

Meet the Director

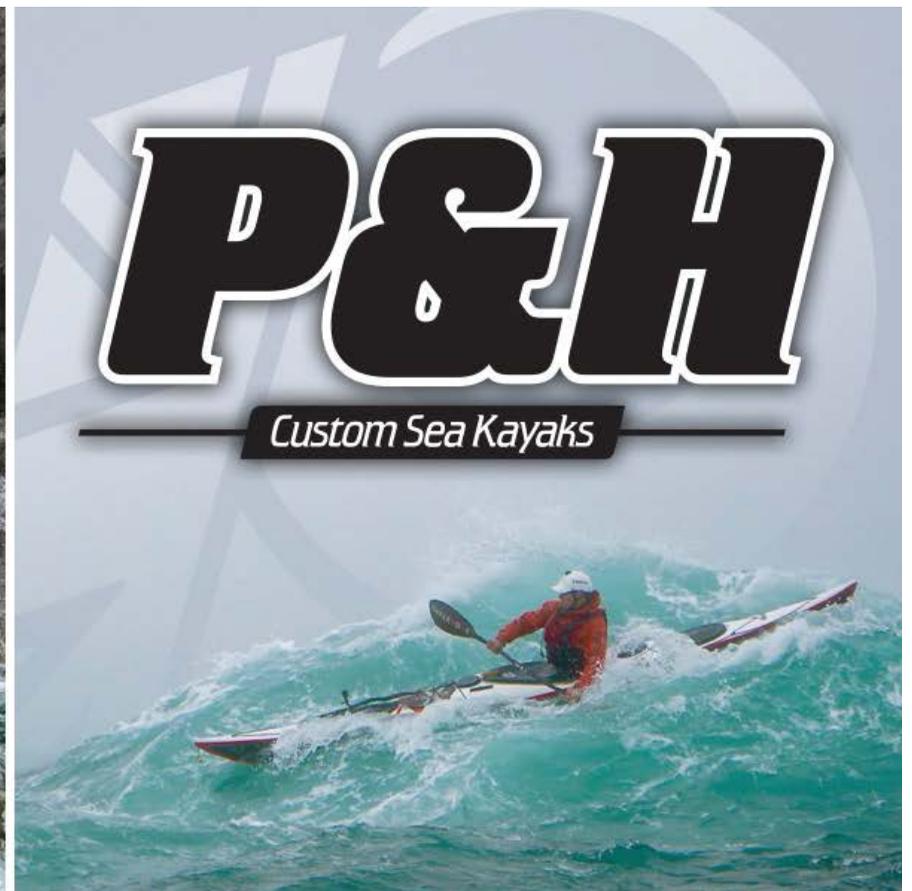
My introduction to paddling, which ultimately brought me to being the Director of Outdoor Adventures at Rutabaga, came quite by accident. There was a shortage of lifeguards and boating instructors at my first camp counselor job, and the director was looking for anyone who was willing to take the necessary training. Despite some initial hesitation, I soon signed up. The training was tough, but it ignited my passion for paddling and I've been striving to share it with others ever since. I became the waterfront director a few years later, before moving on to spending a few amazing summers guiding in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area and pursuing a degree in Outdoor Education at Northland College. After working seasonal jobs for a while, I ended up as the director of a large Girl Scout camp in Central Illinois where I got to help thousands of young girls have impactful experiences

outdoors. While I loved Girl Scouts and its mission, I wanted more time on the water and ended up at Rutabaga Paddlesports.

I became Director of Rutabaga Outdoor Adventures in June 2022 at a time when Darren was in the planning stages to move Rutabaga to a new, owned location. Today, our shop sits next to a 3 acre private pond used for test paddling and some classes, with the majority of classes now held at Esther Beach and Olbrich Park on Lake Monona. We are adding paddling classes to a new location at Rock Lake. We also revitalized our youth program and expanded course offerings. The community response has been fabulous! Finally, I have a great team of paddling instructors who all agree with me the best part of this job is becoming a small part of so many folks' paddling journey—from nervous first-timers not unlike me back in my summer camp counselor days, to intermediate paddlers who are perfecting

their craft, to true experts who we are lucky enough to have speak here at Canoeopia. I truly believe the joy of paddling is unmatched, and am blessed to get to share it with others.

