta fee” (which would be much higher than a “seat fee”) could be a barrier to participation.

**13. Will the per seat cost be applied to boats with US athletes as well, or would it be waived given they are already members US Rowing?**

Non-Canadian athletes would not be required to pay the RCA member fee (the “Base Fee”) as they are already members of US Rowing or another Rowing Federation. The seat fee would apply to all athletes regardless of country of origin.

**14. It is reasonable to ask the membership to pay for what they use, however, it is not reasonable to have \$130k+ annually to the membership to cover the cost of the proposed implementation. This is basically 30-35% of EVERY dollar from the membership goes towards Regatta Central.**

A couple of things to consider here. The “Development Cost” (\$33,333) is the amortized amount over 3 years. After the 3 years, that cost is eliminated. Of the development cost, not all goes to RegattaCentral. Included in the development is an online sanction process through WRS that is connected to RegattaCentral to create a seamless, one stop shop system. There will be other updates to WRS to ensure a more seamless and secure connection with RegattaCentral. RCA wants to ensure it is easy to register athletes for regattas and authenticate them. All in a one-step process.

The “Operating Costs” include; the annual operating amount payable to RegattaCentral based on our estimated number of regatta participants; RCA staff time to assist clubs particularly in the start up phases and; minor system changes/upgrades that may be required each year. Keep in mind that Regatta Organizing Committees will NOT incur RegattaCentral fees. The Operating costs remove RegattaCentral fees from regatta and other event organizers and for those currently using Regatta Central they will realize a savings that will hopefully be considered when they set their regatta fees.

The fee calculations in the report were based on available data and a conservative approach was used in the projections. Seat data provided by RegattaCentral plus approximations provided by PRAs were used. Extrapolations were required because regatta participation is not well tracked at this time. If all regattas are tracked through RegattaCentral in the future, then a more accurate representation of participation will be obtained and more accurate fee calculations can be done. As noted in the report, a reassessment of the fees is planned once development costs of the new system are covered and more accurate regatta participation information is available.

In addition, any proposed changes to the RCA Membership Fee and/or Seat Fee would be reviewed by the RCA Dues and Fees Committee and the Committees recommendations would need to be approved by the membership.

**15. Why RegattaCentral and not some other system?**



In December of 2015, RCA issued a Request for Expressions of Interest (REI) to technology firms capable of providing a regatta registration system, to determine what the costs and implementation of such a system would entail. The RCA membership suggested a number of companies and these companies were contacted directly to invite them to apply. Not all applied. A panel of technical experts and regatta organizers was established and after reviewing all of the proposals received, two companies were shortlisted and went through an extensive review process conducted by the panel.

Through this process, RegattaCentral was selected as the company that offered the best quality, value, service and capacity to support both RCA's system needs and the needs of RCA's regatta OCs. RegattaCentral agreed to provide APIs to race results, timing systems and 3rd party applications and timing results/systems (e.g. Regatta Master, Regatta Data) as required.

#### **16. Can Regatta Data (or other progression system) be connected to Regatta Central?**

Yes, via the API provided by RegattaCentral. The API currently provides regattas with easy access to their regatta entry data including all aspects of lineups. This can make it much easier for a regatta management/timing system to retrieve data from RegattaCentral. There is no longer any need to log into RegattaCentral, download an Excel report and then import that into their system. Their system can now request that data directly through the API.

The other major piece of the API is that it allows for reporting of race schedules/timing data. The benefit of this is that athletes, coaches, spectators, remote family members can quickly and easily access the results data through the RegattaCentral mobile app. Regattas that wish to have their own unique mobile app can also use the data (with either RegattaCentral or their own developer creating the app). The data is also available on the RegattaCentral main website.

#### **17. What is the value for clubs that don't host regattas?**

RegattaCentral doesn't just host regattas. For example, some clubs don't host on-water regattas but may host tours or indoor rowing events which they would like to publicize to other clubs in North America and beyond. RegattaCentral could be used to bring that event to the attention of other Canadian and international rowers and then register the participants. The listing and registration for sanctioned tours and indoor rowing events are included under the RCA agreement with RegattaCentral.

