

CANOE, KAYAK & SUP



Paddlesport Racing

Try This Exciting, Low-Impact Sport

▲ TOWPATH REGATTA WITH THE AUTHOR IN THE BOW, FOLLOWED BY JIM AMELL, JAN PERRIN, AND KIM GREINER.

By Ed Greiner

When the subject of canoe and kayak racing comes up in casual conversation, the usual response is, "You're kidding. You actually race those things?" The incredulity is common.

Some people get involved with paddlesport racing in a logical manner. They start with a short, fun race after having had some instruction in technique and gear. Others jump in blindly, starting with an ultramarathon, and no idea what they are in for. The latter way was mine.

Many years ago, a coworker asked if I wanted to be his partner in the Adirondack Canoe Classic, the 90-miler, three-day event that crosses the Adirondack Park from Old Forge to Saranac Lake. After being egged on by a third coworker, I agreed. The rest, as they say, is history.

Paddlesport racing in upstate New York has opportunities for nearly everyone. There are race classes for canoes, kayaks, stand-up paddleboards, and guideboats. There are also divisions within those classes for hulls of different length, shape and weight, as well as age and gender divisions for the paddlers. Paddling is an excellent choice for those looking for a low impact, aerobic sport, and the participants are a very welcoming and supportive group. They encourage and cheer for all levels of participants from novices to old pros.

Canoes used to be the most popular craft to race, but kayaks have become more numerous in recent years. SUPs are seen at some races and organizers are encouraging their inclusion at all venues. They are more popular to race in other regions. I have heard of as many as 150 SUPs in one race in Maryland.

Here in northeastern New York, there are three regional organizations dedicated to racing in the sport.

- St. Lawrence Valley Paddlers, headquartered in Canton: slvpaddlers.org.

- Northern New York Paddlers (part of Schenectady Wintersports Club), in the Capital-Saratoga Region: swcweb.org.

- Northern Forest Canoe Trail, covering the Adirondack region and more: northernforestcanoetrail.org.

The New York Paddlesports Racing Association sets standards for boat types, classes and age groups. NYNYP also compiles the race calendar for the entire state: nypra.org.

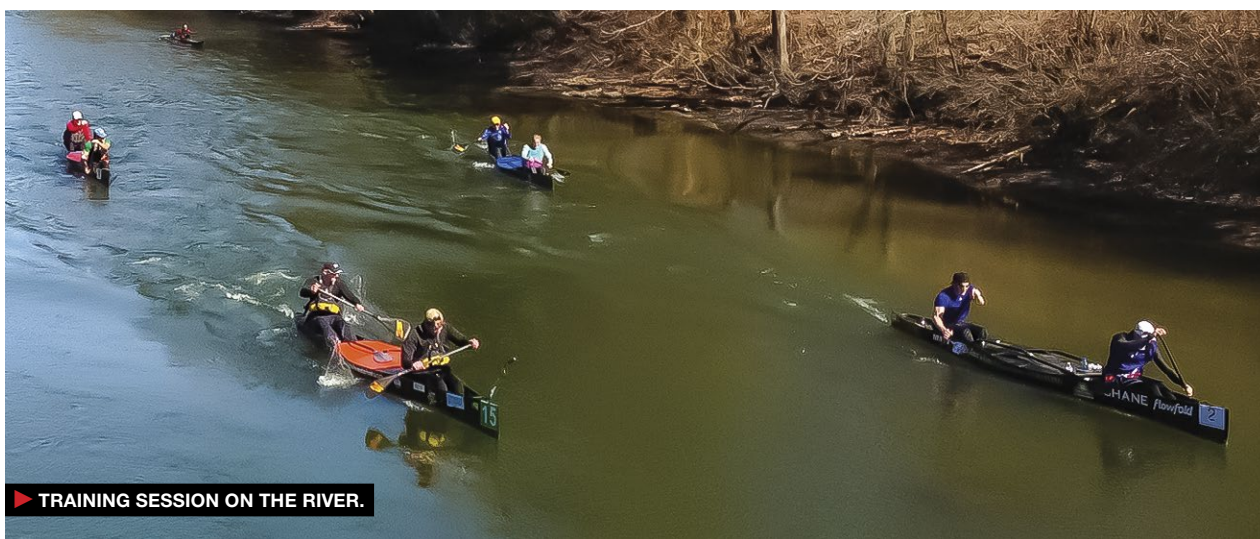
St. Lawrence Valley Paddlers' two biggest events are the Canton Canoe Weekend and the Madrid Canoe Regatta. The 61st annual Canton Canoe Weekend is on May 5-7 this year, which draws as many as 300 paddlers to the Grasse and Little rivers, including some of the best racers in North America. For Canton, visit: cantoncanoeweekend.org. The Madrid Canoe Regatta is on June 10-11 on the Grasse River. Both events are based in St. Lawrence County and offer recreational, amateur and pro races. For Madrid, go to: slvpaddlers.org.

