

NCAWPA History

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The National Capital Women's Paddling Association (NCAWPA) is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year. NCAWPA, a 501(c)3 nonprofit, focuses on community service by providing paddling opportunities for the greater community and also river stewardship.

NCAWPA involvement with the Washington DC Dragon Boat Festival started in 2001. The Washington DC Dragon Boat Festival, hosted each May by the Chinese Women's League of Washington, DC, is NCAWPA's biggest annual community service activity. NCAWPA has representatives on the DC Festival Committee who help plan the logistics of the event. The organization also helps train festival teams and arranges for boat transport to and from the training and festival race sites. GoPink!DC, NCAWPA's breast cancer survivor and supporter team, helps with the DC Dragon Boat Festival Carnation Ceremony. NCAWPA looks forward to its continued partnership with the Chinese Women's League and to sharing the DC Dragon Boat Festival cultural event with the greater DC area.

Not only is dragon boating one of the fastest-growing international water sports, but it continues to gain popularity in the national capital area, along with outrigger canoeing. The work of establishing an elite women's paddling team began in 1992, with a half dozen women who gingerly stepped into aluminum canoes for their first lesson in handling a paddle. Nine months later, twenty-two of them flew to Thailand to compete in the Fifth International Swan Boat races, as the first U.S. women's swan boat team. The women came home with a silver medal. Eventually, the paddlers started calling themselves Jack's Dragon Ladies, as they practiced paddling in a dragon boat (the Chinese equivalent of a swan boat) on the Potomac River. But soon enough, the paddlers decided to start a dragon boat program in Washington, DC, with the goal of eventually competing in the internationally renowned dragon boat races in Hong Kong. In April 1994, the team incorporated and became known as NCAWPA.

NCAWPA's earlier vision included strengthening the presence of women in paddle sports in the DC area. But NCAWPA has expanded on its original vision and now welcomes male and female paddlers of all ages and with all levels of experience. The organization also expanded in size and now includes three official dragon boat teams and one outrigger team: National Capital Area Outrigger (NCA), which started in the mid-nineties and introduced Hawaiian outrigger canoeing to the DC Area; DC Dragons, DC's original co-ed adult dragon boat racing team; GoPink!DC, DC's first breast cancer survivors and supporters dragon boat team, started in 2006; and Capital City Dragons, DC's first and only ages 12 to 18-years-old youth dragon boat team, started in 2008.

In December 1999, NCAWPA joined forces with Organization for Anacostia Rowing and Sculling, Capital Rowing Club, and the Anacostia Watershed Society, and together these organizations founded the Anacostia Community Boathouse Association (ACBA). NCAWPA's growth and stability during recent years can be attributed to having a permanent home within ACBA. ACBA is located at the Anacostia Community Boathouse, 1900 M St., SE, Washington, DC 20003. Boathouse facilities are shared among NCAWPA, several rowing clubs and local high school and university rowing crews.

In 2000, NCAWPA became the driving force and one of the founding members of the Eastern Region Dragon Boat Federation, which is one of the three regional arms of the United States Dragon Boat Federation. NCAWPA also has a position on the Board of Directors for the Washington DC Dragon Boat Association.

NCAWPA spearheaded the development of dragon boating and outrigger canoeing both locally and along the East Coast. In all, our three dragon boat teams and outrigger team have trained hundreds of people and built ties with the local community. We will continue to fulfill our vision by hosting outreach programs and events to educate and expose the greater DC area to paddling sports.

To get involved in paddling or read more about NCAWPA, visit our website at <http://ncawpa.org>. Our teams can also be found on Facebook at DC Dragons (NCAWPA Dragon Boat), Capital City Dragons (NCAWPA Dragon Boat), GoPink!DC and NCA Outrigger and Twitter (@DCDragonsPaddle).