



# **OPEN WATER HANDBOOK 2021**

Pacific Masters Swimming Open Water Handbook  
February 2021

**OPEN WATER HANDBOOK**  
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## OPEN WATER HANDBOOK

### 301 GENERAL INFORMATION

#### 301.1. Objectives

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

#### 301.2. Scheduling

##### A. *Approval of Schedule*

1. All open water events shall be approved for scheduling by the Pacific Masters Swimming Committee on recommendation from the Scheduler.
2. Any changes in event date must be approved by the Scheduler and the Pacific Masters Swimming Committee.

##### B. *Event Scheduling Procedures*

1. All requests should be submitted electronically to:  
[scheduling@pacificmasters.org](mailto:scheduling@pacificmasters.org)

#### 301.3. Sanctions

- A. *Sanction Requests* - All open water sanction requests shall be submitted through the online sanction application.
- B. A link to the sanction system ("Sanction an Event") can be found under Volunteers, Guide to Local Operations, Event Management, Open Water Events of the home page of USMS.  
<https://www.usms.org/volunteer-central/guide-to-local-operations/event-management/pool-meet-management/sanction-application-process>.  
There is also a document available that details the information required during the sanction process. [https://www.usms.org/admin/lmschb/owgto\\_sanctions.pdf](https://www.usms.org/admin/lmschb/owgto_sanctions.pdf)
- C. Events are encouraged to use the Open Water Safety Guidelines document (OWGTO, USMS Guide to Operations—Long Distance / Open Water), checklists, worksheets and safety education documents posted on the USMS website and elsewhere for preparation of their safety plans and management of their event safety. This information may be found here: <https://www.usms.org/volunteer-central/guide-to-local-operations/event-management/open-water-event-management/new-event-checklist>
- D. The Vice President of Open Water will review the sanction request and may ask for additional information. The VP of Open Water will send the sanction request on to the USMS Open Water Compliance Coordinator for the final approval and the issuing of the sanction number. All documents relating to the event must be updated with the sanction number.
- 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. The event director shall provide to the VP of Open Water all approvals and licenses from all necessary entities prior to the event.
- F. *Sanction Fee* – USMS charges Pacific Masters Swimming \$5/swimmer for insurance. This fee is limited to a maximum of \$1000, or 200 swimmers. Pacific Masters will pass this fee onto the Event host. The event director may add this fee to the entry fee to cover this charge.
- G. *Performance Bond* – **For new events**, a \$250 performance bond, payable to Pacific Masters

Swimming, is required one week prior to the event. The Event Director may choose to have this check to be kept "on file" with the LMSC. The bond shall be returned subject to evaluation scoring per the following schedule when all Pacific Masters Swimming requirements have been met:\*See Open Water Event Evaluation form in Appendix A.

#### 301.4. Event Information Sheet/Entry Form

- A. The event information sheet/entry form is part of the online sanction application process. This shall be approved by the VP of Open Water before distribution. When using online entry system, all the required information must be included as listed in 301.4.B.
- B. *Requirements* - The following must be included on the form or online entry:
  - 1. The statement, "Sanctioned by Pacific Masters Swimming for USMS, Inc., Sanction #\_\_\_\_\_."
  - 2. All swimmers must be: current registered members of USMS, one-event registrants, or Masters swimming members of a FINA member federation in order to compete.
  - 3. A warning statement which cautions 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.
  - 4. The current liability release followed immediately by a space for the participant's signature, date, and name of the event. In no case may the above liability release be changed, added to, or modified in any way. See USMS website for current waiver. If an organization requires an additional release, it must be printed separately with a separate signature from the participant.
  - 5. Event host may choose to prohibit deliberate contact between swimmers and craft and physical features complying with USMS rule 303.8.6. Event host must include that information in the race packet per USMS rule 303.8.6.

