

# PADDLE

ACA | CANOE - KAYAK - SUP - RAFT - RESCUE

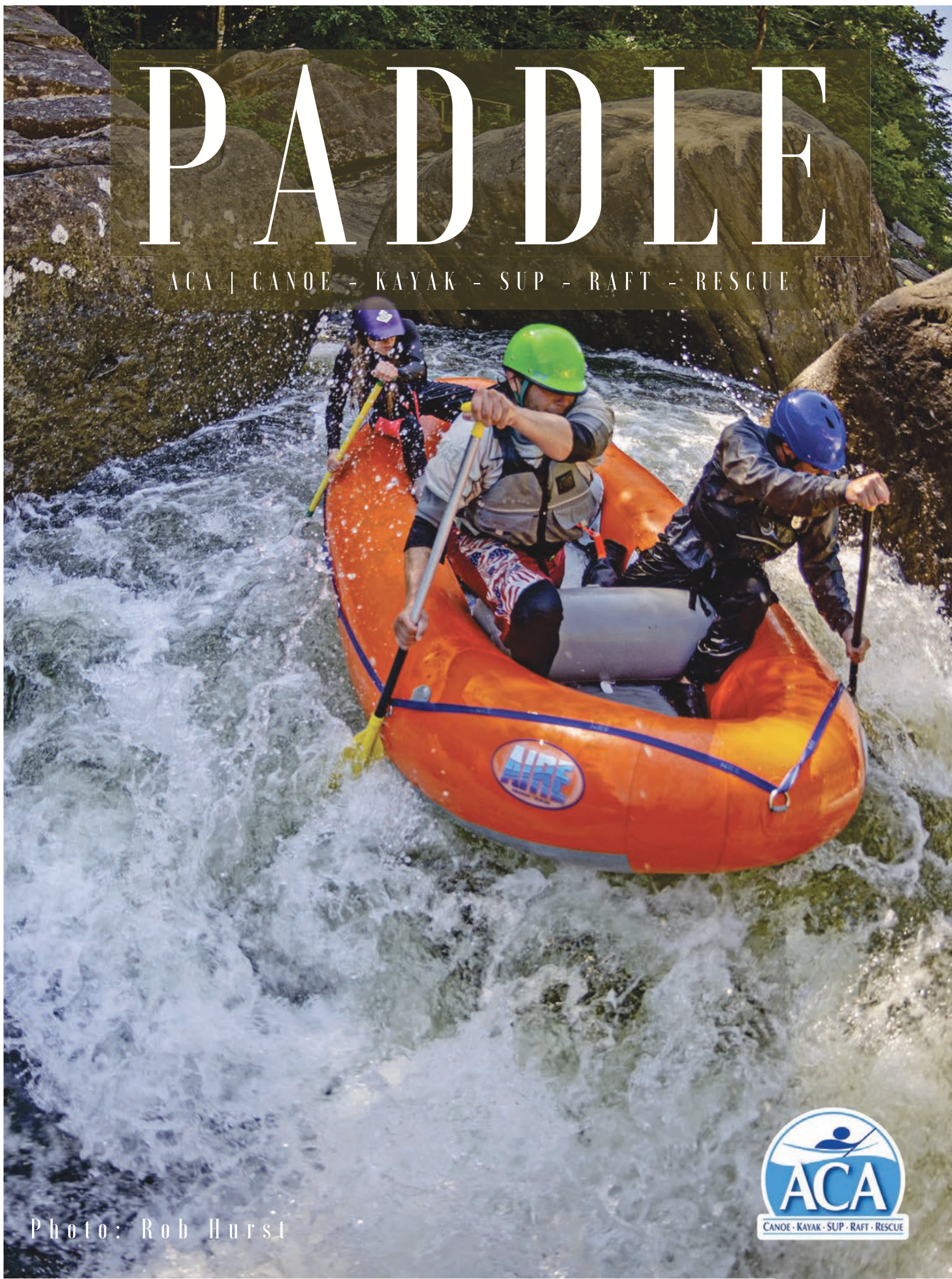


Photo: Rob Hurst



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# Who We Are

Founded in 1880, the American Canoe Association (ACA) is a national nonprofit organization serving the broader paddling public by providing education related to all aspects of paddling, stewardship support to help protect paddling environments, and sanctioning of programs and events to promote paddlesport competition and recreation.

## ACA National Office Staff

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Interim Executive Director	Beth Spilman
SEI Department Manager	Kelsey Bracewell
Membership/State Director Coordinator	Amy Ellis
Membership Coordinator	Michelle Flynn
Sprint National Coach (Development)	Dan Henderson
Compliance & Administrative Manager	Cathlyn Huitt
Sprint National Team Canoe Coach	Aaron Huston
Communications Coordinator	Aaron Mann
Public Policy Chief	Brett Mayer
Insurance Coordinator	LeighAnn Moore
Education & Grant Coordinator	Carrie Schlemmer
Slalom National Team Coach	Rafal Smolen
General Manager - High Performance Programs	Rok Sribar
Sprint National Team Kayak Coach	Zsolt Szadovszki
Finance Manager	Emma Walther

## ACA Board of Directors

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Board President	Robin Pope (NC)
Board Vice President	Trey Knight (FL)
Board Treasurer	John Traendly (GA)
Board Secretary	Stanton Collins (GA)
At-Large Director	William Irving (NC)
At-Large Director	Samuel Fowlkes (NC)
Independent Director	Heather Davis Miller (VT)
Independent Director	Adam Joseph (MD)
Property Management Director	Bill Micks (VA)
Safety Education & Instruction Council	Trey Knight (FL)
Competition Council	Marsh Jones (MN)
Elite Athlete Director - Sprint	Stanton Collins (GA)
Elite Athlete Director - Slalom	Scott Mann (VA)
Elite Athlete Director - Paracanoe	Nikiha Miller (GA)

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## 2020-2021 SEIC Discipline Committees

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### Safety Education & Instruction Council Executive Committee

Chair - Trey Knight (FL)

Vice Chair - Josh Hall (SC)

Secretary - John Traendly (GA)

Past Chair - Steve Hutton (SC)

### Discipline Committee Chairs

### Other Elected Positions

Universal - Crystal Skahan (NH)

