



USRA
UNITED STATES
RAFTING
ASSOCIATION

RACE BULLETIN

BULLETIN NO. 3

NATIONAL TEAM SELECTION EVENT

USRA 2026 US RAFTING NATIONALS

THREE EVENTS · ONE GOAL · ONE TEAM

SPRINT · SLALOM · RX

NUGGET CAMPGROUND, CALIFORNIA

AUGUST 11-16, 2026



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BULLETIN NO. 3 – WELCOME

Welcome to the USRA 2026 US Rafting Nationals

On behalf of the United States Rafting Association (USRA), it is our pleasure to welcome athletes, coaches, officials, families, and spectators from across the country to the **USRA 2026 US Rafting Nationals**. The **Nugget Campground and Race Course** on the South Fork American River in California's iconic Chili Bar corridor will host the country's best raft racers competing in three disciplines: Sprint, Slalom, and RX.

All three races will be held on the short section of the South Fork American just below the Chili Bar Dam, finishing at the beach at Nugget — a compact, technical Class III course set in the heart of California's Gold Rush country. With reliable and consistent hydroelectric releases and clean lines for spectator viewing, it's one of the finest natural venues for classic-style raft racing in North America. Open Teams selections from this event will inform the rosters of teams representing Team USA at international raft racing events under the new United Rafting Federation (URF).

We're committed to a professional, safe, well-run event that showcases U.S. raft racing at its best — and to leaving the river better than we found it. Beyond the racing, the South Fork of the American Valley offers world-class whitewater, oak-and-pine canyon scenery, the historic town of Coloma where gold was first discovered in 1848, and the welcoming small-river towns of Placerville and Lotus.



Team USA at the 2026 Junior & U23 World Rafting Championships — Pau-Pyrénées, France.

Three events. One goal. One team. See you at Nugget.

FROM THE EVENT DIRECTOR

A Word from the Event Director

Welcome to the USRA 2026 US Rafting Nationals. I'm **Aaron Tippet**, Event Director for this championship and Vice President of the United States Rafting Association.

Building a national-team selection event on the South Fork American has been a labor of love, and I couldn't be prouder of the venue, the course, and the community coming together at Nugget. Whether this is your first Nationals or your tenth, my commitment to you is a professional, safe, and fair race that gives every crew a real shot at representing Team USA on the world stage.

Our sport is growing fast under the new United Rafting Federation, and the crews who rise here will carry the flag at World Cups and World Championships to come. If you have any questions before or during the event, please reach out — my contact details are at the back of this bulletin.

See you on the water.

Aaron Tippet

Event Director · USRA 2026 US Rafting Nationals



Aaron Tippet — Event Director, USRA 2026 US Rafting Nationals.



Team USA at the World Rafting Championships.



Race Director

Valerie Burman will serve as Race Director. Once racing begins, Valerie assumes authority for the race as a whole and Aaron Tippet relinquishes his role.

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Key Dates

August 10–12, 2026 (Monday–Wednesday) – Unofficial Training (no water release on Wednesday)

August 12, 2026 (Wednesday) – Set-up & Accreditation

August 13–15, 2026 (Thursday–Saturday) – Racing

August 15, 2026 (Saturday) – Awards, Tear-Down

August 16, 2026 (Sunday) – Optional Chili-Bar Private-Trip / Downriver Fun Day

Three days of competition in Sprint, Slalom, and RX, plus an optional downriver private trip. All participants are encouraged to assist with set-up, tear-down, and race volunteer duties.

Registration & Entries

All entries must be submitted online through **Eventbrite**.

Early Registration: through July 15

Regular Registration: July 16 – August 7

Registration Deadline: August 7

Athlete substitutions on registered teams require USRA approval before accreditation on August 12. Liability waivers, Code of Conduct agreements, eligibility verification, and proof of ACA membership (or event-specific enrollment) will be collected and verified at accreditation.

Attendance Requirements

- Each athlete must complete individual, in-person registration/check-in at accreditation. **Required.**
- Team Captains must attend all Captains' Meetings and race-day huddles. **Required.**
- All athletes are encouraged to attend the Awards ceremony, regardless of results. **Expected.**

Pre-event Training (prior to August 10)

We know many teams like to get on the water early, and we'd love to help make that happen – just reach out to the Event Director in advance to coordinate. Because Nugget Campground is private commercial property, early training does require a seasonal parking pass, and we ask teams to be mindful of ongoing operations and slalom club activity while on site. One note: the Chili Bar Dam put-in used for Nationals itself isn't available for advance training, since it requires separate utility district permits and insurance coverage – but there's still plenty of great water nearby to get your crew dialed in before race week.