#### 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* - Using a Google Earth map or equivalent, event hosts are required to upload a map of the venue and course with the safety plan application. Maps must include locations of start and finish, guide and turn buoys, feeding stations, safety craft, lifeguards/first responders, on-site medical care, and evacuation points. A copy of the Map must be available at the event. The meet sheet will include the course description and it is recommended it includes a copy of the map.
- C. *Course Design* - The course of the swim should be designed so as to minimize confusion of the swimmers. Courses should avoid head-on or crossing 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.
- D. *Large Map* - A large map of the course must be available for the viewing by 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. 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 close to 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, horn, whistle, 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. A ten second count down may also be used at the start of the event.
- G. *Finish*
1. A chute finish is recommended, with the finish line at the entrance to the chute and close to the water line. (There is finish arch included in the Pacific Masters Open Water trailer.)
  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 finish line should be clearly marked and visible from the water from at least 1/4 mile away.
  4. The finish area should be controlled so as to keep non-participants clear.
  5. Finish monitors should be provided for safety purposes to aid swimmers standing up and exiting the water, and to ensure sportsmanlike conduct.
- H. *Pacific Masters Swimming Buoys* - Pacific Masters clubs hosting sanctioned open water swims may make use of the buoys owned by Pacific Masters. The buoys are inflatable. Guidelines for use of these buoys are as follows:
1. Pick up and return of the buoys is the responsibility of the user.
  2. Repair of damaged buoy and cost of replacing lost buoys is the responsibility of the user. Replacement costs will vary by size and type of buoy.
  3. Buoys, anchors, and anchor ropes are provided by Pacific Masters Swimming.
  4. There is, at present, no fee for use of the buoys at Pacific Masters Swimming sanctioned open water swims.

### 301.6. Event Safety

#### A. *Emergency provisions*

1. The medical evacuation plan and event cancellation plan must be included in the sanction application.
2. Pacific Masters require all events to hire an ambulance to be onsite during the event. The race shall not start until the ambulance has arrived. Pacific Masters will subsidize the cost of the ambulance up to \$500 per event.
3. All event personnel shall be informed of the emergency provisions for the event. It is mandatory that the event director hold a meeting including all event personnel immediately prior to the event to make them all aware of these safety provisions.
4. 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).
5. The host club shall provide mechanisms/procedures sufficient to transport swimmers from the water to shore-based medical assistance in less than ten minutes.
6. It is strongly recommended that safety monitor stations (i.e. row boats, canoes, paddle boards, rafts) shall be positioned on the course. It is the intent of this rule to require coverage of the complete field at all times. The placement of safety personnel on the course must be included in the safety plan. Pacific Masters and USMS will work closely with the event host to approve the plan. The plan can be zone coverage, accordion coverage or a combination of these options. 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) should be positioned outside the race course.** Swimmers in trouble should be brought to the evacuation boat by a safety monitor using non-motorized transportation. These evacuation boats must have a swimmer monitor on board to assist the boat captain while navigating the area of the swim course. The swimmer monitor shall insure the boat steers clear of all swimmers while the motor is running. The swimmer monitor may not swim in the event. The swimmer monitor may not drive the boat; however, they may perform other actions that do not detract from their primary role.
9. If safety considerations arise after the competition has started, a detailed event cancellation plan is required for situations that mandate an event cancellation.
10. A procedure must 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 B.) 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, etc.).
  - b. Opportunity for withdrawal if any swimmer has apprehensions as to his/her ability or desire to participate.
  - c. Participant's obligations if they withdrawal before or during an event.
  - d. Procedure for getting aid while swimming.
  - e. Finish procedures and 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 each race. This cut-off time should be included in the entry information and repeated at the safety briefing at the start of the swim. After the cut-off time has been reached, all swimmers still on the course must be picked up by safety personnel. Swimmers failing to finish under the designated time will be disqualified.

*B. Escort and Pilot Craft*

1. The use of individual escorts shall be the option of the host club and announced in the meet sheet.
2. All boats used in conjunction with the event must meet USCG, USMS boat safety

- requirements and local standards for equipment and loading capacity.
3. Provisions for non-event boat traffic control must be provided. It is recommended that control be arranged through a law enforcement agency.
- C. *Referee and Safety Director* – Referee and Safety Director shall be certified by USMS.

