

SPMS OPEN WATER HANDBOOK

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Southern Pacific Masters Swimming

OPEN WATER HANDBOOK

301 GENERAL INFORMATION

301.1. Objectives

- A. This Handbook, developed and administered by the Open Water Swimming Committee of SPMS, is intended to aid in the organization and provide for the safe conduct of open water events. All pertinent USMS and SPMS rules and regulations will apply.

301.2. Scheduling

A. *Approval of Schedule*

1. All open water events shall be approved for scheduling by the SPMS Committee on recommendation from the Open Water Committee in accordance with current SPMS policy.
2. Any changes in event format, fees, awards, or date must be approved by the Open Water Chairman and the SPMS Committee.
3. One open water event may be designated a SPMS Championship, recognizing individual champions (by age group).
4. Bids for Open Water Championships must be submitted in writing on the SPMS Championship Event Bid Form (Appendix A).
5. Selection will be by the SPMS Committee and will be based on previous years' evaluations, date and location.

B. *Event Bid Procedures*

1. All bids received on the proper form and in a timely manner shall be referred to the Open Water Committee for consideration and negotiation, if necessary. The SPMS bid form for Open Water Events is shown in Appendix A.
2. Bids shall be accepted at or before the November SPMS meeting, or as authorized by the SPMS Committee. Recommendations by the Open Water Committee shall be made at the November meeting (or as otherwise directed), and a final decision shall be made by the SPMS Committee.
3. Late additions to and changes in already approved event schedules must be approved by the SPMS Committee after Open Water Committee approval.

301.3. Sanctions

- A. *SPMS Club Requirement* - SPMS shall sanction open water swimming events for SPMS registered clubs only.
- B. *Sanction Deadline* - All requests for sanction of open water swimming events shall be forwarded to the SPMS Open Water Swimming Chairman, by the appropriate newsletter deadline schedule if the event is to be published in the newsletter (see Appendix B for newsletter information sheet) or, if the event is not published in the newsletter, at least sixty days prior to the event.
- C. No sanction will be granted unless all requirements for previously conducted events have been fulfilled.
- D. *Sanction Requests* - Sanction requests must include the following: The bid form (Appendix A), a copy of the proposed event information sheet/entry form, maps/diagram of the proposed course, medical evacuation plan, event cancellation plan, and awards to be given. (See remainder of Handbook for descriptions of these items.)
- E. *Government Approval* - All open water swims must be approved by the appropriate governing or law enforcement agency (USCG, Police Department, Sheriff's Office, Harbor Master, Park and Recreation District, etc.) relating to the location of the course. Approval shall be evidenced in the sanction application packet.
- F. *Conditional Approval* - The Open Water Swimming Committee may recommend sanction

approval conditional on the performance of requirements not specified in this Handbook.

G. 301.4. Event Information Sheet/Entry Form

A. The event information sheet/entry form must be approved by the Open Water Chairman before distribution.

B. *Requirements* - The following must be included on the form:

1. The statement, "Sanctioned by SPMS for USMS, Inc., Sanction #_____."
2. The sanction number.
3. The statement, "A photocopy of your current USMS registration card must accompany your entry."
4. A statement listing the anticipated water temperature at the time of the event, and cautioning the swimmers about special hazards of the event (i.e. water temperature, distance, or surface conditions, etc.) and advises medical examination and training under race conditions prior to participation.
5. The current liability release followed immediately by a space for the participant's signature, date, and name of the event.

If an organization requires an additional release, it must be printed separately with a separate signature from the participant. **In no case may the above liability release be changed, added to, or modified in any way.**

(NOTE: Race directors are encouraged to use an up-to-date copy of a SPMS Consolidated Entry Form with waiver in their meet sheet.) See Appendix.

301.5. Course

A. *Swim Course* - The swim course is defined by:

1. The start line.
2. The turn markers with explicit directions as to which side of the marker the swimmer must pass. All other markers are for directions only and do not define the limits of the course.
3. The finish line.

