

10 OPEN WATER POLICIES

10.1 GENERAL

The following policies are intended to aid in the organization and provide for the safe conduct of open water (OW) events. All pertinent USMS (U.S. Masters Swimming) and Pacific Northwest Association of Masters Swimmers (PNA) rules and regulations shall apply. Event directors should refer to the USMS [Open Water Event Management](#) on the USMS website.

10.2 SCHEDULING AND SANCTIONING

- 10.2.1 Prospective event hosts must apply for a spot on the PNA Open Water Schedule. The bidding process begins with the PNA Event Date Request, which shall be submitted to the Open Water Coordinator in time for consideration at the Board meeting in January. The event date request requires approval by the Board upon recommendation of the Coordinator. Late additions to the calendar shall also be approved by the Board.
- 10.2.2 PNA open water events must be sanctioned by PNA and the USMS National Office. Sanctions are given for one year's event and do not carry over to following years. Sanctions are given based on submittal of the required documents.
- 10.2.3 All OW swims shall be approved by the appropriate governing or law enforcement agency (US Coast Guard, Police Department, Sheriff's Office, Harbor Master, Park and Recreation District, etc.) relating to the location of the course. Approval shall be indicated in the request for sanction.
- 10.2.4 Any organization may apply for a PNA sanction.
- 10.2.5 No sanction shall be granted unless all requirements for events previously conducted by the host have been fulfilled.
- 10.2.6 Rules for an OW event will generally follow the rules in Part 3 of the [USMS Rule Book](#). However, for non-championship events, the Event Host has some discretion in applying and modifying some rules. Examples are:
 - a. Whether or not personal safety buoys are permitted or required
 - b. Whether or not wetsuits are permitted or required
 - c. Whether or not a swimmer may take a rest on a kayak while making no forward progress, and not be disqualified
 - d. Any modifications will be reviewed for their effect on safety and fairness of competition. If approved, they must be stated in the Event Information.

10.2.7 Once the Board has approved an event for its place on the annual calendar, the following documents shall be submitted to the PNA OW Coordinator for approval at least 60 days prior to the scheduled event date.

10.2.7.1 The Event Information is a full description of the event and shall tell swimmers everything they need to know to participate in the event. Topics covered shall include:

- a. The statement, "Sanctioned by PNA for USMS, Inc., Sanction #_____."
- b. Venue description
- c. Course description
- d. Overview of safety measures and medical support
- e. Race distances, heats, waves, etc.
- f. Fees
- g. Eligibility
- h. Special rules for the event
- i. Likely weather and water temperature
- j. Any special hazards on the course
- k. Wetsuit required/permitted
- l. How to register for the event
- m. Race day schedule
- n. Check-in procedures
- o. When results will be posted
- p. Awards that will be presented
- q. Directions, parking availability, local accommodations

10.2.7.2 Course Maps and diagrams of the proposed course included in the request for sanction shall show:

- a. The start, finish, course distances, course marker locations
- b. Medical treatment areas and evacuation points
- c. Course abandonment exit points
- d. Deployment of lifeguards and kayakers
- e. Deployment of power boats and emergency-response watercraft

- 10.2.7.3 Safety Plan Application. Event hosts shall complete a [Safety Plan Application](#) and provide all the information required by that document. For some of the questions needing long answers, reference to a separate document is acceptable if it is provided with the Safety Plan Application.
- 10.2.7.4 Proposed Budget. A proposed budget must be submitted. Complete the "Budget" tab of the [PNA Open Water Event Financial Statement Workbook](#). This shall include:
- a. Entry fees for the event
 - b. Estimates for all other revenue sources
 - c. Estimates for fees due to PNA, Club Assistant, and USMS as specified in the [Open Water Event Fees](#). These consist of
 1. PNA per-swimmer fee
 2. USMS per-swimmer sanction fee
 3. USMS per event sanction fee
 4. One-event entry fees
 5. Club Assistant per-swimmer entry fee
 6. Club Assistant credit card transaction fees
 - d. Estimates for all additional costs
- 10.2.8 Once the required documents have been approved by the PNA OW Coordinator, the host shall submit a [USMS online sanction request](#) to get sanction for the race from the USMS National Office. The process will require you to upload your Safety Plan Application, course map, and Event Information. There is a [tutorial](#) and [worksheet](#) for the sanction request process.
- 10.2.9 The USMS Open Water Coordinator will receive the request for review. The host shall update as needed based on USMS coordinator feedback.
- 10.2.10 Hosts for sanctioned events can provide an article on their event in the PNA WetSet at no charge. The [Open Water Event Data for Publishing in the WetSet](#) is a guide for the information to be provided in the article. Using the Event Information is a good option.

