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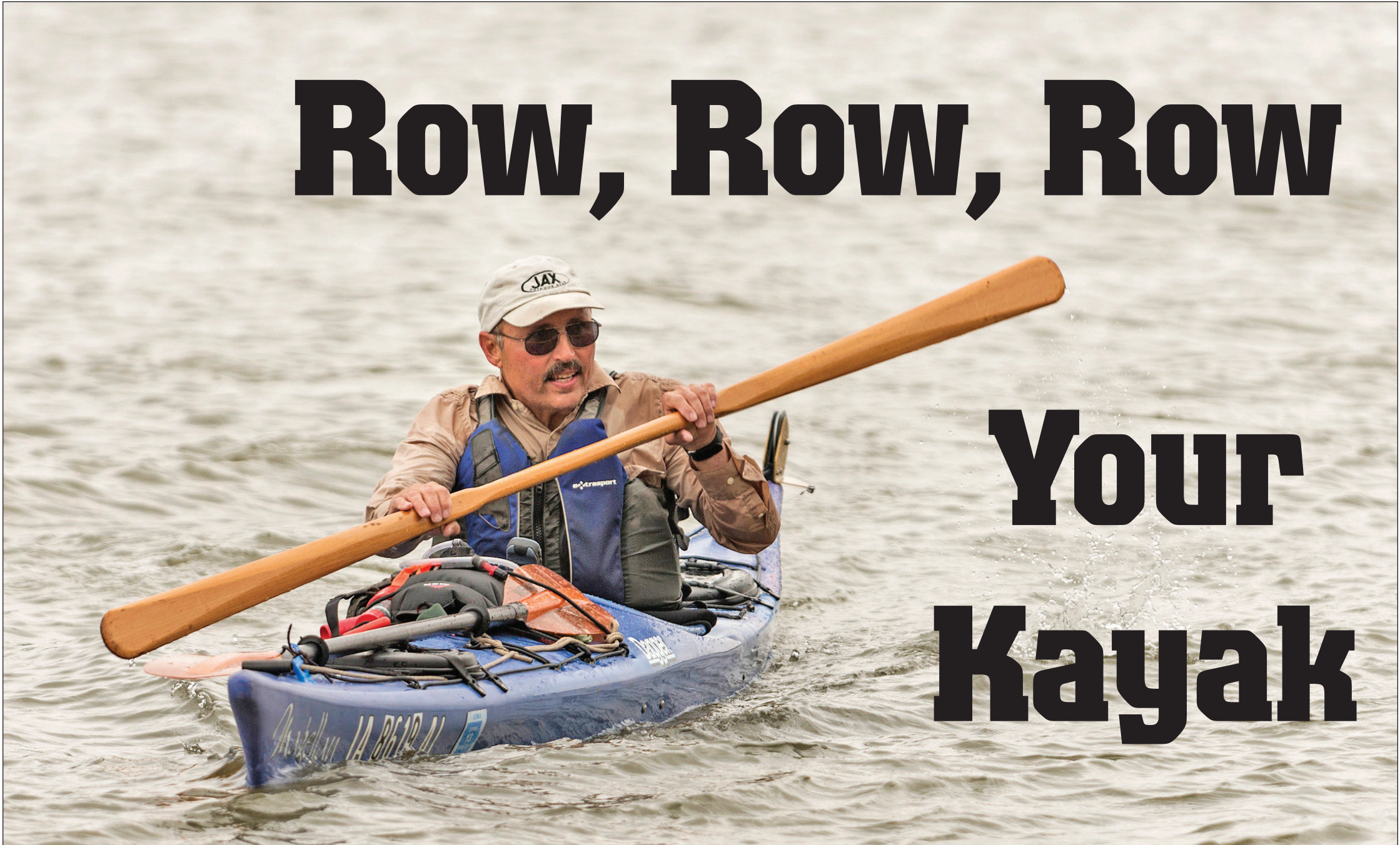


PHOTO: AARON PACKARD

With the numerous bodies of water in the area, kayaking has grown immensely in popularity. This weekend's annual South Dakota Kayak Challenge now draws more than 130 kayakers to the Missouri River.

# Row, Row, Row Your Kayak

**BY DEREK BARTOS**  
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For Hartley Alsgaard, there's just something special about kayaking.

"I've always liked being out on the water," the retired Yankton resident said. "It's quiet and I can go at my own pace."

Alsgaard, who began kayaking a few years ago as an activity he could do with his family, is one of many people from the area who have recently taken up the sport.

Lisa Scheve, director of the Yankton Convention and Visitors Bureau, said that not only have more people become involved with kayaking around Yankton, but they are also extending their seasons.

"We're used to seeing people on the water in June, July and August, but more people are experiencing the water in September and October, and also into March and April," she said. "Since with kayaking you're don't have to physically get into the water, it provides more opportunities for people to get out there and enjoy the outdoors."

For those who are interested in hitting the water, there are three necessities, said Mike Freeman, sales manager at Ace Bike & Fit-

ness in Yankton.

"A kayak, a paddle and your life jacket — those are you're basic needs," he said.

Freeman said there are two basic styles of kayaks: sit-on-tops and sit-insides.

"They're just like how they

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**LISA SCHEVE**

sound," he said. "The nice thing about a sit-on-top is that you can get in and out of them fairly easily. You don't have to crawl into them. However, their center of gravity is a little bit higher, so that makes them a little more tippy."

Sit-insides are what most people think of when picturing kayaks, Freeman said.

"You sit inside, your center of gravity is lower and you're a little less tippy," he said.

Kayaks also come in a variety of sizes, Freeman said, with the 10-foot kayak being the most popular in the Yankton area.

"They are easy to transport and do fairly well for the type of waters we have around here," he said. "Longer kayaks, like your

sea kayaks, are more stable and can travel faster, but aren't as common."

Freeman recommended those who are looking to buy equipment to talk to people they know who are kayakers for recommendations.

"Or you can stop in," he said.

easier for people to get started."

Additional locations that provide more of a challenge include Lewis and Clark Lake and the Missouri National Recreational River (MNRR), Scheve said.

"There's a number of opportunities for people to experience it," she said.

More than 150 kayakers are expected to take advantage of those opportunities this Saturday and Sunday during the 2013 South Dakota Kayak Challenge.

The 72-mile race, now in its third year, travels down the MNRR from Yankton to Sioux City, Iowa.

Alsgaard has participated in the event each time it's been held and said he is once again looking forward to the challenge.

"I think it's great," he said.

"There is a real sense of accomplishment when you finish it."

Whether one is a novice or veteran of water sports, Freeman encourages anyone who loves the outdoors to give kayaking a try.

"It's a great recreational thing to do, and pretty much anybody can enjoy it," he said.

You can follow Derek Bartos on Twitter at [twitter.com/d\\_bartos](https://twitter.com/d_bartos)



**ABOVE: The annual South Dakota Kayak Challenge has grown tremendously in popularity, drawing numerous kayakers to the region for the 72-mile race from Yankton to Sioux City, Iowa. This photo was taken during the 2012 event. (Photo: Aaron Packard)**

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