

OPEN WATER HANDBOOK

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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 PMS, is intended to aid in the organization and provide for the safe conduct of open water events. All pertinent USMS and PMS rules and regulations will apply.

301.2. Scheduling

A. *Approval of Schedule*

- 1. All open water events shall be approved for scheduling by the PMS Committee on recommendation from the Scheduling Committee in accordance with current PMS policy (see 301.2.B).
- 2. Any changes in event format, fees, awards, or date must be approved by the Scheduling Chairman and the PMS Committee.
- 3. At least one open water event each season may be designated a PMS Championship, recognizing both individual (by age group) and team championships.

B. *Event Bid Procedures*

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

301.3. Sanctions

- A. *PMS Club Requirement* - PMS shall sanction open water swimming events for PMS registered clubs only.
- B. *Sanction Deadline* - All requests for sanction of open water swimming events shall be forwarded to the PMS 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), two (2) copies 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. *Performance Bond* - A \$250 performance bond, payable to PMS, is required one week prior to the event. The bond shall be returned subject to evaluation scoring per the following schedule when all PMS requirements have been met:

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

*See Open Water Event Evaluation form in Appendix D.

H. Under extreme conditions PMS may require total forfeiture of the bond.

301.4. Event Information Sheet/Entry Form

- A. The event information sheet/entry form must be approved by the Open Water Chairman before distribution. Club labels may be requested from the PMS office for both information sheets and results.
- B. *Requirements* - The following must be included on the form:
1. The statement, "Sanctioned by PMS 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 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.
 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 PMS consolidated card with waiver in their meet sheet.) See Appendix H.

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.
- 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 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. *PMS Buoys* - PMS Masters Clubs hosting sanctioned open water swims may make use of the buoys owned by PMS. The buoys are inflatable. Replacement costs will vary by size and type. A copy of the PMS Open Water Buoy Contract is in Appendix F. Guidelines for use of these buoys are as follows:
1. Pick up and return of the buoys are the responsibility of the user.
 2. Repair of damaged buoy and cost of replacing lost buoys are the responsibility of the user.
 3. Buoys, anchors, and anchor ropes are provided by PMS.
 4. There is at present no fee for use of the buoys at PMS 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. 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. 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.
6. 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).
7. **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.
8. A detailed plan must be available for event cancellation during the event due to safety considerations arising after the competition has started.
9. A procedure should be developed to account for each participant.
10. 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.
11. 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. \$15.00 if no participation awards are given.
 - b. \$20.00 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. *PMS Open Water Championships*
- 1. Club awards shall be given in two divisions: small teams and large teams. The PMS Open Water Committee shall be responsible for delineating the team divisions after entries have been received. Awards shall be given to the first three teams in each division, but scoring shall be done for the first six individuals in each age/sex group: 7-5-4-3-2-1 for the 1st-6th respectively.
 - 2. 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 USMS rule 102.3.2A.
- D. *Costume*
- 1. Swimmers shall be required to wear fluorescent, day-glow caps. Relay and multiple heat events may be assigned caps of other fluorescent colors. Cap colors must be approved by the Open Water Committee.
 - 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. A referee checklist is provided in Appendix C.
- C. *Event Evaluation* - The referee/evaluator shall provide the race director with a written check sheet and comments within 10 days of the completion of the event. Appendix D contains a copy of the Open Water Evaluation form.

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 forward 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 PMS office for both information sheets and results. Results shall be sent within thirty (30) days of the event to:
 - 1. PMS Open Water Swimming Committee Chairman
 - 2. All event participants
 - 3. The PMS Open Water Points Tabulator (the sponsoring club shall provide these results in the format specified by the tabulator)
- D. *Financial Statement* - The sponsoring club shall forward a complete financial statement, to the Chair of the PMS Open Water Swimming Committee within sixty (60) days of the event (using form in Appendix G or reasonable facsimile.)

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 PMS 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 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. All participants must be PMS registered.
 - 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, 19, 17, 16, 15, 14, 13, 12, 11, 10.
3. Points awarded shall reflect the same placing that the swimmer achieves at the race; i.e. if you place 5th at a swim, you will be awarded points for fifth place (15) 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 showing the top 6 in each age group shall be published after the last PMS 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.

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OPEN WATER BUOY CONTRACT

The purpose of this contract is to maintain the buoys so that all teams who wish to can enjoy their use; and to establish responsibility for specific events.