River Canoe - Mike Aronoff (VA)

Touring Canoe - Lynn Dominguez (MI)

River Kayak - Lydia Wing (NC)

Coastal Kayak - John Browning (WI)

Surf Kayak - Sean Morley (CA)

Surfski - Matthew Murphy (TX)

Prone Paddling - Robin Pope (NC)

Safety & Rescue - Sam Fowlkes (NC)

Rafting - Elisha McArthur (CO)

SUP - Anna Levesque (NC)

Intro to Paddling - Beth Wiegandt (VA)

International Rep: Ge Wu (China)

International Rep: Sandra De Ugarte (Peru)

At-Large Rep: Dale Williams (GA)

At-Large Rep: Jefferson Atkins (SC)

Engaged Athlete Rep: Pia Lord (FL)

Engaged Athlete Rep: Heidi Henkel (VT)

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WI-Luke Martz (wistatedirector@americancanoe.net)

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# MEMBERSHIP

I hope that you are staying healthy and safe whether you are at home with loved ones or on the front lines fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. We thank you for your patience and understanding as our small and dedicated staff continue to make improvements to ACA's processes and communication tools.

ACA's focus today, as always, is serving our members in the best possible ways within the limits of available resources. The past year has been a year of change, transition, and growth for the ACA. For the first time in years, we have actively recruited Board members from our general membership. I'm convinced that we have a more robust and diverse board that is effectively representing all members' interests.

In addition, we welcomed Beth Spilman to the role of the Interim Executive Director last June. In a short time, she has made an enormous effort to repair and restore some of the fraught ACA relationships internally and externally, including with numerous volunteers. She has rebuilt a broken financial system and ensured that our small office staff is cross-trained and capable of providing services even in challenging times of the current pandemic.

As you may recall, ACA conducted a member survey this past January. For more information about what ACA learned from the survey and about the action plans that stem from your feedback, please continue reading below.

On behalf of ACA's Board, I want to thank everyone who participated in the survey. Be assured that Beth and ACA staff will use your feedback to make ACA an even better run organization in 2020 and beyond.

Thank you,  
Robin Pope  
Chairman, ACA Board of Directors



*Connect with us!*  
*@acapaddlesports*





**Thank  
You  
ACA  
Members**



## ACA Membership Survey Report – May 2020

As a member-, grant-, and donations-funded organization, listening to what members have to say about our services is critically important to the ACA. Member feedback helps ensure we understand and meet your needs. We sent a survey to all members in January 2020, and we are using the submitted feedback to help us better serve you.

The survey included twenty-three questions. We received 1240 responses, which represents approximately 8.5% of the annual membership base. Of these, 632 (51%) responses were from standard individual members, 429 (35%) from certified instructors, and 168 (14%) from all other member categories. Approximately three-quarters of the members who responded to the survey have joined ACA in the last twelve years. For those who are interested in reviewing the survey results, a full report and the anonymized data set will be available soon. Some of the initial, clear indicators from the survey results are highlighted below.

A vast majority of members value the ACA as the national paddlesports organization and appreciate the services that ACA provides. Ninety percent of respondents plan to renew their membership, and an additional 7% are considering membership renewal. Survey respondents indicated that the administration of our instructional programs needs technology-based process improvements. Respondents noted difficulties and delays in processing records, issues with the instructional program record-keeping, and misunderstanding of ACA's role in setting the cost of instructional programs.



One of the largest trends indicated by survey results was the need to improve ACA communications. Members want the ACA to improve their website and to communicate more frequently and consistently about our mission, including public policy and stewardship efforts, educational resources and opportunities, and clearer explanations of what role competition (in particular, Olympic level competition) plays within the ACA. We are already starting to address these key take-aways from the survey responses.

### Education & Instructional Programs

ACA's instructional program has seen a massive jump in participation in the past ten years. Our resources and processes were not designed to scale with the demand. For too long, we accepted handwritten records and reports; even reports that were submitted electronically had to be reentered manually into a database. ACA deployed the first phase of the new Course Management System (CMS) on February 1, 2020. The CMS allows instructors to enter information directly into a database without the need for manual entry by staff. Student and instructor candidate memberships are confirmed online within the CMS. Moving forward, instructors are able to check the records they previously entered into the CMS without having to ask an ACA staff member. In the coming month, certification and assessment cards will be automatically processed as soon as an instructor trainer enters the data and candidate requirements are fulfilled.

Last year, some courses took months to process; when the CMS deployment is complete, course processing time will drop to a number of seconds. Going from a manual entry system to an interactive web-based system will make record keeping vastly more efficient, provide better support to our instructors, and allow our staff to focus on value-added services rather than data entry. John Traendly, ACA Board member and SEIC secretary, dedicated an enormous amount of time and resources to this effort. If you have the opportunity to interact with John, please thank him for his incredible efforts.

Also, I want to clarify a common misunderstanding of ACA's role in setting the cost of instructional programs and the availability of instructors and courses in various areas across the country. ACA is a national certifying body for paddlesport instructors and is not a course instruction business manager.

Organizations or individuals that provide instructional services set fees for courses. ACA receives money only from membership fees, Safety Education & Instruction Council (SEIC) dues, and the cost of instructional supplies such as the instructor manual. The ACA does not receive any portion of direct course fees charged by instructors. Additionally, the ACA does not assign or dispense instructors or instructor trainers to work in any particular area. Currently, the ACA staff can help members connect with instructors and instructor trainers. The CMS will allow us to better track requests for classes and help instructors and instructor trainers identify underserved areas with interest in instruction. We plan to work with our instructor partners to explore business models that would enable us to better respond to underserved areas.

### Overall Communications

We strive to keep our members informed regarding every aspect of ACA's operations. A large majority of members want to receive a monthly email newsletter containing information on a variety of topics and links to additional details. We published a newsletter in that format last month and will continue to do so in the future. Also, a notable number of members enjoy the current bimonthly eMagazine. We will continue with that publication for now and will reassess the viability of the eMagazine by the fall. Printed communications have a negative environmental impact; printing, binding, and mailing are costly. We will review the implications of continued paper communications by the fall.

The new Course Management System (CMS) will help instructors; however, it remains linked to our website, which is tightly integrated with the membership database. We are working to determine the cost of modernizing the database and the website, and we hope to upgrade our website and related online functions in the next twelve to eighteen months.

