

**District Department of
the Environment
(DDOE)**

“Swimming Exception”

PUBLIC HEARING

Wednesday, July 18, 2012

6 - 8 PM

1200 First Street, NE

6th Floor

Conference Room 612

DDOE "Swimming Exception" - Public Hearing

July 18, 2012 6:00PM - 8:00PM

1200 First Street, NE, 6th Floor, Conference Room # 612

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Kurt Thiel ✓	Potomac Valley Swimming	703 685 7752	swimthiel@ERAS.COM

Good Evening

My name is Michael Harris and I'm from Fairfax, Virginia. I am 19 year triathlete and have completed the Nation's Triathlon the last four years, which includes swimming in the Potomac three times. I have also completed triathlons in Philadelphia, New York City, and Cleveland. That means I've swum in the Schuylkill and the Hudson Rivers as well as Lake Erie. These are bodies of water that have undergone major clean-up and host numerous swimming events despite the weird looks and comments I get from my non-Tri friends. Some reputations die hard.

I average 5 to 6 triathlons a year and Nation's is always my "A" race since it is in my backyard and because it is a great course. This will be my third year being captain of my company's 30+ person team. This race is a perfect showcase for the Nation's Capital as it demonstrates the District's commitment to personal health and fitness. Two weekends ago, while participating in the NYC Tri, I ran with a participant who

noticed my Nation's Tri shirt and asked me to tell him all about it. He was excited to be going to DC for the first time.

I have never had an issue swimming in the Potomac, other than getting ribbed by those who think that it isn't safe to swim. The Nation's Tri has a great reputation in maintaining safety on their swim course. By passing a permanent exemption to the swimming ban for special swimming events involving the Potomac River you send a message that that the Potomac is safe and that special events are the rule and not the exception.



Travis Siehndel <travis.siehndel@gmail.com>

River swimming rules comments

1 message

Travis Siehndel <travis.siehndel@gmail.com>

Tue, Jul 17, 2012 at 7:12 PM

To: ddoe.swimrules@dc.gov

From: Travis Siehndel
1509 N. Carolina Ave. NE
Washington, DC 20002

To: DDOE
Attn: River Swimming Rules/District Department of the Environment

My name is Travis Siehndel and I am a member and a former president of the 1200 member strong DC Triathlon Club. I have been competing in the sport of triathlon for 9 years and have been either a participant or an active volunteer in each of the Nation's Triathlon events that have been produced in Washington, DC. In addition to swimming in the Potomac for that Nation's Triathlon, I have also participated in open water swimming events in the Potomac River off of the shores of Maryland.

Throughout my experience racing triathlon events I have swam in bodies of water in major cities in the US as well as in the international waters of Cozumel, Mexico. Domestically, in addition to swimming in the Potomac River, I have swam in the Hudson River in NYC, NY, the Allegheny River in Pittsburgh, PA, the Monongahela River in Morgantown, WV as well as the Chesapeake Bay and many of its tributaries. With this experience, it is my opinion that the Potomac River provides one of the best urban river swimming experiences in the country. Breathing to one side you have the Lincoln Memorial, Georgetown and the Memorial Bridge in view and on the other side is Arlington National Cemetery, the US Air Force Memorial and the Pentagon. These sites alone make for one of the most amazing backdrops that open water swimming has to offer.

Through my experience with the DC Triathlon Club as a volunteer for its new triathlete training program I have helped to prepare and train nearly 1,000 first-time triathletes to compete in the sport. For these athletes that may have had pre-existing reservations regarding swimming in the Potomac based on its reputation as a dirty urban river, I have never heard of an athlete exiting the Potomac reporting anything other than praise for the quality of water in the Potomac.

In a city as active and vibrant as Washington, DC, the Potomac River is a national treasure that provides yet another opportunity to define our city as the world class center that it is. Thank you for considering this permanent exemption for swimming in the Potomac River. I look forward to seeing more opportunities for swimming in this historic body of water.