10.3 REGISTRATION

- 10.3.1 All swimmers shall be currently registered with USMS or its foreign equivalent. Online entries shall be checked against the USMS membership database. Event directors shall advise unverified entrants to register immediately or to apply for One-Event Registration, if available for their event.
- 10.3.2 PNA recommends that registration for PNA-sanctioned OW swims be arranged through Club Assistant (CA). Event directors will need to contract with CA to determine the expected fees.

- 10.3.3 Events not using Club Assistant will submit a registration plan to the Coordinator for approval. The registration plan shall include:
- a. Registration form including the USMS Liability Waiver
 - b. Plan for verifying USMS membership
- 10.3.4 Registration Data for all entrants shall include first name, last name, gender, age (age for USMS events is determined by the swimmer's age on 12/31 of the year of the event), birth date, USMS number, USMS club, street, city, state, zip, phone, and email.
- 10.3.5 USMS one-event registration for non-USMS members is available to event directors. The fee is set by PNA and is given in the [PNA Open Water Event Fees](#). The Event Information shall state whether one-event registration is allowed. One-event registration shall be included with online registration. For day of race (DOR) registration, a hard-copy form can be found at [USMS One-Event Registration Form](#). Hard copy forms shall include the USMS Liability Waiver.

10.4 RACE SUPPORT PERSONNEL

- 10.4.1 The Event Host shall appoint a Meet Director, Meet Referee and Safety Director for each OW event. One individual may not serve as both Meet Referee and Safety Director. The Meet Referee and Safety Director shall be certified by the USMS National Office. See USMS Rule Book Section 303.8 for responsibilities.
- 10.4.2 Medical personnel shall be available on site to provide treatment to any swimmer needing medical attention and to determine if anyone in treatment needs to be transported to the local hospital. Nurses, doctors or EMTs can satisfy this requirement.
- 10.4.3 Certified lifeguards shall be on the water to assist swimmers, provide assessment of swimmers in distress, and initiate first aid.
- 10.4.4 The course shall be patrolled by persons in non-motorized watercraft. They shall monitor the course for swimmers in distress and swimmers dangerously off course, provide non-medical assistance to swimmers, direct lifeguards to swimmers in distress, and assist other race support personnel as requested.
- 10.4.5 In events where non-event watercraft might intrude onto the racecourse, power boats will be deployed to prevent such intrusions. If necessary, perimeter protection shall be coordinated with local law enforcement.
- 10.4.6 An evaluator, assigned by the Coordinator, shall attend all sanctioned open water events. The evaluator shall not be affiliated with the host. The evaluator shall observe the event, assist with the event as requested, and submit a written report to the OW Coordinator.
- 10.4.7 Depending on the location of the event and the length and configuration of the course, the Event Host may require an individual escort for every swimmer. The escorts shall

not be powered watercraft and shall be capable of holding pace with the swimmer. Requirements for individual escorts shall be stated in the Event Information.

