OUR STORY

It’s no surprise the Outdoor Writers Association of America®, an organization dedicated to all things outdoors, was founded during a wilder era of the United States. While bootleggers supplied brown-bag liquor, our founders provided the public with words and images of the conservation movement. In 1927, at the Fifth Annual Izaak Walton League of America’s National Convention in Chicago, 18 journalists formed the Outdoor Writers Association of America®, dedicated to “the purpose of bettering of our profession, to give more stability and standing to the same, and to eliminate untruths from stories of the outdoors...”

Morris Ackerman, a Georgia lawyer-turned-writer, led the movement. He wrote the first-ever outdoor column for The Cleveland Leader. Readers loved it. Ackerman became the outdoor editor of The Cleveland Daily News, a new position that caught on at newspapers nationwide. His efforts and those of his peers created this field that continues today. OWAA remains the oldest and largest group of outdoor communicators, far outlasting prohibition and the roar of the 1920s.

Today, OWAA is nearly 800 members strong. We originally focused on fishing, hunting and conservation topics in newspapers, magazines, books and photography, but now our coverage includes all outdoor activities across all media including television, film, radio, and all digital platforms. We are truly “The Voice of the Outdoors®!”

FAST FACTS

• Some of the biggest names in the history of outdoor communications have been OWAA members, such as Jim Bashline, Nash Buckingham, Homer Circle, Curt Gowdy, Charley Waterman, Lee Wulff, and Ed Zern.
• We’re more than just writers. We’re also broadcasters, photographers, filmmakers, videographers, conservationists, bloggers, book authors, lecturers, editors, media relations professionals and we are all passionate about the outdoors.
• Discounts offered to members on goods and services more than covers the cost of an OWAA membership.
• Annual-conference locations are held in all parts of the country.
• OWAA’s national headquarters is located in Missoula, Montana but our members live in all 50 states.
• We fish, hunt, hike, camp, climb, boat, bike, ski, cook, go birding, watch wildlife, travel, and take interest in the environment. We care about the outdoors, and we communicate about it through words and images.
Conferences and Networking  OWAA hosts an annual conference that connects members to each other, media outlets and industry leaders from the front-line of today’s outdoor-related issues. Sessions revolve around craft improvement and news-makers. We demo products, socialize, and bestow nationally-recognized awards and honors on those at the top of our field. It’s OWAA's marquee event and the highlight of our year.

Excellence in Craft Contests  Up to $17,000 is awarded each year to members who compete in OWAA’s Excellence in Craft contests.

The Bodie McDowell Scholarship  We annually grant scholarships to students pursuing careers in outdoor communications ranging from $1,000 to $5,000 each, totaling up to $24,000 each year.

John Madson Fellowships  We annually award John Madson Fellowships, stipends of $1,000 each, to outdoor journalists to help them learn new skills, perfect their craft or attend the OWAA conference.

The Norm Strung Youth Writing Awards  We annually give up to $1,500 to middle school and high-school students, our next generation, for prose and poetry about the outdoors.

Outdoor Marketplace  OWAA’s online Outdoor Marketplace is a members-only listing of job openings and editorial needs by media outlets.

Sell Your Work  We promote our members’ books, videos and other products through our magazine, *Outdoors Unlimited®*. 

FINANCIAL BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP
**Press Credentials**  Reduced-rate or complimentary entry to consumer and trade shows and free or discounted admission to outdoor places, facilities and activities.

**Staples Advantage**  The Staples Advantage Premium Program provides a 3% discount on orders over $250 along with free next-day delivery for office supplies, printing, and promotional materials.

**Supporter Discounts**  Discounts on goods and services including rental cars, hotels and outdoor gear from select OWAA supporting companies.

**Publications**  Various educational, business and style manuals published by OWAA specific to outdoor communications.

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**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & NETWORKING**

**Outdoors Unlimited®**  Members receive the bimonthly Outdoors Unlimited® magazine in print and digital formats, with information on craft improvement, outdoor industry and conservation news, employment opportunities, technology, new products, our conference and so much more.

**Feature your Photos**  In the “Portfolio” section of Outdoors Unlimited®

**Business & Legal Advice**  We assist members needing guidance on how to properly and ethically conduct their business.

**Assistance with Disputes**  Having a hard time getting paid? OWAA can help settle these disputes.

**Links to Member and Supporter Websites**  Complete lists of OWAA’s individual member and supporting group websites are available.
OUR MISSION

Improve the professional skills and opportunities of our members, set the highest ethical and communications standard, encourage public enjoyment and conservation of natural resources, and mentor the next generation of professional outdoor communicators.

BECOME A MEMBER

Individual “active” membership to OWAA costs $150.00 annually and is open to all professional outdoor communicators who meet any of the following criteria:

- You have published and received income from at least five stories, articles, photographs, videos or illustrations on outdoor-related topics in the past year.
- You have published a book or worked on an income-producing film or any form of audio on outdoor-related topics in the past five years.
- You are a full-time outdoor communicator in any media.
- You write for a blog or other digital media that is updated with original content at least twice per month and receives 500 AUVs (Average Unique Views) per month over a 12-month period, or generates income for you.

OWAA also offers associate, student and senior memberships. For more information, visit www.owaa.org/join or call (406) 728-7434. We look forward to welcoming you to our organizations.

JOIN US TODAY! Let OWAA help you hone your professional skills or gain new ones, develop profitable business strategies, and network with peers, industry trendsetters and policymakers. While conservation and outdoor recreation were important in 1927, they are even more so today.