301.7. Entry Fees and Awards

- A. *Non-relay Open Water Events*
1. Maximum entry fees for individual events shall be as follows:
    - a. Late entry fees may be a maximum of twice the regular fee. Event day entries are normally allowed.
- B. 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.

301.8. Eligibility

- A. *Swimmer Eligibility* – Swimmers shall be in compliance with USMS rule 203.2.1 - All swimmers entered in USMS sanctioned events as USMS members or Masters swimming members of a FINA member federation shall provide proof of current membership acceptable to the LMSC. This proof must accompany the entry form. All other swimmers entered shall provide proof of one-event open water registration.
- B. *One Event* - The event host may choose to allow a non-USMS member to register as a One Event member (OEV), either on race day or through the online entry. The cost of this registration One Event is set by USMS and Pacific Masters.
- C. *Age Groups* - The age groupings shall be 18-24, 25-29, and subsequent five-year increments as high as necessary to include all entrants for men and women in individual events.
- D. *Swimwear*
1. Swimmers shall be required to wear the event race cap that corresponds with the assigned wave.
  2. The Open Water Points competition has two divisions for the two different types of suits. Category 1 and 2. Separate awards may be given to Category 2 competitors at the discretion of the race director. Please also note that no tape (spider tapes, bandages, duct tape, etc.) is allowed in either category. 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 there is approval of the Referee as well as USMS compliance, and they do not present a safety hazard to the other swimmers.
  3. The use of 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. See USMS rule 303.4.

301.9. Evaluator

- A. *Evaluator Assignment* - An evaluator assigned by the VP of Open Water must be in attendance at all sanctioned open water swim events. Such evaluator should not be a member of the host club. If the assigned evaluator is unable to attend, a designee may be substituted.
- B. *Event Evaluation* - The evaluator shall provide the VP of Open Water with a completed Open Water Evaluation form and comments within 10 days of the completion of the event. See Appendix D for a copy of the Open Water Evaluation form.



### 301.10. Results

- A. *Back-up Results System* - Every open water swim shall employ a timing system that, at a minimum, (1) produces a document listing the finish of each swimmer, and (2) maintains each such document with the order of finish of all swimmers. This 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 send a file of the complete result summary, listing contestants by (a) overall order of finish with times and club affiliation and (b) order of finish for each age division with times and club affiliation. A c o p y m u s t b e s e n t t o :
  - 1. Pacific Masters Swimming Open Water Sanction Chairperson
  - 2. The Pacific Masters Swimming Open Water Points Tabulator (the sponsoring club shall provide these results in the format specified by the tabulator)

### 301.11. Disqualifications and Protests

- A. Shall conform to the current USMS Rule Book as of the date of the event.

### 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 Pacific Masters swimmers competing in individual Pacific Masters Swimming open water events.
  - 2. Every year, prior to the open water season, the Open Water Committee shall announce which open water events will count towards the competition.
  - 3. The intent of the competition is to recognize participation and achievement in designated open water events by awarding season points for finish placement.
  - 4. Points shall be scored according to a Pacific Masters swimmer's age group finish placement in each race.
  - 5. An individual is automatically entered in the competition when they place in the top ten at one of the designated events.
  - 6. A swimmer is awarded points for every swim greater than 500 meters.
- B. *Rules*
  - 1. All participants must be registered with Pacific Masters Swimming to be eligible for points.
  - 2. Points shall be scored based on placement within each age group from the official results supplied by each event. Points shall be scored for placement up to 10th place in each age group. Points shall be 22, 18, 16, 14, 12, 10, 8, 6, 4, 2.
  - 3. Points awarded shall reflect the same placing that the swimmer achieves at the race (disallowing non-Pacific Masters swimmer placing), and category of their suit (1 or 2.); i.e. if you place 5th at a swim, you will be awarded points for fifth place (12) towards your season total.
  - 4. If your birthday occurs between the first and last swims of the competition and you are changing age groups, your points will be transferred into the age group in which you compete in your final race of the season.
  - 5. Final results shall be published after the last Pacific Masters Swimming 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 to a club representative, by hand delivery to the award winner, or by mail.

