

Open Water Chairs & Event Directors Peer-to-Peer Teleconference

March 13, 2014

The items posted in this section are notes from conversations that are not reviewed or approved by the attendees. The information in these notes is not intended to override guidelines, policies and procedures listed elsewhere in the LMSC Guide to Operations or elsewhere on usms.org or in the USMS rule book.

1. Call to order by Daniel Cox
2. On the call: Gordon Gredley, Nadine Day, Ellen Taylor, Don Livoni, Lynn Morrison, Bob Bruce, Jerry Clark, Tim Waud, Chris Stevenson, Rob Copeland Phyllis Quinn, Melissa Hoffman, Josh Green, Paige Buehler, Mary Hull, Colleen Driscoll, Sarah Clark
3. Introductions – Bob Bruce, Oregon LMSC Open Water Chair, member of the USMS Open Water and Long Distance committees and event director
4. Open Discussions
 - a. **Referee:** Referee defined duties are not in rules since each open water event is very different. Referee can disqualify a swimmer for such things as cutting a corner . . . should have a Turn Judge on/near turn buoy(s).
 - b. **How many kayaks per swimmer:** At the 8 mile race in Utah there is a one-to-one ratio (1 kayak per swimmer). Each swimmer must provide his/her own kayaker. USMS requirement is to keep it safe so that all swimmers have spotting coverage.
 - c. **Safety coverage:** Five levels:
 - 1) Swimmers responsibility to keep themselves safe
 - 2) Spotting swimmers . . . watching the water
 - 3) Rescue craft
 - 4) Emergency crew on shore
 - 5) Where to take injured swimmers (i.e., hospital).
 - d. **Safety plans:** safety plans should be reviewed by your open water person (or use the forum and ask for someone to review your plans before moving them to the sanction chair).
 - e. **When do you call a race for weather:** The Director should be aware of impending weather that might cause issues during the time of the race. Lightning and heavy rain, fog, and wind are all factors that should be considered. Many smart phones have apps that allow you to track all of these weather-related issues.
 - f. **Life Guards:** Not all venues come with life guards; even if they are provided, any open water race should have enough spotters to assist swimmers . . . and enough rescue boats.

- g. **Does USMS collect incident reports at open water events.** Yes, but the nature and who was involved will be kept private. The number of Incident Reports is public.
 - h. **(Cont.) When to call a race:** High bacteria count. Some cities do report the bacteria count but those reports could be days old. If you have no data on the water quality, use your best judgment; always warn swimmers about the possibility of a high bacteria count so they can make an informed decision if they personally should race that day.
 - i. **Water temp:** USMS does not have much in place for high and low limits but the rules are looking at it. **Cold water (low mid 60s):** you need to ask yourself and your staff, "Can you handle hypothermia? Should we allow wet suits?" What type of resources do you have to handle someone who gets cold and needs help? **Hot water: mid 80 and above rule:** 85 above, 3 or more miles - not allowed.
 - j. **Algae:** Blue/green algae can make swimmers very sick and should be looked at when determining whether to race on a particular day. Event directors considering venues that have historically low occurrences of algae blooms is good to have the best chance of a successful event, too.
 - k. **Medical providers:** Need to make sure there is a backup plan in place in the event of a second emergency (i.e., if the emergency unit has left to take a swimmer to the hospital).
 - l. **Starts:** The *safest starts* begin in water and finish in water; they are harder to judge, but "are more true to our sport" (Bob Bruce). The use of *Touch board at the finish* is in the works; it would be triggered by the electronic chip timer on the swimmers wrist. *Beach starts and finishes* are more dangerous but more common. Make sure to break up the waves of swimmers so all swimmers have enough room on the beach to start at one time.
 - m. **How many swimmers per wave.** As big as the venue can handle. How many to start sometimes depends on how big the beach is; other factors to be considered are the number of spotters and kayaks in the water.
 - n. **Open Water Manual** is available online at *USMS.org*:
<http://www.usms.org/longdist/owman.pdf> This is a very complete resource for open water event planners and directors and for LMSC open water chairs.
 - o. **One event memberships.** (Bob Bruce)- Allows USMS to reach out to other swimmers and can be used as a marketing tool. Bob sends a letter at year end to all the one event members from Oregon open water events to invite them to become full members of USMS.
 - p. **Event directors - finding successors:** This can be an issue. One way to allow an easier transition would be to have someone run the event while you shadow them. This should be done long before you decide to step down. It's an opportunity to show someone how it's done with a safety net. The more people you get involved in running different parts of the event, the more likely you are to have someone step into the lead role.
5. **Thank you: Big thanks to Bob Bruce for taking the time to speak about running an open water event! Thanks to all the participants for their questions and contributions to the conversation, too!**