



**U.S. MASTERS  
SWIMMING**  
OPEN WATER

# Open Water Safety Plan Application

## Event Information

### General Information

Name of Host: [District of Columbia Aquatics Club](#)  
Name of Event: 33rd Annual Maryland Swim For Life  
Event Location: National Harbor (Maryland)  
City: Fort Washington State: MD LMSC: PV LMSC  
Event Dates: 6/22/2024  
Length of Swim(s): 2.5K, 5.0K  
Dual Sanctioned with USMS Swimming: No

### Key Event Personnel

Event Director: Mallory O'Connor / [WonKee Moon](#) Phone: 480-282-1071 / 202-615-3931 E-mail: [wonkee.moon@yahoo.com](mailto:wonkee.moon@yahoo.com) captain@swimdcac.org/mallory.e.oconnor@gmail.com  
Referee: Mallory O'Connor Phone: 480-282-1071 E-mail: captain@swimdcac.org  
Certified Safety Director: [Mallory O'Connor](#) Phone: 480-282-1071 E-mail: captain@swimdcac.org

### Pre-Race Safety Meeting (required): all officials & safety personnel must attend

Tentative date: June 22, 2024 Time: 8am.

Tentative agenda:

- Review weather report and river conditions provided by Potomac RiverKeepers and US Coast Guard
- Provide safety personnel and volunteers with information on emergency points of contact and radio for call-in and backup
- Review course map and buoy set up, provide overview of what to look out for with swimmers, how and when to provide possible assistance and what signals to look out for from swimmers in need of assistance
- Provide water and other essential basic needs for on water safety volunteers
- Assign locations for on water volunteers, begin patrol
- Motorcraft to begin patrolling water

### Pre-Race Swimmer Meeting (required): all officials & swimmers must attend to participate in race

Tentative date: June 22, 2024 Time: 8:15 AM

Tentative agenda:

- Review weather and water conditions to be aware of (waves, tides, any other hazards); water temperatures and wet suit allowances

- Discuss water entry and exit procedure, provide overview of course and buoy locations (where to swim around them), detail signaling for assistance from on water volunteers and how to interact with kayaker assistance in case of need

## Course & Event Conditions

### The Course

Body of water: River Water type: Saltwater Water depth from: 3 feet to: 40 feet

Course: Open - non-event watercraft allowed near swim course; but swim will mainly be in protected inlet of harbor

If open course, indicate the agency used to control the traffic while swimmers are on the course.

Agency name: USCG & MD DNR How to contact during event: Cell phone or radio to be provided by crew at safety meeting.

Expected water conditions for the swimmers: (marine life, tides, currents, underwater hazards): brackish water, approximately 72-82 degrees expected, mild tidal conditions, minimal marine life.

How is the course marked?

- Turn buoy(s): Height(s) 6ft Color(s) yellow Shape(s) pyramid
- Guide buoy(s): Height(s) 6 ft Color(s) red Shape(s) pyramid
- Approximate Distance between Guide buoys: na
- Course will be set up in a 2.5k loop marked by multiple buoys, participants completing the 5k distance will complete the course twice

Number of Feeding Stations: 0

Type of structure(s) used as feeding station(s): kayaks will have limited food and water for participants in need

Number of people the structure(s) can safely hold: na

### Water & Air Temperatures

Expected air temp range: 75-86

Expected water temp range: 72-82

Wetsuits: Optional based on race

day conditions

#### **USMS Water Temperature Index for sanctioned open water events:**

- **Below 57°F (Very Cold) – heat retaining swimwear and a Thermal Plan for Cold Water Swims is REQUIRED**
- **57°F-60°F (Cold) - heat-retaining swimwear is required or a Thermal Plan for Cold Water Swims is REQUIRED**
- **60°F-66°F (Quite cool) - Thermal Plan for Cold Water Swims is RECOMMENDED**
- **66°F-72°F (Fairly cool) - Thermal Plan for Cold Water Swims is ENCOURAGED**
- **72°F-78°F (Cool) - No Thermal Plan required**
- **78°F-82°F (Optimal) - Heat-retaining swimwear & neoprene caps are not permitted above 78°F.**
- **82°F-85°F (Warm) - Thermal Plan for Warm Water Swims is RECOMMENDED**
- **85°F-87.8°F (Very warm) - Thermal Plan for Warm Water Swims is REQUIRED**
- **87.8°F-95°F (Hot) - Sanctioned open water swims cannot be held**
- **Over 95°F (Extremely hot) - Any swimming is ill-advised**

**USMS Water Temperature Measurement Procedure:** Using an accurate thermometer, the event host should take three to five measurements at various places on the course—12 to 18 inches below the water surface and no closer to the shore than 25 meters (if possible)—within one hour before the start of an open water swim. The host should average these measurements, post and/or announce the resulting average temperature at least 30 minutes before the start of the swim, and announce it during the pre-race staff safety and swimmers' meetings.