Respectfully,

Travis Siehndel

July 13, 2012

Jennifer Rentch
2311 15th Street, NW
2
Washington, DC 20009

DDOE's Water Quality Division
1200 First Street, NE
5th Floor
Washington, DC 20002

Attention: River Swimming Rules/District Department of the Environment

I am a local triathlete and I am writing in support of lifting the permanent swimming ban for the Potomac River around the area of Washington, DC. I have participated in the local triathlon scene for 6 years now and I have competed in the notable local races – DC Triathlon and Nation's Triathlon three times and two times respectively. Each of these swims has been outstanding with regards to water visibility and quality. I have swum in many other city rivers without being able to say that about any of them.

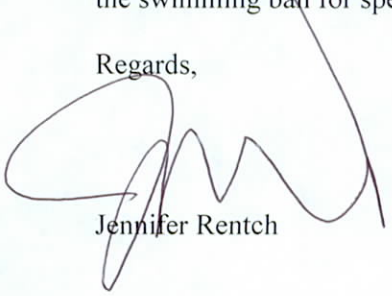
While there are many races held in major metropolitan areas around the county, ours is particularly special due to the city's various unique historical sites, monuments and spectacular parklands. I believe that is what continues to draw large crowds of participants, sponsors and spectators year after year.

I think triathlon brings a lot of benefits to the individuals that participate. Good health and good habits are just some of the more visible benefits of participating in triathlon. There are also the benefits of improved self-confidence as well as learning about a new city from a unusual vantage point. Lastly, many participants help raise money for charities, and some use the opportunity to honor a loved one or friend.

In the past 6 years, I have traveled all around the country for races. Many people stop me and ask about my Nation's Tri t-shirts and express that this race is definitely on their "bucket list." Most express that they just can't wait to get here to do it in the near future. It would be a real shame to disappoint them

Thank you for your consideration and I sincerely hope that you pass a permanent exemption to the swimming ban for special swimming events involving the Potomac River.

Regards,



Jennifer Rentch



Meredith Bowen <mtebowen@gmail.com>

River swimming rules commentys

7 messages

Meredith Bowen <mtebowen@gmail.com>

Thu, Jul 12, 2012 at 11:17 AM

To: ddoe.swimrules@dc.gov

Bcc: Sara Ridge <Sara.Ridge@lls.org>, Kristen Avioli <kavioli@competitorgroup.com>

Meredith Bowen

150 Rhode Island Ave. NW
Unit 303
Washington DC 20001

July 12, 2012

To the members of the river swimming rules committee, District Department of the Environment,

My love affair with triathlon is a D.C. romance. I jumped into the Potomac River for my first race at the Nations Tri 2010. My favorite memory of the race was taking a moment to look up over my shoulders while underneath the Arlington Memorial Bridge and thinking how incredibly cool it was to see the bottom of it. As a runner and resident, I've seen the sights of the mall and memorials dozens, if not hundreds, of times. But that view, under the bridge – that was something unique.

I've completed two more DC triathlons since then – the 2011 DC Tri and the 2011 Nations, which broke my heart a little and canceled the swim due to heavy rains. I'm looking forward to taking the plunge into the Potomac again for this year's Nations on Sept. 9.

Being a member of DC's growing triathlon community is one of my favorite aspects of my residency. I get to train and race along America's yard and share our beautiful city with thousands of out-of-town racers each year during Nations Tri, the largest race of its distance in the country. And while training amongst monuments and museums is a uniquely DC experience, racing in the parks, when closed to traffic and engulfed in spectators, puts local races above and beyond any other urban races I've done, including the New York City and Philadelphia triathlons.

DC is consistently rated amongst the fittest cities in the country. We're one of the most charitable, too – our chapter of Team in Training, which benefits the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, is one of the largest in the country. When my aunt was diagnosed with cancer in late 2009, I decided to join TNT and complete the Nations Triathlon to honor her fight. She passed away in August 2011. Triathlon and TNT are the ways I honor her memory; doing that in D.C., where it started, is important.

A permanent exemption to the swimming ban for special swimming events in the Potomac will protect and foster our triathlon community and help ensure the reputation of the District of Columbia as one of the country's eminent triathlon cities. Thank you for your consideration of this exemption.