B. *Maps/Diagram* - The maps/diagram of the proposed course included in the sanction application must show the start, finish, course distances, course marker locations, and medical evacuation points. (Medical evacuation points are shoreline locations to which swimmers will be transported for emergency medical aid.) (NOTE: For accurate description of course, please use at least 8.5 inches by 11 inches paper and diagram as close to scale as possible.) A detailed diagram of the start and finish line configurations should be submitted if the map above does not allow for sufficient detail. (See also 301.5 E and F).

C. *Course Design* - The course of the swim should be designed so as to minimize confusion of the swimmers. Courses should avoid head-on traffic patterns where swimmers could pass close to each other in opposing directions. Course design should also eliminate changes in course direction until the field of contestants has spread out from starting line congestion. A 500-yard minimum is recommended.

D. *Large Map* - A large map of the course must be available for the viewing of the contestants at the race site. Minimum size of the map should be 24 inches by 36 inches.

E. *Course Markers* - Fixed or anchored course markers should be used as follows:

1. Provide course markers at 200-yard points or closer.
2. Markers shall be brightly colored. Turn markers should be easily distinguished from course markers.
3. Markers should have a visible surface area of at least four square feet.
4. Markers should be high above the water, three feet minimum. Six feet is recommended.
5. Hazards or danger areas on the course should be marked with a marker different than course markers or turn markers.

F. *Start*

1. Bottom should be firm, clean, and free from hazards (rocks, algae, glass, etc.)
2. Starting line should be as wide as possible to minimize multiple row starting. The course design should provide a starting line which is as perpendicular as possible to the first leg of the course whereby all contestants along the starting line have equal advantage.

3. The starter must be clearly identified, visible by all persons on the starting line, and in front of the starting line.
4. The starting area and course should be controlled so as to keep non-participants clear.
5. A gun or horn or siren start should be used with simultaneous waving of a large green flag which should stand out from surroundings. A three minute red flag warning and one minute yellow flag warning shall be given.

G. *Finish*

1. A chute finish is recommended with the finish line at the entrance to the chute and close to the water line.
2. The chute should be long enough and wide enough to accommodate the number of swimmers expected to finish at about the same time.
3. The ground surface leading up to the water line as well as through the finish chute should be free of rough or slippery areas and objects that could injure swimmers' bare feet.
4. The finish line should be clearly marked and visible from the water from at least 1/4 mile away.
5. The finish area should be controlled so as to keep non-participants clear.
6. Finish monitors should be provided for safety purposes to aid swimmers standing up and exiting the water, and to ensure sportsmanlike conduct.

301.6. Event Safety

A. *Emergency provisions*

1. The medical evacuation plan and event cancellation plan must be included in the sanction application.
2. All event personnel shall be informed of the emergency provisions for the event. It is recommended that the event director hold a meeting including all event personnel just prior to the event to make them all aware of these safety provisions.
3. All open water swims shall have a medical evacuation plan. The plan(s) must outline detailed procedures and methods of transport for swimmers needing emergency medical aid from water pickup to land-based medical services. The plan required shall be as follows:
 - a. One plan is required if the start and finish of the race are the same location (or less than 1/4 mile apart).
 - b. Two plans are required if the start and finish are not in the same location (or more than 1/4 mile apart).
4. The host club shall provide mechanisms/procedures sufficient to transport swimmers to shore-based medical assistance in less than ten minutes.
5. A printed map and directions to the nearest medical care facility must be available at the event. Several copies should be available to give to individuals in need of non-emergency medical attention who wish to transport themselves.
6. It is strongly recommended that safety monitor stations (i.e. row boats, canoes, paddle boards, rafts) shall be positioned on the course in a minimum ratio of one station per thirty (30) entrants or minimum one station for every 1/4 mile of course length, whichever number of stations is greater. It is the intent of this rule to require coverage of the complete field at all times. Pilots are considered safety stations. Emergency evacuation boats cannot be counted as safety stations.
7. Safety monitor stations shall be equipped with first aid supplies and an emergency signaling device to summon a medical evacuation boat (signals may be day flares, smoke flares, radio, or flags).
8. **Emergency evacuation boats (i.e., power boats) shall not approach the race course at any time.** Persons in trouble should be brought to the evacuation boat by a safety monitor using non-motorized transportation.
9. A detailed plan must be available for event cancellation during the event due to safety considerations arising after the competition has started.
10. A procedure should be developed to account for each participant.
11. A public briefing of all swimmers must be held prior to the start of the event. (See Pre-race

instruction outline in Appendix E.) Attempts should be made to involve all the contestants in the briefing and ensure that instructions can be heard and understood. A good public address system is essential. The briefing must include the following:

- a. Description of general conditions (i.e. water temperature, depth, unusual hazards...).
 - b. Opportunity for withdrawal if any swimmer has apprehensions as to his ability or desire to participate.
 - c. Participants obligations if they drop out/quit.
 - d. Procedure for getting aid while swimming.
 - e. Finish procedures/cut off time.
 - g. Encourage the contestants to position themselves at the start with the faster swimmers in front. Swimmers should be courteous and pay attention to others' safety.
 - h. Course directions/markers/rules.
 - i. Starting procedure/signals.
12. The host club shall establish and announce a cut-off time for the event, at which time all contestants still on the course must be picked up by the sweeper or clean-up boat. Swimmers failing to finish under the designated time must be disqualified and picked up.
- B. *Escort and Pilot Craft*
1. The use of individual escorts shall be the option of the host club.
 2. Power boats may not normally be used as pilot or escort boats for individuals in a non-relay event.
 3. On individual swims over two miles, it is recommended that each contestant supply an escort capable of maintaining pace with the contestant.
 4. All boats used in conjunction with the event must meet USCG and local standards for equipment and loading capacity.
 5. Provisions for non-event boat traffic control must be provided. It is strongly suggested that control be arranged through a law enforcement agency.
 6. Escort boats for events must display a fluorescent orange "skier down" flag at all times.
 7. A sweeper or clean-up boat must be used.

301.7. Entry Fees and Awards

- A. *Non-relay Open Water Events*
1. Maximum entry fees for individual events shall be as follows:
 - a. \$20.00 if no participation awards are given.
 - b. \$25.00 if participation awards are given. Participation and place awards must be commensurate with the fee.
 - c. Late entry fees may be a maximum of twice the regular fee. Event day entries are normally allowed.
 2. If awards are given for each age division, they shall be equal to the number of participants in a division, up to three places. Awards given for places beyond third shall be the option of the host club.
- B. *SPMS Open Water Championships*
1. Individual awards shall be given for first through 5th place in each age/sex group.

301.8. Eligibility

- A. *Swimmer Eligibility* - No swimmer's entry will be accepted unless he/she is currently registered with USMS, has a valid travel permit or its equivalent. A copy of the current registration card, travel permit, or other acceptable proof of current Masters Swimming registration of each swimmer must accompany the entry.
- B. *Relay Team Eligibility* - Swimmers shall follow the event rules regarding relay team eligibility.
- C. *Age Groups* - The age groupings shall be 19-24, 25-29, and subsequent five-year increments as high as necessary to include all entrants for men and women in individual events. Relay events shall be grouped at the option of the host club. Recommended relay age groupings are 19+, 25+, 35+, 45+, etc. for men and for women. The age of the youngest swimmer determines the relay age group as defined in the USMS rules.

D. *Costume*

1. Swimmers shall be required to wear highly-visible caps which increase their visibility on the race course. Relay and multiple heat events may be assigned caps of different colors.
2. The use of neoprene wet suits or other non-porous attire shall result in that swimmer being ineligible for place and points. Separate awards may be given to wet-suit competitors at the discretion of the race director. The use of fins, pull buoys or other swimming devices shall not be permitted except soft hand paddles or fins may be used as a prosthesis, provided that, in the opinion of the race director they do not present a safety hazard to the other swimmers.
3. The use of grease, goggles and swim caps (including neoprene swim caps) shall be permitted. Swim caps shall be defined as head gear conforming to a normal swim cap design and not extending to protect the neck and shoulders.