### Water Quality

It is recommended that one week before the event, check water quality. If results returned are inconsistent with the local governing body's standards, notify swimmers who participated in the event of any known exposures post-race. If an exceptional event such as heavy rain or flooding affects the water quality, the Event Director, Referee, or Safety Director shall have the authority to postpone or cancel the race. It is recommended to take and retain water samples on race day and retain for reference.

We will receive course and water quality results the week of the race from the Potomac RiverKeeper Network Volunteers.

## Event Safety

### Medical Personnel

Lead medical personnel (emergency trained) on site: PGC Emergency Services Command

Experience in sporting events (Marathon, Triathlon, Open water swim, etc.): Yes

Will medical personnel be located on the course? Yes

How many medical personnel do you plan to have on site? The number of medical personnel will be dependent on the course layout, number of swimmers in the water, expected conditions, etc.

### First Responders/Lifeguards & Monitors

Indicate the qualifications of the first responders: Certified Lifeguards

Number on course: 1-2 Number on land: 1-2

Indicate their location on the Race Plan Map.

### Onsite Medical Care & Facilities

Describe onsite set up for medical care, such as medical treatment tent, heating/cooling tent or facility. etc., and indicate locations on the Race Plan Map.

- We will have an onsite station setup for medical care, the local EMS command site at National Harbor will be informed

We maintain an indoor structure for race day that we use for medical attention and heating and cooling as necessary. We also inform local ems about the event, and they usually elect to have EMTs on location with ambulance capabilities. If they are not onsite, the location of the facilities are within 5 miles.

### Ambulance/Emergency Transportation & Nearby Medical Facilities

Ambulance(s) onsite: PGC Emergency Services Command On Call: Yes (301-883-7758)

Have you spoken with local emergency response agency regarding potential emergencies? Yes

Closest medical facility: Inova Alexandria Hospital Phone: 703-504-3066

Type of medical facility (urgent care, hospital, etc.): hospital with emergency department

Distance to closest medical facility: 7.5 miles Approximate transport time: 15 minutes

### Watercraft

Motorized Watercraft:

- Owned/operated by government agencies (Coast Guard, police, fire & rescue, etc.): 1 to 2
- Owned/operated by volunteers or hired individuals: 1 to 2

Will all motorized watercraft with a propeller owned/operated by volunteers or hired individuals be equipped either with a propeller guard or a swimmer monitor? Yes

Other motorized watercraft:

- With propellers fore of the rudder: 0
- With impeller motor (jet ski, jet boat): 0
- Anchored from start to finish: 0

Allocation of Watercraft:

- Safety Watercraft:
  - 1st Responders: Motorized: 1-2 Non-motorized: 7-10

- 2nd Responders: Motorized: 1-2                      Non-motorized: 7-10
- Watercraft for race officials: Motorized: 0                      Non-motorized: 0
- Watercraft for race supervision: Motorized: 1-2                      Non-motorized: 10
- Watercraft for feeding stations: Motorized: 0                      Non-motorized: 0
- Watercraft for escorted events: Motorized: 0                      Non-motorized: 0
- Other event watercraft: 1-2 craft and approximately 7-10 kayaks will monitor the race course and will serve as second responders. Motorized craft will carry first responders and approximately 7-10 kayaks will act as first responders to any distressed swimmers.

Emergency Signal Flag Color for all watercraft: bright orange

### **Communications**

Primary method between event officials: Cell Phone Secondary method: Radio

Primary method between medical personnel, first responders & safety craft: Cell Phone

Secondary method: Radio (separate channel from safety and related personnel)

### **Swimmer Counting & Accountability**

Describe method of swimmer body numbering: written on cap, arm, matched to their timing chip

Describe method of electronic identification of swimmer (Recommended): timing chips with numbers

Describe different bright cap colors for various divisions (Recommended): each distance has a separate bright color (green and blue)

Describe method of accounting for all swimmers before, during and after swim(s): timing system as primary, two backup timers with manual records, meet director and safety director with independent verification lists to ensure all swimmers accounted for at all times; communication with on water crafts

Describe method of accounting for swimmers who do not finish: required to provide their timing chip at finish, required to provide name to the DNF pier, and to the motorcraft who pulled the swimmer out of the water.

