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The ACA National Office is serving up the latest paddlesports news! To find the content that matters to you most, use the guide below.

- **Forward Strokes** brings you exciting news about the bipartisan recreation policy package recently introduced in the House.
- **Making Waves** shares an update from the 2023 LEAD Program event, how to get your limited-edition snow globe ACA sticker, and how to tune in to the ACA Annual Meeting this Sunday.
- **Bringing Home the Gold** celebrates the incredible performances by U.S. athletes at the 2023 ACA Slalom National Championships and the 2023 ICF Stand Up Paddling World Championships.
- **Safety Talk** announces November's ACA Instructor of the Month, big news from our Packrafting Instructor Trainers, and the newly elected SEIC Committee Members.



*Photo Credit: Ben Sack*

### House Introduces "EXPLORE" Bipartisan Recreation Policy Package

November 29, 2023, Congressman Westerman (R-AR) and Congressman Grijalva (D-AZ) introduced the Expanding Public Lands Outdoor Recreation Experiences (EXPLORE) Act, a

bipartisan package of outdoor recreation policy. The EXPLORE Act could serve as a companion to America's Outdoor Recreation Act (AORA), a similar package in the Senate.

One of the key bills that impacts paddlers presented in both EXPLORE and AORA, is the Simplifying Outdoor Access for Recreation Act (SOAR). Section 5 of the SOAR Act would allow guiding professionals, outfitters, and outdoor leaders more flexibility when it comes to their permits. Rafting companies for example could also offer kayaking tours under the same permit. Another proposed change to the permitting system included in the SOAR Act is to create a program so permit holders can return unused service days and allow for other guides and outfitters to use them.

Other highlights include the Biking on Long Distance Trails Act (BOLT) to identify and create more long-distance bike trails, the Protecting America's Rock Climbing Act (PARC) to safeguard Wilderness climbing, and permanent direction for the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership and FICOR.

Like AORA, the EXPLORE Act aims to improve outdoor recreation on America's public lands and waters. These bills take important steps to expand and improve outdoor recreation opportunities.

[Ask Your Lawmakers to Pass a Recreation Policy Package](#)



### ACA Gift Memberships

This holiday season, give the gift of paddling, community, and a year's worth of discounts. In short, give the gift of an ACA membership!

While supporting the ACA's policy & stewardship efforts, community initiatives, and education & instruction programs, a gift membership unlocks:

- deep discounts on over 650 outdoor brands through ExpertVoice
- monthly updates on the latest paddlesports news
- advocacy assistance for local paddling issues

Even better, when you give a membership, you get a gift in return! As the gift sender, you will receive a limited-edition ACA snow globe sticker. To the gift recipient, we will send them both a personalized note and a sticker. That means ACA snow globe stickers for both of you!



Exp. December 31, 2023

## 2 FREE STICKERS!

Gift a membership before the new year and we will send you and the gift membership recipient a limited time holiday ACA sticker!

[Gift a Membership](#)





*Photo Credit: The incredible Gil Hidalgo*

*A special thank you to Gil who has photographed all 5 LEAD Program events. His talent and support have been instrumental in our ability to share the success of these events. From the bottom of our hearts — THANK YOU, Gil!*

### **Back for Year Two: The ACA LEAD Program Comes to Tampa, Florida**

The ACA Tampa LEAD Program, held this November 10-13, was a remarkable event that brought together the American Canoe Association (ACA), Tampa Bay Kayak Anglers, Sun Coast Youth Conservation Center, and Florida Youth Conservation Centers Network in Apollo Beach, Florida. This was the fifth installment of the Leadership Exploration and Development (LEAD) program, which aims to provide a unique student-centered experience for participants from historically underrepresented communities within the ACA.

Throughout the four-day program, attendees had the opportunity to immerse themselves in the ACA's Community Paddlesport Leader curriculum. Guided by Trey Rouss and Jake Fitzroy, the participants engaged in various activities and workshops designed to enhance their leadership skills and knowledge in paddlesports and water safety.

What made this year's LEAD program particularly special was the involvement of three former LEAD participants. Chris Manning, Adrienne Gallup, and Tatiana Cox-Lopez who participated in the 2022 LEAD Program served as mentors to the first-time participants. Their valuable insights and experiences not only provided guidance to the newcomers but also allowed them to further develop their own skills during the event.

[Read More](#)

### **ACA Annual Meeting**

The ACA Board of Directors invites you to attend the 2023 Annual Meeting on Sunday, December 3 from 4:00PM to 5:30PM Eastern Standard Time. During this virtual Zoom meeting, we will provide an update on the Strategic Plan and ACA financial status. We will also announce the winners of our annual awards. We hope to see you there!



*Photo Credit: Luca Bohn*

### **2023 ACA Slalom National Championships**

Last week coaches and athletes from across the country along with athletes from Canada and Mexico gathered at RIVERSPORT in OKC for a weeklong training camp, culminating in the 2023 Slalom and Kayak Cross National Championships. It is a tradition that has been happening for many years over the Thanksgiving holiday and allows junior athletes attending their first Nationals to train alongside seasoned veterans. It also provided an opportunity for in-person committee meetings, and an educational session for volunteers to begin the process of becoming Nationals Officials.