10.5 THE COURSE AND FACILITIES ON LAND

- 10.5.1 The course shall clearly define the starting line, turn locations, feeding stations if used, and the finish line. The course shall be designed to prevent swimmers from meeting head on. If motorized watercraft are to be used, the course shall have enough room in the water around the outside so that the motorized craft can operate and stay clear of the course. Hazards on or near the course shall be minimized.
- 10.5.2 Only in-water starts are permitted. The starting line shall be as wide as practical to minimize multiple-row starting. Access to the starting area shall be controlled.
- 10.5.3 The turns shall be marked by stationary buoys. Guide buoys may also be used. Turn buoys and guide buoys shall be brightly colored. The color of guide buoys shall be different from that of turn buoys. A different shape for guide buoys is preferable. Buoy size and spacing shall be sufficient to provide sighting markers for swimmers on the course. Markings shall also be provided to identify any hazards on or near the course. The finish area shall be clearly marked and visible from far enough away to allow swimmers a straight-line path to the finish.
- 10.5.4 The finish line shall be located as close as possible to the water's edge and clearly identified. The intent is that the race should be over when the swimmers exit the water. A foot race should not be part of the event. Although some running or walking between the water's edge and the finish line is inevitable, finishes where running over an extended distance is necessary are not permitted.
- 10.5.5 Timing equipment, timers, and finish judges shall be positioned at the finish line. In addition, there shall be enough monitors positioned at the finish to make sure every swimmer can exit the water safely. Access to the finish area shall be controlled.
- 10.5.6 It may become necessary to abandon the event. The course map will identify locations for swimmers to exit the water if this occurs. The locations shall allow swimmers to reasonably exit the water (e.g., no high sea walls or heavy foliage) and shall have a path directly to the finish area or to points where transportation back to the finish area can be arranged.
- 10.5.7 A large map of the course shall be available for contestants to see at the race site. It shall show the start, finish, course distances, course marker locations, medical evacuation points, and abandonment exit points.
- 10.5.8 Land-based medical facilities shall be provided. The facilities shall allow medical staff on site to deal with any medical situations that might arise during an open water swim (e.g., hypothermia, injuries). Prior to the event, coordination with the nearest hospital to facilitate emergency medical evacuation shall take place.

10.5.9 Toilet facilities and changing areas shall be available.

10.6 SAFETY AND MEDICAL PROCEDURES.

10.6.1 Plans and procedures shall be in place for safe conduct of the event and adequate emergency response in accordance with the [USMS safety guidelines](#). The Safety Plan Application shall document these procedures. Requirements for these plans and procedures are as follows:

10.6.2 A plan shall be developed that provides detailed procedures and methods of transport for swimmers needing emergency medical aid. The procedures shall cover:

- a. Initial contact by course patrol
- b. Initial assessment by lifeguards
- c. Transfer to motorized watercraft
- d. On board treatment
- e. Transport to land-based medical services.

10.6.3 Course patrol guidelines will identify the duties of those personnel and watercraft assigned to patrol the course including:

- a. Recognizing a swimmer in distress
- b. Swimmer rescue procedures
- c. Assisting swimmers needing a rest
- d. Tracking lead and lag swimmers
- e. Keeping swimmers on course
- f. Enforcing the time cutoff

10.6.4 Positioning and movement of watercraft supporting the event shall ensure that any swimmer in distress can get assistance within two minutes and be reached by a lifeguard within 2 minutes of being called for assistance. Transfer to a powered watercraft shall take place within 3 minutes of notification by the lifeguard.

10.6.5 Powered watercraft assigned to protect the perimeter of the event from intrusion by non-event watercraft will be positioned outside of the course but able to intercept any boat that threatens to enter the course. Motorized boats shall not approach the race course at any time unless required to do so for medical emergency evacuation. Motorized boats shall be equipped with a propeller guard or manned by a spotter independent of the boat operator.

