




Serving paddlers since 1880



Big news for the ACA community!

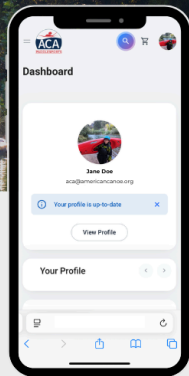
We are excited to announce that we'll be transitioning to a new membership platform next month (November)! This upgrade will provide a cleaner, more user-friendly experience for all ACA members—making it easier than ever to manage your membership.

More information and step-by-step instructions will be shared soon. We can't wait to bring you a better, smoother ACA experience!



NEW MEMBER PORTAL COMING SOON!

Next month we will be switching to a brand-new membership platform! The new system will be cleaner, faster, and easier to use—so you can spend less time clicking and more time paddling.



The smartphone screen displays the "Dashboard" of the new member portal. It includes a profile picture, the name "Jane Doe", the email "aca@americancanoe.org", and a button that says "Your profile is up-to-date". Below this is a "View Profile" button and a section titled "Your Profile" with a plus icon.



Trip Report: Outdoor Alliance DC Fly-In



Outdoor Alliance members posing for photos outside the United States Capitol.

Captured in Washington, D.C., on October 21, 2025. — (Kevin Lowery, @kevloweryphoto / Collection Media @collectiondotmedia

Earlier this month, ACA joined Outdoor Alliance and partners in Washington, DC for the annual DC Fly-In, meeting with over 70 congressional offices to advocate for policies that protect and enhance our public lands and waters. Despite the government shutdown, ACA staff and instructors were able to share the paddling community's voice on key priorities, including public land protection, federal agency funding, and reauthorization of the Legacy Restoration Fund.

This year, two ACA Instructors joined the effort as members of the Outdoor Alliance Grasstops Collective, a leadership program training local outdoor advocates to engage in conservation policy from a community perspective.

[Read the full Trip Report for more!](#)

Applications for the Outdoor Alliance Grasstops Collective are now open!

The application for the next cohort of Outdoor Alliance's Grasstops Collective is now open! They are looking for passionate outdoor leaders who are ready to play the long game in conservation and advocacy.

This network of trained advocates helps protect more public lands and waters, advance strong conservation and recreation policy, and secure funding for the outdoors—furthering the mission of Outdoor Alliance and its member organizations, including ACA.

Apply by Sunday, November 9, 2025!

[Learn More & Apply](#)



ACA PaddleFest 2025: A Weekend to Remember



Photo Credit: Gil Hidalgo

From October 17–19, ACA hosted the first-ever PaddleFest at the U.S. National Whitewater Center in Charlotte, NC—combining the Swiftwater Rescue Conference, Instructor Updates, USA Slalom & Kayak Cross Nationals, the 145th Anniversary Celebration, and the Paddlesports Trade Coalition CoLab all in one exciting weekend!

Participants sharpened their skills across five disciplines, watched thrilling slalom and kayak cross races, and even enjoyed a special visit from the Sprint National Team rafting down the competition channel with their guide, Slalom National Team Coach Rafal Smolen.

[Read the full article to relive the highlights!](#)

Congratulations to the 2025 ACA Annual Award Recipients

Each year, the American Canoe Association (ACA) presents a series of prestigious national awards to individuals and organizations who have demonstrated exemplary leadership, service, and dedication to the paddlesports community.

The 2025 ACA Annual Awards were presented on Saturday, October 18, during the ACA's 145th Anniversary Celebration at ACA PaddleFest—held at the U.S. National Whitewater Center in Charlotte, North Carolina.

The evening honored instructors, volunteers, organizations, and lifelong leaders whose contributions continue to shape the sport's future.

Congratulations to this year's award recipients:

- **Legends of Paddling Award** – Mike Aronoff
- **Excellence in Instruction Award** – Nik White
- **Event of the Year Award** – 2025 Slalom Junior Olympics, Junior Development Camp, and Age Group Nationals
- **Green Paddle for Waterway Conservation Award** – Mountain True
- **Joe Pina Volunteer of the Year Award** – Gil Hidalgo
- **J. Henry Rushton Award for Organizational Excellence** – Ríos to Rivers, Paddle Tribal Waters Program
- **Outstanding State Director Award** – Kelly Rudolph
- **Havens Leadership Award** – Steve Kelly
- **President's Award** – Kelsey Bracewell, Robin Pope, Brett Mayer

Continue reading to learn more about each award and this year's honorees.



USA Slalom & Kayak Cross National Championships



Photo Credit: Gil Hidalgo

The USA Slalom & Kayak Cross National Championships at ACA PaddleFest were full of action! Athletes showed incredible skill, speed, and precision on challenging courses, including head-to-head kayak cross races.

Podium Highlights:

MK1:

- 🏅 Tyler Westfall
- 🏅 Coleman Christie Williams
- 🏅 Ricky Powell

WK1:

- 🏅 Marcella Altman
- 🏅 Lucy Crino
- 🏅 Carden Oetting

MC1:

- 🏅 Zach “Bug” Lokken
- 🏅 Casey Eichfeld
- 🏅 Nathaniel Francis

WC1:

- 🏅 Carden Oetting
- 🏅 Marcella Altman
- 🏅 Isabella Altman

MX Individual:

- 🏅 Tyler Westfall
- 🏅 Nik Nijhawan
- 🏅 Ricky Powell

WX Individual:

- 🏅 Lucy Crino
- 🏅 Ivy Lenz
- 🏅 Carden Oetting

MX:

- 🏅 Ricky Powell
- 🏅 Tyler Westfall
- 🏅 Nathaniel Francis

WX:

- 🏅 Carden Oetting
- 🏅 Marcella Altman
- 🏅 Ivy Lenz

[Check out the full PaddleFest recap for more!](#)