Unofficial Training (August 10–12)

Unofficial training runs from August 10–12 and all pre-event rules remain in effect during this period. Seasonal parking permits are not required for athletes already registered as campers or day-use participants; however, teams should note that water releases are not guaranteed on Wednesday, August 12.

AT A GLANCE

Facts & Useful Information

Name	USRA 2026 US Rafting Nationals
Period	Official Racing: August 13–15
Venue	Nugget Campground, South Fork American River, California
Race Section & Class	Chili Bar Dam to Nugget Campground — Class III
Anticipated Flow	1,300–1,500 CFS (release-controlled, gauge: CBR)
Local Reference	“Chili Bar” — ~15 minutes from Placerville, CA

Course Description

All three disciplines (Sprint, Slalom, RX) run on the same Chili Bar Dam-to-Nugget section. No racing occurs below Nugget. Course design varies by discipline and will be finalized by the Course Setting Committee on each race day.

Sprint: Individual time trial, 2 runs (best counts)

Slalom: Upstream & downstream gates using river features; 2 runs (best counts)

RX: Knockout bracket racing (16/8/4/Final), side-by-side heats

Sanctioning & Organisers

United States Rafting Association (USRA) — usarftassociation.com. Sanctioned under USRA Race Rules, with results contributing to USRA national rankings and team selection for international competition under the URF.

Official Communication

Web: usarftassociation.com · Email: usarftassociation@gmail.com

Event Director: Aaron Tippet · Social: FB/[unitedstatesraftingassociation](https://www.facebook.com/unitedstatesraftingassociation) · IG [@usa_rafting](https://www.instagram.com/usa_rafting)

ON THE WATER

Rules, Categories & Events

Competition Rules

The USRA 2026 US Rafting Nationals follow current USRA Race Rules (usraftassociation.com/race-rules), aligned with URF rules and standards. Chief Judge decisions on the field are final.

Divisions & Categories

Athletes may compete in any eligible division and may enter multiple divisions/categories with the same or different crew, subject to registration fees.

Division - Categories	Age Eligibility	Team
Open Men/Women/Mixed	15+ (born 2011 and older)	R4 + reserve
Open Para	18+ (born 2008 and older); requires 2 URF-eligible para athletes in boat	R4 + reserve
Masters Men/Women/Mixed	40+ (born 1986 and older)	R4 + reserve
U23 Men/Women/Mixed	15-23 (born 2003-2011)	R4 + reserve
U19 Men/Women	15-19 (born 2007-2011)	R4 + reserve
Development	12+ (born 2014 and older). Team provides own raft.	R4 + reserve
R2	12+ (born 2014 and older). Team provides own raft.	R2 + reserve

Age based on calendar year. Mixed teams require 2 women in a boat. Development and R2 are not internationally recognized.

Race Disciplines

Sprint — A hard, fast burst of speed over a short course, typically two to three minutes of all-out paddling. Rafts are set off one by one and teams race the clock. Two runs per team; best run counts. Sprint results determine Slalom competition order and set heats and lane-choice priority for RX.

Slalom — A technical course with upstream and downstream gates, similar in concept to canoe/kayak slalom. Rafts are set off one by one. Touched and missed gates carry penalties. Two runs per team; best run counts.

RX — The most exciting discipline: two teams set off together for a fast-paced paddle to the finish, negotiating buoys and gates side by side. Run as a knockout elimination format.



Team USA at the World Rafting Championships.

Who Can Race

All athletes must hold a current ACA Annual or Event Membership to race (URF Arts. 12.2, 14.4). International teams are welcome to enter, but are not eligible for the national title and will race in a separate RX event (URF Arts. 13.4-13.6, 14.1).

Athlete License – The Flow

Athletes who qualify for the national team and want to race internationally need an athlete license. Licenses are issued through The Flow, and the license is held by the individual athlete.

Register at theflow.rsportz.com/memberships — create an account, choose the Athlete License, complete the profile form, and pay online. Keep the confirmation.