- 10.6.6 All boats used in conjunction with the event shall meet US Coast Guard and local standards for equipment and loading capacity. Non-motorized watercraft shall be equipped with personal flotation devices and a fluorescent flag.
- 10.6.7 Systems shall be in place that allow communication between all the elements of race support. The systems may include radios, cell phones, and visual signals such as flags.
- 10.6.8 The event shall provide accounting for all event participants that go into the water. There shall be redundant systems to accomplish this (e.g., automatic timing system and manual accounting). The event shall control entry into the water and limit entry to event participants. During the event, both systems shall:
- a. Identify and list each swimmer as they enter the water. The lists shall be cross checked to make sure they are the same.
 - b. During the race, identify and account for swimmers that retire from the race.
 - c. At the finish, identify and list swimmers as they exit the water. If no other backup is provided, the manually generated finish list shall serve as a backup order of finish.
 - d. Cross check the finish list with the start list to make sure everyone is accounted for and cross check lists to make sure they agree.
- 10.6.9 The event shall plan for the necessity to abandon the course before race completion if conditions warrant. The decision to abandon shall be made by the Meet Referee and Safety Director. Should abandonment become necessary, the Meet Referee will inform the race support personnel who will in turn notify the swimmers and pick them up or guide them to the appropriate abandonment exit points. Race officials shall provide instructions as to how to proceed from the exit points. Strict swimmer accounting shall be maintained throughout the abandonment process.
- 10.6.10 After abandonment, the race may be restarted if conditions permit. The decision to restart will be made by the Meet Director, Meet Referee and Safety Director. The Meet Referee shall determine the rules and plans for restart. Swimmers shall be briefed, and the race restarted as planned.
- 10.6.11 If the event cannot be conducted safely, the Meet Referee shall delay the start of the event until conditions become safe enough to proceed.
- 10.6.12 If the event is delayed or abandoned, the Meet Director may decide to postpone or cancel the event. Terms of cancelation shall be laid out by the Meet Director and provided to all entrants as soon as possible.

10.7 SWIMWEAR

- 10.7.1 All rules regarding what is required, allowed or prohibited will appear in the Event Information. The Event Information will also explain how swimwear will affect race placing (e.g., separate wetsuit and non-wetsuit divisions).
- 10.7.2 Requirements for non-wetsuit swimwear shall correspond generally with requirements for Category (Cat) I swimwear as defined in the USMS Rule Book. Deviations are at the discretion of the Event Director. Wetsuits shall meet the requirements of Category II swimwear unless otherwise specified by the Event Director. Event directors may also include heats where swimwear does not comply with either Cat I of Cat II. All swimwear requirements shall be presented in the Event Information.
- 10.7.3 The use of a neoprene wetsuit or other nonporous attire may be permitted or required. Swimmers with wetsuits shall not compete for places with swimmers not wearing such attire. If awards are given, separate awards shall be given to wetsuit competitors and non-wetsuit competitors.
- 10.7.4 The use of grease and additional swim caps (including neoprene swim caps) worn beneath the official event cap shall be permitted unless specifically prohibited by the Event Host. Additional equipment such as personal safety buoys, fins, snorkels, etc., may be permitted at the discretion of the Event Host.
- 10.7.5 Each swimmer shall wear a brightly colored cap provided by the host. The cap is not considered a participation award. Separate heats, waves and/or events shall be assigned different colored caps which are easily distinguished from one another.

10.8 RACE DAY OPERATIONS

- 10.8.1 Timed events shall have systems for capturing times and order of finish.
- 10.8.2 For each swimmer, the event check-in process shall:
 - a. Verify swimmer identity.
 - b. Verify USMS membership (full-time or one-event).
 - c. Apply the swimmer's race number.
 - d. Distribute race swim cap.
 - e. Notify the swimmer of the time and location of the mandatory pre-race briefing.
- 10.8.3 Check-in personnel shall collect all information required for registration (see 0). DOR registrants shall verify their USMS membership by showing their USMS membership card. All DOR registrants shall sign the USMS Liability Waiver form.
- 10.8.4 All race support personnel shall be briefed on the following:
 - a. Roles and responsibilities
 - b. Personnel deployment

