

How to Obtain Approval of a Swim Event in the Potomac River and Anacostia River

The Department of Energy & Environment (DOEE) may grant an exception to the swimming prohibition in the Potomac River and Anacostia River for special swimming events, such as triathlons or other competitions that involve water contact recreation. The special swimming event organizer, however, must demonstrate that the bacteria and pollutant levels (water quality) in the river is likely to be suitable during the event. The regulations and its revisions regarding swim events can be found here: [Water Quality Regulations | ddoe \(dc.gov\)](#) under the Action to Amend the Ban on Swimming in the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers section of the page.

To demonstrate the suitability of the water quality, the special swimming event organizer must:

1. Submit to DOEE for approval a quality assurance project plan (QAPP) at least thirty (30) days prior to collecting samples. The QAPP shall:
 - a. Explain how the entity or party shall monitor and analyze the water quality parameters -- E. coli, pH and turbidity -- in the river;
 - b. Include maps of the event's route and sample collection locations;
 - c. Include certification documentation of the analytical laboratory; and
 - d. Include a monitoring plan that meets the requirements in 21 DCMR § 1108.2 (Rivers). [Notice of Final Rulemaking Swimming Rules 08-10-2012.pdf \(dc.gov\)](#)

Information on basic elements of a QAPP can be found here: Guidance for Quality Assurance Project Plans EPA QA/G-5- [Guidance for Quality Assurance Project Plans \(epa.gov\)](#)

2. Samples shall not be collected before the QAPP is approved by DOEE.
3. Submit the monitoring report and analysis of the River's water quality to DOEE for review at least forty-eight (48) hours before the event. Laboratory analytical results reports shall be on the letterhead of the laboratory conducting the analysis.

NOTE: *Swimming (Primary contact recreation) is the Class A use in the DC Water Quality Standards regulations. The applicable DC Water Quality Standards (Section 1104.8, Table 1 Numeric criteria) can be downloaded from the following website:*
[DC WQS FINAL RULEMAKING Nov 1, 2013.pdf](#)

4. Submit a contingency plan in the event DOEE determines that the river is unsafe for Swimming.
5. Pay a fee of one thousand dollars (\$1,000) per event to DOEE. Fee shall be made payable to the DC Treasurer and submitted along with the application.

Additional Requirements

6. Prior to the event, organizers must contact the [Special Events Office of the DC Fire and EMS Department | DC](#) to coordinate permission from the District of Columbia

Metropolitan Police Department and the US National Park Service and other appropriate offices to swim in the Potomac or Anacostia Rivers.

7. A Certificate of Insurance with the appropriate coverage, as required by 21 DCMR § 1108.10, shall be submitted to the Office of Risk Management (<https://orm.dc.gov/>). A copy of the certificate can be included with the approval request at least thirty (30) days before the event. Coverage shall be maintained throughout the period of the event.
8. The special swimming event organizer shall secure from each of its employees, contractors, volunteers, and event participants a signed DDOE approved statement that the organizer expressly:
 - (a) Assumes the risk of event participation; and
 - (b) Waives liability of the District Government, its officers, employees, and agents for any damage or injury arising out of the person's participation in the event.

Post Event Obligations

Within eight weeks after the event, the special swimming event organizer shall submit to DOEE: a report of each recorded incident from each relevant public safety agency; each medical issue or incident involving an on-site first aid facility; use of the contingency plan for unsafe swimming; and, the results of samples taken in the river on the day of the event.

Submit documents to:

Department of Energy & Environment
Attention: Associate Director
Water Quality Division
1200 First Street, NE, 5th Floor
Washington, DC 20002

e-mail: jonathan.champion@dc.gov

The DOEE Director reserves the right to allow swimming or deny permission to swim in the Potomac River or Anacostia River. In summary, the special swimming event organizer must show that the organization has:

- conducted the required sampling and testing
- coordinated with government public safety agencies
- provided proof of insurance coverage to relevant permitting agencies
- waived the District of all liabilities
- developed and maintained a contingency plan should the river be deemed unsafe for the swim.

Application Check List

- QAPP
- Contingency Plan
- Application Fee
- Permission from District of Columbia Metropolitan Police Department and the US National Park Service for swim event
- Certificate of Insurance
- Assumption of Risk and Waived District Government Liability statements

All checklist items must be submitted at least thirty (30) days prior to swim event for approval consideration.