

1. LEAVE NO TRACE

We wouldn't insult you by preaching the positives of keeping your litter off riverbanks, but the impact you can make on ecosystems goes way beyond garbage. Among the basic principles of Leave No Trace: schedule your trip at times of reasonable river flows—if you have to bushwack out because the water level was too high, you are leaving a trace, and if you're running the river it at a scrapey level, you're scraping more than just rocks. You're probably scraping away some delicate flora. Also, you can dump urine into the main current of many high-volume (more than 500 cfs) rivers. In low-volume rivers, scatter liquid waste 200 feet from water and away from camp and trails. Learn more about the LNT ethic at www.lnt.org.

35 FOR LIFE

TRUE PADDLERS ARE ABOUT DOING. SO, READ ON, PADDLER, AND DISCOVER A NEW APPROACH FOR YOUR PADDLING AND LIFE

2. PADDLE INTO YOUR 80s

When will you stop paddling? Hopefully, we'll all be on the water until climate change soaks it all up. Here's how you do it: drop out of the lustful lifestyle of excess. With a healthy diet and way of life, and a little luck, you could be paddling all that Polar Icecap meltwater in the year 2050! A recent *Men's Health* article stated that eating raw vegetables, losing fat, having a large social network, and maintaining a positive outlook can add more than 20 years to your life. So ask yourself, what's better? Paddling prowess for decades, or 3 a.m. street churros?

Log on to www.realage.com and take a test to find out if you're younger, older, or equal to your calendar age.

3. ADOPT A RIVER

Paddlers take pride in being arguably the most eco-conscious users of our nation's waterways, but just talking about it is as pointless as John McCain campaigning in the Haight-Ashbury District. Too many rivers are laden with the flotsam of careless and ignorant polluters. A cleanup is a fun way to restore the purity of a river—even if your fellow paddlers weren't the ones who put it there.

Log on to www.americanrivers.org to find or organize a river cleanup.

4. TRAIN FOR AN OPEN-WATER RACE

Pick a race that is suitable for your skill and conditioning level, says two-time USA Surf Ski champion Greg Barton, then plot out the amount of time (hours per week) you can put toward training. "The goal is to maintain consistent training," Barton says. The advantages you'll gain for your regular paddling are improved fitness, more efficient technique, and the experience of pushing yourself through adversity (head winds, strong currents).

5. WIN IT

Making up lost time is difficult, so "the start is obviously an important part of the race," says Barton, who also won two gold medals in the 1988 Olympic Games in the K-1 and K-2 1000-meter races. Barton also advises to maintain a consistent pace and leave a little bit in your reserve at the finish. If you're trailing someone, but feel you're a stronger paddler, follow his line and you'll eventually catch him. If he's stronger, however, you may have to take more chances and try to cut angles. Know the course, as well, to identify currents and eddies. "There's an art to learning the strategy of racing," Barton says. "Experience definitely helps."