Sincerely,

Meredith Bowen

Ridge, Sara <Sara.Ridge@lls.org>

Thu, Jul 12, 2012 at 12:24 PM

To: Meredith Bowen <mtebowen@gmail.com>

My name is Mike Di Marco. I have been a resident of the District of Columbia for five years and am an avid triathlete. When I first moved to Washington, DC, the city was not known as a “triathlon town” and was regularly mocked in the triathlon community. Fellow triathletes from across the country would mock the “dirty” Potomac River and did not see Washington, DC as a desirable location. In 2007, I completed the Nation’s Triathlon for the first time and couldn’t have been more surprised at what a great city Washington, DC was for triathletes. This race turned me from a skeptic to an advocate for triathlon in Washington, DC.

Now in the triathlon community, the Nation’s Triathlon is known as one of the best events in the country and was recently rated the top triathlon in the Mid-Atlantic Region. Triathletes from across the country eagerly flock to our great city to participate in this race each September and each year, a new corps of racers transform from skeptics to advocates—much like myself five years ago.

Passing a permanent exemption to the swimming ban for “special swimming events” in the Potomac will help ensure that the Nation’s Triathlon can continue to attract triathletes to Washington, DC each year and allow us to showcase our wonderful city and wonderful sport to people from across the country and across the world. Thank you for considering passing this exemption at this time.

TALKING POINTS FOR MOLLY FOR DDOE PUBLIC HEARING

- Hello, my name is Molly Quinn and I am Vice President of Competitor Group, the owner and producer of The Nation's Triathlon and other major endurance races that take place worldwide. Competitor Group currently owns and operates more than 50 events around the world, including the Rock 'n' Roll Marathon Series, Land Rover TriRock Triathlon Series and Columbia Muddy Buddy Series; events that will include more than 600,000 professional and amateur participants in 2012.
- As the former President of Washington Sports & Event Management, I have overseen 7 events involving a swimming competition that took place in the Potomac River, four for The Nation's Triathlon, two for the Washington DC Triathlon and one for the Dextro Energy World Triathlon series. Additionally for most of these events, we also held a swim practice in the Potomac River the day before the event.
- For each of these events, our organization worked with independent water quality testing organizations and conducted all the required water tests leading up to and including the day of the race.
- In order to further enhance swim safety, we have also put into place a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) and have taken added steps to ensure the safety of our athletes, including the purchase and deployment of large, numbered buoys that assist in directing swimmers in the water and the use of ambulances, and assets in the water, including rescue boats, kayaks, wave runners, all equipped with the appropriate number of lifeguards and EMS personnel to support the number of participants for each given race. Safety support for the swim is provided by DC Fire EMS,

DC Harbor Police, the US Park Police, and personnel on the water provided through Nation's Tri. All swimmers are monitored via an electronic chip as they enter and exit the water.

- I would also like to take a moment to share with you some of the positive results of these races. For three years running, Washington, DC was voted by the American Fitness Index as the "fittest city in the nation." Among the reasons cited were the proliferation of triathlons, including the three events noted earlier and a non-profit organization we also support called ACHIEVE Kids Tri which brings the benefits of triathlon training to some of DC's inner city youth.
- The Nation's Triathlon is the only triathlon event in the country dedicated to supporting research into a cure for blood cancers and to date, our race has raised more than \$11 million to benefit The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society.
- In addition to our charitable giving, we also commissioned a study on the economic impact of The Nation's Triathlon, which found that direct and indirect spending tied to the event has contributed more than \$6.8 million annually to our local economy.
- Through these triathlon events, we also offer unique races-within-a-race that have fostered competitions among our city's federal employees – we've had Members of Congress, White House staff, Hill staff and Administration leaders compete. We also host competitions among active duty and veteran military populations and for new triathletes.
- We are proud of the impact we have had on this city, including being recognized by the Guinness Book of World Records as the largest international distance triathlon event in the nation and being recognized by the First Lady's "Let's Move!" initiative for our ACHIEVE program, as an organization that is helping combat the obesity crisis in our country.

- We hope you will continue to let triathlons grow and flourish in the nation's capital as we continue to see the benefits of these competitions reflected in our city's economic well-being and health.

