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**Action Item:**

1. MSA to appoint a task force to implement a plan to create a grand prix series of open water events.
  2. MSA that the executive director is authorized to sign contracts for pool and championship events.
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President Rob Copeland called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. EST. Also present were Meg Smath, Rob Butcher, Julie Heather, Mike Heather, Mark Gill, Jeff Moxie, Rob Copeland, Patty Miller, Leo Letendre and Jim Miller.

Jim left the call at 6:45 p.m.

## **Executive director's report**

Rob B announced that staff had met at the Charlotte office, where employee reviews were held.

Rob has been communicating with the YMCA about USMS and the YMCA proactively working together on marketing and operation of YMCA Masters Nationals. Both USMS and YMCA want to move forward with this, and details are being worked out.

Rob and staff have also been communicating with USA Swimming about our involvement in swimnetwork.com.

Online logging for Go The Distance will be available in January.

USMS will begin sending e-newsletters the first Monday of each month in 2009; a separate e-newsletter will be sent to coaches every third Monday. Members will be able to opt out of receiving email from USMS if they wish.

The National Office is also developing a plan to move administration of the postal events online.

The staff has met with the designer working to develop the new brand strategy and have narrowed it down to one concept. Rob hopes to bring the logo to the Board of Directors in the near future.

## **Disclosure of USMS membership numbers**

The EC discussed the issue of posting USMS numbers on the Internet. Leo will chair a task force to develop a policy to present to the Board of Directors about how and to whom this information should be made available.

## **Club registration of members**

We are still working on a process to implement club registration of members. Leo reminded us that he was directed by the Board of Directors at the post-convention meeting in Atlanta to implement this procedure. We will continue to work toward this goal.

Julie requested that the Registration Committee be moved to the National Operations Division and out of the Local Operations Division. Rob C and Leo agreed to make this change.

## **Open water proposal**

Mark submitted a proposal for a grand prix series of open water events (attached). Rob B said that the National Office staff has reviewed the plan and is enthusiastic about it and its potential to promote open water swimming. **MSA to appoint a task force to implement the plan.** Rob B volunteered to serve on the task force. Mark suggested Lynn Hazlewood to head the task force. The task force should also have representation from the Open Water and Long Distance Committee. Mark will coordinate with the Open Water and Long Distance Committee and this task force.

## **Committee assignments**

Rob C went over the committee assignments for 2009. He announced that the Open Water and Long Distance Committee is being moved to the Member Services Division from the National Operations Division. The vice presidents will work with their committees to come up with goals and objectives that support our strategic plan and the executive director's action plan.

## **Pool and open water championship contracts**

**MSA that the executive director be authorized to sign contracts for pool and championship events.** Evaluation of the events will remain with the Championship and Open Water and Long Distance Committees.

## **Progress on National Office bids**

Rob B reported that four communities have indicated they will be submitting proposals for USMS to locate its National Office in their cities.

## **Status of projects**

On behalf of one of her committees, Julie requested that the National Office keep committees up to date on the status of projects that staff are working on for them.

## **Next EC meeting and adjournment**

Julie suggested that the EC designate standing times to hold meetings to help avoid scheduling conflicts. We agreed to meet the first and third Tuesday of every month at 6:00 p.m. Eastern time. Our next meeting will therefore be November 18 at 6:00 p.m. EST. The meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m. EST.

Meg Smath  
Secretary

# National Open Water Events Planning

## Introduction

This is a proposal for the development of a new national open water event system, beginning with the 2009 season. The goal is to create growth in participation in our open water championships and to create opportunities for promotion and exposure of USMS. The plan calls for a new championship structure to be in place for the 2011 season, other national and regional events promoted/managed by USMS and a new method for ranking open water swimmers across the country. The 2009 and 2010 national championships will go forward as scheduled.

## National Event Reform

The initial concern is the events that we manage now. They are our most visible assets and have potential to bring sponsors and members to USMS. Currently, we have five national championship events spread around the country. This system does not optimize value for USMS, since the championships are largely local in nature, frequently have small entries and are comprised of a single race per championship. Imagine having multiple pool championships with each one consisting of a single event! In addition, we currently limit ourselves to a single concept—national championships only—when there are many other types of events we could also develop.

## National Events Potential

The potential for expansion of national events is only limited by our imagination. The table below shows some of the variables available to us in crafting events. Events could encompass one or more items from each category.

Event Types	Distances	Hosts	Venues	Divisions
National	Novice (<1 mi)	USMS	Lake	Non Wetsuit
Regional	Short (1 to < 3	Zone	River	Wetsuit
Championship	mi)	LMSC	Ocean	USMS AG
Series of events	Middle (3 to <6	Club	Reservoir	USMS Elite
Clinic	mi)	Other	Quarry	USA-S AG
Invitational	Long (6 to <10		Canal	Open AG (18+)
Festival	mi)		Other	Fins
Relay	Marathon (> 10			Kick boards
Open water	mi)			Other
Straightaway				
Solo				
Multi-race				
Multi-sport				

## Phase I—Grand Prix Series/Rules Revisions

USMS will initiate a national level Grand Prix series in 2009 made up of major events from across the country. A feature of this series will be a points system that represents the initiation of a national open water swimmer ranking system that will ultimately replace the current methods of selecting LD AA and LD AS swimmers. Some characteristics of the series will be:

1. USMS sanctioned events will be invited to join the series. Criteria will include:
  - a. Established record of success.
  - b. Significant entry size (TBD).
  - c. Room for development in the future.
  - d. Multi-race/multi-day format preferred.
  - e. At some level, there must be uniformity across the events, so that they are a true series and not merely a group of events called a series. Events accepted must be willing to integrate into the series format. There will have to be incentives for the events to do so.
2. Promotion and marketing of the series should be accomplished through the marketing arm of USMS. This will hold true as we move through all the phases, so the totality of our events is folded into USMS promotion and marketing efforts.
3. A major sponsor will be recruited to sponsor the series. This should be done by the sponsor recruitment arm of USMS. Some accommodation will have to be made with individual events that already have local sponsors. By approaching this as a USMS series of events rather than individual local events, we can achieve a greater value for our sponsor and a higher level of sponsorship for USMS.
4. For each event, USMS will produce a 30 minute video showcasing the event and its participants. This will be developed for distribution through media outlets such as regional cable networks, UniversalSports.com, SwimNetwork.com, FloSwim.org, the USMS YouTube channel, USMS.org, Swimming World TV and DVD sales. The goal of these videos will be to promote and market open water swimming, our events and our organization.

### **Phase II—Regional Series**

Phase II will drill down to the regional (i.e. Zone) level to create a series of events in all zones that are modeled on the Grand Prix Series. The regional series will feature the same points award system and feed into the overall ranking system, but with lower points awarded for participants in the regional events than national events.

### **Phase III—Local Events**

Phase III will draw the remaining OW events around USMS into the points system, but with lower points awarded for participants in local events than regional events.

### **Phase IV—New National Championship Structure**

Currently USMS does not own an open water national championship. Each year, we borrow five currently existing events and put our name on them. The next year, we move on to the next five events. By its very nature, this has tended to produce a primarily local participation in our championships events. In addition, the marketing and promotion of these events has largely been left up to the local event director. It is up to them to determine how USMS hosts its open water championships.

2011 will see a new national championship structure that will sit at the top of the points award system. This will consist of a single, 3-day event that includes all national championship

distances. This event will be the culmination of the Grand Prix Series. Maximum ranking points will be awarded at the championship level. Our championship will be owned and operated by USMS. The championship will stay in one location for several years before moving on to a new location. When the move occurs, the former venue will be turned over to the local LMSC to operate. Venue selection will be based on a series of criteria such as ease of access, desirability of location from both a competition and vacation standpoint, quality of swim course, cost of area, etc.

### **Phase V—Open Water Fitness**

Development of open water fitness activities will proceed on a parallel track to phases I through IV and will include development of clinic/practice swim events, safety education, and integration of OW mentoring into the Coach and Club Services division work.

### **USMS Support For Open Water Development**

Successful development of open water will hinge on creating the technological infrastructure for event support. Development and promotion implies an increase in number of events (both competitive and fitness) as well as an increase in the number of swimmers entered in each event. To do this effectively, the following technology is required:

1. Online entry processing. There are existing services available and USMS should take advantage of that rather than develop their own system. The biggest negatives are the lack of ability to verify USMS registration and purchase OEVT (One Event) registrations online.
  - a. In the near term, we need to authorize meet directors to look up registrations through the USMS administrative tools.
  - b. USMS needs to move to implement the ability to purchase a One Event Registration through our online registration system and develop a less expensive, more available OEVT.
  - c. We need to implement an online USMS verification system that authorized vendors can hook into should they choose.
2. Electronic timing of events. If an event does not currently do this, we should encourage them to do so. This will be a tougher sell, because it involves a financial investment. Use of electronic timing for all events should be an ultimate goal of our system.
3. A meet results database with a unique event ID, so events can be tracked through time. The ability to upload results for open water swims into a meet results database is essential for any points system to be viable. Without implementation of a points ranking system, the Grand Prix events would be marginally different from our existing championship concept.
4. Sanction tracking system. Development of the planned sanction tracking system needs to move forward, so we can keep track of the sanctioned OW swims around the country. This system will also feed into the meet results database.

## Logistical Issues

Adding to the challenge is that our current rules do not contain the flexibility to easily change our approach to the national championships. If we decide to restructure them using our normal process for changing rules and bidding championships, it would be 2013 before we could begin to use our new structure. To move more quickly, we will have to move outside our normal process. This can be done within our existing code as follows:

1. First, we need to forestall bidding for the 2011 championships (scheduled for the 2009 convention). We have already awarded championships through 2010 and we need to gain time to prepare alternative proposals without continuing to commit more years to the current structure. This can be accomplished by the BOD invoking their emergency powers under Article 506.4 and suspending the applicable rules in Part 3.
2. We can begin by running demonstration events during the 2009 season as exemplars for a new national event structure. We will need to be careful that these demonstration projects do not diminish the value of the already selected championship events.
3. We need to propose legislation and rules changes for the 2009 convention that would allow a more flexible process in developing national events. It is imperative that there be an unopposed meeting at convention to discuss these rules so as to avoid significant time expenditure in the HOD.
4. As an aside, not bidding for 2011 will not create the danger that we would be without championships for that year. Open water championships do not need 2 ½ years lead time as they are normally chosen from already established events. Advanced bidding is a convenience that allows us to know we have secured the events ahead of time and they can be run well, but most of the work takes place after January 1 in the year they occur. If we are still using our current structure at the time, the 2011 championships could be bid during the 2010 convention and still be put on in 2011—albeit with a compressed timeline.