



Serving paddlers since 1880



The ACA is conducting a survey for current members to help us improve our programs, events, and member benefits. This survey only takes a few minutes and will directly influence the future of the ACA and the greater paddler community. We will be closing the survey on Wednesday, May 7 so [please take the survey today](#) if you haven't already!

We appreciate you taking the time to provide us with your feedback!



- *Beth Spilman*  
Executive Director



ACA Joins Outdoor Alliance in Washington D.C.



Amidst tough times for public lands and waters, Beth Spilman, ACA Executive Director, recently joined fellow leaders from the Outdoor Alliance in Washington, D.C., to advocate for public lands and human-powered recreation. Representing over 250,000 members, the coalition of Outdoor Alliance member organizations met with lawmakers and federal agencies to discuss the protection and accessibility of public lands. Their visit highlighted the importance of preserving these spaces for activities like paddling, hiking, and climbing, ensuring they remain public and protected for future generations.

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### **National Safe Boating Week**

National Safe Boating Week is coming up! In the United States, the week of May 17-23 is dedicated to promoting a culture of safe boating and ACA North Carolina has stepped up in a big way. This year, ACA North Carolina and North Carolina State parks are once again coming together to host their Paddlesports Safety Day events on May 17 to kick off National Safe Boating Week. With 13 events throughout the state, there are a lot of opportunities to get out on the water and learn something new. [Learn more](#), sign up, and share this opportunity with a friend or family member!

We are also excited to see Virginia joining in the fun with their first paddling safety event being hosted as part of National Safe Boating week!

### **Smart Start for Safe Paddling Webinar**

The ACA has created a brand new suite of boating safety resources called Smart Start for Safe Paddling, to share core paddling principles that will keep you, your friends, and your family safe on the water and creating lasting memories for years to come.

Learning the principles and information presented within this resource collection will help increase fun and decrease accidents on the water. The Smart Start for Safe Paddling program features:

- Resource book including glossary of terms
- Student workbook including comprehension questions, answer key, skills checklists, float plan template, and accompanying activities
- Instructor's guide with presentation slides
- Infographics for quick reference
- On-water training course outline
- Collection of complementary resources

These resources are designed to meet ACA's educational guidelines and the evidence-based educational standards recommended by the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary's B Directorate, as well as align with standards created by the National On-Water Standards program and the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA).

**Learn more about this new resource and how it can benefit you and/or your organization in a webinar taking place on Wednesday, May 21 at 2:00 PM Eastern Time.** This session will be hosted by two of the program's authors, Kelsey Bracewell and Robin Pope, along with ACA IT and Recreational Boating Safety Specialist for the Seventh Coast Guard District, Scott Szczepaniak.

[Register for the Smart Start for Safe Paddling Webinar](#)

## 2025 ACA Summer Solstice Celebration



*A limited number of FREE ACA Waterway Cleanup Kits are available for cleanups being hosted by ACA members, PACs, and affiliate organizations during the ACA Summer Solstice Celebration!*

We are looking forward to a third year of celebrating the summer solstice on the water! Join us **June 20-22** by finding an event listed on the [ACA Summer Solstice Celebration webpage](#) or add your own using our [Calendar Event Submission Form](#)!

To make this year special, we will be sending a limited number of waterway cleanup kits to ACA members who are planning a waterway cleanup event over the ACA Summer Solstice Celebration. Please use the [Waterway Cleanup Kit Request Form](#) to apply for your free kit!



Just like the past two years, we will also be sending out stickers to any ACA member, PAC, or affiliate who is hosting a paddling event during the ACA Summer Solstice Celebration. This includes community paddles, instructional courses, races, and other competitive events! Click the button below to learn more, request stickers, and add your event to the Summer Solstice Celebration Calendar!

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### ACA Welcomes New Staff to the Competition Department

We are thrilled to welcome four powerhouse additions to the ACA staff: Michele Eray (Sprint High Performance Director), Jerzy Dziadkowiec (Sprint Kayak Coach), Lee Leibfarth (Slalom Coach), and Kaitlyn McElroy (Paracanoe Coach). These experienced leaders bring world-class expertise and a shared commitment to athlete development as we build toward LA28 and beyond. This expansion was made possible thanks to the generosity of our competition funding partners.