SIGN UP BEFORE THE LAST RACE ON SATURDAY

Your athlete license must be in place before the end of the final race on Saturday, 15 August 2026. If you anticipate winning your category, or think you may otherwise qualify for international competition, sign up now — do not wait for results.

Full details: usraftassociation.com/athlete-license-the-flow

HOW WE SCORE IT

Overall Scoring

Under the URF Classic Format, the standard disciplines are Sprint, RX, and Slalom.

Following URF practice, finishing position in each discipline is converted into points using a standard placement scale. Points from all three disciplines are summed to produce the overall ranking, and the team with the highest combined points in each Division/Category is declared National Champion. For the USRA 2026 US Rafting Nationals, all three disciplines carry equal weight: 100 points maximum per discipline (300 points total).

Discipline	Max Points	Notes
Sprint	100	Two runs per team; best run counts
Slalom	100	Two runs per team; best run counts
RX	100	Knockout brackets
Overall	300	Sum of all three disciplines

URF Placement Distribution

Within each discipline, points are awarded by finishing place per the schedule below. The same integer-point scale applies to Sprint, Slalom, and RX (each discipline maxes at 100 points).

Ranking	Sprint	Slalom	RX
1st	100	100	100
2nd	90	90	90
3rd	80	80	80
4th	75	75	75
5th	70	70	70
6th	68	68	68
7th	66	66	66
8th	64	64	64

Points continue to decrease by 2 for each subsequent place (9th = 62, 10th = 60, etc.) through 25th place (30 points), per full URF scale.

National Champion in each Division/Category is the team with the highest overall points across the three disciplines.

Tie-breaking: ties within Sprint or Slalom will be broken by the team's slower run time.

Protest

Each team is allowed one (1) protest for the entire event.

Every protest requires a \$100 fee, a written explanation, and time-stamped video evidence. If upheld, the fee is refunded and the protest doesn't count against the team's limit. If denied, the fee is forfeited and it does count.

Overall Tie-Breaker

Where two or more teams finish tied on total points across the three disciplines, the higher placing goes to the team with the better Slalom result.

COST OF ENTRY

Participation Fees

Fees are payable at registration. Fees are non-refundable.

Item	Fee	Notes
R4 Team Entry	\$275 / team	One team, one category, all 3 disciplines. Includes Eventbrite fees. Development team provides own raft.
R2 Team Entry	\$150 / team	One team, one category, all 3 disciplines. Includes Eventbrite fees. R2 team provides own raft.
Camping	\$22 / person / night	On-site camping at Nugget; parking; put-in fees. Paid via usaraftassociation.com/2026-national-championships .
Day Use (all non-campers)	\$6 / person / day	Nugget venue access; parking; put-in fees. Applies to everyone on-site who is not camping – not just athletes. Paid via usaraftassociation.com/2026-national-championships .

What the Team Entry Fee Includes

- Entry into all three race disciplines (Sprint, Slalom, RX) for the registered category
- Use of R4 race raft (provided by SOTAR)
- Bibs / competition numbers as required
- Official timing and scoring, plus on-water safety and logistical support
- Eligibility for National Title Overall Awards
- Open Team qualification pathway for 2027 World Cups and World Championships

A NOTE ABOUT EQUIPMENT

R2 and Development teams must supply their own rafts – borrowing from other teams may be possible for those unable to transport equipment. All teams are responsible for providing paddles, PFDs, helmets, and all personal safety gear in accordance with USRA equipment standards. Closed-toe shoes are required.

ACA Annual or Event Membership (Required)

Due to ACA event insurance requirements, all athletes must hold current ACA Annual or Event Membership to compete at US Rafting Nationals. One of the following is required for every athlete and is not included in the entry fee:

- ACA Annual Competition License Membership: \$40 (Join the ACA), or

- ACA Event-only Membership: \$10 (paid via Non-Member Event Waiver as part of accreditation)



OUR OFFICIAL RAFT PROVIDER

The USRA extends its deepest thanks to **SOTAR – State of the Art Rafts** of Merlin, Oregon, for supplying the R4 race fleet for the USRA 2026 US Rafting Nationals. Our gratitude to **Jeremiah and Rachel Lewman and the entire SOTAR team**, carrying on the legacy founder Glenn Lewman began in 1980, for putting American-built, hand-crafted boats under our national-team hopefuls.

