

Risa Shimoda
Takoma Park, MD

American Canoe Association
Board of Directors Search Committee

P.O. Box 7996
Fredericksburg, VA 22404

Dear Search Committee,

This is an indication of my interest in serving the American Canoe Association as a member of your Board of Directors. To help you make a determination of wisest choice among your eligible candidates. I will try my best to provide a clear sense of my qualifications, interest and capacity to help the organization strengthen its programs, solidify its resolve to lead, and establish itself as the primary resource for the millions of individuals who have discovered a yen for the best sport on the planet.

1) Why are you interested in serving on ACA's Board?

I have been asked to serve the boards of the American Canoe Association and USA Canoe Kayak board more than once, and at each point in time felt that I would not be able to make a difference. I was not involved enough to care, I saw little opportunity to contribute new or welcome perspectives, or both. Today, I am aware 'enough' about the organization's priority issues to have a sense of how we might approach both our complexities and conundrums, all the while leveraging the passion and commitment evident among fellow members and organization's sharp, capable professional staff. I believe I can contribute to structural, programmatic change that will both stir new reasons to be a member of the ACA community and improve the organization's brand value to attract investment by members, sponsors and donors.

2) What specific knowledge, skills, abilities and talents will you bring?

I was educated to be an engineering product designer, then inspired to be a brand manager, event planner and non-profit organization leader. I have loved the experiences of paddling very challenging whitewater, competing domestically as a slalom, wildwater domestically and internationally as a freestyle and squirt paddler; coordinating multiple national 40-event whitewater freestyle circuits and series; and introducing structure to what has become the largest annual gathering of whitewater paddlers in the world (the Gauley River Festival). The connectivity among these is that I have enjoyed solving problems when making my way down a steep creek; designing the first-ever 'smaller version' of a kayak to fit smaller people; confronting and shifting

the energy of a belligerent customer into a loyal brand fan; and identifying how best to appeal to an audience who needs a product but doesn't know it.

I have also experienced major failure as a leader, and as such cite my accomplishments humbly.

3) What do you believe are the most important challenges facing ACA at this time?

- The value of members and the value ACA represent to them.
- The value of representing Olympic and Paralympic sports to the world and the relationship of the Olympic disciplines to the non-Olympic disciplines
- Lopsided representation of SEIC, State programs, competition and PACs in board discourse

We could claim leadership in the industry because we have no competition for being 'all things paddling.' However, our internal program areas do not collaborate as parts of a larger whole, so we appear to those beyond our bubble as a mashup whose membership value is either irrelevant or a penalty for those interested in competing internationally. Paddlesports are the most visually leveraged (think about how many kayaks you see on truck and SUV ads) and undervalued activity (the Outdoor trade shows no longer include boats and paddles) in the outdoor spectrum. The SUP/surf industry, American Whitewater (since 2004) and American Rivers (since 2017) seek and deservedly receive \$000s from corporate sponsors today to serve their programmatic interests. The rest of the Paddlesports user community could be represented by the ACA and they are not. Many paddlers ally with us for our fairly competitive insurance program and as the primary resource for instruction and instructor certification. Amidst this perfunctory relationship all are vulnerable to unprotested and irreverently applied user fees or taxes, an inability to create a unified voice for or against a movement that would affect many users, or a lost opportunity to create positive change because we do not have a platform to which members actively align.

If we are to have a voice, a brand, a face so that we are a factor to rally, fuss or protect we need to collaborate our multiple facets and present ourselves as, instead of a small basket of pretty, unattached fabric swatches and thread, an expansive tapestry of skill, excitement, freedom and grace that Paddlesports can be to the world outside our bubble.

4) How would you address those challenges?

I would ask for each of our leadership teams to collaborate, maybe even compete in friendly ways to solve institutional puzzles; challenge each other to develop, implement and monitor diversity initiatives, and to be offered the incentive that all get to thrive when the others do, as well. I am not familiar enough to know the points of pride, sensitivities and aspirations enough to suggest specifics, but they are there. The opportunity lies with the aspirations of our leaders. The challenge lies in political will of our leaders, the (real) constraints of time, hubris, and ego.

5) Do you have any previous experience serving on a non-profit Board?

I have developed organizational skills through my service to several non-profit organizations and in leadership roles. I served as the North American Paddlesports Association President, and Executive Director of American Whitewater (twice). I served on the board of the Conservation Alliance during its first ten years of early wayfinding. I co-founded the Outdoor Alliance when working at American

Whitewater, along with the American Hiking Society in the early 2000s to initiate a powerful cohort of allies among advocates for human-powered outdoor sports and the public resources they enjoy. I have served on the boards of the Stanford Alumni Association, the Stanford Associates, and Alumni Trustee Nominating Committee, as well as having been the president of five regional clubs.

Are you currently serving on a Board?

I currently serve as board president of the World River Center, organized in 2019 to parent the International Whitewater Hall of Fame. I chair the US Freestyle Committee, and serve on a committee of the Stanford Asian Pacific American Alumni Club to drive awareness of the importance of Asian American Studies.

6) What do you expect from the ACA to make service on the Board personally rewarding for you?

I don't have time to waste, nor do I plan to waste the time of other dedicated volunteers, so I hope to be able to support the engagement of our longtime and traditional members in initiatives that move us forward. I will listen to all who wish to speak and suggest a role that suits the direction and agreed upon needs of the organization, then hop to my role, my assigned station or my leadership position and start paddling! This might take the form of, for instance, assessing and acting on an examination of bias in all departments or initiating symbiotic relationships between SEIC, PACs, competition and State leaders. Equally delightful and worth the effort would be incidents which tell transformative stories, such as celebrating the first trans paddling club president; achieving a new membership threshold; connecting the US and Hawaiian outrigger communities; or acknowledging the parents, siblings and volunteer supporters of competitors in each of our recognized disciplines.

