



ACA Sanctioned National Marathon Events

Operating Guidelines

The following operating guidelines are recommended for organizations applying to host an ACA sanctioned marathon event. Exceptions to these guidelines may be approved by the ACA Marathon Competition Committee (MCC). Exception requests should be submitted in writing to marathoncc@americancanoe.net.

Host Applications

Applications to host an ACA sanctioned marathon event may be submitted to the ACA Marathon Competition Committee at marathoncc@americancanoe.net. Ideally, applications will be submitted at least one year prior to an event, but not less than 6 months.

The Marathon Competition Committee will post requests for applications on the ACA and USA Distance Paddle Racing (USA DPR.org) web sites with an application deadline. The approved applications will be announced 30 days after the deadline. If the MCC decides to host a marathon event, applications to host the event will not be requested. If an adequate application is not received, the MCC may also elect to host the event.

Event Location

Event locations should be included in applications with an address, waterway and proposed race routes.

Event Schedule

Event schedules should include dates and times for each race, scratch meetings for team captain(s) and any other event activities. Schedules may be adjusted in discussions with the MCC.

On Line Support

Marathon events must be supported online by one of the available race service web sites. For simplicity, these guidelines will assume that Paddle Guru, [link](#), is the chosen service. Paddle Guru support includes:

- Event Overview including registration deadline and fees
- Schedule
- Registrations and fee collection
- Start lists
- Results
- Course(s) map
- Directions to the venue
- Photos (optional)

If the event includes requirements for qualifying times, these requirements must be listed on the Event Overview.

Registrations

Athletes must register for an event by the published registration deadline which will be at least 5 days before the beginning of the competition. Late registrations and event day registrations should not be supported.

Athletes may be affiliated with one of the paddling clubs listed on the USA DPR web site or may be unaffiliated. Athletes must be U.S. citizens for U.S. team trials and national championships. In addition to the standard Paddle Guru registration questions, the following questions will also be asked:

- Birthdate
- Age on race day (first event day)
- Qualification time - best time in the last 12 months in a race 6 miles or longer
- Name, location and sponsor of the race in which the qualification time occurred
- Club affiliation, if any

Athletes need not be invited to a competition, but they must meet all participation requirements including qualification times.

Venue

The event venue should include the following characteristics:

- Inland, fresh water
 - Protection from winds – longest fetch less than two miles
 - Limited or no current – current not to exceed 5 knots
 - Clear of underwater hazards, e.g. fallen logs, on the designated courses
 - Limited power boat access – limited to boats with electric motors less than 5 hp preferred
 - Portage path – flat, close to water level, clearly marked with safe water exit and re-entry
 - Sufficient waterway size to limit a senior course to no more than 8 laps
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Competition Classes - General

Competition classes will follow ICF rules where practical. Since U.S. Nationals/Team Trials and Masters Nationals/Team Trials are typically conducted as one event, competition classes may be combined, again where practical.

Competition Classes - Boats

Boat classes are limited to the following ICF certified boat types - K1, K2, C1, and C2. All boats must carry a boat number attached to the boat.

13.2.1.a and b. – World Championship competition boat classes are as follows:

Group	Long Distance	Short Distance
Men	K1, K2, C1, C2	K1, C1
Women	K1, K2, C1	K1, C1
Under 23 Men	K1, C1	
Under 23 Women	K1, C1	
Junior Men	K1, K2, C1, C2	K1
Junior Women	K1, K2, C1	K1

13.13.3 – Masters World Championship competition boat classes are as follow:

Group	Boat Classes
Men	K1, C1, K2, C2 - all age groups
Women	K1, C1, K2, C2 - all age groups
Mixed	K2 - all age groups

The Host may modify ICF specified boat classes to simplify race administration for a combined junior/U23/senior/master event. The recommended modification is to adopt the masters allowed boat classes for all races.

Note: Paragraph numbers refer to the ICF Canoe Marathon Competition Rules 2025.

Competition Classes – Age Groups

Youth age classes typically include Junior (15 - 18) and U23 (19 – 23). However, specific age ranges vary by discipline, but these ranges will be adopted for U.S. Nationals/Team Trials.

13.3.4 – Masters World Championships – Age groups in singles are defined in 5-year bands, starting with 35 to 39 years. Age groups in doubles are defined in 10-year bands, starting with 35 to 44. There is no upper limit in age bands, there.

13.13.2 – In K2 and C2 events, the age of the youngest competitor will determine the age group in which a crew can compete.

1.4.7 – An athlete can compete in an event in the year that they reach the lower limit of the age group.

See the table below for age groups to be used for a U.S. Nationals/Team Trials that includes both junior/U23/Senior and masters athletes.