301.13. Paperwork required after the event – See Appendix D

- A. All one event registrations, corresponding fees, and spreadsheet described in Appendix D must be sent to the Pacific Masters administrator.
  - B. The total number of individual swimmers and the \$5/swimmer fee for insurance must be sent to the Pacific Masters administrator. The maximum fee is \$1000. So if the number of swimmers is over 200, the required fee amount is \$1000.
  - C. If the Event host wants to request reimbursement for the ambulance at the event, the invoice and request for reimbursement must be sent to the VP of Open Water.
  - D. The equipment must be dried and replaced in the trailer. The trailer is either returned to the storage facility or arrangements are made to transfer to the next Pacific Masters Open water event. If there is any problem with the equipment, notify the Open Water Chair.
-

# APPENDIX

Pacific Masters Swimming Open Water Handbook  
February 2021

APPENDIX A

Open Water Evaluation

Pacific Masters Swimming, Inc.

Event: \_\_\_\_\_ Event Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Location: \_\_\_\_\_ Host Club: \_\_\_\_\_  
Race Director: \_\_\_\_\_  
Safety Director: \_\_\_\_\_ Referee: \_\_\_\_\_  
Pacific Masters Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_  
General Comments or Suggestions:

TOTAL POINTS RECEIVED:

Performance Bond Return Schedule

- 92 - 100+ = 100% returned
- 67 - 91 = # of points equals the percentage
- 66 or less = 0% returned

Pre-Event/Post-Event Administration Requirements

(21 total points)

Evaluation

(To be completed by the Open Water Chairman)

1. Sanction Application submitted on line in complete form, on time.
2. Performance bond received one week prior to event.
3. Results e-mailed in proper form to Open Water Chairman and posted on line.

Event Requirements

(To be completed by the Evaluator)

Facilities/Registration

(7 total points)

Evaluation

1. Toilet facilities met standards (10 for 201-500 swimmers)
2. Parking facilities adequate
3. Registration/Check-In satisfactory

Safety

(21 total points)

1. Emergency evacuation equipment/personnel adequate  
(ambulance on site, power safety craft)
2. Safety monitors adequate (1 per 30 swimmers, spread out)
3. On-shore medical facilities & personnel (first aid station)
4. Water traffic controlled

**Map/Instructions** (12 points)

1. Map: Accurate as to course, distances, buoys
2. Pre-race instructions audible to all swimmers
3. Pre-race instructions met requirements:
  - a. Description of general conditions (water temp., unusual hazards)
  - b. Opportunity for withdrawal if swimmer has apprehensions
  - c. Participants obligations if they drop out/quit
  - d. Procedure for getting aid while in water
  - e. Finish procedures/cut off time
  - f. Encourage faster swimmers in front at start/courteous behavior
  - g. Course directions/markers/rules
  - h. Starting procedures/signals

**Race** (24 points)

1. Start line clearly marked, perpendicular to course and monitors.
2. Start procedure (red/yellow/green flags, starting signal) audible/visible.
3. Course markers: Number (1 per 200 yards)
4. Course markers: Location and set-up (3 feet above water/straight line)
5. Finish line marked, visible, monitored
6. Finish chute: Finish order maintained

**Results/Awards** (15 points)

1. Preliminary results posted w/in 30 minutes of last finisher? Yes
2. Final results posted w/in 60 minutes; awards ceremony begun? Yes
3. Awards (participation and/or place) commensurate with fee

**Bonus Points: (maximum of 5)**

Awarded at discretion of the evaluator for event operations that significantly exceed Pacific Masters standards or overcome inherent limitations of the event site, and which enhance the competitive experience

## APPENDIX B

### **Pacific Masters Swimming**

#### **Pre-Race Instruction**

**Note:** It is important to involve all the contestants in the pre-race briefing. Make sure instructions can be heard and understood. If you are running two swims on one day, you must give the pre-race instructions before each swim.

A good public address system is essential. Please use the following guidelines for the briefing.