- c. Communication systems and protocol
- d. Emergency medical procedures
- e. Monitoring for and assisting distressed swimmers
- f. Monitoring for and assisting tired swimmers
- g. Keeping swimmers on course
- h. Monitoring lag swimmers
- i. Procedures for pulling a swimmer
- j. Procedures for perimeter protection
- k. Procedures for course abandonment
- l. Procedures for enforcing time cutoff

10.8.5 A briefing for all swimmers shall be held prior to the start of the event. The briefing is mandatory for all swimmers and attempts shall be made to ensure that instructions can be heard. The briefing shall include:

- a. Description of general conditions (e.g., water temperature, depth, unusual hazards).
- b. Directions regarding course and course markers
- c. Event-unique rules.
- d. Procedure for getting aid while swimming.
- e. Procedure for withdrawing from the race including the requirement to check in with officials.
- f. Instructions for swimmers who are being pulled from the race
- g. Explanation of starting procedure and signals.
- h. Finish procedures
- i. If applicable, the host shall announce the cutoff for the event at which time the evacuation boats shall pick up all swimmers still on the course.
- j. Explanation of swimmer accounting procedures.
- k. Plans for interruption of the race while in progress and course abandonment if conditions warrant.
- l. Opportunity for withdrawal if any swimmer has apprehensions as to their ability or desire to participate.

10.8.6 All personnel who have positions on the water shall be in place at the start of the race.

- 10.8.7 All swimmers shall be checked into the water prior to proceeding to the race start. Check-in shall consist of manual check and recording of the swimmer's number, crossing the timing mat if automatic timing is used, and reconciling the redundant check-in lists.
- 10.8.8 If warm up is allowed, it must be attended by a lifeguard and shall not circumvent the water entry procedures given above.
- 10.8.9 The starter should be in front of the starting line, clearly identified, and visible by all persons on the starting line. A starting signal shall be provided that assures a fair start for all swimmers. The starter shall ensure that no swimmers cross the starting line early.
- 10.8.10 Throughout the race, race support personnel on the water shall monitor the course for swimmers in distress or swimmers needing a rest and pull swimmers from the race if necessary. They shall track lead and lag swimmers, keep swimmers on course, and enforce time cut-off.
- 10.8.11 Personnel shall be stationed at the finish to ensure that the finish is safe and orderly. Duties shall include:
- a. Assisting swimmers exiting the water and encouraging sportsmanlike conduct.
 - b. Watching for swimmers in distress and notifying medical personnel as necessary.
 - c. Accounting for swimmers finishing the race
 - d. Removing and collecting timing chips
 - e. Conducting swimmers out of the finish area.
 - f. Providing backup timing and order of finish if used
- 10.8.12 A copy of automated timing results as well as manually recorded times and order of finish shall be given to the Meet Referee as soon as they are available.
- 10.8.13 Disqualifications will be in accordance with USMS Rule Book section 303.9 as modified by the Event Information.
- 10.8.14 Preliminary results shall be posted or announced within 30 minutes of the event finish. The results shall list placings for every category for which awards will be presented. If the timing system should fail, places shall be based on the backup order of finish.
- 10.8.15 If awards are given for each age division, an equal number shall be available for all age divisions.
- 10.8.16 Protests shall be made to the Meet Referee no later than 30 minutes after preliminary results are posted.

10.9 RACE FOLLOW-UP

10.9.1 Results.

10.9.1.1 Final results shall be posted within two days after the event. Results shall be posted on the event website, or the event website shall have a link to the complete results. Results shall be compiled as follows:

- a. Overall by gender, wetsuit/non-wetsuit, and distance
- b. By age group by gender, wetsuit/non-wetsuit, and distance
- c. The following data shall be listed for each swimmer:
 1. Wetsuit/non-wetsuit if applicable
 2. Distance if applicable
 3. Gender
 4. Age group
 5. Place
 6. First name
 7. Last name
 8. Age
 9. Club
 10. USMS number
 11. Time
- d. If the preliminary results are not posted in a timely manner or there are protests arising from the final results, protests shall be filed with the PNA Open Water Coordinator within 3 days after posting of the final results.

