



## USRowing 2023-24 Regatta Schedule FAQs

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### GENERAL

#### 1. What are your top goals for the 2023-24 regatta seasons?

First, to significantly improve planning and communication by:

- announcing the schedule for the next two years by early October
- releasing preliminary entry packets for comment before end of year and finalizing by February 1
- finalizing onsite operations by March 1, including practice, parking, and volunteer policy
- sharing details behind our decision-making process, constraints, and tradeoffs
- hiring up the team so we can respond more quickly to your needs until we're able to build systems and self-service tools

Second, to make progress wherever possible on our priorities of safety, fairness, access, comfort, and delight. Click [here](#) for our town hall presentation about regatta priorities and venue selection from last July.

#### 2. What tactics are you employing to make progress against your regatta priorities?

- *Deliver more – and more dependable – regional masters racing opportunities.* We're bringing back Southwest masters and partnering with existing regattas to deliver championships to the Central and Mid-Atlantic regions. We're moving Northwest masters to Lowell, Ore., given the environmental risks to summer competition in Vancouver, Wash. In 2023 all five regattas will take place the weekend of June 24.
- *Secure a suitable location for youth nationals.* We'll continue to host in Sarasota, Fla., through 2024 given Nathan Benderson Park's purpose-built infrastructure and commitment to partnership. Identifying another appropriate, geographically diverse, and available site is a top priority for our long-term venue planning.
- *Build expertise at additional venues.* Six of the 14 venues where we'll host or partner in 2023-24 are new or have been absent from our rotation for years. The learnings across a variety of locations will be instrumental to our strategy.
- *Unify our summer national championships.* Summer nationals and masters nationals have traditionally been several weeks apart, forcing many teams to choose one regatta, delaying masters' transition to head race training, and straining our ability to deliver great experiences. In July 2023, we will hold the regattas on back-to-back weekends just 150 miles apart in Bethel, Ohio, and Indianapolis, so clubs can more readily attend both events. In July 2024, we will host the inaugural RowFest Summer Championships in Oklahoma City, bringing together the entire rowing community for 10 days of competition, development, and entertainment for competitors and spectators alike.

- *Bring our values wherever we go.* Our venue and vendor procedures will launch by December 31, and we will partner with each site to ensure everyone who attends our events is treated with dignity and respect. We will celebrate the unique identities of our participants and the members of the communities we visit through local partnerships and onsite experiences, as well as strengthen the bonds we share through our love of rowing.

### **3. What feedback informed your tactics?**

We had structured conversations with nearly two dozen program leaders and reviewed survey feedback from each of our hosted regattas, which we integrated with the regatta priorities and venue selection considerations we reviewed in last July's town hall presentation.

### **4. What were the biggest challenges?**

We started with a list of nearly 30 venues and selected 14 based on the following constraints, which significantly impacted geographic flexibility for 2023-24:

- *Ability and interest.* Certain venues lack or have lost their local organizing committee (LOC) and volunteer bases, while several sport commissions and visitor bureaus have different priorities post-Covid and are not ready to engage. Others are undergoing infrastructure or organizational changes that will delay partnership to 2025+. To address these critical limitations, we will develop a flexible partnership model that enables USRowing to serve as the LOC and are launch a volunteer policy in 2023 to improve regatta support.
- *Availability.* Many preferred venues have already-scheduled events, community commitments (i.e. unrestricted pleasure boating and the income they generate), and/or permit constraints.
- *Venue fit.* Our sport lacks venues necessary for our competition level, scale, and reliability. Many sites we are interested in require substantial infrastructure and staffing upgrades not feasible in this timeframe. Others are too susceptible to cancellation from environmental/climate change factors.

### **5. When will you announce the 2025 regatta schedule? What are your priorities?**

By March 31, 2023. We will build upon the changes we've made for 2023-24 and keep chipping away at the challenges that limit our options with a focus on building geographic diversity.

### **6. What is the plan for 2026 and beyond?**

In November, we will meet with each competition region to accelerate dialogue on long-term venue planning. By December 31, we will publish updated requests for proposal (RFPs) to the community for our 2026+ regional and national regattas. In 2023, we will partner with representatives, local organizing committees, and visitor bureaus from each region on objectives, requirements, and timelines for one national-caliber and at least two additional regional-caliber venues in their area.

### **7. How can I help?**

To start, please join us next month for your region-specific discussion about long-term venue planning to share your thoughts (stay tuned for details). We'll talk about our fast-approaching 2025 decisions, our forthcoming RFPs, and preliminary target venues for long-term planning.