Required Equipment

Personal flotation device

Every team member must wear a buoyancy aid of a size appropriate to their body, with flotation of at least 50 N in all sizes. Inflatable buoyancy devices are not permitted. The device must be unaltered and in good working condition.

Helmet

Every team member must wear a proper whitewater protective helmet, securely fastened, unaltered and in good condition.

Footwear

Hard-soled, closed shoes.

Team safety equipment

At least one team member must carry a flip-line no shorter than 3 meters, a knife, a whistle, and a throwline no shorter than 15 meters. The throwline may instead be secured to the boat.

Exceptions may be granted by the Safety Manager where the competition is held at an artificial or semi-artificial venue.

DAY BY DAY

Competition Program

Schedule updated 7/23/2026. Schedule will be updated prior to accreditation and daily after the Captains' Meeting.

Note: water often arrives early but rarely stays late.

Day	Time	Who's Expected	Activity
Wednesday Aug 12	9:00 AM–4:30 PM	All Available Participants	Venue and Race Course setup
	3:00–6:00 PM	All Athletes	Accreditation (forms, payments, bibs)
	3:00–6:00 PM	Available Volunteers	Volunteer check-in (forms, roles)
	4:30–5:00 PM	Everyone	Welcome & orientation meeting
	5:00–5:30 PM	Available Volunteers	Volunteers meeting (align for Sprint)
	5:00–5:30 PM	Captains	Captains meeting (align for Sprint)
	5:00–7:00 PM	Optional	Low-water course scout
Thursday Aug 13	7:15 AM	Captains	Captains huddle
	7:15 AM	Day-of Volunteers	Volunteer huddle and check in
	8:30 AM–12:00 PM	Everyone	Racing (2 Sprint runs per team)
	12:00 PM	FYI	Water shuts off – anyone heading downstream launch
	12:15 PM	Available Volunteers	Volunteer Meeting (align for Slalom)
	12:30–4:00 PM	Course Setters	Course setting
	4:30 PM	All Athletes	Discipline Awards
	5:00–5:30 PM	Available Volunteers	Alternative Volunteer Meeting (align for Slalom)
	5:00–5:30 PM	Captains	Captains Meeting (align for Slalom)
	5:00–7:00 PM	Optional	Low-water course scout
Friday Aug 14	7:15 AM	Captains	Captains huddle
	7:15 AM	Day-Of Volunteers	Volunteer huddle and check in
	8:30 AM–12:00 PM	Everyone	Racing (2 Slalom runs per team)
	12:00 PM	FYI	Water shuts off – anyone heading downstream launch
	12:15 PM	Available Volunteers	Volunteer Meeting (align for RX)
	12:30–4:00 PM	Course Setters	Course setting
	4:30 PM	All Athletes	Discipline Awards

	5:00–5:30 PM	Available Volunteers	Alternative Volunteer Meeting (align for RX)
	5:00–5:30 PM	Captains	Captains Meeting (align for RX)
	5:30 PM	Optional	Low-water course scout
Saturday Aug 15	7:15 AM	Captains	Captains huddle
	7:15 AM	Day-Of Volunteers	Volunteer huddle and check in
	8:30 AM–1:00 PM	Everyone	Racing (water shuts off at 1PM)
	1:00–2:30 PM	All Athletes	Tear down race course & river venue
	2:30 PM	All Athletes	Discipline awards
	2:45 PM	Everyone	Overall awards / OG-Alumni-Coaches Honors / Volunteer & community thank-yous / Closing
	3:15 PM	National Title Winners	Overall National Title Winners Group Photo (U19/U23/Open/Masters)
	3:30 PM	Everyone	All Participants Group Photo
	3:45–4:45 PM	All Athletes	Tear down on-shore venue
	4:45 PM	Optional	Sunday's Chili Bar Fun Run Huddle
Sunday Aug 16	9:30 AM	Optional	Chili Bar Downriver Fun Run
	12:00 PM	Optional	Take-out
	12:30 PM	Optional	Lunch at River Shack (Coloma)

THE RIVER

USRA 2026 Rafting Nationals Venue – Nugget Campground

The USRA 2026 US Rafting Nationals will be held at Nugget Campground on the South Fork American River (El Dorado County, CA), commonly known in the paddling community as “Chili Bar.” While the put-in is at Chili Bar Dam, the official race venue, headquarters, and finish area are all located at Nugget Campground – the central hub for the event: team area, finish line, scoring, awards, and take-out for all race disciplines. It is also the launch point for the optional Class III+ downriver fun run.

