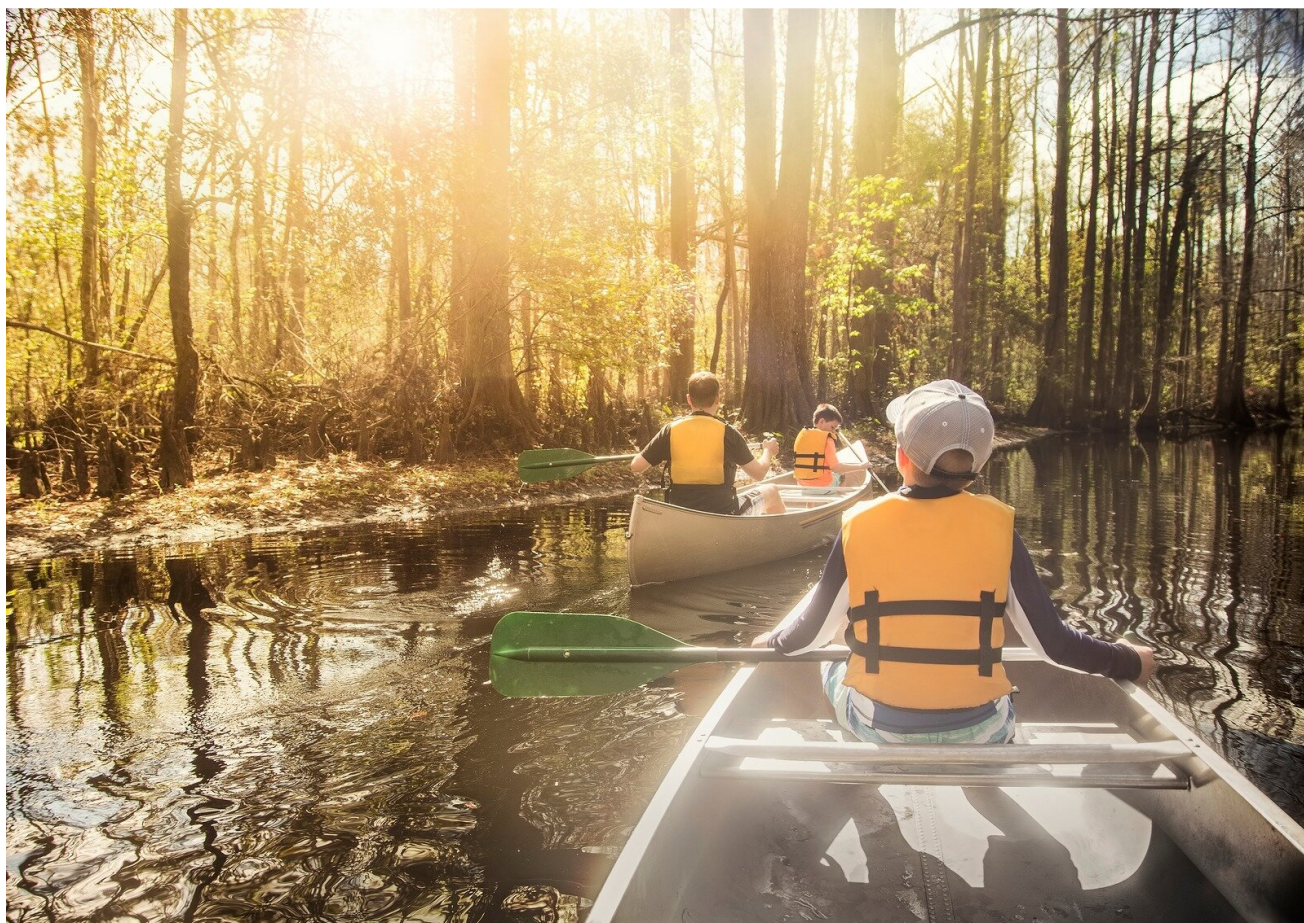




# Making noise over silent sports

DIANNA STAMPFLER | THURSDAY, MARCH 2, 2023



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For those who enjoy the great outdoors, Michigan is a vast playground full of waterways, forests, state parks, national lakeshores and the largest section of the 4,800-mile, eight-state North Country Trail (which stretches from North Dakota to Vermont, with about 1,150 miles running through Michigan's two peninsulas).

Michigan is home (and home-away-from-home) to paddlers, bikers, hikers, campe



anglers, stargazers, birdwatchers and others who are eager to escape the noise of the world and find ways to connect (or reconnect) with nature in the simplest of ways.

The Quiet Adventures Symposium (QWS) – an annual gathering of trade show exhibitors, speakers and gear demonstrators – is meant for these outdoor lovers of silent sports. This year's event, presented by the Quiet Adventure Society, is Saturday, March 4 (9 a.m. -5:30 p.m.) at the Michigan State University Pavilion in East Lansing.

The first QWS was held in 1996, loosely organized by a group of 11 volunteers and friends and by 2007, the non-profit Quiet Water Society was established. The Friends of the Quiet Water Society came next, created by people who support the Society's mission, to provide additional help and ensure that the Symposium and other work by the Society can continue.