Chloe Machula
chloem@rutabaga.com



Adult Classes

Rutabaga Outdoor Adventures is here to help you take the next step in your paddling journey. We offer classes in canoeing, kayaking, and stand-up paddleboarding. Whether you're just starting out or are a seasoned paddler, we have something for you.

- Recreational Kayak Basics
- Sea Kayak Basics
- Day Trips
- Sunset Paddles
- Solo canoeing
- Tandem Canoeing
- Stand Up Paddleboarding
- And more...

“The course made me feel so much more confident to go out kayaking!”

“Great instructors! The course made me excited to paddling with my family!”

“The small class size was great. I got lots of individual instruction.”

“Great class! I’ll be back 😊”



What Else Do We Offer?

Maybe you want to improve one specific part of your paddling, or just want an outing with friends and/or coworkers, and the lessons described above don't exactly fit what you're interested in. Don't sweat it. Give us a call. We offer lots of specialty classes & events throughout the season.

- Private Lessons for Youth and Adults
- Special Guest Instructors
- Wilderness First Aid courses
- American Canoe Association Certification Courses
- Youth Outreach
- Corporate Outings
- Door County Sea Kayak Symposium (returning in 2025)
- Olbrich Park Boat Rentals



*NadaChair
Love at First Sit*



Canoe BackUp:
Nada-Chair.com

Photo Credit:
Benjamin Williamson



An Immigrant and His Son Get Hooked on the BWCA

Miguel Garcia-Gosalvez talks about sharing his new-found love of the Boundary Waters with his son and the challenges of being an outsider who loves being outside

I am well over 50 years old and did not discover canoeing and the Boundary Waters until only a few years ago. I was born in the South-east of Spain, near the Mediterranean coast of Alicante, a semi-desert and arid area with very warm summers and mild winters and only a tiny creek of water for dozens of miles. Always loved nature and spent my teenage years around the mountains nearby. I have been always interested in bird watching and spent many hours alone enjoying the great diversity of birds in Spain. I am first generation of my family with a high school degree. After college, and graduate school and after spending a few years as a tenured university professor in Barcelona, we moved to the Washington, DC area for over 15 years. In 2006, we moved to Madison, where my wife is originally from, to raise kids and be closer to family.

A friend of mine talked to me about the Boundary Waters Canoe Area and offered to take me for a few days in late September. The first entry point I went to was 14 (Little Indian Sioux River North), Northwest of Ely. Before that I had been only a few times that far north (Bayfield and the Grand Marais areas). That trip was one of the biggest wake-up calls of my life. I was always interested in being in contact with nature, enjoying seeing wildlife, the landscape, dark nights, bright skies, as well as the silence. After that first trip, I

realized that both canoeing and the BWCA - Quetico National Park areas were the passions that filled a great emptiness I had in my soul. I fell in love with the beauty of the lakes and the boreal forest, started appreciating a land that for the past ten