All three race disciplines run the same compact stretch of river – from the Chili Bar Dam release to the beach at Nugget. This highly accessible course makes the event extremely spectator-friendly, with continuous viewing along much of the river and all key event infrastructure concentrated at the finish. The course features consistent Class III whitewater with controlled dam releases, rewarding strong crew communication, precise line selection, and powerful paddling – exactly the skills these classic-style Nationals are designed to test for international qualification.

Venue Facts

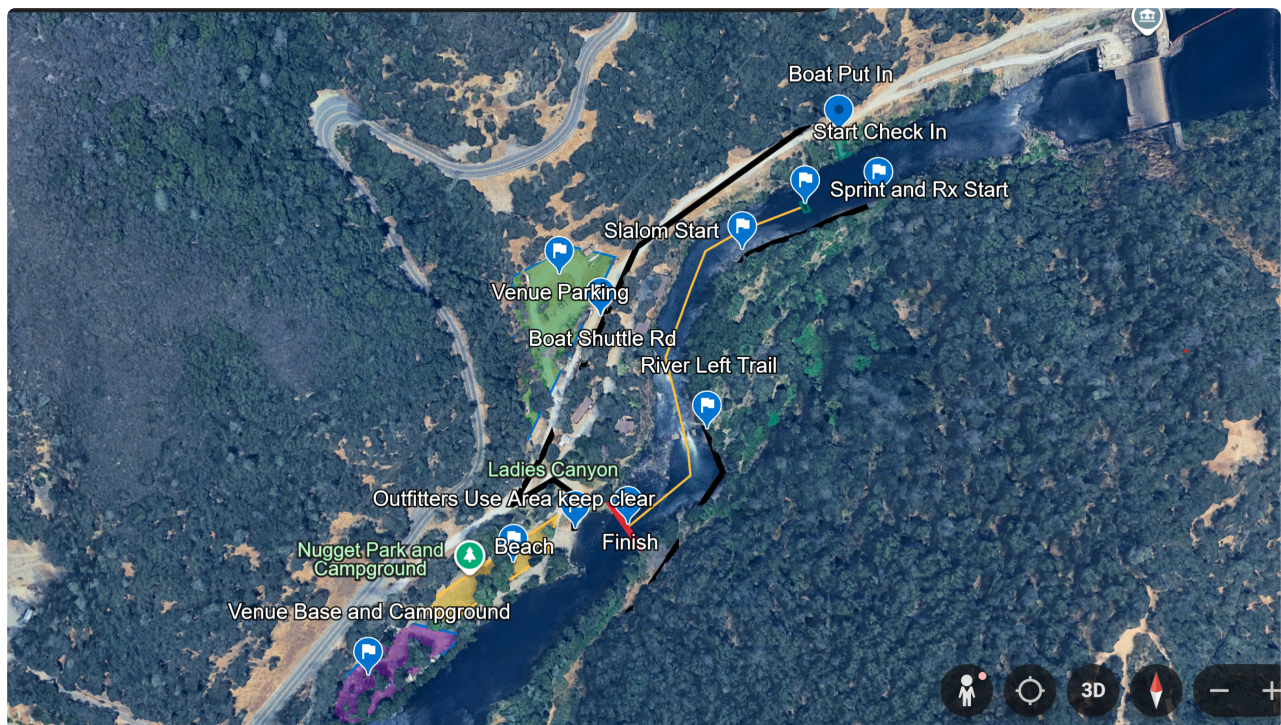
Host Venue	Nugget Campground, South Fork American River
Put-in	Chili Bar Dam release point
Take-out	Beach at Nugget Campground
Race Section	Compact Class III whitewater, dam to beach
Difficulty	Class III throughout
Flow	1,300–1,500 CFS, controlled by Chili Bar Dam release
Gauge	CBR (Chili Bar Dam release) – published daily



The South Fork American below Chili Bar Dam – finish line and team zone at Nugget.

Race Course Map

Start, boat put-in, and finish locations for the 2026 course at Nugget.