### Paddlesports Policy and Stewardship

Although ACA has been very engaged with public policy and stewardship/conservation issues, we need to improve communications about these efforts. ACA members and staff have worked with regulatory agencies, including the US Coast Guard (USCG) and the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA), for decades to ensure that regulations impacting paddlers have input from paddlers.

If regulators didn't recognize the ACA as a trusted and knowledgeable source of paddling expertise, this collaboration and representation wouldn't be possible.

Here are a few recent examples of our activities in this sector:

- In the past six months, our volunteers have worked nationally with the USCG to develop rules allowing throw bags, rather than throwable buoyancy aids, as acceptable lifesaving resources for rafting operations in the Western United States.
- The ACA has been working alongside the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) to provide guidelines on multiuse waterway conflicts and management.
- We guided the development of paddling safety and educational materials used by the USCG Auxiliary and the Boy Scouts of America.
- ACA has successfully fought against paddle craft registration in many states and effectively advanced the message of "education, not regulation."

On the public policy & stewardship front, the ACA is a founding member of the Outdoor Alliance (OA). OA's goal is to bring together the voices of America's outdoor recreation community to protect the outdoor experience for everyone to enjoy. Alongside the Outdoor Alliance, the ACA is working to fight proposed weakening of Clean Water Act provisions, to prevent copper mining around the Boundary Waters area in Minnesota, and to gain support for the Great American Outdoors Act. We further work with local members to address environmental concerns at the state level.

### Competition

ACA's role as the National Governing Body (NGB) for Olympic and Paralympic paddlesports has brought new challenges and opportunities. The ACA staff is aggressively pursuing funding from the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC) and other sources to support athletes, coaches, and officials, all of whom are primarily self-funded. We will address many more details of how our competition activities could enhance and contribute to the growth of ACA and the paddlesports in the U.S. in the next few months. Until then, I can assure you that support for the ACA competition activities will not reduce ACA's support for our other programs.

Thank you for your support by providing us with the gift of your feedback and time.

Beth Spilman

ACA Interim Executive Director



# UPDATE

# COVID-19

For ACA members, spring is generally a busy season. Members are on the water, enjoying warmer temperatures. Instructors are certified and updated as they prepare for summer teaching. This year, our elite athletes were training hard, hoping to compete in the Tokyo Olympics and other international competitions. Unfortunately, COVID-19 has changed all of our schedules and plans. Instead of paddling, ACA members, like many others in the paddling community, are at home practicing social distancing.

ACA's response to the COVID-19 crisis has been based on our longstanding policy of "education, not regulation." As an organization, ACA must make decisions about ACA sponsored events. For our members, we want to share accurate information that helps members make well-informed decisions. To that end, we've recommended that our members follow guidance from medical professionals and public health experts from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and local health departments. We've further sought out guidance specific to paddling from medical professionals and recently formed a medical advisory panel to help guide ACA's Board of Directors. Researchers continue to learn how to best respond to this crisis but it's clear the situation remains volatile and uncertain.

Based on what we know now, what the CDC recommends, and on the guidance provided by medical professionals, we will continue to cancel or postpone ACA sponsored events such as team trials until at least June 15th. Public health guidelines vary across the country, but there are clear general guidelines we can follow if we choose to paddle:

- If you're sick, stay home and contact your doctor for care
- If you're exposed to someone with COVID-19, follow your doctor's guidance on the proper duration for quarantine
- Avoid groups of more than ten people
- Maintain at least six feet of separation between people at all times. That may make shuttle and transportation, rafting, and tandem paddling challenging. Flat water paddling, park and play, and attainments are good options. Walking or bike shuttles are also options
- Maintain strict hygiene – wash your hands frequently, don't share food or water containers, and frequently clean surfaces you touch
- Minimize travel time and distance, and be sure to follow state and local rules for quarantine and isolation if you do travel
- Paddle well below your skill level to reduce the risk of injury and need for rescue
- Respect the communities in which we paddle – be sure to not do anything that might stress local healthcare resources. Make sure we'll be welcome when this crisis resolves

For instructors, and especially instructors teaching for pay, this is a particularly challenging time. ACA leadership is working on a list of practices to help guide instructors as they eventually return to face-to-face teaching.

Some things can easily be taught while maintaining distance. A number of instructors are working on ways to teach through different technology platforms. ACA strongly supports these efforts to provide boating education during these challenging times. However, on water skills training always has the potential to need hands-on rescue, increasing the risk of disease transmission between course participants.

COVID-19 has created changes in our daily life. More changes are likely. However, it can't change something most people reading this believe – paddling is fun, and paddling is an important, even vital, part of our lives. ACA's leadership team will do everything we can to support fun, safe paddling for the entire ACA family (and if you're reading this, then you're a part of that family), and the overall paddling community.

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EDUCATION

A man wearing a red helmet, a black jacket, and a red life vest is sitting on a rocky bank next to a river. He is holding a yellow rope that extends across the water. The river has some rapids and white water. The background shows more rocks and some greenery.

**RIVER**  
**SAFETY & RESCUE**

TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

Paddlers learn a lot of things their first few days in a paddling course. One is the language of paddling – the words and phrases instructors use to describe paddling. Those specific language choices are important because they allow clear communication (or lack thereof). No one wants to misinterpret something critical, like “take out on river right because there’s a nasty strainer on river left.”

The language of swiftwater rescue can be particularly challenging. With common terms and phrases like “river right” there’s a reasonable chance of a student making a correct guess; but what does it mean when a paddler says something like “use a line ferry to set up a Y cinch, and then use the messenger to set a zip line with a pig rig so everyone can get back to the strong side?”

Several years ago, a survey of swiftwater rescue instructors found that there was disagreement about the meaning of some common terms. Disagreement existed even in the ACA's Safety and Rescue Committee. Therefore, to help new swiftwater rescue students, and to ensure that swiftwater rescue instructors teach consistent information, the ACA’s Safety and Rescue Committee has developed a terminology guide, which can be [found here](#).