Jeffrey Bell
Head Triathlon Coach –
Team In Training – NCA Chapter
1367 K Street, SE
Washington, DC 20003

Attention: DDOE's Water Quality Division
Re: River Swimming Rules/District Department of the Environment

I am a local triathlete and triathlon coach and I am writing in support of lifting the permanent swimming ban for the Potomac River around the area of Washington, DC. As one of the thousands of athletes bred into the sport of triathlon here in the Nation's capital, I fell in love with the sport thanks to the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society's Team In Training endurance training program. Six years ago I considered the feat of finishing a single triathlon to be a pipe dream. With the incredible coaching and fundraising support through the DC chapter of TNT, not only did I successfully complete the race, but I raised over \$4,000 for LLS and blood cancer patients in the metro DC area.

~~My experience with TNT was so amazing that I immediately signed on for more triathlon training and more fundraising.~~ I was at the starting line when the Nation's Triathlon first broke ground in its inaugural year at the Georgetown Waterfront, and I watched over the next few years as this race became the largest Olympic Distance triathlon in North America. In addition to becoming the continent's largest triathlon, the Nation's Triathlon is the only triathlon in the country dedicated to building awareness and raising money for the treatment of Leukemia and blood-related cancers. In 2011, the event raised nearly \$3 million for LLS with 700 athletes competing and raising funds through TNT. Even more impressive, since the race's inception, the partnership between the race and LLS has garnered an estimated \$11 million for research, patient education and support initiatives that will help the LLS bring us closer to a cure.

The Nation's Triathlon is the flagship triathlon for Team In Training nationwide and a cornerstone tourism event for this city in September each year. With over 85% of TNT participants arriving in DC as traveling participants (not local), they are awarded four-day weekend hotel stays on top of planned time to spend with family, friends, and visitors touring the landmarks of the Nation's capital. So not only is the race acclaimed as a world-class triathlon, but also provides significant tourism revenue to the city outside of the busy summer season.

Having been a part of the LLS family for six years as a participant, fundraiser, and now Head Triathlon Coach, I have developed incredible connections to dozens survivors of blood cancers, as well as several of those who lost their battles. I cannot fathom depriving blood cancer patients in the DC area of nearly \$3 million of cancer research funds raised by this event, because of a legislative swimming ban. *per year*

Passing a permanent exemption to the swimming ban for the Potomac River will help ensure that the Nation's Triathlon can continue to attract triathletes to Washington, DC, and provide LLS and Team In Training with a cornerstone fundraising event to support its mission of curing blood cancers.

Thank you for your consideration.

Regards,

Jeffrey Bell

Witness List for July 18 Public Hearing

Molly Quinn, Race Organizer, Nation's Triathlon
Michael Harris, triathlete and past competitor
Meredith Bowen, Team in Training, Leukemia & Lymphoma Society
Mike DiMarco, triathlete and past competitor
Tarus Nelson, disabled veteran and triathlete
Jeff Bell - Team in Training, Leukemia & Lymphoma Society
Jenn Rentch - triathletes and past competitor
Travis Seihndel - triathlete and past competitor
Tim Staples, Marine Evolutions

Kurt Teal?

1200 First St, NE

6th Floor 612

River Swimming Rules Talking Paper

for the Public Hearing

DDOE Water Quality Division, July 18, 2012

Potomac Valley Swimming

Potomac Valley Swimming lauds this effort to streamline the process by which swimming events can be brought to the Potomac River within the confines of the District of Columbia's waters. This is a major step to allow the contesting of National Championship Open Water Swimming Events in our "Nation's River" in the future along with local and regional events.

Potomac Valley Swimming has been at the forefront of efforts to have significant Open Water Swimming Events return to the Potomac since the late 1990's when it first became evident that the measures taken by the communities along the Potomac had improved the water quality dramatically over the lamentable state President Johnson found in the 1960's. In an attempt to hold the 2003 National Open Water Championship 5 Kilometer race, the D.C. Department of Health shared the water sample reports for a number of years which showed that the river was Contact One certifiable for approximately 325 day per year in the area below the Memorial Bridge. The problem then and now was when an unusually heavy rainstorm flushed pathogens into the river from streets, parks and Combined Sewer Outflows (CSO) along with minor tributaries. Since that time the situation has been greatly improved by communities along the river through active and passive measures. The District of Columbia and its DC Water are to be particularly commended for the actions taken since the 2003 USA Swimming 5K race attempt.

