

The Northland Challenge
2026 Kayak Sprint Official Rules
August 1, 2026

Registration Opens: 7:00AM at Duck Park, Alpena MI

Women's Sport Race Start Time: 9:00AM

Men's Sport Race Start Time: 9:15AM

Recreation Race Start Time: 9:30AM

Races End: 11:15 AM

Awards Presentation: 11:15AM at Duck Park, Alpena

Welcome to the 3rd Annual Northland Challenge. The Northland Challenge is a Kayak paddling event open to the public.

Women's Sport and Men's Sport Division Racers line-up in the river at Duck Park Bridge, and race to the Bagley Bridge at Bagley Rd., approx. 3 miles upstream, then turn around at the buoy at Bagley Bridge and paddle downstream and back to the finish at Duck Park Bridge.

We listened to your feedback and this year we're offering three race divisions:

Women's Sport Division, Men's Sport Division, and a shorter Recreation Division

Recreation Division Racers line up in the river at Duck Park Bridge, and race to the marked red buoy, approx. 1.5 miles upstream, then turn around and paddle downstream and back to the finish at Duck Park Bridge.

Women's Sport Division is a Kayak paddling event open to the public where experts, skilled competitors, and professionals, race for the top prizes: 1st Place - \$500, 2nd Place - \$400, 3rd Place - \$300, 4th Place - \$200, and 5th Place - \$100. Racers line-up in the river at Duck Park Bridge, and race to the Bagley Bridge at Bagley Rd., approx. 3 miles upstream. Turn around at the buoy at Bagley Bridge and paddle 3 miles downstream back and under the Duck Park Bridge for the finish. Prize money will be distributed at the finish line at Duck Park at 11:15 AM. For more information, please visit Northlandcu.com

Men's Sport Division is a Kayak paddling event open to the public where experts, skilled competitors, and professionals, race for the top prizes: 1st Place - \$500, 2nd Place - \$400, 3rd Place - \$300, 4th Place - \$200, and 5th Place - \$100. Racers line-up in the river at Duck Park Bridge, and race to the Bagley Bridge at Bagley Rd., approx. 3 miles upstream. Turn around at the buoy at Bagley Bridge and paddle 3 miles downstream back and under the Duck Park Bridge for the finish. Prize money will be distributed at the finish line at Duck Park at 11:25 AM. For more information, please visit Northlandcu.com

Recreation Division is a Kayak paddling event open to the public. This division offers a fun and laid-back competitive experience and exciting prizes: 1st Place - \$150, 2nd Place - \$75, 3rd Place - \$50, 4th Place - Prize Basket, 5th Place - Prize Basket. Professional racers and racing boats are excluded from this

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August 1, 2026

division. Racers line-up in the river at Duck Park Bridge, and race to the marked red buoy approx. 1.5 miles upstream. Turn around at the red buoy paddle 1.5 miles downstream back and under the Duck Park Bridge for the finish.

Prize money will be distributed at the finish line at Duck Park at 11:35 AM.

For more information, please visit Northlandcu.com

Northland has outlined the following guidelines for paddlers to follow while participating in the Northland Challenge Kayak Sprint:

Participants and Registration

- All participants must 18 years of age or older at the time of registration
- All participants must have their own kayak, paddle, and life vest (None of these items will be provided)
- Kayaks are to be propelled by individual paddle effort; kayaks propelled by motors, pedals, sails etc. are not permitted
- Only one participant per kayak will be accepted
- The fee for early registration is \$28.00
- Early registration will be accepted from April 20th, 2026 to July 31st, 2026
- To be registered for the event, the registration information and registration fee must be postmarked or received by July 31st, 2026
- Participants may register online following a registration link provided, and mailing registration fee to: 1161 N. Bagley Rd., Alpena MI 49707
- The name of the participant must be included on MEMO line of the check
- Participants may also register by printing off and completing the registration form, and mailing the registration fee and form to the same address referenced above
- Late registration may be accepted the day of the event on a limited basis
- The fee for late registration is \$35.00

The Northland Challenge
2026 Kayak Sprint Official Rules
August 1, 2026

- All participants are required to be checked in by 8:30 AM (Check in opens at 7:30 AM)
- All participants are required to sign a release and waiver form at check in
- All participants are required to be registered, pay (or have paid) their registration fee, and checked into the event, and issued a number by Northland Challenge Officials in order to participate in the event
- The participant to race is as indicated on the registration form; no participant substitutions will be accepted/allowed
- There will be no refunds of registration fees for early withdrawals or no-shows to the event
- At check in, all participants will have their kayak and equipment (paddle, life vest) inspected
- Participants without proper water-safe kayaks, paddles, or life vests will be disqualified
- At check in, all participants must receive a number at registration and display their number visibly on the chest and back for the duration of the competition
- Under no circumstance may any illegal drug(s) be taken during this event
- Participants may not be under the influence of alcohol and/or other substances that may cause cognitive impairment during the event
- The Northland Challenge Committee reserves the right to deny any entry if there is a concern/thread of safety and soundness

During the Race

- All participants must complete the course following the marked race path; the use of short cuts is prohibited and participants who deviate from the marked race path will be disqualified
- No kayak and/or participant may be towed or pulled by another participant and/or non-participant
- Participant numbers must be visible at all times during the race
- A participant leaving their kayak anytime during the race will result in disqualification from the event

The Northland Challenge
2026 Kayak Sprint Official Rules
August 1, 2026

- If a participant's kayak capsizes, a designated safety boat or watercraft will be available to assist
- If a participant needs medical attention, a designated safety boat or watercraft will be available to assist
- Per Michigan DNR and Michigan law regulations no paddler is to throw trash in the river. If you are seen doing so you will be disqualified
- Commonly accepted rules of sportsmanship will prevail
- Intentionally capsizing or damaging other paddlers' kayaks will result in automatic disqualification
- Participants who are disqualified from the race during the event will be asked to leave the race path
- Depending on the severity of a disqualification, paddlers may be asked to not participate in further Northland Challenges
- Inclement weather causing potential race cancellation will be made by Northland Challenge committee members

Winning the Race

- The five participants who cross the finish line first, without penalties, will be determined the first, second, third, fourth and fifth place winners of the competition respectively. The Northland Challenge Committee reserves the right to make the final determination of winner(s) or facilitate a tie-breaker sprint in the event the results are undetermined (too close to call)
- Once participants have crossed the finish line, they must exit the water immediately/as soon as practicable to allow room for other participants to finish
- Winning participants must be present at the Awards Ceremony (scheduled for 11:15AM, 11:25 AM, and 11:35 AM) in order to collect their winnings
- The Northland Challenge Committee reserves the right to modify the rules

Finally, the most important detail: Have Fun!