This guide defines course content found in ACA’s swiftwater rescue curriculum and will serve as an important teaching resource. Topics referenced include:

- Wading
- Throwbags
- Swimming
- Boat Based Rescues
- Mechanical Advantage
- Stabilization Lines & Cinches
- Additional Important Terminology

All members of the ACA Safety and Rescue Committee participated in developing the reference. The overarching Safety Education & Instruction Council would particularly like to thank lead authors CC Williams, Nate Ostis, Justin Padgett, and Robin Pope for their work on the project, as well as Sam Fowlkes for his leadership of the Safety and Rescue Committee.

# Life Jacket Labels & Standards

NEW



By: Peg Phillips, Executive Director  
National Safe Boating Council



When is the last time you tested your life jacket? While there is no expiration date, life jackets do have a life cycle; depending on how you've maintained and stored your paddling gear, it may be time to replace your life jacket. Look for any tears or broken straps and buckles. If the life jacket appears to be in top condition, you should test for in-water performance by wearing your life jacket and floating yourself in a shallow area. Does it still fit properly when you're in the water? Can you float on your back with enough buoyancy to keep your entire face out of the water? All life jackets should be tested annually, and some more frequently depending on the manufacturer and/or how much heavy use it endures. It's helpful to use a sharpie to note a date on the inside of the life jacket to help you keep track when it was purchased and last tested.

If it's time to replace your life jacket, you may see an unfamiliar label on new jackets in retail stores. The new labels are being phased in, and you may find some life jackets in the store with the new label and others still containing the old labelling system. An important note: the new labels don't make 'older label' life jackets or life jackets you already own obsolete - you can continue to use your life jacket as long as it is serviceable. However, it is important to be aware of the new labelling system and be familiar with it so that you can make educated choices about your next life jacket purchase.



The most important thing to remember in selecting a life jacket is to find one that fits you snugly and comfortably, and one you will want to wear! What kind of life jacket do you need? You'll need to consider your body type, swimming skills, paddling activity, and your frequented paddling environment/venue. A capsized can happen easily in any paddlecraft. **Last year, 84% of drowning victims in recreational boating accidents were not wearing a life jacket.**

When considering a new life jacket, first check the label on the inside of the life jacket to find the U.S. Coast Guard approval number for that life jacket. This approval number is on both the old and new life jacket labels. If you see this, you can be assured that the life jacket design has been thoroughly tested for performance. Life jackets with the new labels are approved for use in Canada and the United States, whereas devices with the old labels continue to be approved in one country or the other, not both.

## CHOOSE THE DEVICE YOU WILL WANT TO WEAR

### SIZE & FIT

- Check label for user weight and chest size.
- Different body types float differently.
- Try your device on in the water to ensure your airway is clear.
- A good fit is secure, comfortable, and adjustable.

### TRY IT ON

### PERFORMANCE

- Lower level number generally offers greater mobility, comfort, and style with good flotation for most people.
- Higher level number generally offers greater flotation, turning, and stability in the water.



Near Shore (Calm)

(Waves) Offshore

Increasing time to rescue



No Turn

Turns Some

Turns Most

### CONSIDER YOUR ACTIVITY & ENVIRONMENT

### WATER SAFETY INFO \*

- In over 80% of boating fatalities the person was not wearing flotation.
- Most of these are sudden falls overboard or capsizing of a small boat.
- The first moments in the water are critical, even for experienced swimmers.
- Cold water shock causes involuntary gasping, loss of muscle control and swim failure.
- Long term immersion in cold water causes hypothermia and requires thermal protection and flotation in the HELP position to conserve energy.

### FLOTATION DEVICES SAVE LIVES

### DESIGN TYPES

- **INHERENT** – built-in flotation (always buoyant).
- **INFLATABLE** – activated gas canister inflates chamber(s) (no buoyancy until time of inflation, requires canister replacement, may be manual, may require secondary action to don).
- **HYBRID** – combination of flotation and inflation (some immediate buoyancy and supplemental when inflated, may require canister replacement).
- **SPECIAL PURPOSE** – your activity may require special features (safety color, harness, straps, etc.) and accessories (whistle, lights, reflectors, etc.) for certain conditions.

### YOUR DEVICE ONLY WORKS WHEN WORN

### MAINTENANCE

- Over time, exposure to sun, salt, fuel, and mildew can damage device.
- Allow to air dry. Inspect and test regularly.
- Inflatables require replacement rearming, repacking and regular servicing.

### READ, SAVE AND FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS

### WARNINGS

- Devices must be fastened correctly and securely.
- Some devices were not designed for certain activity or conditions such as water skiing, towed sports or use on personal watercraft.



### CHECK LABEL FOR LIMITATIONS OF USE

### APPROVAL

- Some devices are approved only when worn.
- Check federal, state/provincial and local requirements for carriage, use and wear.



US Coast Guard



Transport Canada

### WEAR IT

- For more info on the right choices for yourself, your family and friends...

Visit [www.XXXXX.org](http://www.XXXXX.org)\*

Next, the new labels have icons noting its performance level, turn ability, and warnings. These icons are international symbols adopted from the International Standards Organization (ISO) sub-committee for life jacket standards. The icons make it much easier to understand and choose the right device to use in its intended water activity.

The performance level icon is a combination of five factors – buoyancy, freeboard, turning, stability, and visibility. A lower level number generally offers greater mobility, comfort, and style with good flotation for most people. These are intended for near shore (calm water) activities. The higher level number generally offers greater flotation, turning, and stability in the water. These are intended for offshore activity and when added time is needed in rescue situations. In stores today, you'll find life jackets with the new label for Level 70 devices.

The turn ability icon will note if the life jacket will turn an unconscious wearer from face down to face up. The warning icons also illustrate activities the specific life jacket is not designed for, such as whitewater rapids.



If you're not sure what the icons mean, the life jacket will have a hang tag containing a quick reference guide. There's also a website listed on the hang tag (and stamped on the inside of the life jacket) with additional information. The information can be found at [wearitlifejacket.org](http://wearitlifejacket.org). Life jackets with the "old label" have the labelling system that is being phased out.

After you've reviewed the label and have selected a life jacket for your activity, try it on. While the size of the device is shown on the inside label (usually near the back of the neck) as a measure of weight, and sometimes chest measurement or height, it's best to try it on as just like other clothing items. A life jacket will fit differently for each person. If you have the opportunity - try it out in the water!