Northern New York Paddler's races are all held on the Mohawk River/Erie Canal. The race season starts with the Towpath Regatta on Thursday, June 15. It starts and finishes at Gateway Landing, on the ramp to SUNY Schenectady. It is a fun 4.5-mile race starting at 6:30pm. Registration begins at 5:30pm and there's no entry fee.

NYNYP's second race is the Electric City Regatta which will take place on Saturday, July 8 at Erie Canalway's Lock 9 in Glenville. The premier event is an 11-mile race. There will also be a three-mile recreational race and a one-mile fun race/paddle. Registration is from 8:30-9:45am. The first boat start is 10am. The registration fee is \$25 for adults and \$5 for youth paddlers. The next day, July 9, is the Barge Chaser at Kiwanis Park in Rotterdam. Once again, there will be a three-mile recreational race/paddle and a 10-mile event for more experienced paddlers. Registration is from 9-9:45am. The race starts



▼ CANTON CANOE WEEKEND RACE START.



▶ TRAINING SESSION ON THE RIVER.

at 10am. Registration is \$10 for adults and \$5 for youth. With all of NYNYP's races, online preregistration is encouraged. For the schedule and registration, visit: nypra.org.

The Northern Forest Canoe Trail organization took over much of the paddlesport racing scene in the Adirondacks a few years ago. Their racing season, which includes canoes, kayaks, SUPs and guideboats, starts with 'Round the Mountain at Lower Saranac Lake on Saturday, May 13, which is the unofficial kickoff event of the Adirondack paddling season. The finish line is on Lake Flower in Saranac Lake so racers are encouraged to do a pre-race car shuttle. Paddlers head west on Lower Saranac Lake to mouth of the Saranac River, then do a short carry around the lower locks, then to Oseetah Lake and ending at Lake Flower – a race distance of 10.5 miles.

If you'd like to improve your skills, check out the Adirondack Paddling Symposium, which will be in Saranac Lake on Friday-Sunday, June 16-19. Now hosted by NFCT, it's a comprehensive weekend of paddling instruction offering beginner and intermediate course tracks for kayaks, pack boats, SUPs and canoes. To learn more, go to: adirondackpaddlingsymposium.com.

The Adirondack Canoe Classic – known as the 90-Miler – is an Adirondack tradition that dates back over three decades, and is on Friday-Sunday, Sept. 8-10. The classic takes paddlers from Old Forge to Saranac Lake, the first 90 miles of the Northern Forest Canoe Trail, which extends 740 miles on historic waterways to Fort Kent, Me. The 90-Miler online registration begins July 1.

The Long Lake Long Boat Regatta will take place on Saturday, Sept. 23, closing out the Adirondack Race Series. Events include North American voyageur canoe championships, Adirondack kayak championship, Northeastern College Cup race. The 10-mile course is a figure-eight, begin-



▲ KAYAKING AND SUPING AT THE GREAT BRANT LAKE CANOE RACE, 2022. ▼



ning and ending at the Long Lake Public Beach. They have all NYNYP classes and a fun "Anything Goes" category. For more info on the NFCT racing season, go to: northernforestcanoetrail.org.

For something different, The Great Brant Lake Canoe Race is on Saturday, August 12. Experience a beautiful Adirondack lake, in a fun and exciting six-mile race that takes paddlers down the length of Brant's picturesque shores into a channel, and finishing on the Mill Pond at the Horicon Town Beach. There will be post-race music, awards, demos, SUP yoga, voyageur canoe tours, and a kids' race. Visit: northwarrencanoe.com.

There are other races throughout the state not covered by the regional organizations. For information, they can be found here: nypra.org.

Getting back to Northern New York Paddlers in the Capital Region, we also offer a recreational and instructional paddling program at Kiwanis Park on the Mohawk River/Erie Canal in Rotterdam on Mondays starting on May 1. There are a few canoes and kayaks to lend to participants, but we encourage participants to bring their own boats if you have them.

NYNYP also puts on weekly time trials for training and fitness at Aqueduct Park on the Mohawk River/Erie Canal in Niskayuna. This is a 3.6-mile timed paddle, the purpose of which is to track your progress through the year, as well as to see how different factors affect overall time. There is no entry fee for these two programs and the public is welcome. To learn more, visit: swcweb.org. ▲

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