2026 Nationals course map – boat put-in, Start Check In, Sprint/RX start, Slalom start, River Left Trail, Venue Parking, Beach, and Finish at Nugget.

Spectator Access

Much of the course is visible from riverbank viewing areas, with the finish line, team zone, scoring, and awards co-located at the Nugget take-out beach; designated viewing areas will be marked. **A \$6/day-use fee (paid via usraftassociation.com/2026-national-championships) applies to everyone not camping – not just athletes – and covers parking and full venue access.**

Environmental Stewardship

The South Fork American is an actively used river corridor supporting commercial and private recreation. In line with USRA standards, this event is pack-it-in / pack-it-out with a strong low-waste commitment. We thank Nugget Campground for their hospitality.

NO DOGS ON SITE

Nugget Campground enforces a strict no-dogs policy – dogs are not permitted anywhere on the property, including inside parked vehicles. Please leave pets at home.

NO CAMPFIRES

Open burning is not permitted at the Nugget in August. Do not light fires in the fire rings, in the campgrounds, or in the parking areas. Bring a camp stove if you plan to cook. This overrides the fire-ring permission printed on the Nugget Guidelines for Use handout.

WHERE TO BE

Coloma, Placerville & the South Fork Region

This venue sits in the heart of the Sierra Nevada foothills, in the historic Mother Lode region of California. This is Gold Country — where James Marshall first discovered gold at Sutter’s Mill in 1848, sparking the California Gold Rush. Today the region is known both for its whitewater and its history.



Sierra foothills above the South Fork American — Gold Country in spring.

Placerville

Placerville (population ~10,500) is the nearest full-service town, approximately 15 minutes from the venue by car. Founded during the Gold Rush as “Hangtown,” it features a compact historic Main Street with restaurants, breweries, coffee shops, stores, a hospital, and a full range of hotels and motels. While camping at Nugget is encouraged for convenience and event logistics, Placerville is the primary nearby option for hotel-style accommodation.

Coloma & Lotus

Located downstream of the venue, the neighboring towns of Coloma and Lotus sit at the center of California’s rafting community. The area is home to Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park, The River Store, and many well-known paddler spots for food and drinks. Alternative riverside camping and lodging here is extremely popular and is typically booked several months in advance.

Climate

Mid-August in the Sierra foothills is typically hot and dry, with daytime temperatures around 90–100°F (32–38°C) and nights cooling into the 50s–low 60s°F (10–17°C). River water released from the dam remains cold at roughly 50–55°F (10–13°C). Plan accordingly: prioritize sun protection and hydration, and be prepared for cold-water conditions — lightweight neoprene / hydroskin is recommended.

GETTING HERE

Travel & Accommodation

Getting to the Venue

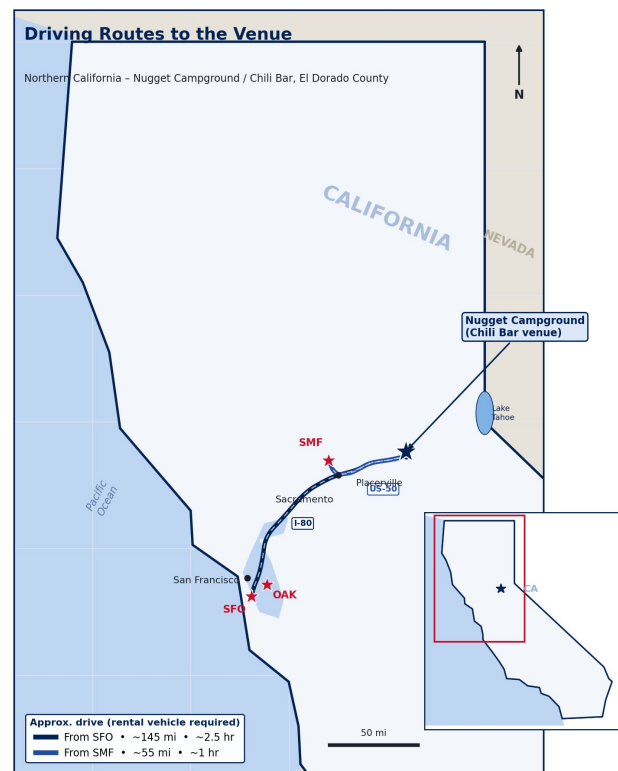
Nugget Campground is located on Highway 193, about 5 miles north of Placerville in the locally known “Chili Bar” section of the South Fork American River. The site is accessed via Highway 50, the primary east-west route connecting Sacramento and Lake Tahoe.