Once you've found the perfect fit, think more about your intended use for the life jacket. Paddlers might also love other forms of boating, so be sure to check the label if you want to spend time on a personal watercraft or a motorboat offshore. You might need a different life jacket for these different activities. While paddling in flatwater environments in warmer climates, inflatable life jackets have become a popular option for strong swimmers. Stand up paddleboard users often opt for the waist mounted, belt-type inflatable life jacket. These inflatables are USCG approved and are great options, but be sure you understand how to activate, test, and properly wear an inflatable life jacket.



Our paddling community always comes together as great ambassadors for the annual Wear Your Life Jacket to Work Day (May 15, 2020). Even if you're working from home, you can join in on the fun by posting pictures and videos of you in your life jacket while working using the hashtag #lifejacket2work and tag @boatingcampaign on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram. As we join forces for National Safe Boating Week on May 16 – 22, we are counting on our paddlers nationwide to be influencers on the water. The most important thing to remember about life jackets is to always Wear It!

National Safe Boating Week  
May 16-22, 2020

**REMEMBER  
TO**



**WEAR IT**

In partnership with the National Safe Boating Council

**[SafeBoatingCampaign.com](http://SafeBoatingCampaign.com)**



# *April* Instructor of the Month Christian Fuchs

Hello - I'm Christian Fuchs, an ACA Level 4: Open Water Coastal Kayaking Instructor Trainer and Level 3: Surf Kayaking Instructor. I live near São Paulo, Brasil! "Where is that?" you might ask - it is located in the southern half of Brasil, between Rio de Janeiro and Paraná! After taking my first ACA course with Fabio Raimo and Roger Schumann, I learned how to break one maneuver down in understandable parts. I realized how effective different teaching methods can be when catered to different learners. I was fascinated with the variety and flexibility of new paddlers and those who wanted to learn. Paddling then gained a whole new layer of depth in my life, and I wanted to better myself as an instructor so I could share my experiences with others (and help them help others too).

I have been instructing and leading sea kayaking trips for 15 years. At first, becoming an ACA Instructor Trainer was purely a personal challenge; I couldn't imagine that I would eventually contribute to the certification of almost 120 instructors in Brasil, Argentina, and Chile. After years of slow and constant work, the paddling culture here in South America is slowly changing; I am proud to play a part in it and to bring safety principles, educational resources, and new perspectives to everyone. Thanks to the ACA I am part of an amazing sea kayak community!

A kayaker wearing a red helmet and a bright green jacket is paddling a red kayak through a narrow, rocky river. The water is turbulent and white with foam. The surrounding cliffs are dark and rugged. The word "May" is written in a white, cursive font in the top right corner.

May

# Jeff Laxier

## Instructor of the Month

In 1996, Jeff started teaching kayaking. A lifelong waterman and nature lover - teaching kayaking has become a way for Jeff to share his passion for water and nature with others. In 2005, Jeff founded Liquid Fusion Kayaking. Liquid Fusion Kayaking is an instructional kayak company based on the Mendocino Coast of Northern California. From dry and mild to wet and wild, Jeff and his partner Cate Hawthorne instruct and guide sea kayaking, whitewater kayaking, surf kayaking, rock gardening/rock hopping, and nature history tours. With 20 plus years of experience teaching multiple disciplines of kayaking, Jeff has honed his instructional skills for all levels and is a master at skill refinement and application and fun. A former member of the San Diego Mountain Rescue Team and the U.S. Marine Corps, Jeff has a dedication to exhilarating outdoor activities that know no boundaries.



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# STEWARDSHIP & PUBLIC POLICY