Tours, camps, clinics and the like that only involve local club members do not need to be sanctioned and should be managed as a club program through WRS.

Perhaps your members participate in regattas or now with the large upgrade fee being eliminated in this new system, will consider giving this a try. Many realize after their first time that these events can be great fun!

#### **18. What is the benefit to participants and coaches? LOC's?**

The advantage of standardizing on a single regatta registration system is that participants and coaches will only need to learn to use one system for any regatta in Canada they attend or in which they register



participants. Also, results from any Canadian regatta will be presented in a consistent way which again makes it easier for participants and coaches.

Although LOC's may need to learn a new regatta registration system, both Regatta Central and RCA are committed to helping LOC's with the transition. For organizing committees, having access to a free, standardized regatta registration system means they can draw on the expertise of other LOCs and local volunteers who may have helped with regattas at other clubs. These skills will be transferable.

#### **19. RCA doesn't provide anything useful to indoor events so why a seat fee for Indoor Events?**

This is addressed in the report on page 7 but, to reiterate:

- Many Indoor Rowing Events are already paying RegattaCentral to use their online registration system. In the new model, Rowing Canada member organizations would have free access to this as the cost is covered by RCA and the seat fee that would be recovered.
- Indoor Rowing Events are governed by RCA Rules of Racing and many are supported by RCA umpires.
- RCA sanctions and insures the event at a cost to RCA and its members. The majority of participants in Indoor Rowing Events are already members of RCA through their club participation but this model opens the door for greater outside participation with insurance coverage provided.
- If all sanctioned Indoor Rowing Events are using the same regatta registration system, race results from across the country can be tracked year after year and an accurate history of winners and Canadian records can be easily maintained. This could assist in various marketing initiatives and expanded indoor rowing participation is an important priority in RCA's plans over the next few years.
- Improved marketing of Indoor Rowing Events across could translate into an increase in the number of rowing participants.

#### **20. We feel our little recreational 1 day tour should not endure this seat fee as it does not involve any umpires or judges and gets no promotional advantage from Rowing Canada or Row Ontario.**

If your event is purely recreational for your club, then it does not need to be sanctioned and thus is exempt from the seat fees. The basic membership fee would still be required.

#### **21. What about international (e.g. FISA) events? Do the seat fees apply?**

RCA and any provincial fees would NOT be able to be applied to FISA events hosted in Canada. Agreements with FISA normally prohibit the assessment of any independent levies. Conversely, FISA events would not be part of RCA's agreement with Regatta Central and would have to provide and pay for their own regatta registration system.

#### **22. This new structure is nothing more than a money grab on the part of RCA.**



The new membership structure was based on a model to be revenue neutral and the Committee has been quite transparent in outlining this and using the current membership revenue as the base. As noted in the report and previously (Question #7), the fee calculations were based on available data. The data were the best approximations and were conservative to ensure fiscal responsibility. A reassessment of the fees is planned once development costs of the new system are covered and more accurate regatta participation information is available. Any proposed changes to the RCA Membership Fee and/or Seat Fee would be reviewed by the RCA Dues and Fees Committee and the Committees recommendations would need to be approved by the membership.

**23. *The institution that my club is affiliated with will not permit personal information to be held in a US based system.***

If you currently register your athletes for any event in the US or through any Canadian event that uses Regatta Central, the amount of information that Regatta Central has access to remains the same in this new model. Typically this would be RCA registration number, participant name and date of birth. Regatta Central does not have the ability to access the information that is contained in the RCA WRS system but has the ability to have the information that it receives from the registering coach or participant to be “verified” by the RCA system.

**Example:** Currently, the RCA membership for participants at the Royal Canadian Henley who register for this event through Regatta Central is verified through WRS. An API exists where RC asks WRS to verify “yes” or “no” in terms of RCA membership but Regatta Central does not have the ability to “see” all of the information that is contained with our WRS system.