10.9.1.2 The Host shall provide an electronic set of results to the PNA Open Water Coordinator. The results shall include the information in 10.10.1.1 as well as each swimmer's birthdate, address, phone number and email. The results shall indicate which swimmers were One Event swimmers.

10.9.2 One Event (OEVT) Swimmer Information

- a. The Host shall
 1. Submit of an electronic version of the completed USMS [One-Event Swimmer Spreadsheet](#) to the PNA Open Water Coordinator as soon as possible and no later than one week after the event. If registration was through Club Assistant, the host can download the one-event swimmer list from Club Assistant. Day of race OEVT registrants must be added. If registration was not through Club Assistant, the host shall download the One Event Swimmer Spreadsheet from the PNA website and enter OEVT swimmers into that spreadsheet.
 2. Submit any paper entries to the PNA Open Water Coordinator

- b. The PNA Open Water Coordinator shall forward the One Event Swimmer Spread sheet to the PNA Membership Coordinator.

10.10 Financial Reporting

- 10.10.1 The PNA Open Water Coordinator shall forward the number of swimmers and the number of one-event Swimmers to the PNA Treasurer.
- 10.10.2 The PNA Treasurer shall generate and send an invoice to the Host for fees due to PNA for the following items as specified in the [Open Water Event Fees](#):
 - a. PNA per-swimmer fee
 - b. USMS per-swimmer sanction fee
 - c. USMS per-event sanction fee
 - d. One-event entry fees
- 10.10.3 The host shall submit a full financial statement and the required fees to the PNA Treasurer and Open Water Coordinator within 30 days after the event. The financial statement shall consist of completion of the “Actual” tab of the PNA Open Water Event Financial Statement Workbook.
- 10.10.4 PNA wants to encourage clubs to put on events. To guarantee that a club hosting an event does not lose money, PNA guarantees a profit to event hosts of \$6 per swimmer. Calculation of profit per swimmer is part of the “Actual” tab in the PNA Open Water Event Financial Statement Workbook. If that calculation falls below \$6, and if all expenses are reasonable, the host may receive reimbursement from PNA to boost the event’s income to the guaranteed level. Event hosts must complete the bottom portion of the “Actual” tab to be eligible for reimbursement. If reimbursement is requested, PNA will review all expenses to make sure they are appropriate. If any expenses are disallowed or deemed excessive, PNA will complete the “PNA Approved” tab of the PNA Open Water Event Financial Statement Workbook with the approved expenses and calculate the amount to be provided to the host.
- 10.10.5 The Open Water Coordinator shall provide the event director with a written evaluation within 30 days after the host’s submission of all fees and documents.

10.11 CONVERSION OF ONE-EVENT FEES TO FULL USMS MEMBERSHIP

- 10.11.1 The PNA Registrar shall
 - a. Keep a file of one-event registrations for a minimum of ten years.
 - b. Contact each OEVT member as soon as possible after the event and extend an invitation to convert their OEVT membership into a full USMS membership. The swimmer will get credit for the one-event Fee that was already paid. Make sure to say that this conversion is only available for 30 days after the date of the OEVT

registration, and that the member will have to mail a check for the difference in price to the LMSC membership coordinator.

- c. If any members convert, register them as full members in the registration software. Take their previous One Event fee payments and include them in your registration deposit along with the check they sent for the difference in price. Delete converted members from the One Event Swimmer Spread Sheet.
- d. After 30 days have elapsed since the event, submit the remaining OEVT registrations to the National Office by emailing the One Event Swimmer Spread Sheet to volunteer@usmastersswimming.org. Do not send any money or registration forms. The National Office will bill the LMSC as part of the monthly accounting process.
- e. A one-event member converting to a full membership may only do so within the same membership year. In other words, a member could not register with a one-event membership in October 2020, and convert that to a full 2021 membership in November 2020 at the reduced (offset) cost for a 2021 membership.