1. Pickup and return of buoys are the responsibility of the user.
2. Repair of damaged buoys or the cost of replacing lost buoys are the responsibility of the user. (The cost of replacing lost buoys can run from \$35.00 - \$200.00, depending on the type of buoy.)

It is highly recommended that anchors and Styrofoam floats only be set the night before, and that buoys be placed the morning of the swim.

ITEMS BORROWED:

LARGE TURN BUOYS

SMALL BUOYS

ROPES

ANCHORS

BALLAST WEIGHTS

NAME OF TEAM BORROWING EQUIPMENT:

EVENT CHAIRPERSON - NAME:

ADDRESS:

RECEIVED ABOVE ITEMS: PHONE:

(SIGNATURE)

(PRINT NAME) DATE

RETURNED IN GOOD CONDITION:

(OPEN WATER BUOYS)

CUSTODIAN)

DATE: _____ EXCEPTIONS:

CAUTION When stored, buoys should be protected from direct sunlight. Buoys are fragile when deflated. Protect from abrasion and heat (they are very durable when inflated.) Do not leave in a hot area for a long period of time. Do not attempt to inflate immediately after removal from warm storage area (e.g. inside camper shell or car).

TO INFLATE: Set spring in valve to open position (depressed). Inflate. Close spring valve. Put extension valve cover in place. Leave room in buoy for expansion as sun warms buoy.

Tie rope on anchors and the buoy with bowline knot and secure with half hitches. Use one or two sash weights on the bottom of the buoy to hold the buoy vertically. Use loop or carabiner. (DO NOT REMOVE LOOPS TIED ONTO SASH WEIGHTS.)

The tetrahedron buoys must be stored in their sacks.

Open Water Evaluation

Pacific Masters Swimming, Inc.

Event:

Event date:

Location: _____ Host
Club: _____

Race Director: _____ Phone: _____

Address:

PMS Evaluator: _____ Phone: _____

General Comments or Suggestions:

TOTAL POINTS RECEIVED:

Performance Bond Return Schedule

92 - 100+ = 100% returned
67 - 91 = # of points equals the percentage
returned
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 in complete form, on time

4 3 2 1

0

2. Newsletter submission on time

2

1 0

3. Performance bond received on time

4 3 2 1

0

4. Results mailed in proper form to Open Water Chairman and participants

6 5 4 3 2 1 0

(within 30 days of event)

5. Financial statement mailed to Open Water Chairman

5 4 3 2 1 0

(within 60 days of event)

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 1 0

2. Parking facilities adequate

2 1 0

3. Registration/Check-In satisfactory

3 2 1 0

Safety (21 total points)

1. Emergency evacuation equipment/personnel adequate

5 4 3 2 1 0

(ambulance on site, power safety craft)

2. Safety monitors adequate (1 per 30 swimmers, spread out)

6 5 4 3 2 1 0

3. On-shore medical facilities & personnel (first aid station)

5 4 3 2 1 0

4. Water traffic controlled

5 4 3 2 1 0

Map/Instructions (12 points)

1. Map: Accurate as to course, distances, buoys

2 1 0

2. Pre-race instructions audible to all swimmers

2 1 0

3. Pre-race instructions met requirements:

- a. Description of general conditions (water temp., unusual hazards)

- 1 0
- b. Opportunity for withdrawal if swimmer has apprehensions
- 1 0
- c. Participants obligations if they drop out/quit
- 1 0
- d. Procedure for getting aid while in water
- 1 0
- e. Finish procedures/cut off time
- 1 0
- f. Encourage faster swimmers in front at start/courteous behavior
- 1 0
- g. Course directions/markers/rules
- 1 0
- h. Starting procedures/signals
- 1 0

Race (24 points)

1. Start line clearly marked, perpendicular to course and monitors

3 2 1 0
2. Start procedure (red/yellow/green flags, starting signal)
audible/visible

4 3 2 1 0

3. Course markers: Number (1 per 200 yards)

4 3 2 1

0

4. Course markers: Location and set-up (3 feet above
water/straight line)

5 4 3 2 1 0

5. Finish line marked, visible, monitored

5 4 3 2 1 0

6. Finish chute: Finish order maintained

3 2 1

0

Results/Awards (15 points)

1. Preliminary results posted w/in 30 minutes of last finisher?

Yes (5) No (0)

2. Final results posted w/in 60 minutes; awards ceremony begun?

Yes (5) No (0)

3. Awards (participation and/or place) commensurate with fee

5 4 3 2 1 0

Bonus Points: (maximum of 5)

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

5 4 3 2 1 0