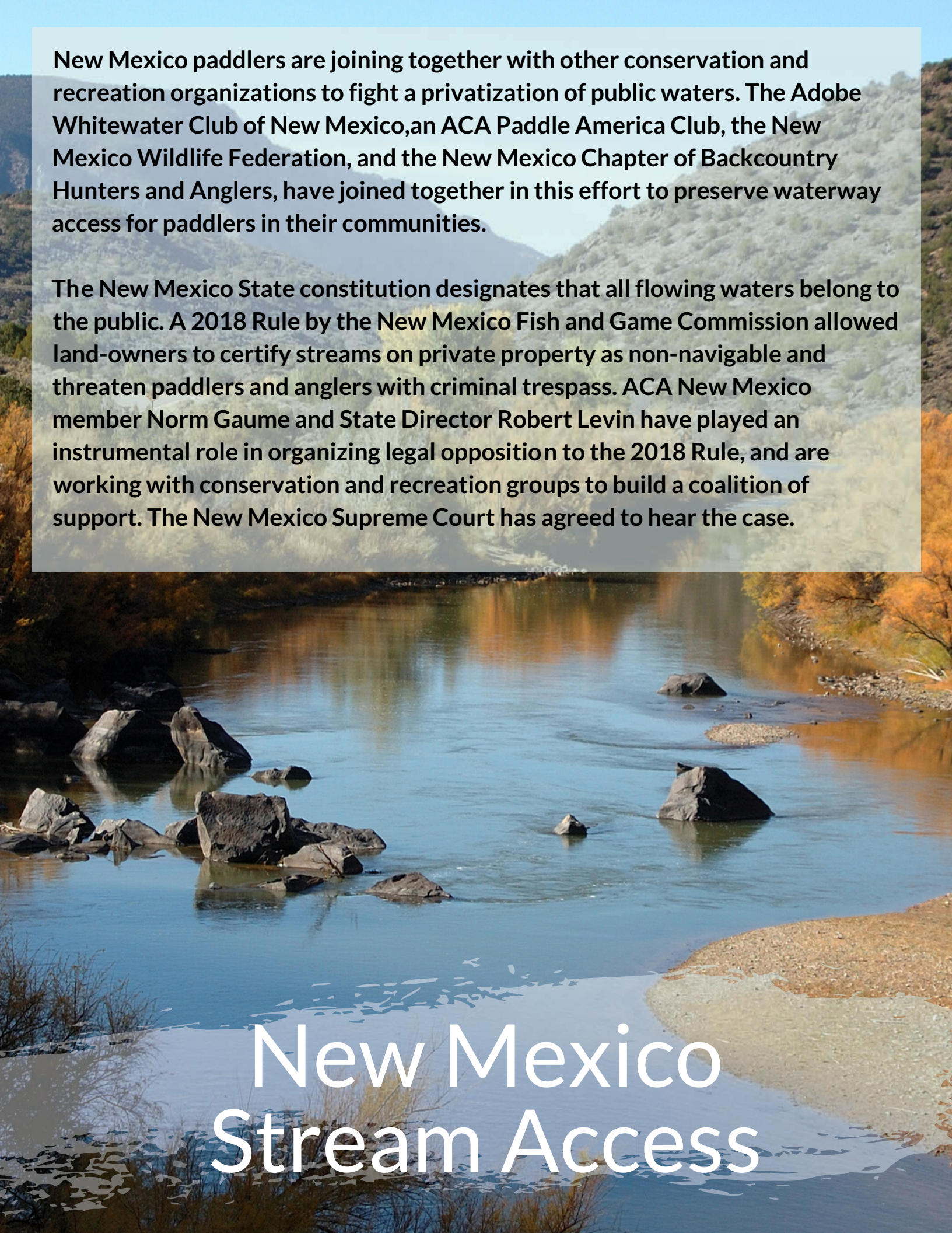
## Great American Outdoors Act

To preserve & protect our public lands

The Senate recently introduced a major public lands funding bill, S.3422: the Great American Outdoors Act.

The Act combines two previous bills that would ensure that all \$900 million from the Land and Water Conservation Fund goes towards public lands and conservation efforts every year. In addition, the Restore Our Parks Act will make nearly \$2 billion available to address the over \$20 billion in backlogged maintenance in our National Parks. The Great American Outdoors Act would benefit the paddling community by providing resources for greater access to paddling venues that pass through public lands.





**New Mexico paddlers are joining together with other conservation and recreation organizations to fight a privatization of public waters. The Adobe Whitewater Club of New Mexico, an ACA Paddle America Club, the New Mexico Wildlife Federation, and the New Mexico Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, have joined together in this effort to preserve waterway access for paddlers in their communities.**

**The New Mexico State constitution designates that all flowing waters belong to the public. A 2018 Rule by the New Mexico Fish and Game Commission allowed land-owners to certify streams on private property as non-navigable and threaten paddlers and anglers with criminal trespass. ACA New Mexico member Norm Gaume and State Director Robert Levin have played an instrumental role in organizing legal opposition to the 2018 Rule, and are working with conservation and recreation groups to build a coalition of support. The New Mexico Supreme Court has agreed to hear the case.**

# New Mexico Stream Access

# COMPETITION



The ACA is proud to welcome Rok Sribar as the new General Manager of High-Performance Programs. In this role, Rok will be responsible for leading all aspects of the ACA's Olympic and Paralympic Programs, including the National teams management, elite athlete development, talent identification programs, and fundraising for these teams and programs.

“

I am thrilled to be joining the ACA's High-Performance Team. I look forward to contributing my experience and a lifelong passion for paddlesports.

ROK SRIBAR

WELCOME TO THE TEAM!



Rok's main objectives are to deliver top of the podium performances at World Championships and major games and to establish a sustainable pipeline of athletes, coaches, and programs that will create the next generation of champions for future Olympic and Paralympic games to be held in Paris 2024 and Los Angeles 2028. He will represent ACA and the sport's interests and goals with the L.A. 2028 Organizing Committee, the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee (USOPC), the International Canoe Federation (ICF), and the Pan American Canoe Federation (COPAC). Rok has been an active member of the ACA Slalom Committee and has led athletes to the 2018 Youth Olympic Games in Buenos Aires. ACA Interim Executive Director Beth Spilman has noted, "Rok is a proven business leader and an entrepreneur, making him a fantastic fit for ACA. Rok has extremely high standards and is driven by helping people and organizations reach their potential and delivering results. We look forward to the impact Rok will make on our High-Performance Programs."