Motorcraft also radio the numbers to the race director for independent check.

### **Warm-up/Warm-down Safety Plan**

Describe safety plan for warm-up/warm-down, include number and location of lifeguards and designated watercraft. Warm up and warm down is available in the river near the start/finish line. Lifeguards are stationed at the beach.

### **Swimmer Management**

Maximum number of swimmers on course at a time: 250

If more swimmers show up on the day of the swim(s), how will you adjust the safety plan to accommodate the increased number of entries? We will do separate heats of the short events so that it limits the number of swimmers in the water at any one time.

How will you deploy the safety staff and crafts distributed to supervise this event to ensure swift recognition, rescue, and treatment of any swimmer? We station kayakers at each of the turns, between the turns (to act as guides primarily) and we have a pair (minimum) of kayakers who follow each heat of swimmers. We generally provide more kayakers to the longer distances. The motorcraft are generally between the mid-point and the end, with the Coast guard patrolling the channel to keep boats clear of the swim course.

How will you deploy the safety staff to maximize rapid response to a troubled swimmer? Kayakers monitor swimmers in each distance and report any issues and radio in the watercraft should a swimmer need to exit the event. The course is quite shallow. We encourage swimmers who are having trouble to stand and rest and communicate with the kayak team.

How will you alter the event if insufficient safety personnel/craft are available on the day of the swim(s)? We will limit swimmers or distances or both.

Describe your missing swimmer plan: Verify all data sources to ensure we aren't just in clerical error. We provide the kayakers a certain number of swimmers to keep count of in their "heats" so that any missing swimmers are discovered quickly. Should a swimmer continue to be missing, we will deploy additional kayak and watercraft to search the area of the swimmer's course/distance. We will simultaneously send a team to look on shore, which parallels the race course.

## Severe Weather Plan

Is a lightning detector or weather radio available on site? Yes

Describe your plan for severe weather or natural disaster: We will clear the course and get swimmers to shore or back to the starting point if safe to do so. If it is not safe to be in the water we instruct swimmers to shelter in place on the shore until the watercraft can pick them up or can tell them it is clear to continue to swim.

Describe your course and site evacuation plan, including accounting for all swimmers and other participants: The course site is a slow moving river, along one side of the shore. The swimmers can take refuge on the shore, but will need to either swim back to the starting point or be taken back by watercraft if swimmers are some distance from the start. All swimmers are accounted for through inventory of the timing chips, recording of finishers and non-finishers by the timers, with a backup done by the safety team (race director and safety director).

## Thermal Plan for Cold Water Swims

### General Information

Thermal Plan for Cold Water Swims: USMS Rules for Open Water Swims state:

302.2.2A (1) A swim shall not begin if the water temperature is less than 60° F. (15.6° C.), unless heat-retaining swimwear is required of all swimmers or a USMS-approved thermal plan is in place.

302.2.2A (2) A swim in which heat retaining swimwear is required of all swimmers shall not begin if the water temperature is less than 57° F. (13.9° C.), unless a USMS-approved thermal plan is in place.

Remember that the average masters swimmer does little or no acclimatization to cold water, so even a small drop in water temperature—especially in the colder ranges—dramatically increases the odds of thermal issues: Cold Shock Response, Cold Incapacitation, Hypothermia, and Circum-rescue Collapse). Be Prepared!

- If your swim course has a remote chance of water temperature less than 60° F., you are **REQUIRED** to complete the thermal plan below, showing your specific commitment to increased swimmer preparation before the event, reduced swimmer exposure during the event, and maximize mitigation & treatment of thermal issues during & after the event.

- If your swim course has a chance of water temperature between 60° F & 66° F., a thermal plan is **RECOMMENDED**.

- If your swim course has a chance of water temperature between 66° F & 72° F., a thermal plan is **ENCOURAGED**.

### How will you assist swimmer preparation before the event:

**The following methods are among the ways you can do this:**

1. Emphasize & stress on entry information of possible cold water swim conditions.
2. Require prior cold water swim experience.
3. Require swimmer cold water preparation plan.
4. Refuse entry if swimmer is not acclimated to cold water swimming.

What method(s) of swimmer preparation will you take: NA- cold water not an issue for this event.

### What action will you take to reduce swimmer exposure to thermal issues:

**The following methods are among the ways you can do this:**

1. Cancel the swim(s).
2. Shorten swim(s) or institute/shorten time limits.
3. Encourage wetsuits for all swimmers.
4. Require wetsuits for all swimmers.