Over the years, the focus has expanded beyond Michigan's waterways to a broader emphasis on additional non-motorized activities and the name was changed to Quiet Adventures Symposium (QAS). This year, with collaboration from the League of Michigan Bicyclists, the group will become known as the Quiet Adventure Society.

Led by a dedicated board of directors and scores of planning committee volunteers, the Symposium draws as many as 2,000 in-person attendees (even COVID, an MSU basketball game or a snowstorm don't interfere).

"Michigan has boat shows and RV shows, but before Quiet Water Symposium began, there was no venue that catered to those of us who enjoy the quiet, non-motorized activities on the many rivers and lakes in beautiful Michigan," says Cynthia Donovan, QAS president. "Of course, people have to get to these activities and Williams Subaru has been a long partner in the event, always bringing in the Subarus with canoes, bikes and kayaks on top."

As many as 100 exhibitors will be on hand for this year's event, held as part of MSU's Agriculture and Natural (ANR) Week. Dozens of state and local organizations contribute

to the day's programming, from the Coast Guard Auxiliary, Michigan DNR and the Association of State Dam Safety Officials.

A new nonprofit this year is the Michigan Waterways Stewards, focused on collaborative efforts between advocacy groups, volunteers, local government and local railroads to clean up our rivers. Many of Michigan's regional watershed groups are also on hand, including Friends of the Rogue, Friends of the Maple River, Grass River Natural Area, Grand River Environmental Action Team (GREAT) and even Isle Royale and Keweenaw Parks Association.

"The Power of Water lets people sit in a selection of kayaks and check out new paddles," Donovan says. "Custom wooden boats and paddles are always on my dream list, including Old Moustache Canoe Paddles and Bowery Boatworks. The biking community will be well represented by locally owned Denny's Central Park Cycles."

Several other local, regional and national businesses make a point to join in the Symposium to reach outdoor customers, including Moosejaw Mountaineering (sponsor of this year's event swag bags) and Synthia March Jewelry, with her distinctive Northwoods pieces.

"Over a number of years, I've been both an exhibitor and a presenter," says Michael Gray, founder of Uncommon Adventures, a paddling guide operation that has been in business since the 1980s. "Lansing is where I started my company 40 years ago, so that particular symposium was homegrown by the paddling community that gave me my start. Being part of it gives me a chance to reconnect to that community and to share with new members."

Among this year's nearly three dozen speaker sessions are "How Gravel has Made Cycling Accessible," "Reducing Risk of Tick Bites," "How to be a Happy Camper" and "Spelunking at Pictured Rocks." Noted author Jim DuFresne will present "End of the Trail: A Life Well Spent Hiking in the Woods and Sleeping on the Ground " while bicyclist James Studinger will talk about his "Tour Da Yoop Eh!". A trio of speakers will also present kayaking, hiking and moose/wolf research on and around Lake Superior's Isle Royale.

"We are fortunate to have nationally known people, including Gary and Joanie McGuffin who will present their new work on the Boreal," says Donovan. "We are always looking to include a more diverse population to enjoy the outdoors, and several speakers will

address that. Chicago Adventure Therapy, led by Andrea Knepper and her team, is doing wonderful work in the Chicago area, and they work locally with Opportunities Unlimited for the Blind. In the biking community, Sean Warren and Todd Poquette invest their time and effort to get youth outdoors on bikes with Michigan Scholastic Cycling Association (MiSCA) and 906 Adventure Team, respectively.”

Andrea Graham and Scott Kruger will speak about the “Life and Legacy of Verlen Kruger.” Verlen was a world-record canoeist from Delta Mills who paddled over 100,000 miles in his lifetime – including a Two Continent Canoe Expedition (18,232 miles) and the Ultimate Canoe Challenge, the longest canoe journey ever at 28,040 miles. In 2003, Verlen was awarded “The River Guardian” for his “outstanding achievements and records in paddle sports, for bringing international awareness to our environmentally sensitive waterways and for fostering stewardship of our treasured water resources.”

After his passing in 2004, the honor was renamed “The Verlen Kruger Award” to recognize the person (or persons) who has supported and promoted paddle sports along with water conservation, education, or history in Michigan.

“This year the awardees are Gary and Linda De Kock,” notes Donovan. “They are currently on a fundraising journey (not their first) on the Suwannee River for the organization Water for People that works to ensure that people, especially in the developing world, have access to clean water. Gary and Linda were President and Secretary of QWS for years and kept the dream of the Symposium and of Verlen Kruger’s legacy alive.”

Award-winning Nashville songwriter Jerry Vandiver and his fiddler, Amberly Rosen, will entertain with songs such as “No Such Thing as Too Many Boats” while Paddling Adventures Radio will be interviewing speakers, exhibitors and guests for later podcast broadcasts.

There is even something for the kids to get them excited about the great outdoors. Staff and volunteers from 4-H will run hands-on activities for those ages 5 to 18. Youngsters will learn about environmental resource management, fisheries and marine life, entomology, soils and the interconnection between people and nature.

Tickets for the symposium are available at the door for \$20. Student tickets are \$5 and children under 12 are admitted free.

*Dianna Stampfler has been writing professionally since high school. She is the president of Promote Michigan and the author of Michigan's Haunted Lighthouses and Death & Lighthouses on the Great Lakes, both from The History Press.*

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