#### **WELCOME:**

- \_ Name of swim
- \_ This swim is part of the Pacific Masters Swimming Open Water season.
- \_ Thank sponsors

#### **GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

- \_ Awards
- \_ Refreshments
- \_ Facilities (changing rooms, showers, bathrooms)
- \_ Swimwear – what's legal/what's not

#### **CONDITIONS:**

- Water temperature
- Possible hazards
- Currents or tides

#### **SAFETY/EMERGENCY PROCEDURES: (Suggested items to be covered)**

##### **Please read this statement for all swims:**

1. If you are apprehensive about participation in the swim or your ability to complete the distance, please withdraw before entering the water.
2. If you need assistance during the race, wave one arm overhead. A paddler will come to you.
3. If you drop out before or during the race, report immediately to the finish line judge under the finish banner so we know you didn't complete the race and are safe.
4. Faster swimmers should position themselves closer to the start line at the edge of the water. Slower swimmers need to be towards the back of the pack. This is for safety reasons.
5. Emergency staff will be stationed (advise swimmers as to location.)
6. A cut-off time of \_\_\_\_hours will be enforced. Any swimmer still in the water at this time will be brought to shore. Please cooperate for your own safety.
7. If you are not registered to swim, please, please, please don't participate.

### **Pacific Masters Swimming**

#### **Pre-Race Instruction (Continued)**

#### **THE FINISH**

- \_ Chute directions
- \_ Clock
- \_ Chip timing directions

## **THE COURSE**

- \_ Direction on swim on course; which way to round buoys
- \_ Required buoys to round
- \_ Reference to map or other bearing markers
- \_ Caution again about possible course hazards

## **THE START**

- \_ Time of start
- \_ Repeat faster/slower warning (Faster swimmers should position themselves closer to the start line. Slower swimmers further back in the pack.
- \_ Spread out. Be courteous
- \_ Explain start commands and flags.

Red flag – 3 minutes

Yellow flag -1 minute

Green flag and gun or horn – GO

**Thank you for coming. Have a safe swim.**

## APPENDIX C

### **Trailer Information**

The trailer is stored at Ideal Boat and RV Storage at 6371 Tesla Road near Livermore, in space "RM16". The front gate is just opposite where S Vasco Road "T's" into Tesla. You don't need an access code if you're there during regular weekday business hours, and the space we have this time is great with very easy access (we don't even have to back the trailer in.)

You will need to contact Bill McCracken, his home is just a few miles away. I believe Bill also has the "access code" if you need to be there after hours. You need the key for both doors and the trailer hitch (one key fits all). The chocks for blocking the wheels are in the trailer. Once you're at Ideal, if you have any questions, contact "JJ" in the manager's office on site there.

The trailer is stored at Ideal Boat and RV Storage at 6371 Tesla Road near Livermore, space RM16. The front gate is just opposite where the S Vasco Road T's into Tesla Road. An access code is not needed during regular, weekday business hours but will be needed during non-weekday hours. The space we have is great with very easy access. We don't even need to back the trailer in.

There is a key for both the trailer doors and the hitch – one key for both. The chocks for blocking the wheels are in the trailer.

If you have questions at Ideal, contact JJ, the Manager at the office on site.

You will need to arrange beforehand for the access code (if needed) and the getting the keys. Please contact the VP of Open Water to arrange this.



## APPENDIX D

### Administrative procedures

#### Before the Race

1. Get current OEVT form from Pacific Masters Administrator.

#### After the Race

1. Send Pacific Masters Administrator and VP of OW an excel spreadsheet of the OEVT swimmers, both preregistered and same day, and their information (name, address, phone, email, birthdate)
2. Send a check to Pacific Masters Swimming for the amount of the OEVT registration (# of OEVT swimmers x Pacific Masters OEVT fee).
3. Send Pacific Masters Administrator and the VP of OW the total number of swimmers. If a swimmer swims more than one race at your event, they only count once. This number will be passed on to USMS and will be used to determine the sanction fee (\$5 per swimmer, capped at \$1000).
4. Pacific Masters will send you an invoice for the sanction fee (# swimmers x \$5, \$1000 max). Send check to Pacific Masters for that amount.
5. Turn in your ambulance invoice to the VP of OW so you can get your \$500 stipend for that.