Explain your plan of action: na

### What extra medical care will you provide to mitigate & treat symptoms of thermal issues:

**The following methods are among the ways you can do this:**

1. Bring in more emergency trained medical personnel and/or ambulances.
2. Bring in more volunteers to assist medical personnel.
3. Bring in more emergency craft and first responders on the course.
4. Increase warm beverages before the swim and at feeding stations.

5. Have special procedures (different than normal) for removing swimmers from the water & venue.
6. Increase warm beverages after the swim.
7. Increase thermal treatment gear (blankets, hot water bottles, etc.)
8. Make warm showers available on-site.
9. Make warming facilities (buildings, tents, vehicles, etc.) available on-site.
10. Other: [Specify](#)

Specify what extra listed items you will provide: na

Comment on how you will be prepared to care for multiple medical issues: na

**If the water temperature is below 72° F, will you be prepared to deal with cold water medical issues:** We have not experienced water temperatures below 72 degrees for this swim in recent recorded experience.

## Thermal Plan for Warm Water Swims

### General Information

Thermal Plan for Warm Water Swims: USMS Rule 302.2.2A(3) for Open Water Swims states:

“A swim of 5K or greater shall not begin if the water temperature exceeds 29.45° C. (85°F.). A swim of less than 5K shall not begin if the water temperature exceeds 31° C. (87.8°F.).”

Remember that the average masters swimmer does little or no acclimatization to warm water, so even a small increase in water temperature—especially in the warmer ranges—dramatically increases the odds of thermal issues: Dehydration, Heat Stroke, and Hyperthermia. Be Prepared!

- If your swim course has a chance of water temperature from 85° F to 87.8° F, you are **REQUIRED** to complete the thermal plan below, showing your specific commitment to increased swimmer preparation before the event, reduced swimmer exposure during the event, and maximize mitigation & treatment of thermal issues during & after the event.

- If your swim course has a chance of water temperature between 82° F & 85° F., a thermal plan is **RECOMMENDED**.

### How will you assist swimmer preparation before the event:

**The following methods are among the ways you can do this:**

1. Emphasize & stress on entry information of possible warm water swim conditions.
2. Require prior warm water swim experience.
3. Require swimmer warm water preparation plan.

What method(s) of swimmer preparation will you take: Our swim has usually not exceeded 82 degrees, however we believe there is some risk of warm water issues, so we have made this part of our planning. We discuss the issues related to warm water swimming with the swimmers before and during the safety meeting. We provide water and cooling stations before, during, and after the swim. We encourage swimmers having any difficulty to contact the kayaks or motorized craft and encourage them to rest (including standing up in the course) and consider not finishing the event.

### What action will you take to reduce swimmer, official, and staff exposure to heat-related issues:

**The following methods are among the ways you can do this:**

1. Cancel the swim(s).
2. Shorten swim(s) or institute/shorten time limits.
3. Remind all participants to stay well hydrated.
4. Remind swimmers to select appropriate pace.
5. Make swim caps optional or use Lycra swim caps.

Explain your plan of action: We will have cold/frozen water bottles and Gatoraid available on kayaks to hand to swimmers. We will have cooling stations at the course start/end. We will shorten or cancel the swim if conditions merit, and will limit or forbid the use of wetsuits.

### What extra medical care will you provide to mitigate & treat symptoms of heat-related issues:

**The following methods are among the ways you can do this:**

1. Bring in more emergency trained medical personnel and/or ambulances.
2. Bring in more volunteers to assist medical personnel.
3. Bring in more emergency craft and first responders on the course.

4. Increase cool beverages before, during and after the swim (for swimmers and staff, including extra cool beverages on watercraft and feeding stations)
5. Increase heat exhaustion and heat stroke treatment gear (iced water, ice chips, cold water bottles, misting tents/fans, etc.)
6. Make cool showers available on-site.
7. Make shade and cooling facilities (buildings, tents, etc.) available on-site.
8. Other:

Specify what extra listed items you will need to provide: we have more available EMS personnel available, and have added extra shade tents. Last year we added additional showers to the cooling station, as well as access to indoor air conditioned areas if needed. We will have chilled beverages on the kayaks available to swimmers.

**Comment on how you will be prepared to care for multiple medical issues:** multiple watercraft available to help swimmers out of the water if needed, we have multiple medical personnel who will be volunteering with the event, and have USCG, MD DNR, and county EMS on site or on call.

**If the water temperature is above 82° F, will you be prepared to deal with heat-related medical issues:** yes- we have medical volunteers with cardiac emergency training on site as well as EMS, USCG, lifeguards and MD DNR as described.