



**About the Club:** The Nantahala Racing Club (NRC) is an independent 501(c)3 non-profit organization that is one of the oldest and most active whitewater racing clubs in the US. The NRC has about 100 active members from ages 5 to 70, whose ability levels range from Olympic-level kayakers to absolute beginners. The club supports canoe and kayak competitions in three disciplines: whitewater slalom, kayak cross, wildwater, and freestyle by hosting several competitions and programs for these disciplines each year. In addition to competitions, the club places a strong emphasis on youth development in whitewater paddling by organizing programs throughout the summer, spring and fall. The club's events and programs are run primarily through a dedicated group of volunteers.

**Accomplishments:** The NRC is internationally recognized as one of the leading whitewater sport clubs in the United States. Members of the NRC have been represented in every Olympic Games and Canoe Slalom World Championships since the club was founded in 1989. In fact, 100% of the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Canoe Slalom team athletes and coaches had an NRC affiliation. The club has hosted two International Canoe Federation World Championship events (2013 ICF Freestyle Worlds and 2015 Junior/U-23 Wildwater Worlds) as well as many national-level events including US Freestyle Team Trails, US Wildwater Team Trials, US OPEN, Junior Olympics, US Slalom Nationals, and Slalom Age-Group Nationals. Aside from competitions, the NRC created an extremely successful "Nantahala Kid's Club" program to help local youth get involved in paddling. This program has been active for over a decade and seen 100's of participants; some of which have gone on to represent the US in Olympic and international competitions. The club has received multiple grants to assist with its programming from organizations such as: The North Face, Cherokee Heritage Foundation, Keen, Columbia, ACA, and others.

**History:** The NRC was founded in the late 1980's by NOC staff members who were training for international slalom competitions. The club provided fundraising opportunities and training sessions in addition to hiring an executive director, hiring coaches, creating & maintaining training sites, setting up training camps, and organizing competitions. The early members would train year-round at the Nantahala River, even when it was cold and snowing, and developed a reputation for being tough. The "Rhino" was chosen as the club mascot because it represented the toughness it takes to become an elite whitewater athlete.

**Governance:** The NRC is governed through a volunteer board of directors that consist of a mix of industry experts, current/former athletes and involved parents. Board members are primarily voted in through the membership, with the ability to appoint members who may bring special talents. The President of the NRC board is Lee Leibfarth, who has a 30 year history as a canoe slalom coach and has an extensive background in working with NRC's youth programs, event organization and fundraising. The NRC board typically meets bi-monthly (usually in conjunction with NRC events); meetings are open all members and run in strict accordance with the club's by-laws.

**Equipment:** The club owns and maintains an extensive fleet of canoes, kayaks and equipment for members to use. A fleet of slalom competition boats are kept in a 30-foot box trailer adjacent to the Nantahala slalom course along with other slalom specific equipment. Plastic recreational kayaks, wildwater boats and flatwater kayaks are kept in the NOC Instruction corral. The NRC maintains three slalom courses: (1) intermediate/advanced gate course at the NOC main campus available year-round, (2) advanced/expert gate course at Nantahala Falls available a week preceding the US OPEN or other National event, (3) beginner gate course at Island Park in Bryson City – maintained only during the summer. The club also helped to coordinate the construction of an advanced freestyle feature (2013 Worlds Hole) located on the Nantahala just above the NOC highway bridge.