



MOWSA Solo Swims Observer Information

The Massachusetts Open Water Swimming Association was founded in 2012 to oversee solo marathon swims undertaken in Massachusetts waterways. Since then, we've observed and authenticated more than two dozen solo and relay swims in various locations around the state. All of these swims have been executed under the watchful eye of an official MOWSA observer who documents everything that happens during the swim and enforces the declared rules of the swim. The documentation produced by the observer is critical for authenticating the swim claim and preserving the details for future reference when another swimmer wants to complete the same event. Observers must be:

Independent. MOWSA-certified observers must maintain a level of objectivity during the swim to ensure that the declared rules are followed. While friends can and do observe for each other, it's important that while you're wearing your observer's hat, you separate your feelings for the swimmer from your duty to observe and document the event.

Knowledgeable. MOWSA has designed a brief observer training course to help observers who haven't served in such a capacity before to develop the skills they need to be effective in that role. While you don't have to be a marathon swimmer yourself, it helps if you understand the aims and spirit of the sport and have adequate knowledge of the rules that will be followed along with your responsibilities in documenting the facts of the swim as it transpires.

Invested in the safe completion of the swim. While not every marathon swim goes as planned and it's not the observer's responsibility to crew or assist the swimmer or crew in the execution of the swim itself, we do ask that our observers be enthusiastic ambassadors of our organization and assist in delivering a good and safe experience for swimmer, crew, and pilot.

HOW TO OBSERVE A MOWSA SOLO SWIM

Thank you for being a MOWSA observer! We are very grateful for the dedication of the volunteers who assist in this important role. The observer has several specific tasks to complete before, during, and after each swim they oversee.

- **Before the swim begins**, the observer must read aloud the rules that will govern the swim and get a verbal acknowledgment from the swimmer and their crew that they understand these rules and pledge to

follow them. A copy of the applicable rules will be provided to you by MOWSA staff as part of your observer's kit, which will also include an air horn in case of emergency, a mylar blanket, a water thermometer, and a wind meter. Please download a simple GPS app to your phone for tracking your precise location.

- **At the start**, please take an initial water and air temperature reading and record those starting conditions. You must also write down the time of day when the swimmer first enters the water
- **During the swim**, the observer must keep an eye on the swimmer at all times. Part of your role is as safety personnel, so please be aware of where your swimmer is and communicate with the pilot and the crew if you observe an unsafe action or situation. Throughout the swim, you must fill in the observer's log every 30 minutes. Fill out as much info as you can and include notes about what else is going on around the swimmer – are there other boats around? any sealife? has the swimmer peed? – and note these details in the comments section of the log. This log is the record of everything that happened during the swim, so be detailed!
- **When the swim finishes**, you must record the whole elapsed time and the time of day when the swimmer exits the water.
- **After the swim**, please send a scan of your hand-written observer's log along with a typed version of your report to the swim administrator for processing and ratification. Please be responsive if the administrator has any follow-up questions or needs additional information to authenticate the swim.

That's is! Thanks for your help in keeping marathon swimming alive in Massachusetts! We hope you have a wonderful day on the water!



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