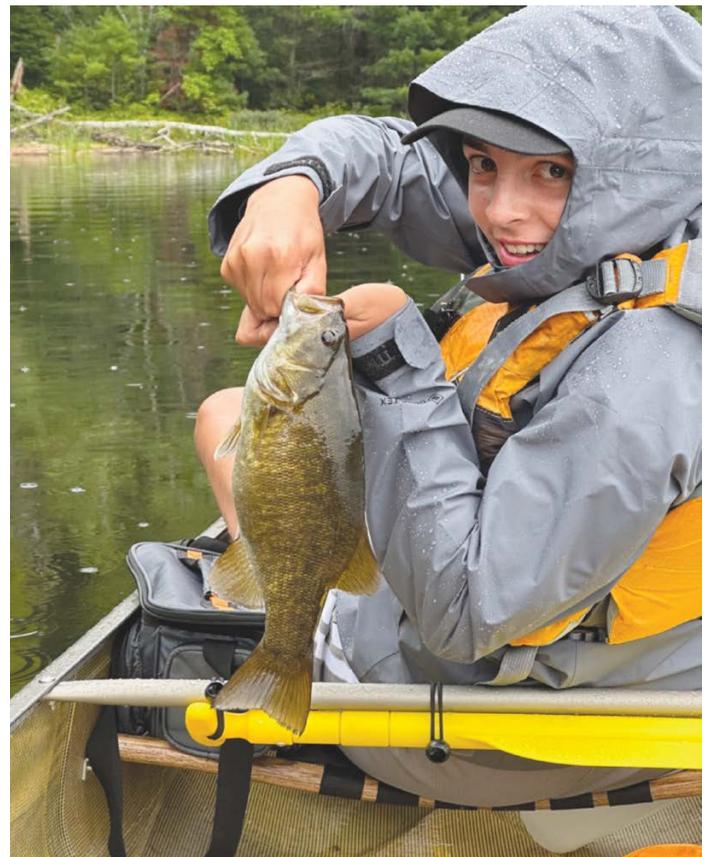
[My son] felt it right away. Now he keeps asking about our future trips.

thousand years follows an ancient cycle of seasonal extremes.

Since then, I have done multiple solo trips every year, perfecting, painfully and slowly, the ability to single portage while having everything I need to be comfortable. My solo trips are usually early in the Spring (May) and early in the Fall (September-October). In the summer of 2023, I took my son with me for the first time. He is an avid fisher in the Madison lakes but had never been in the Boundary Waters before. He felt it right away. Now he keeps asking about our future trips. As a land of extremes, I also enjoy the winters. The old spruce forest is silent but not dead. Some days are so blue and brilliant that you need to almost close your eyes, others misty, with the sun giving us a milky haze

over a landscape that has a million varieties of gray color.

Being Hispanic and having a strong accent has always been kind of a challenge for me in the United States. When being in the Boundary Waters and towns nearby I sense, sometimes, people staring at me due to a lack of familiarity with different cultures or accents. Many times, and very politely, I share a bit about my background and experience. It makes easy to start conversations with other paddlers and strangers. They are



Rafael Garcia-Dove in his first trip ever to the Boundary Waters in August 2023. That smile is worth the whole trip.

always curious to know how I ended up there and, as we keep talking, they soon realize that I am also knowledgeable about canoeing, route planning, gear and equipment, camping, safety, navigation, leave no trace, wildlife awareness, as well as permits and regulations. As soon as that realization happens, they forget about my culture and background. They realize I also enjoy nature as they do, and we can have a normal conversation.

It is still common to find myself as the only Hispanic immigrant in many canoeing-related events and

venues. Hispanics have got a lot of attention due to their growth rate in the U.S. It is not commonly acknowledged that Hispanics also have an enormous amount of purchasing power and that they also enjoy the outdoors. This will only increase soon. Early studies about Hispanic outdoor participation emphasized preferences for social activities in group settings. Urban Hispanic recreationists in different studies sought a diversity of human-powered and contemplative outdoor activities. Guided group outings and Spanish-language materials were identified as steps to increase partic-

ipation. Barriers included a lack of awareness of prospective recreation sites, the absence of recreation partners, and unfamiliarity with outdoor gear. In that regard I see myself as a small contributor, not only helping the Hispanic community to enjoy the outdoors but also to make others realize what we can also contribute to the field with our knowledge and experience.

Miguel is also speaking at Canoecopia. Find out more on page 13.



From Pure Ballast to Pure Motor

Darren Bush reflects on his son's growth and development as a paddler and the connections that paddling fosters.

Thirty years ago, a ten-pound baby boy came into my life. It was a beautiful moment for me, as it was for my wife, although my contribution to the event was holding her hand and reminding her to breathe. Right. As if she would forget.



Ian looked a lot like a baby orangutan, with bright orange hair and covered with red fuzz. After three strong pushes he was out, and was born so fast he looked like he had been in a bar fight.