I don't have a person agenda, so once I understand I can help out, I'll simply aim to pursue and complete, if possible, those items I recommend or am assigned, with the support of the board and sense of the members.

7) Have you reviewed the job description?

Yes.

Are you willing to make a commitment to the listed obligations, including time, work and financial contributions?

Yes.

Thank you for making it this far! Please let me know if you have questions.

Respectfully,



Risa Shimoda

RISA SHIMODA

Takoma Park, MD

SENIOR EXECUTIVE

Executive Officer • Program Innovator • Stakeholder Cultivator
Creating Enterprise Value • Redefining Brands

Entrepreneur practiced in leading client and management teams, developing and implementing consumer and business-to-business marketing initiatives that establish category leadership. Developer of strategic alliances and partnerships that grow organizations' ability to attract members, donors and sponsors, and leverage current assets to achieve boldly achievable objectives.

Qualifications Summary

Team Leadership • Sales and Marketing Strategy • Change Agency • Brand Development
Client, Sponsor, Donor and Volunteer Development • Operations Management • Customer Service

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

- Redefined the River Management Society's revenue sources from its dependence on event sponsorship to program fees, tripling service-based revenue to exceed \$300,000 budget supporting a 2.75 FTE staff.
 - Developed an international presence for the McLaughlin Whitewater Design Group brand to its position as a premier supplier of civil engineering design in its specialty, in-channel recreational river engineering and \$1,000,000+ annual revenue.
 - Founded the Outdoor Alliance, a consortium of previously unallied outdoor user groups with complimentary interests that now enjoys a respected national voice; 2) initiated American Whitewater's corporate philanthropy, which accounts for \$100,000 annual revenue; and 3) founded the Marketplace for the annual Gauley River Festival, the largest gathering of whitewater enthusiasts in the world and with its two partner events provides well over 8% annual gross revenue.
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PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

THE SHIMODA GROUP - MD
President

2004 - Present

Led clients through repositioning and repurposing efforts to establish new brands that would flourish and grow through acquisition and in partnership with well-established and branded organizations.

Innovative Growth Strategy and Leadership Evolution - As River Management Society Executive Director, increased program revenue 100%. Developed new professional resources and networking opportunities for river management professionals and students through webinars, online resources and events produced with strategic partners. Reduced the age of board members by 30% to encourage millennial leadership and membership.

Brand Creation and Dominance: Developed and grew the McLaughlin Whitewater Design Group brand and

institutionalized its new, stakeholder driven civil engineering specialty, despite a corporate merger. Created the Native Watercraft brand, the most successful paddlesports industry introduction in 2006.

National River Cleanup Week – Led the sponsorship and interim management of this standalone program to position it as viable for its ownership transition (2006-2007).

AMERICAN WHITEWATER - MD 2001-2004

Executive Director

Led the only national recreation / conservation river organization in the United States.

- **Securing recreational flows from hydropower dams and access to public land threatened by development or private interest** - Represented the public successfully in over 100 hydropower relicensing projects and non-consumptive water use and access to public lands and rivers issues.
- **Reinvented outreach to appeal to youth** - Creating a path toward what has grown to \$200,000 annual sponsorship from youth-oriented brands.

NICHE MARKETING SERVICES - SC 1998 - 2000

Partner

Developed retail strategy and marketing programs for retail and manufacturing clients.

- **Consumer Marketing Planning and Implementation** - Grew business 4-12% for Earth Fare (Asheville, NC), Nature's Way Market (Greensburg, PA) and Watermark, Inc.

PERCEPTION/WATERMARK - SC 1991 - 2001

Director of Marketing, Sales and R & D

Led domestic and international divisions through a period of 250% growth.

- **Product Category Leadership** - Created a new industry-accepted product category
- **Structural Re-alignment** - Redesigned sales organization to maintain focus on brand through rapid growth
- **Sales Channel Innovation** - Designed a spin-off company to address market expansion.

EARLY CAREER

Coca-Cola USA - Brand Manager, New Coke, Fanta, Mello Yello, Ramblin' Root Beer, Fresca – Created first media market-centric campaign in company to halt 17% Mello Yello sales decline.

M&M/Mars – Associate Brand Manager, M&Ms Chocolate Candies – King Size, Fundraiser Packs created net incremental volume; Olympics sponsorship demand caused the factory to deny shipments for the first time.

EDUCATION / AFFILIATIONS

Stanford University - June, 1979 - B.S. Degree, Product Design Engineering

USA Freestyle Kayaking – Chair (2007-Present)

International Whitewater Hall of Fame – Member/Chair, Board of Governors (2004-Present)

Stanford University Alumni Association – Alumni Trustee Nominations Committee; Alumni Association Board of Directors; President, Stanford Alumni Clubs of Greater Cincinnati, New York/New Jersey, Georgia, the Carolinas, and Washington, DC; Class Reunion Committees; Stanford Associates Board of Governors

American Whitewater – President, Board of Directors (1991-96)

Team River Runner – Walter Reed Army Medical Center (2005-Present)

Nantahala Outdoor Center, Adventure Sports Center – Board of Directors (2003-04, 2006-09)

North American Paddlesports Association – President, Board of Directors (1994-96)

Conservation Alliance – Member, Board of Directors (1997)