## YOUTH SERIES

**8. You've hosted youth nationals at Nathan Benderson Park since 2019 and have committed to the venue for another two years. Why aren't you cycling locations, so teams from certain regions don't consistently pay higher travel costs?**

We will cycle the location of youth nationals once we identify another venue partner with the infrastructure, expertise, reliability, availability, and interest needed to deliver a great experience for competitors and spectators. We were excited to bring the regatta back to Lake Natoma (Gold River, Calif.) in this timeframe, but the venue is unable to host the regatta for the foreseeable future because California State Parks does not want to displace the boating public. Other potential venues pose similar challenges, have not been ready to engage, or are already partnering with us on other key events. Our long-term venue plan will address these issues head on, and we will keep challenging our thinking on site selection. In the interim, we will leverage the consistency of our continued presence at Nathan Benderson Park to improve your experience and our operations.

**9. Youth Nationals has gotten so big. Why not hold a separate event for U16 and U15, so you have more flexibility where you host and don't dilute the accomplishment of qualifying for the regatta by including less experienced athletes?**

The exposure, inclusion, and scale benefits of including U16 and U15 athletes at youth nationals are instrumental to the growth of our sport. Accounting for 18% of events and 11% of entries in 2022, these categories are not a primary driver of our venue limitations, have had no demonstrable impact on the competition experience for older athletes, and are not yet large enough to justify a standalone event. If we extended this argument to include U17 athletes (47% of events and 43% of entries), we would be hosting two smaller regattas that introduce a different set of experience, operations, and financial challenges for all of us. Until and unless the tradeoffs change, we will pursue a consolidated event to deliver high-quality competition to our youth athletes.

**10. What are you doing to make youth nationals more accessible for teams traveling further distances and competitors with the greatest financial need?**

We are exploring ways to help normalize participation and travel costs but can't yet commit to support or a specific offer. We will decide by December 31.

**11. Are you going to stick with time trials at youth events? What about the regatta experience for teams that didn't progress past their trial and never got the chance to line up against other boats?**

Yes, we will continue using time trials as a fair and efficient way to seed semifinals and determine lane allocations at these regattas. In 2023, we will restructure our schedule so that every entry at one of our youth regattas is guaranteed at least one race after their time trial. We'll provide more information when our preliminary regatta packets go live on December 1.

**12. Practice logistics at youth nationals were a mess this year. What are you doing to improve that experience?**

Practice sessions will be allocated to certain teams/boats and the trailer area will be clearly labeled with launch and recovery traffic patterns to keep boat traffic flowing. We have not finalized the breakdown of who will be able to practice when, but boats will be allotted a practice timeslot and teams will be asked to

arrange their travel and logistics based on this information. This practice allotment will be available March 1, 2023.

**13. What about non-hosted qualifier events for youth nationals?**

Information about our non-hosted qualifier events will be included in the preliminary youth nationals regatta packet on December 1.

**MASTERS REGIONALS**

**14. Why are you holding all masters regionals on the same weekend?**

A nationwide competition weekend adds excitement and attention to masters rowing and standardizes the USRowing competition season for all masters athletes.

**15. Why did you change venues for Northwest masters?**

Vancouver Lake's (Vancouver, Wash.) increasing environmental issues in mid/late-summer have made a masters regional event there untenable for both the LOC and USRowing. Moving to Dexter Reservoir mitigates those risks and enables us to help scale an additional venue that will benefit all west coast rowing.

**16. Why are you going to Lake Otay (Chula Vista, Calif.) for Southwest masters?**

Bringing back Southwest masters was one of our priorities for 2023. The Chula Vista Elite Athletic Training Center is prioritizing racecourse investments to host additional regattas and is excited to help us deliver other activities for masters athletes at the center.

**17. How are Central and Mid-Atlantic regattas different from the others?**

Stars & Stripes (Oklahoma City) and Diamond State (Townsend, Del.) are existing regattas that we will designate as official regional masters championships and assist to enhance the competitor experience, but they will be run by their respective venues. We chose this path to support these much-loved regattas and to avoid diluting competition/reducing viability at any event.

**18. How are you planning to support five masters regionals on the same weekend?**

In addition to USRowing staff, we will partner with contracted regatta directors that have regional/venue expertise.

**SUMMER NATIONALS & MASTERS NATIONALS**

**19. Why are you hosting the regattas on back-to-back weekends and so near one another in 2023?**

Many rowing programs want to attend both regattas but haven't been able to because of the cost and complexity of trailering boats multiple times to divergent locations. In addition, moving masters nationals to July will address requests to transition sooner to head race season and reduce the likelihood that our most engaged athletes must choose between masters nationals and the World Rowing masters regatta.

**20. Wasn't masters nationals originally supposed to be in Sarasota for 2023?**

That was the plan until we decided on back-to-back regattas for 2023 as the first step towards a unified regatta in 2024.

**21. Why are you unifying these events as RowFest in 2024?**

In addition to the reasons above, combining these regattas and expanding our charter will breathe new life into summer competition that has become transactional rather than transformational, provide value beyond racing for more members of our community, and reach new audiences by combining sport with entertainment, learning, and development. We're excited to partner with Oklahoma City as our proving ground for this reimagined experience and will leverage planned success to rotate RowFest regionally thereafter.