A year later, he was old enough to sit up in a canoe. First, he was just ballast, enjoying the sensation of being on the water and all the new things to look at. He would squeal with delight at a beaver, which the rest of us noticed only after the tell-tale splash. All his life he has noticed

things the rest of the family misses: wildlife, plants, flowers, and rocks of a particular hue or a weird-colored fungus.

We set out on our first Boundary Waters trip when he was two. Toddler Ian had two speeds: off, and full tilt. The Boundary Waters is full of sharp, jutting rocks and slippery slopes, which were a great playground for a nature lover, but gave his parents significant anxiety.

The Wisconsin River, however, was a giant sandbox. Eagle-Eye Ian could wander aimlessly (always wearing a PFD on or off shore, a longstanding family rule), finding tracks of birds and turtles, pieces of turtle eggs and the occasional shell, and the exuviae of dragonflies stuck to the stems of grass along shore.

I think he was about five when he graduated from ballast to motor, albeit of limited horsepower. I flipped around a small tandem and he squeezed into the bow. I had found an old paddle that was trashed around the edges, and it was perfect when I took it down to clean wood, sanded, varnished, and varnished again.

I sometimes ask him what he's thinking about when he's off in the distance, and it's always the same answer: oh, just stuff. I know what he's thinking, though. Because I was him thirty years ago.

The paddle's name was Lightning II (Lightning I was way too short), and we painted his name on it with sign paint.

He was a good motor for years. I liked the motor phase; it allowed for good conversation, and let me listen to him talk about all the things he saw. He learned about more birds and animals, crossbow draws, and spotting obstacles. We made plaster of Paris casts of animal prints on the sandbars. We rescued freshwater clams from dropping water levels that stranded them in the sun. We ate good food and just enjoyed being together.

When Ian was eleven, a sales rep/friend of the family gave him a canoe that some bozo had returned as defective even though it was fine. It was a princely gift, and even though it's a fairly voluminous small tandem, Ian had soon flipped it around and was soloing his own boat. I think that ruined him for tandem paddling, and when he wasn't much older, I rarely saw him in a tandem.

He never had formal instruction. I taught him why it's more effective to use a J-stroke rather than an inefficient goon stroke, but that's about it. The rest he learned from observation or the Most Ancient of Teachers,

screwing up and taking a swim.

Last fall I decided to do a

little overnighter with Ian. It was a different dynamic than I was used to. On this trip, I didn't have to tell him



what to do, he just fell into the natural rhythm of hauling gear down to the water while we ran the shuttle. Pretty soon we were off and paddled into the setting sun.

Soon after, I noticed he was a hundred yards ahead of me. He is a strong man and a strong paddler, and likes his aloneness. I sometimes ask him what he's thinking about when he's off in the distance, and it's always the same answer: oh, just stuff. I know what he's thinking, though. Because I was him thirty years ago. Kinetic meditation: that's what paddling a solo canoe is all about.

Now we paddle together more than ever, and I'm so blessed to have him live so close. It's nice to just paddle side by side, sometimes talking, sometimes not. The smirk of contentment on his face looks the same now as it did a quarter century ago. It's been a wonderful journey, and I just hope that if I am ever too

old to paddle, we'll reverse the cycle and I can be the ballast to his quite substantial motor.



Darren is the Chief Paddling Evangelist of Rutabaga Paddlesports. He believes the correct answer to the question, "How many canoes do I need?" is "Just one more."

2024 NEW COLORS

COME AND SEE THEM AT THE CANOECOPIA SHOW ON MARCH 8-10TH 2024



WILDERNESS
SYSTEMS

Great Paddling Adventures

Great times await those who say “yes” to the question “Shall we paddle?” (Also a nice rundown of fun places to go this season.)

Darren and Lindsay’s Excellent 28-Hour Paddling Adventure: River:30 paddles #6-10

On Sunday, May 25, Rutabaga Paddlesports owner Darren Bush and I headed Up North to Wisconsin’s Vilas County for a wonderful series of paddles. At about 4:30 p.m., we picked up Darren’s freshly restored wood and canvas tandem canoe. It was built in the early ‘80s by the legendary Jerry Stelmok at Island Falls Canoe in Maine. Darren had sent it to restoration specialist Dave Osborn in Boulder Junction for a big refresh, and what a job he did.