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### The Steve Kelly Standard: A Legacy Etched in Discipline and Devotion



After decades of service to the sport he loves, Steve Kelly is transitioning out of his role as High Performance and Competitions Manager at the ACA. From Olympian to official, venue builder to mentor, Steve has shaped the path of canoe sprint in the U.S. with integrity, passion, and unshakable discipline. His influence can be felt in every generation of paddlers—and now, in a new award bearing his name. Thank you, Steve, for your incredible contributions and lifelong dedication to paddlesports. Read more about his legacy and the new Steve Kelly Award for Outstanding Discipline in the full article linked below.

[Read More](#)

### **Wildwater Announcement**

Following two days of racing at the USA Wildwater Team Trials earlier this month, we're thrilled to announce provisional nominations to the 2025 USA Senior Wildwater World Championships Team and the 2025 USA Junior & U23 Wildwater Team. These athletes will go on to represent the United States in international competitions, including the ICF Wildwater World Championships and World Cups. Congratulations to all athletes—your hard work, grit, and speed have earned you a place among the best!

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### **USA Canoe Slalom National Teams Announced**

After two electrifying weekends of elite competition, the American Canoe Association proudly announces the 2025 Canoe Slalom and Kayak Cross National Teams. These athletes earned their places during two weekends of Team Trials racing that coincided with the 2025 Pan American Championships in Montgomery, Alabama (March 21–23) and the ICF Ranking Race at OKC Riversport in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma (March 28–30).

These teams will represent the United States at the highest levels of competition at International Canoe Federation events throughout the 2025 season. With a mix of veteran leadership and rising stars, the U.S. is well-positioned to make a strong showing on the international stage.

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### **USA Canoe Sprint National Teams Announced for 2025 Canoe Sprint World Cups & Junior/U23 World Championships**



*Athlete Jonas Ecker competes for his spot on the U.S. Sprint National Team in Chula Vista, CA*

*Photo by: Cathy Kasperbauer*



Following a competitive weekend at Team Trials in Chula Vista this past April 14-15, we're excited to share the official athlete rosters for this year's World Cup and Junior/U23 World Championship teams. These paddlers will represent the U.S. on the international stage in Hungary, Poland, and Portugal.

*Note: The 2025 Senior World Championship Team will be announced in June following additional camp evaluations and seat racing.*

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### Instructor of the Month: Karl Schmidt



Karl brings more than a decade of experience, leadership, and deep commitment to the paddlesports community. Since becoming an ACA instructor in 2010, Karl has focused his expertise on swiftwater rescue and whitewater kayaking.

Based in Richmond, Virginia, he makes the most of his local waters on the James River while also paddling and instructing throughout the Mid-Atlantic and Appalachian regions. His instructional reach extends through his business, Fall Line River School, where he offers a comprehensive range of courses in whitewater paddling, swiftwater rescue, and wilderness medicine.

In addition to his teaching, Karl is actively involved in ACA leadership. He currently serves on the ACA's Safety & Rescue Curriculum Committee and previously contributed to the River Kayak Curriculum Committee. His insight and experience help shape the very standards by which instructors across the country are trained.

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

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### **ACA Pro School Feature: Canyon River Instruction**

Whether you're new to paddling or ready to level up your whitewater skills, Canyon River Instruction (CRI), operating out of Salida, CO, has the perfect course for you. As an ACA Pro School, CRI delivers top-tier, customized instruction in oar and paddle rafting, kayaking, canoeing, and swiftwater rescue—all taught by ACA-certified instructors.

What sets CRI apart? Their personalized, hands-on approach empowers private boaters and outfitters alike, and their deep commitment to river safety, stewardship, and access creates a learning experience that flows beyond the classroom.

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

Sincerely,

Kaycee Maas, Communications Manager

American Canoe Association

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