From	Distance & Time
Sacramento (SMF)	55 miles · ~1 hour
San Francisco (SFO/OAK)	145 miles · ~2.5 hours
Reno, NV (RNO)	110 miles · ~2 hours

Airports

- **Sacramento International (SMF)** – closest major airport, ~1 hour drive
- **Reno-Tahoe International (RNO)** – ~2 hour drive (construction delays frequent)
- **San Francisco (SFO) / Oakland (OAK)** – ~2.5 hour drive (traffic can be heavy)

A rental vehicle is required; there is no public transit to Chili Bar.



Approximate driving routes to Nugget Campground / Chili Bar, El Dorado County.

Ground Transport

Teams are responsible for their own transportation. There is no public transit to Nugget. Parking is available at the venue in designated lots and is included in the Camping and Day Use fees; gate access passes will be issued at accreditation as needed.

Accommodation

On-site camping at Nugget Campground (\$22/person/night) offers tent camping at the venue with toilets and potable water included — logistically the most convenient option, with the team area, take-out, and awards staging all at Nugget. During the event, camping is reserved exclusively for US Rafting Nationals. There is no cell service or internet access.

Campground Guidelines & Site Map

Arrival and parking, walk-in camping, quiet hours, water conservation and the site map are published in full at usaraftassociation.com/2026-national-championships/nugget-campground.

Read it before you travel — there is no cell service at the venue. Key points: the campground is walk-in only; unload your gear, then move your vehicle to the upper parking area; the speed limit is 10 mph; quiet hours run 10:00 pm to 8:00 am; and vehicles parked outside the upper lots are towed at the owner's expense.

LEAVE ROOM FOR THE BUSES

The bus turnaround loop runs through the upper parking areas. Park tight and leave clearance, or you will be towed.

LOGISTICS

Other Useful Information

Internet & Communications

There is no cell service or internet at the venue. Though occasional personal satellite access exists and there is cell service at the top of the canyon (about a 5–10 minute drive), teams should plan to be offline at Nugget Campground. Download any needed maps, schedules, or contact info before arrival, and expect any digital updates (live results, postings to the USRA website and social channels) to be published from off-site once crews return to coverage.

Code of Conduct

All participants agree to abide by the USRA Code of Conduct, which prioritizes professionalism, integrity, community, and safety. Violations may result in disqualification and/or sanction by the USRA Board.

BE PREPARED

Medical, Safety & Security

Medical Support

Marshall Medical Center in Placerville provides 24-hour emergency services and is approximately 15 minutes from the venue. Qualified medical / first-aid volunteers will be present at Nugget Campground throughout the event.

Water Safety & Required Gear

Safety boaters and designated water-safety volunteers will be stationed at key points along the race course during competition runs. All athletes must wear closed-toe shoes, whitewater-compliant PFDs, and helmets at all times while on the water.

Medical & Travel Insurance

All participants are responsible for ensuring they have adequate personal health and accident insurance. The USRA and the host organizing committee will not cover any costs related to medical or evacuation services.

Security

The organizer accepts no responsibility for missing equipment or personal items — teams are expected to secure their gear in their team areas and overnight at their accommodation.

Anti-Doping

The USRA supports clean sport and adheres to the World Anti-Doping Code as adopted by the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency (USADA). Use of prohibited substances will result in disqualification and sanction by the USRA Board. Athletes selected for international representation may be subject to drug testing.

GET IN TOUCH

Contacts

EVENT DIRECTOR**Aaron Tippet****Mobile:** +1(530) 448-7199**Email:** aarontippet@gmail.com

For all event-specific inquiries: registration, training coordination, accommodation, equipment, and on-site logistics.

USRA**United States Rafting Association****Email:** usaraftassociation@gmail.com**Web:** usaraftassociation.com

For governance, race rules, and national-team selection questions.

STAY CONNECTED

Web: usaraftassociation.com · Facebook: /unitedstatesraftingassociation · Instagram: @usa_rafting

**THREE EVENTS. ONE GOAL. ONE TEAM.**

See you on the water — August 13–15, 2026 — Nugget Campground, California.

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