We headed out to execute our plan to paddle five of “Wisconsin’s Wild Lakes,” inspired by John Bates’ book of the same name, subtitled “A Guide to the Last Undeveloped Natural Lakes.” We began by putting into 147-acre **Frank Lake (#6)**. Darren’s boat looked beautiful, graceful and purposeful in turn, and my restored Bell Yellowstone Solo behaved well. The juxtaposition of Darren’s wood and canvas boat and my lightweight Kevlar boat was truly entertaining. A pair of trumpeter swans across the water remained oblivious to us throughout our visit.

Next, we headed to a favorite of Darren’s, nearby **Blueberry Lake (#7)**. Smaller than John Bates’ 30-acre limit, this was the only one of our five not to appear in the Bates “Wisconsin Wild Lakes” book. It was truly wild and had a shoreline filled with flowering wild blueberries. I joined Darren paddling his lovely Wilderness 16 canoe.

The next morning we headed to Monday’s first put-in, the ominously named **Lost Canoe Lake (#8)** a 279-acre beauty, where we were immediately greeted by the true “Call of the North,” the haunting loon calls we all love to hear.

Next, **Escanaba Lake (#9)** at 303 acres was not far from Lost Canoe Lake by land or water, but a surprisingly long way away by road.

We finished up with a late morning paddle on the largest of the lakes we visited, 406-acre **Allequash Lake (#10)**. The size is a little deceiving, as it is a lake that is divided into two distinct basins. What made this one particularly appealing were a few widely separated wilderness campgrounds, accessible only by canoe or kayak. It’s truly a place to get away.

Dining tip: On our way home, we discovered Wausau’s Hmong Eggroll restaurant. Wouldn’t you know it, they had terrific Hmong eggrolls, and a killer Pho, too.

Denny and Lindsay’s Great Paddling Adventure: River:30 paddles #18-25

Here’s another trip that you can use to design your own multi-paddle adventure: Eight paddles in two days along Wisconsin’s eastern shore and its estuarine rivers (plus a creek and one BIG lake).

July 15th, we began with the **Manitowoc River (#18)**, launching a few miles upstream from downtown in the first of many high quality parks we found on this trip. Next came the **Little Manitowoc River (#19)**, a great little stretch of water where our put-in and take-out were from the parking lot of a local insurance agency. We paddled under the Highway 42 Bridge into **Lake Michigan (#20)**, the biggest piece of water of the entire trip.

Heading north, we next paddled the **Kewaunee River (#21)**, launching from a DNR put-in west of Kewaunee. We overnighted in Algoma.

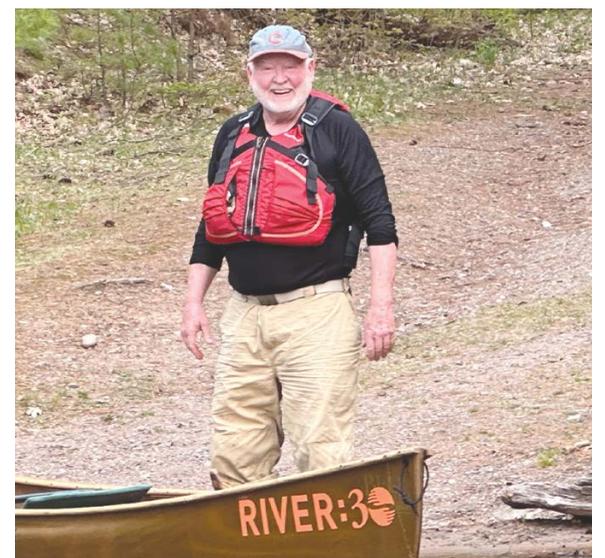
Dining Tip: An amazing local tavern in

Algoma called Son of Scaliwags is easily one of the most enjoyable seafood restaurants in the state! Wow, a shocker!

