

Sea Kayaker Magazine Readers Choice Awards 2008

NRS Voted Best Wetsuit & Sea Kayak Outfitter in the West



BY CHRISTOPHER CUNNINGHAM, Editor

We're pleased to present our second triennial Readers Choice awards. We've made a few changes since our inaugural awards in 2005, including a few new categories and a wider variety of kayak awards. We also went from paper ballots included with the magazine to electronic voting through our website. That brought us a record number of responses and much faster and more accurate tabulation of the results.

After we determined our winners, we brought each piece of kayaking equipment in for a brief review. Some of the gear we've reviewed in previous issues of *Sea Kayaker*, some are tried for the first time. With all of the winners, it was easy to see why they were selected. Our readers and web viewers know good gear.

Congratulations to all of the manufacturers who won the newest Readers Choice awards and thanks to all of you who took the time to participate in our survey.

Best Sea Kayak Outfitter

West NRS

Southeast/Gulf Coast Saltwater Sports

Midwest Living Adventure

NRS

www.nrsweb.com

800-635-5202



Best Wetsuit

Farmer John by NRS

The farmer John wetsuit from Northwest River Supply (NRS) is another repeat Readers Choice winner. The Farmer John is a versatile piece of immersion wear and NRS's most popular wetsuit. The 3-mm neoprene has fabric facings inside and out and titanium added to the adhesive between layers to reflect heat back to the wearer. The armholes are cut larger to prevent chafe and the ankles have zippers to make the Farmer John easier to pull on over large feet and seal over neoprene booties. The seams are glued and sewn on the outside only so the inside is smooth. The long front zipper is backed with a neoprene flap to retard water seeping through the zip. Reinforced knees and seat resist wear where the pressure on the suit is the highest. The reinforcement at the knees doesn't extend into the area where most thigh braces are so there's not extra bulk where you need a closer fit. At \$115, you get a good margin of safety for paddling cold water at an economical price.

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Best Drysuit

Meridian by Kokatat



Kokatat designed the Meridian as a drysuit for paddlers. The wetsuit has an overlayer that covers the spray skirt to create a more effective seal for keeping water out of the kayak. The wetsuit and knees are reinforced to provide durability for the parts of the suit that are in contact with the cockpit. The latex gaskets at the neck and wrists are protected by stretch latex patches through cuffs. The Gore-Tex fabric's breathability is an essential quality in a drysuit that keeps practitioners from sweating the insulating layers worn under the suit. The seams are all welded with tape fused to the fabric. The Meridian has one pocket, just below the neck, a good place to keep your car keys. The Meridian is available with options for relief slips (front or drop seat) and Gore-Tex socks instead of latex ankle gaskets (pictured).

A well-built drysuit like the Meridian doesn't come cheap, but the protection and comfort make it worth the price.

\$850 or \$990 with relief slip and socks

Kokatat
www.kokatat.com