301.9. Referee/Evaluator

- A. *Referee/Evaluator Assignment* - A referee/evaluator assigned by the Open Water Swimming Committee must be in attendance at all sanctioned open water swim events. Such referee/evaluator should not be a member of the host club. It is recommended that two people share this responsibility.
- B. *Referee/Evaluator Authority* - The referee/evaluator shall have complete authority to enforce all PMS regulations and conditions of the sanction. The referee/evaluator may delay the event or withdraw the sanction until all conditions and regulations have been met or in the interest of the safety of the participants.
- C. *Event Evaluation* - The referee/evaluator shall provide the Open Water Chairperson with a written check sheet and comments within 10 days of the completion of the event. See Appendix for a copy of the Open Water Evaluation form.
- D. *Referee/Evaluator Reimbursement* - PMS shall reimburse the assigned referee/evaluator an amount equal to an individual swimmers' regular (pre-registered) entry fee for that event to defray expenses incurred by the evaluator.

301.10. Results and Financial Report

- A. *Back-up Results System* - Every open water swim shall employ a system that, at a minimum, (1) produces a document recording the finish of each swimmer, and (2) maintains each such document according to the order of finish of all swimmers. The document shall record, at a minimum, the name of the swimmer, the swimmer's race number, and the swimmer's overall place in the order of finish. If the primary results system for the swim does not produce such documents, the swim shall maintain a back-up system that produces the required documents.
- B. *Preliminary results* shall be posted within 30 minutes of the last person finishing the swim.
- C. *Results* - It is the responsibility of the sponsoring club to compile a complete result summary, with a minimum type size of 9 points, listing contestants (a) by overall order of finish with times and club affiliation and (b) by order of finish for each age division with times and club affiliation. Club labels may be requested from the SPMS office for both information sheets and results. Results shall be sent within seventy-two (72) hours of the event to:
 1. SPMS Open Water Swimming Committee Chairman
 2. The SPMS Open Water Points Tabulator (the sponsoring club shall provide these results in the format specified by the tabulator).
 3. The event results shall be posted on the SPMS Website within two days of receipt.
 4. Swimmers must be given the opportunity to request that a "hard copy" of the results be sent to them. It is the host club's responsibility to fulfill this request. A nominal fee to cover copying and mailing may be charged. If not specifically requested, results made available on a timely basis through the SPMS Website will meet the sponsoring club's obligation to provide results to all participants.

301.11. Disqualifications and Protests

- A. *Disqualifications* - Swimmers shall be disqualified if they or their personal escort willfully or

intentionally delay the progress of another swimmer. Accidental contact, especially at the start, shall not be considered a disqualification. However the flagrant disregard of another swimmer's rights shall result in disqualification. (Refer to USMS Rule Book, Open Water Section 304.6 for a full list of disqualifications.) Swimmers shall not be tethered or attached to each other by rope or other means.

- B. *Disqualifications* shall also occur if the course rules and/or directional bouys are not adhered to.
- C. *Protests* - Protests shall be handled following the procedures outlined in Sections 102.16.1, .2, and .4 of the USMS Rule Book.

301.12. Open Water Points Competition

A. *Event Description*

1. Every year the Open Water Points Competition shall recognize a champion in each age division for swimmers competing in individual *SPMS Open Water Series Events*.
2. All individual sanctioned open water series event will count towards the competition.
3. The intent of the competition is to recognize participation and achievement in designated open water events by awarding points for finish placement.
4. Points shall be scored according to a swimmer's age group finish placement in each race.
5. An individual is automatically entered in the competition when he/she places in the top ten at one of the designated events.

B. *Rules*

1. Only SPMS registered swimmers may participate.
2. The Open Water Points Tabulator will announce the scoring scheme before the beginning of the season. This will be published in the SPMS Newsletter.
3. If a swimmer changes age groups between the first and last swims of the season competition, their points will be transferred into the age group in which they compete in their final race of the season.
4. Final results showing the top 6 in each age group shall be published after the last SPMS open water swim of the season and awards presented to 1st through 3rd place in each age group. The swimmer in each division (men and women) who scores the most points for the year shall be declared champion.

C. *Awards*

1. Awards shall be distributed to the award winners by hand delivery to a club representative, by hand delivery to the award winner, or by mail.