July 16th, we paddled Algoma’s **Ahnapee River (#22)** and its tributary, **Silver Creek (#23)**. This creek is a perfect example of how the Clean Water Act has taken a badly polluted body of urban water and is turning it into an emerging community asset for Algoma.

Next, it was back south to Two Rivers where we first paddled the **East Twin River (#24)**, and ended our two-day paddling adventure on the **West Twin River (#25)**. Again, we found wonderful, well-marked put-ins and take-outs, most equipped with variations of the new kayak launching systems that open up paddling opportunities to an entire new community of differently-abled people. So cool!

Thanks to my long-time friend and paddling partner Denny Caneff (a former executive director of the River Alliance) for imagining and planning this great trip. To learn more about the work of River Alliance of Wisconsin, visit wisconsinrivers.org.



Lindsay Wood Davis is a River Alliance of Wisconsin board member emeritus.

Novice to Instructor

Lenore Sobota took a chance to learn something new and hasn't looked back

I never paddle alone. By saying that, I don't mean I never paddle by myself – I've done that a lot. But every time I put on my PFD and get in the cockpit of a kayak, I am joined by memories of friends and mentors. Sometimes I hear their voices in my head, whether they're saying, "What a beautiful view," "Rotate your torso," or, simply, "Smile."

I've smiled a lot in more than two decades of kayaking. I also may have shed a tear or two, cursed a little, and faced some fears. It's all been worth it but I couldn't have done it alone.

It all started on the eve of Y2K when I came up with a list of "21 Things to Do in the 21st Century." On that list was "Learn to kayak." My knees were objecting to some of my hiking and I figured sitting in a boat would be a good way to give my knees a break and still explore nature. This newfound activity (some might say obsession) was that and so much more.



I've made new friends through kayaking and "made" old friends become kayakers. I've watched sunrises and sunsets,

loons and eagles, and collected a hundred "remember the time we ...?" moments.

Classes through the Outdoor Adventure Program at Illinois State University were my gateway. That first wet exit – getting out of an upside-down kayak – was almost enough to make me give up on the idea, despite taking place in a nice warm pool with two instructors beside me. I'm not exactly a water lover. But the patience and support of my instructors helped me stay with it.

Before you know it, I was going to sea kayak symposiums in Wisconsin and Michigan's Upper Peninsula and helping with outdoor trips at ISU. A desire to help others learn more led me to training as an instructor. A desire to have more paddling partners led me to encourage friends to attend classes and symposiums, too.

I'm thankful for the instructors and mentors who have helped me along the way, from early days as a somewhat timid, beginner student at sea kayak symposiums (such as Rutabaga's Door County Sea Kayak Symposium) to eventually becoming an instructor. I'm thankful for friends who've shared adventures with me and continue to join me even after sinking almost to their knees in mud when river levels were lower than expected or encountering other "fun" surprises.

I've learned from students, too, and been inspired by paddlers I've met at an adaptive paddling workshop and with Team River Runner. I've shared

their triumphs and the joy of being on the water. I've seen their persistence and tried to emulate it.

My road to becoming an instructor had a few bumps along the way, but the struggles made me a better paddler as well as a better instructor.

I'd like to think because of my own struggles and fears, I've been able to help others overcome – or at least cope with – theirs. And I hope when they paddle, I'm "with" them even if they're "alone."

Rutabaga's New Digs!

Many of you will already know that Rutabaga Paddlesports is the entity that produces Canoeconopia. If not, now you know that our family business is one where we strive to be honorable and ethical for our staff, our customers (thank you!), and our environment.

In 2022 Rutabaga built a new building just down the road at 2620 Rimrock Road. We built it from the ground up, doing everything we could to make the building as environmentally responsible as possible. The building is super-insulated, and we overbuilt our solar array on purpose to give us negative power bills.

Our test paddle pond has a state of the art oxygenator system. It's not an aerator: it's a system that dissolves oxygen into the water and raises the saturation level. This is better for fish and worse for algae, so it's a win-win. It was a significant expense but it was worth it, as we all love clean water and optimal habitat for wildlife.