Although this is a major step in the right direction it only covers "onetime" events and associated practice session. PVS is also in need of a venue to practice Open Water Swimming on a continuing basis by its teams and also the National Team. Without the use of the river beyond the one event plus practice session format, a great asset will be lost to the development of World Class Open Water Swimmers in the area and the USA. We believe that a program as it existed and was overseen by the D.C. Department of Health; with routine testing of the main channel of the river and incorporating a radio contact/check-in/out system with the Harbor Master, properly water safety qualified and certified coaches in escort boats could open the Potomac River as a major training venue for Open Water Swimming. Although only a quick thumbnail sketch of the possibilities PVS stands ready to consult with the District's Authorities to make this a viable part of this Rule making effort.

July 13, 2012

Jennifer Rentch
2311 15th Street, NW
2
Washington, DC 20009

DDOE's Water Quality Division
1200 First Street, NE
5th Floor
Washington, DC 20002

Attention: River Swimming Rules/District Department of the Environment

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While there are many races held in major metropolitan areas around the county, ours is particularly special due to the city's various unique historical sites, monuments and spectacular parklands. I believe that is what continues to draw large crowds of participants, sponsors and spectators year after year.

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In the past 6 years, I have traveled all around the country for races. Many people stop me and ask about my Nation's Tri t-shirts and express that this race is definitely on their "bucket list." Most express that they just can't wait to get here to do it in the near future. It would be a real shame to disappoint them

Thank you for your consideration and I sincerely hope that you pass a permanent exemption to the swimming ban for special swimming events involving the Potomac River.

Regards,



Jennifer Rentch

RECEIVED
7/26/12 SB

July 17, 2012

DDOE's Water Quality Division
1200 First Street, NE
5th Floor
Washington, DC 20002

RE: Action to Amend the Ban on Swimming in the Potomac River

Dear Director,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the emergency rulemaking action to amend the ban on swimming set forth in title 21 (Water and Sanitation), chapter 11 (Water Quality Standards), of the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations).

When I moved to Washington, DC the Triathlon community was one of the first communities to welcome me with open arms. Participating in Nation's Triathlon in 2010 was my first international distance triathlon and my first opportunity to swim in the Potomac River. Participating in this exceptionally well organized race was an amazing experience that catapulted me into the sport of Triathlon. It was obvious that race organizers had taken the safety of the athletes very seriously. I recall they not only worked with DDOE, but they hired an independent water quality testing facility to ensure they adhered to the guidelines of federal water safety and quality standards required by the District and by USA Triathlon.

It is clear that race organizers have met the requirements each year, starting with the temporary suspension of the swimming ban authorized by statute in 2007 and by rule in each of the years 2008 through 2010. Triathlon competitive swim events took place in the Potomac River during each of those years. It is important to highlight that the District received no reports of illness resulting from the Potomac River's water quality from these events and that the analyses conducted in each of those years demonstrated to the satisfaction of DDOE that the water quality met applicable standards.

The opportunity to participate in the largest international distance triathlon in the county, in the Nation's Capital, is a special opportunity for athletes throughout the US to experience the historic landmarks of the District. The Nation's Triathlon course is one of the most spectacular and athlete friendly courses in the world winding past monuments, memorials, and history through the Nation's Capital. The unique opportunity to view the city from inside the scenic and clam Potomac is a vantage point one rarely gets, not to mention the views of Arlington Cemetery and swimming under the Memorial Bridge. This coupled with the exceptional bike and run courses allow athletes to view the White House, Washington Monument, Lincoln Memorial, WWII Memorial, and many more famous landmarks.

I do a number of triathlons each year; however I always sign up, and look forward to doing Nations Triathlon. Triathlon is a way of life for many in the District. The sport has shown me personally how to balance three athletic disciplines, nutrition, and a life outside of the sport.

RECEIVED
7/26/12 SB

Based on the fact that the District of Columbia has received no reports of illness resulting from the Potomac River's water quality during special swimming events, I encourage you to pass a permanent exemption to the swimming ban for "special swimming events," defined as "a single day event requiring full body contact in water...including a triathlon swimming leg, a group plunge, or a swim meet."

Thank you for the opportunity to comment, and I look forward to swimming in the Potomac River this fall.

Taldi Walter