



NorthStar Paddle League

In the land of 10,000 lakes, where a Boundary Waters trip is nearly a rite of passage and summers are spent biking to the nearest waterhole, it makes sense that paddlesports in the Twin Cities and greater MN are on the rise.

There has long been canoe racing in the Midwest, anywhere from the 40+ years of the Hoigaard's Paddle Derby 7-mile races on the Chain of Lakes to the AuSable Canoe Marathon in Grayling, Michigan: an overnight 80 mile race down the AuSable River where small town locals line the streets to watch a sprinting on-foot start and support teams stay up all night to wear glow sticks and stand in the river to pass off food and water.

Twin Cities paddlers have long been well-represented at Canoe & Kayak Nationals, and certainly have a deep well of paddling knowledge to be tapped locally. From a programming perspective, the Rice Creek Boat Club has provided paddling programs for over 15 years out of New Brighton and is now the paddling program for Endurance United. Twin Cities Paddlesports began seven years back at Lake Phalen, focusing on the Olympic sport of sprint kayaking. Most recently, the Loppet Foundation added canoe programming on the Chain of Lakes in Minneapolis.

The Two Paddles event company began the Mississippi River Paddle Weekend two years ago, bringing together over 125 participants from around the country last season. The longest race - the 150 mile - goes from Brainard to Coon Rapids. There are also 7.5, 10, 25, and 48 mile options. Race directors Scott Miller and Todd Foster set the Mississippi Speed record in 2023, and wanted to share their enthusiasm for long-distance paddling.

The Snake River Canoe Race in Mora, Minnesota has been the largest canoe race in the state for many years due to its fun, winding course down the charming Snake River, and it's inclusive nature of mostly being a community event that brings in mostly aluminum canoes and many, many boat categories.

While learning to paddle a canoe has been a long-standing tradition of Minnesotans (hello, lakes!), there has never been an official school sports league or club. Being primarily a summer activity, and somewhat of a non-traditional endurance sport, that makes some sense. But starting this summer, the Loppet Foundation, Twin Cities Paddlesports and Endurance United are joining together to create the NorthStar Paddle League (NPL). The NorthStar Paddle League (NPL) is a collaboration to promote competitive youth paddlesports.

NPL will host three events in the summer of 2024 to introduce racing, build community, and celebrate the skills learned in individual programs. Each organization will host an event at their home lake, and feature both a short race but an additional unique activity (voyageur canoe racing, SUP sprints, round robin starts) to showcase a different style of paddling and add an element of play to the day. Organizations are also cooperating on curriculum, coaches' training and marketing efforts, and look forward to building up the next generation of paddlers!

All three organizations will offer programming this summer, for a variety of boat types and ages. Programs promote water safety, efficient and confident paddling skills, and racing techniques.

- See Loppet.org for more information on canoe programming: family program, adult - recreation and competitive, and juniors.
- See Enduranceunited.org for more information on Endurance United juniors and adult canoe/kayak/SUP programs.
- See Twin Cities Paddlesports at TCPaddlesports.com for more information on Juniors sprint kayaking.

May the tradition of paddling in Minnesota continue! Learn more about the NorthStar Paddle League at Paddle.mn.