Athletes got approximately 12 quality sessions on RIVERSPORT's world class whitewater. While the weather largely cooperated, race day was chilly, with the temperatures hovering just above freezing in the morning and some rain moving in later in the day.

When it was all said and done, three National Champions were crowned with Evy Leibfarth winning the Women's K1, Women's C1, and Women's Kayak Cross. Zach (Bug) Lokken narrowly edged out Casey Eichfeld to take the C1 Gold by just 0.16 seconds, and Josh Joseph took home the Men's K1 with Potomac Whitewater Racing Club sweeping the podium. Kaelin Friedenson followed up his Green Race win earlier in November by also winning the National Championship in Kayak Cross.

Many newly trained volunteers from RIVERSPORT helped support the event. The ACA would like to send a big thank you to the RIVERSPORT staff and all the officials who helped make this event a success. We would also like to thank Janusz Zebracki for all his help with logistics and coaching, and each of the coaches who were there to help athletes make progress. Last but not least, a big thank you to Nancy Templeton and Angela Lokken for coordinating and running the officials training.



## Results

### 2023 ICF Stand Up Paddling (SUP) World Championships

The 2023 ICF SUP World Cup took place in Pattaya, Thailand, this November 15-19. In the Open Division, across the three competitive disciplines (sprint, long distance, and technical) the U.S. athletes threw down and earned two gold medals and two silver. Congratulations to all the athletes who competed and a special shout out to the podium finishes of Connor Baxter, Seychelle Webster, and Kimberly Barnes!

- 🥇 Open Women Sprint: Seychelle Webster
- 🥇 Open Men Technical: Connor Baxter
- 🥈 Open Men Sprint: Connor Baxter
- 🥈 Open Women Long Distance: Kimberly Barnes

[Read More](#)



*ACA Instructor of the Month, Scott Dahlquist, doing what he does best!*

**Instructor of the Month**

Congratulations, Scott Dahlquist, November's ACA Instructor of the Month! The ACA is so grateful for Scott and his thoughtful, student-centered approach to paddling instruction! Scott is an Advanced Open Water Coastal Kayak and Stand-Up Paddling Instructor, and a member of the Dagger Pro Team.

It is Scott's belief that, "It's not only my job to make sure everyone is comfortable and competent with safety but also to understand the science of a wave and the artistry of riding one with style." He and his wife are currently living in Sequim, Washington — drawn to the area by the incredible access to the rugged coastal kayaking found in the Strait of Juan de Fuca. He especially loves helping paddlers develop their skills in the surf zone and rock gardens in this coastal kayaker's paradise.

[Read More](#)

If you know a truly awesome ACA instructor, [nominate them as future Instructor of the Month!](#)



*Photo Credit: Gunnison Kayak Program and MRS Packrafts*

*ACA Level 3: Packrafting Instructor Certification Workshop hosted by the Gunnison Kayak Program in China*

### **Packrafting Instructor Certification Workshops Take Place in Canada and China**

Since SEIC approval in October 2021, the ACA Packrafting program has seen notable expansion, with 14 currently certified Instructor Trainers! This fall, Level 3: Packrafting Instructor Certification Workshops have been hosted in Canada and in China! We are thrilled to see this discipline thriving both domestically and internationally.

ACA Instructor Trainer Dave Bumgarner, of Colorado's Gunnison Kayak Program recently took a trip out to Nujiang, Yunnan to carry out China's first Packrafting Instructor Certification Workshop. In October, ACA Instructor Trainer Cameron Fenton hosted Canada's first Packrafting Instructor

Certification Workshop in Squamish, British Columbia. A big congratulations to all the newly certified packrafting instructors!

## SEIC Discipline Committee Election Results

On behalf of the ACA Board of Directors, the SEIC Executive Committee, and SEI Department Staff, we want to say a very big and heart-felt "Thank you!" to all nominees for nominating yourself to serve within a SEIC Discipline Committee or International/At-Large role for the 2024-2025 term. ACA could truly not achieve its mission and goals without your immense talent, expertise, and contribution – and we want to express our gratitude for your willingness to serve!

This was a record year for participation in this nomination and election process! Over 125 nominations were submitted, and over 600 instructors and trainers submitted their votes as part of the election! The At-Large, International Rep, Coastal Kayak, River Kayak, Rafting, Safety & Rescue, and Universal Paddling Committees had contestation, which is more than ever before!

[More Information and List of Newly Elected SEIC Committee Members](#)

What we are reading:

- [Leading the Way with Galen Volckhausen & the Boat Library](#) (1-minute read)
- [Suing for Survival](#) (6-Minute Read)
- [Hidden Potential: The Science of Achieving Greater Things](#) by Adam Grant

Thank you for reading our monthly newsletter! Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) for the latest stories and updates!

Have some news to share? We encourage you to submit your content for consideration using this [Content Submission Form](#).

Sincerely,

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