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# RECREATION

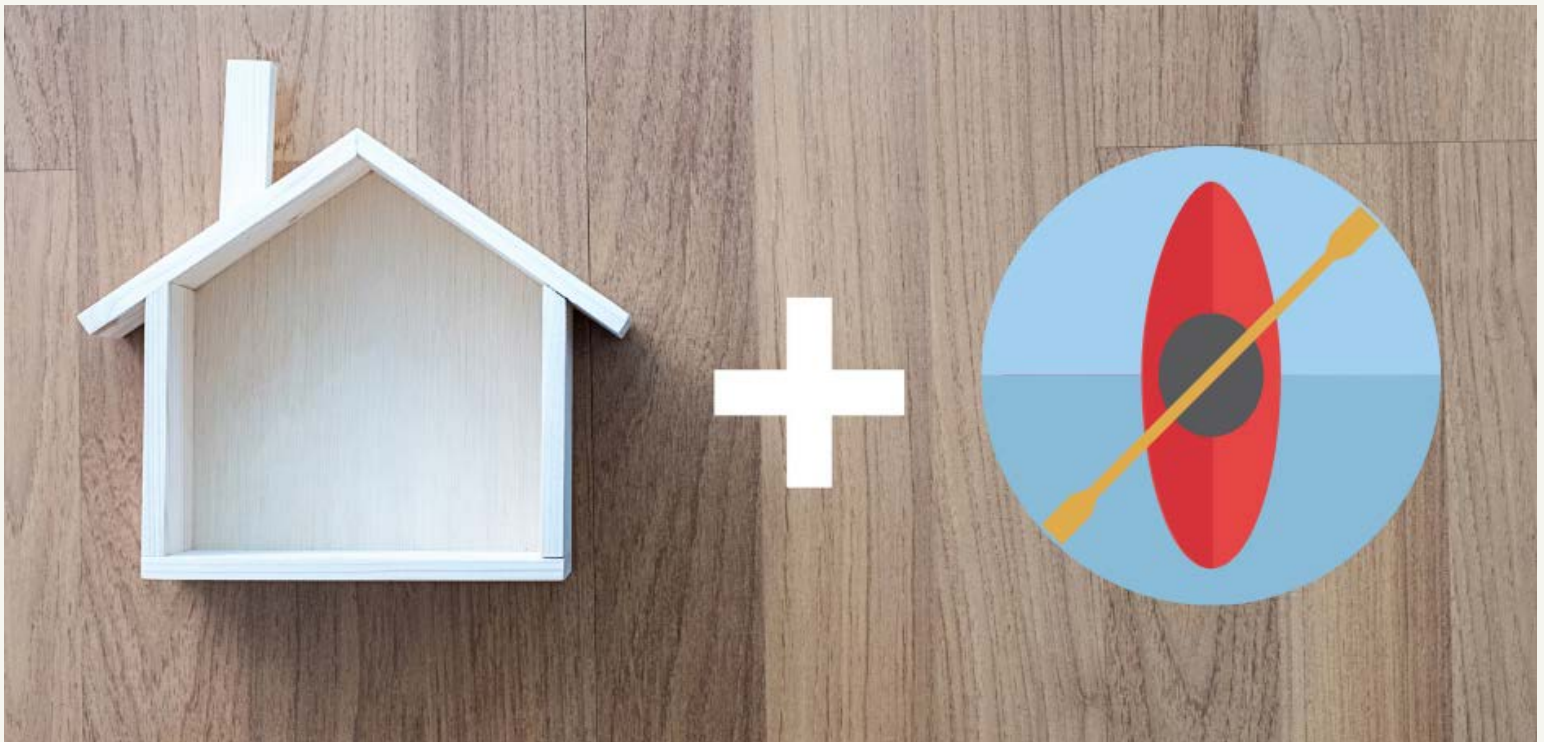


Did you know?

April 22nd was the 50th anniversary of Earth Day!

While we encourage paddlers to care for the earth & its resources every day, we want to acknowledge the past fifty years of effort to fight for the nation's natural areas. The establishment of Earth Day also led to the the passage of the Clean Water and Endangered Species Acts.

Wherever you are, go outside - enjoy the scent of fresh air, clean up some litter, plant a tree, paddle a stream, ride your bike, or simply enjoy companionship with nature.



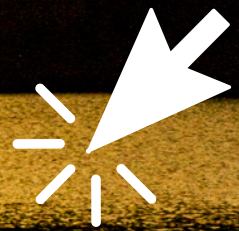
Staying home and staying healthy doesn't mean you have to stay completely away from all things paddling related. You just need to approach and think about paddling differently. There are lots of paddling related activities that you can do from home:

- Yoga to increase your flexibility and strength
- Body weight exercises or exercises using your boat for weight
- Check and repair your boat and all your gear
- Organize and restock your first aid kit and rescue kit
- Tune up the transport and storage systems for your boat
- Go through paddling gear: repair damaged gear, donate what you're not using
- Practice what you can on land. Tie knots, develop navigational skills, or practice z-drags and mechanical advantage using your furniture or trees in your yard
- Review maps, and guidebooks – daydream about new places to paddle

If you're an instructor:

- Work on your lesson plans and review course materials
- Dive into the ACA Course Management System (CMS)
- Practice your presentations
- Use online resources to strengthen your paddling knowledge
- Create a paddling education resource list

# RESOURCES



[Click Here For More At-Home Paddling Activities](#)

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# SPECIAL FEATURES

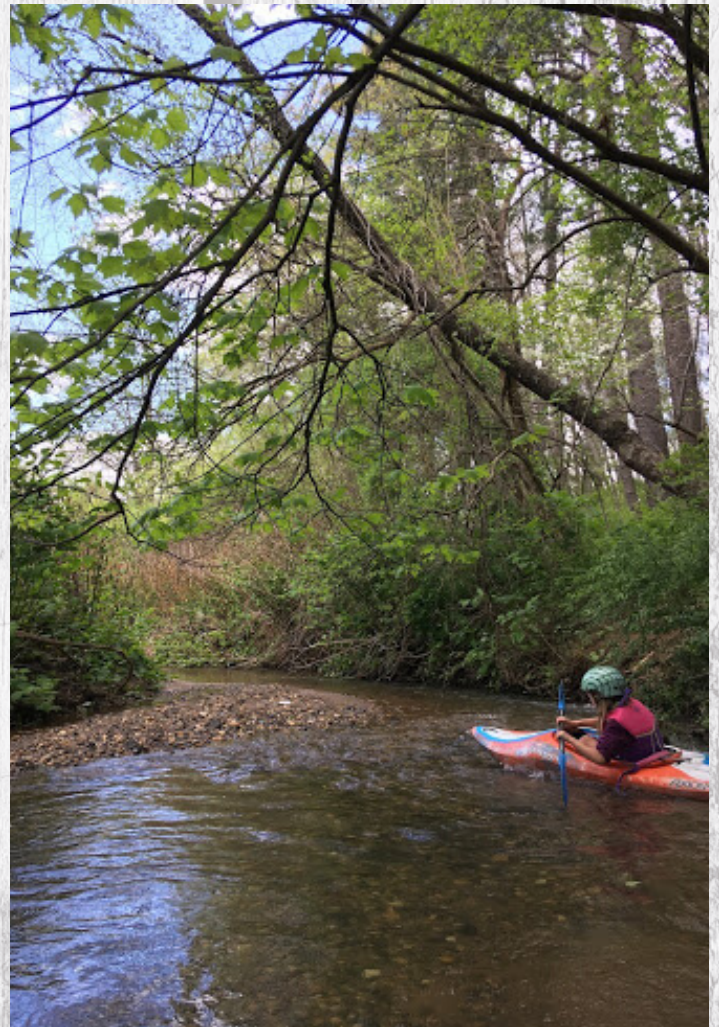
## *The Magic Of Smith-Mill Creek*



*By: Brett Mayer  
ACA Public Policy Chief*

“Things are different lately.” This is certainly an understatement. I find myself teaching science classes from my deck, while simultaneously navigating the facilitation of my pre-K and first grader's online learning curricula. Instead of conversation with colleagues, I join forces with my neighbor to do our best to keep watch from our front porches while we both move between various online meetings interrupted by sibling rivalries. Balancing the professional lives of two full time working partners while raising three children is not for the faint of heart. I try every day to find the silver linings in the midst of challenging circumstances.

When the clutter of our daily responsibilities begins to subside by mid-afternoon, my family and I often find ourselves wandering down to the little creek that flows adjacent to our property. We are lucky to have this beautiful resource just a few hundred yards from our back door. I started building a trail down to the creek last year. The trail passes through the long forgotten outreaches of a patchwork of half-acre suburban lots that commiserate to form a remarkably beautiful woodland area with towering white pines and gnarled wild cherry trees which rival some of the largest I have ever seen.