A valid group should include a minimum of four boats. However, at the Host's discretion, fewer boats may be considered for awards and World Championships team selection.

Age Group	Singles Age Ranges	Doubles Age Ranges
Junior	15 - 18	15 - 18
U23	19 - 23	19 - 23
Senior	24 - 34	24 - 34
Masters 35+	35 - 39	35 - 44
Masters 40+	40 - 44	
Masters 45+	45 - 49	45 - 54
Masters 50+	50 - 54	
Masters 55+	55 - 59	55 - 64
Masters 60+	60 - 64	
Masters 65+	65 - 69	65 - 74
Masters 70+	70 - 74	
Masters 75+	75 - 79	75 - 84
Masters 80+	80 - 84	

Courses

13.3 – Course Types are as follows:

- Long distance races are a minimum of 10km long with no upper limit.
- Short distance races may be offered at the Host's discretion and are between 3.4 km and 10 km long.

13.3.2 – Courses must be in a lap format with the start, finish and portage in the same area.

13.3.3.a – Long Distance – The recommended number of laps is:

- Eight (8) laps for senior men
- Seven (7) laps for kayak senior women and kayak U23 men
- Six (6) laps for kayak U23 women, kayak junior men, canoe senior men
- Five (5) laps for kayak junior women and canoe senior women
- Four (4) laps for canoe junior men and canoe junior women
- Three (3) laps for canoe U23 women and canoe junior women

13.3.3.a – The exact number of laps and the number of portages may vary if required by specific course related circumstances.

13.3.4 – Short Distance recommendations:

- The recommended format is three (3) laps and two portages.
- The recommended distance is 3.4 km.
- The distance between turns is approximately 500 m.

- The first portage is after approximately one (1) km.
- The distance may vary due to course related circumstances.

13.3.5 – Masters course recommendations:

- Masters men in kayaks in their 64th year and younger will race five (5) laps of the long distance course.
- Masters women and all Canoe classes in their 64th year and younger will race five (5) laps of the long distance course.
- Masters in the 65th year and older will race one (1) lap less than the younger Masters and will not be required to do portages.

Other

- Start lines, finish lines and turns must be clearly marked with brightly colored buoys at least 2.5 feet in height.
- Races may be run in one stage or in several stages over one or several days as determined by the Host.
- Athletes who have been lapped by a faster athlete in the same or faster class may finish their race and receive an official race time for their overall course.

Event hosts should consider these recommendations when designing courses.

Responsibilities

ACA Marathon Competition Committee

- Post host requests for National Championships and Team Trials on the USA DPR and ACA web sites.
- Review event hosting proposals and select the preferred proposal.
- Obtain official ACA sanctioning for the event.

Athletes

- Register for all races prior to the registration deadline.
- Ensure compliance with age requirements for registered races.
- Provide birthday and age on the first competition day during registration.
- Provide club affiliation, if any.
- Be an active ACA competition member.
- Have a current competition license.
- Be current on SafeSport training
- Sign a liability waiver at event check-in
- Athletes need not wear a team jersey unless required in the event description

Venue

- Provide written confirmation of an event permit.

Host Organizing Committee (HOC or Host)

- Submit required application to the ACA Marathon Competition Committee.
- Ensure one or more officials are overseeing the event.
- Accurately measure the course distances for each lap and overall for each race.
- Deploy and retrieve course marker buoys.
- Create a safe, well-marked portage path.
- Provide a boat weighing station
- Provide a pop-up tent or pavilion for athlete check-in and information
- Ensure there are adequate toilet facilities.
- Provide bottled hydration for athletes, e.g. water, Gatorade or Powerade
- Provide snacks and/or an option to purchase food
- Provide awards for first (gold), second (silver) and third (bronze) places
- Establish an online site for event information and registrations, e.g. Paddle Guru.
- Market the event through the online service, ACA and USA DRP web sites.
- Provide one or more safety boats.
- Provide EMS support onsite.
- Provide race starters, timers, efficient timing procedures and timely reporting of race results.
- Record finish times for all athletes. Laps times are desirable, but optional.
- Record temperature and wind conditions at the beginning and end of the event.
- Provide an event photographer/videographer.
- Obtain liability insurance for the host organization, venue and sponsors, if any.
- Secure adequate funding to cover event expenses.
- Offer rental boats (optional).

Official(s)

- Ensure all ACA guidelines are followed.
- Confirm that course distances have been measured accurately and reconcile any discrepancies.
- Supervise boat weighing.
- International Technical Officials are preferred, but not required.

Sponsors

- Provide funding and other support to the event host based on commitments.