2025 Canoe Ocean Racing World Championships

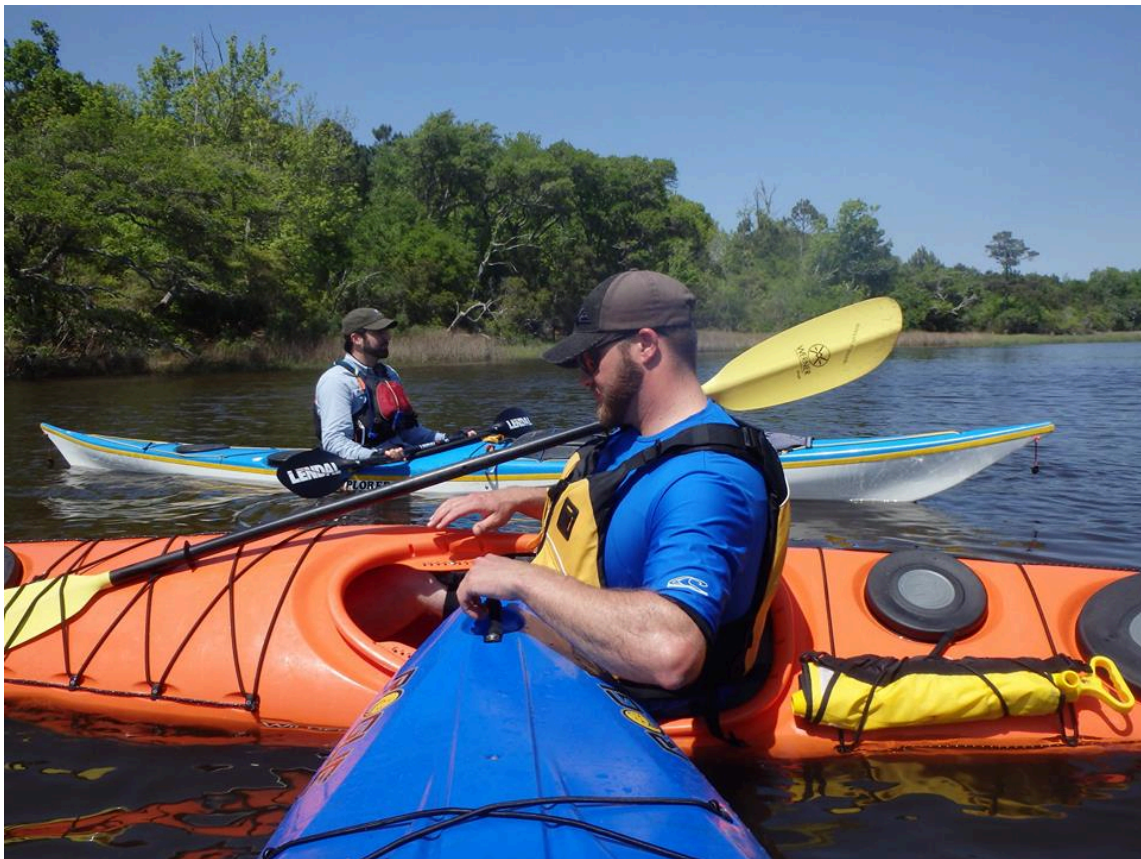


Three USA athletes represented the stars and stripes at the 2025 Ocean Racing World Championships in Durban, South Africa—known as the “Home of Surfski Paddling.” The event brought together more than 500 paddlers from over 30 countries to compete in both SS1 and SS2 categories. The SS1 race featured a dramatic mass start from the beach and a 34 km (~21 mi) course that tested endurance, skill, and ocean reading—taking most paddlers between two and three hours to complete. Greg Barton led the U.S. effort, earning first place in his age group and representing the American paddling community with distinction!

Paddlers interested in representing the USA at the 2026 Continental Championships or 2026 World Championships are encouraged to contact the ACA Ocean Racing Committee at orc@americancanoe.net.



Instructor of the Month: Jake Vitak



Congratulations to Jake Vitak, ACA Instructor of the Month for October 2025! From the rivers of western Maryland to the coast of North Carolina, Jake has built a career helping paddlers gain skills, confidence, and safety on the water.

As an ACA instructor and IT, Jake has grown state park kayaking programs, hosted festivals and camps, and continues to mentor new instructors across the Southeast. Through his work with ACA RAC's Kayaking 101 program, Jake is helping new paddlers start their journey the right way—safe, supported, and inspired.

[Read Jake's full Instructor of the Month feature!](#)

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

Instructor Trainer Educator Emeritus Recognition

The ACA Instructor Emeritus Program honors exceptional educators who have dedicated decades to paddlesports instruction, allowing them to formally retire from certification while continuing to share their knowledge and mentorship.

This year, three leaders were recognized as inaugural Instructor Trainer Educator Emeriti:

- **Sam Fowlkes** – Level 5 Advanced Swiftwater Rescue and Level 4 Whitewater Canoeing ITE Emeritus. A pioneer in rescue instruction, Sam has served the ACA for 45 years, shaping safety education through leadership, mentorship, and compassion.
- **Robert Dye** – Level 4 Whitewater Canoeing Instructor Trainer and multi-discipline educator. As a professor at Brevard College, Robert has inspired thousands through experiential education and the Voice of the Rivers program.

- **Steve Hutton** – Level 5 Advanced Open Water Coastal Kayaking ITE and Adaptive Paddling Instructor Emeritus. As Chief Operating Officer and ADA Coordinator for the Charleston County Park and Recreation Commission, Steve has advanced accessibility and inclusion in outdoor recreation nationwide.

Happy Halloween and 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,

Kaycee Maas, Communications Manager

American Canoe Association

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