Over the past several weeks, with the rapid emergence of spring, a chorus of wild flowers has created a portrait of color strewn amidst the dark, humus rich forest floor. Spring Beauties and Bloodroot grow boldly amidst the reaching ways of poison ivy vines that are beginning to crawl into the edges of our wooded pathway. The morning clouds give way to the cheerful warmth of the afternoon sun, and we are called to the waters of Smith-Mill Creek.

Meandering past the groundhog holes, and beneath the nests of the increasingly robust population of our avian neighbors, we descend into our backyard gorge. The trail cuts sharply through a series of switchbacks that go up and over an outcropping of boulders. My youngest son River likes to test his newfound ambulatory abilities and leaps from rock to rock. I hold his hand through the last steep chute of slippery soil, and we arrive.



The water shimmers in the afternoon sun as it flows gently through a gravel bar. Smith-Mill Creek makes its journey on the outskirts of West Asheville, draining the flanks of Spivey Mountain, passing through agricultural, suburban and urban landscapes before connecting with the French Broad River. Smith-Mill Creek is unfortunately one of the more polluted watersheds in our county, but thanks to the work of local non-profit, Riverlink, there is a plan in place to improve the water quality of Smith-Mill over the next few years. The section that borders my backyard happens to be one of the targeted sections of Smith-Mill slated for improvement. The creek will eventually be rerouted to reduce erosion and the eventual sediment load deposited into the French Broad. On this particularly glorious sunny afternoon, in the midst of a global pandemic, my family and I feel nothing but extraordinarily thankful to be able to access this waterway on foot.

My kids don their Chacos and splash off around a muddy bend. It is not long before I hear excited shouts about the discovery of a salamander, and rush to investigate. They dig their hands into the muddy clay banks, and I have vivid memories from my own childhood, catching Mud Puppies with my friends. The creek in this half-mile stretch of land serves as the borderland between field and forest.



The field is an old campground, remnants of a Moose Lodge from years ago. The new owner is attempting to resurrect the lodge and turn it into a small outdoor concert venue, and is determined to help safeguard the ecological integrity of the property. There are still old electrical boxes where people used to hook up their campers. The wires and plastic conduit criss-cross the stream bed, lying on the bottom, relics of a changing landscape.

I remember that rivers can teach us things. I think about paddling, and feel disappointed about the loss of the spring race season and so many other joyful moments of gathering as a community. I remember the old line of thinking about doing what you are able, with the resources you have, where you are, and stare into the waters of Smith-Mill Creek with a new perspective. I sprint back up the hill to get my garden shears and my daughter's kayak & paddle.

I cut the old wires and pull them out of the water. I remove a few strainers and trim back some briar bushes that overhang the bank; in the process I create a two hundred yard stretch of navigable stream bed. My daughter, Aoife, runs and grabs her paddle, climbs into her tiny kayak, and sets forth into uncharted waters. She takes turns with my son Stokes, and when they reach the end of the tiny course, I help them pull the boat out of the water and walk it back to the put-in: a glorious little patch of sand offering the opportunity to create lasting memories.

In these passing moments, amidst the magic of Smith-Mill Creek, we forget about our worries, and forge a deeper connection with the land and waters that sustain us. At the moment, our daily lives may feel upended. Things are certainly different, but wandering into the waters that flow so close to home, I am reminded of the opportunities and the certainty that the paddling community will always find pathways to renewal, community, and coexistence in light of any challenge.



# ACA Florida Paddler's Environmental Toolkit



This past February, ACA Florida State Director, Wayne Douchkoff, teamed up with Jill Lingard, president of the Florida Paddling Trails Association, to present their Paddler's Environmental Toolkit Training (PETT) program to paddling clubs in the communities of Naples and Punta Gorda, Florida.

The program has received a previous L.L. Bean Club Fostered Stewardship Grant from ACA in the past. Capitalizing on their love of nature, PETT program leaders educate about waterway environments, how to limit impacts on wildlife & their habitats, and empower paddlers to serve as waterway stewards. The stewardship component of the program includes information on how to lead waterway cleanups, report environmental issues to appropriate local & regional agencies, and be the “eyes and ears” of Florida’s paddling trails. Wayne & Jill are looking forward to taking the PETT program to additional paddling groups throughout Florida in the future.

To learn more about FL's Paddling Trails Association: [www.floridapaddlingtrails.com](http://www.floridapaddlingtrails.com)

To learn more about L.L. Bean sponsored Club Fostered Stewardship (CFS) Grant Program: [www.americancanoe.org/LLBean\\_CFS\\_Grant](http://www.americancanoe.org/LLBean_CFS_Grant)



# INSURANCE

We've recently made some changes to our online waiver process!

For ACA Sanctioned/Insured events, there is now one simple waiver that everyone can sign. Current ACA Members, Event members, Adults or Minors - everyone should now use our all-inclusive waiver, which can be found under one link:

## [ACA Online Waiver](#)

If you are still using an old waiver link, please discontinue using that link as soon as possible. If you have shared previous links with your club members or students, please update them with the new link provided above.

# Dear ACA Members,

I hope this letter finds you and your family safe and healthy. Personally, this has been an interesting time for my husband and me as our three adult children have returned home to quarantine with us. Fortunately, they are helping with the preparation of meals, laundry, and other housekeeping, and we are all still speaking to each other. :)

The ACA's small but mighty staff in Fredericksburg, VA continue to work primarily from home, but we have at least one person in the office every day to ensure that we are available to support our members. We thank all of you for continuing to renew your membership and for providing other financial support to ACA.

We are using this time to take a hard look at many of our processes and expenses, especially those that involve paper, printing, and mailing. As an organization committed to being a good steward of the environment, we feel a strong obligation to reduce the amount of paper we use and distribute. Please help us with this effort by renewing your membership online rather than by mail.

Thank you again for your support. We wish you all the best,

Sincerely,

*Beth Spilman*

Executive Director

*Thank you for reading  
ACA Paddle eMagazine!*



Have some news to share?  
Please [click here](#) to submit content for consideration.