We hope to see you at Canoeconopia, but come visit us at our shop any of the other 303 days a year.

Gratefully,
Darren

Born on the river, ready for whatever.™



NRS

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of Canoeconia.

- Access Ability Wisconsin
 Advanced Elements
 Adventure Custom Trailers
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 Bonafide Kayaks
 Boundary Waters Journal
 Brautigam Expedition Works
 Bungee Dealee Bobs
 Camp Manito-wish YMCA
 Canadian Canine
 Canoe North Adventures
 Cedar Falls Tourism
 Chaco
 Chesapeake Light Craft
 Churchill River Canoe Outfitters
 Citizens' Climate Lobby
 Cooke Custom Sewing
 Crazy Creek
 Dagger Kayaks
 Delta Kayaks
 Destination Panama City
 Eddyline Kayaks
 Embark Maple from B&E's Trees
 Epic Kayaks and Paddles
 Esquif Canoes
 Evolved Supply Co.
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 Explore La Crosse
 Explore Northwest Florida
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 Friends of the Boundary Waters
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 Frost River
 Garage Grown Gear
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 Goal Zero
 Good To-Go
 Granite Gear
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 Greater Richland Tourism
 Helinox -Ultra Lightweight
 Outdoor Gear
 Hey Bear Outdoors
 Hornbeck Boats
 Humpback Kayaks and Paddles
 Hurricane Kayaks
 Ice Age Trail Alliance
 Illinois Paddling Council
 Invasive Species Action
 Network
 IRONBULL
 Ironman Wisconsin
 Isle Royale & Keweenaw Parks
 Association
 Isle Royale Families and Friends
 Association
 Jackpine Paddle
 Jackson Kayak
 Jet Boil
 KIALOA
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 KNOO
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 Association
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 Let's Minocqua!
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 Melker of Sweden
 Mendota Rowing Club
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 NADA CHAIR
 Nantahala Outdoor Center
 Native Watercraft
 Natural Resources Foundation
 of Wisconsin
 NC Kayaks
 nCamp
 Nomadix
 North Country Trail Association
 Northeast Iowa Whitewater &
 Recreation
 Northeast Wisconsin Paddlers
 Northern Forest Canoe Trail
 Northern Lakes Canoe Base
 Alumni Association
 Northern Tier High Adventure
 Northland College
 Northstar Canoes
 Nova Craft Canoe
 NRS
 Old Mustache Canoe Paddles
 Old Town Watercraft
 P&H Kayaks
 PackTowl
 Paddle and Portage
 Paddle Buddy
 Paddle It!
 Paddle Planner
 Perception Kayaks
 Pictured Rocks Kayaking
 Platypus
 Portage North (Kondos
 Outdoors)
 Prairie State Canoeists
 Pyranha Kayaks
 Recreational Barrel Works
 RedLeaf Designs
 River Alliance of Wisconsin
 Rocky's Lighthouse Adventure
 Saint Croix National Scenic
 Riverway
 Sanborn Canoe Co.
 Save the Boundary Waters
 Sea to Summit
 SealLine
 Seals Skirts
 Silverwaves Jewelry
 Southern Utah Wilderness
 Alliance
 SPACE Trailers
 Spirit of the Wilderness
 Outfitter & Retail Store
 Stormy Kromer
 Suspenz Carts, Storage &
 Transport
 Swen Products, Inc.
 Swift Canoe & Kayak
 SylvanSport Adventure Trailers,
 Campers and Gear
 TACO Marine
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 Yakima Products
 Yukan Canoe

CANOECOPIA

Information in Brief

Who Canoecopia is the world's largest paddlesport expo. It's filled with everything wonderful and wild in the community.

When March 8, 3-8 pm
March 9, 9-6 pm
March 10, 10-4 pm

Where Exhibition Hall at the Alliant Energy Center
1919 Alliant Energy Center Way
Madison, WI 53713

Pre-Order Admission \$13/day, \$25/3-day pass

Admission \$15/day, \$30/3-day pass (17 & under free)

Parking \$8/day, \$25/3-day pass

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