



# America Outdoors Announces 2024 Award Recipients

Industry Achievement Award and Innovator Award honored at the AO Conference

December 13, 2024

Chattanooga, TN – America Outdoors, a national, membership-led organization dedicated to supporting professional outdoor recreation outfitters and advocating for the protection of public lands, is proud to announce the 2024 winners of the George and Pamela Wendt Industry Achievement Award, and the 2024 winner of the Innovator Award. The winners were recognized at the annual America Outdoors Conference on Thursday, December 12.

This year, two members received the George and Pamela Wendt Industry Achievement Award, which honors individuals who have demonstrated exceptional commitment and achievement in the outdoor industry. Steven Foy and Don Roberts were each presented with an award by the president of America Outdoors (AO), David McGlashan.

“Our award winners, Don Roberts, Steven Foy, and Zeb Smith, stood out from an exceptional pool of nominees for this year’s George & Pamela Wendt Industry Achievement Award and the Innovator Award,” said Aaron Bannon, America Outdoors’ Executive Director. “It is an honor to celebrate their contribution to, and support for, the entire outdoor recreation industry.”



As Director of Outpost Operations at Nantahala Outdoor Center (NOC) in western North Carolina, Steven Foy has been a driving force in outdoor recreation since 2008. A member of the America Outdoors board of directors since 2017, Foy has also served on the executive committee since 2021 and actively supports AO’s legislative affairs and education task forces. He has been an active participant in Camp Washington since 2018, engaging with key members of Congress and public lands agencies. Locally, Foy is a dedicated volunteer with organizations such as the

North Carolina Outdoor Recreation Coalition, American Rivers Southeast Region advisory committee, and French Broad River Partnership.



Don Roberts is a pioneer in the outdoor industry, having co-founded the National Association of Canoe Liveries and Outfitters in 1976, which later evolved into the Professional Paddlesports Association (PPA). Roberts played a critical role in merging PPA with America Outdoors, creating a stronger unified voice for the industry. Founder of Front Royal Outdoors in Virginia, Roberts has led canoe trips on the Shenandoah River since 1968. With nearly five decades of association experience and a longstanding commitment to the industry, Roberts has been a steadfast leader on the America Outdoors board.

The Innovator Award, which recognizes individuals driving growth and creative initiatives in the outdoor industry, was given to Zeb Smith. Based in Colorado, Smith founded Zebulon LLC in 2016 with a background in business administration and financial management. He joined the America Outdoors community in 2019 and has since helped professional outfitters achieve financial growth and increase profitability. Zebulon's peer mentor group, the Eddy, fosters collaboration and strengthens community ties within the outfitter industry.



## About America Outdoors

America Outdoors is a community of outdoor adventure businesses and organizations who have joined together to promote and support the outdoor recreation industry through advocacy, education, and collaboration. AO has been working on behalf of the outdoor industry for over 30 years.