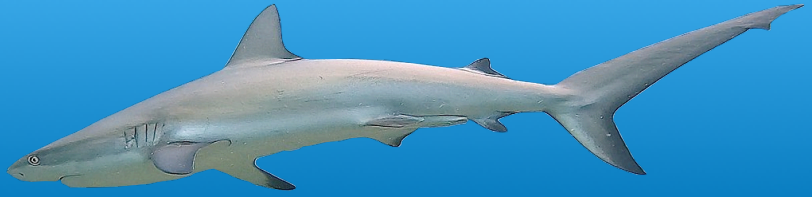




MOWSA SHARK PROTOCOL



The Massachusetts Open Water Swimming Association's rules are largely the same as the generally accepted **Rules of Marathon Swimming** as detailed by the **Marathon Swimmers Federation** in 2014 to govern unassisted open water marathon swims. A major exception is our shark protocol, outlined here. This protocol will be in force during all cross Cape Cod Bay swims and will come into force if a shark is spotted during any other solo swim.

MOWSA SHARK PROTOCOL

During the swim, the swimmer shall remain between the escort power boat and the escort kayak(s) if such are involved. The swimmer is to remain next to the escort boat and within 20 to 30 feet of the side of the boat. The presence of the power boat should be enough to keep sharks away.

The pilot and crew are responsible for the swimmer's safety and should diligently look for marine life during the entirety of the swim. The pilot should keep up-to-date information on recent sightings of sharks in the area and make note of any shark sightings made locally by other mariners during the swim.

If the pilot hears of a sighting somewhere nearby, they do not need to take action. However, if someone on the escort boat or kayak spots a shark, that sighting should be confirmed by a second person.

If a shark is sighted, the swimmer and kayaker should be brought in close to the boat (closer than the 20 to 30 feet that's standard) so that depending on observed behavior, the swimmer and kayaker can be pulled immediately.

Note the direction in which the shark is headed and visually track the shark if possible. Try to identify the species, as this information can be very useful to local mariners, environmental groups, and other water users.

If the shark approaches the group (escort boat, swimmer, or kayak(s), and gets within 50 yards of any of these parties, the swimmer should be removed from the water. If a shark is sighted, but does not approach within 50 yards of the group, then it's up to the pilot to decide whether or not to continue the swim. Once the swimmer leaves the water, the swim is over and they cannot reenter once the shark has swum away.

SHARK REPELLENT METHODS

Shark shields are permitted during a MOWSA swim, and in fact will be required equipment for any cross Cape Cod Bay swim. The official MOWSA observer will be responsible for the delivery of these devices (fully charged) to and from the swim.

The devices are to be mounted on the escort kayak with the whip probe immersed in the water. If there is no kayak or the kayak leaves the water during the swim, then the devices should be hung from the side of the escort power boat so that the probe is immersed in the water.

Because the shark shields have limited battery life, they should be used consecutively. The first shield should be mounted and turned on at the start of the swim. The shield should be swapped out for the second one when the battery gets low (~7 hours in cold water). Please refer to the shark shield manual for proper use and light indicators. Don't use both shields at once; it doesn't improve safety and will leave the swimmer without coverage if/when the batteries run down. Once the device is turned on, keep clear of the whip probe. If you do touch the probe while the device is on, you may receive an unpleasant, but mild shock.

BODY PAINTING/MARKING

Research has indicated that sharks react to the interplay of light and shadow in the water, leading some researchers to theorize that breaking up the lighter mass of the body with dark and light stripes can help a swimmer "hide" in the water. If you think that will help, you are welcome to use colored zinc oxide to paint stripes on your body; doing such will not violate the rules of a MOWSA documented swim.

PHYSICAL DETERRENT

No intentional harm is to be inflicted upon a shark, unless the swimmer is in immediate danger or actively being attacked. No intentional contact is to be made with a shark or any other wildlife and if such occurs, the swim will be nullified by the observer.

For more information or questions visit:
massowsa.org/sanctioning or contact us at:
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