Department of Conservation and Recreation

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DCR Recreational Advisory: Open Water Swimming at Walden Pond

What: Following a thorough review of safety protocols, beginning on Friday, July 9, 2021, the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) will open Walden Pond to open water swimming with enhanced safety measures. As part of this revised policy, DCR is issuing updated Open Water Swim Rules & Best Practices for Walden Pond, including modifications to ensure that open water swimming is available to experienced swimmers while prioritizing safety for swimmers, lifeguards, and visitors to the waterfront.

To ensure that DCR lifeguards can focus exclusively on the safety of visitors in the designated swimming area, between Memorial Day and Labor Day, open water swimming is permitted during park hours only before and after lifeguard shifts. Lifeguards are on duty between 10:00AM and 6:00PM daily. During this time, open water swimming is permitted:

- 5:00AM-10:00AM and 6:00PM-8:00PM on weekdays
- 7:00AM-10:00AM and 6:00PM-8:00PM on weekends

After Labor Day, open water swimming is permitted during all park operating hours.

DCR Open Water Swimming Rules

- Swimmers must follow all directives of DCR Lifeguards and other DCR personnel.
- All open water swimmers must utilize a brightly colored open water swim buoy. Open water swim buoys are flotation devices that are attached to swimmers via a strap and are intended to increase visibility of open water swimmers.
- Open water swimmers must enter and exit the pond from within the designated Open Water Swim Lane. In the event of an emergency or dangerous conditions, swimmers should exit at a safe location.
- Swimmers may not swim in the buoyed “no-swim zone” between the southerly corner of the Main Beach and the westerly corner of Red Cross Beach when ropes and buoys are in place
- Open water swimmers may not swim within 100 feet of the boat launch area at any time.
- Swimmers must stay at least 50 feet away from a boat or fisherman to avoid interference. (Entangling fishing lines is a violation of state regulations.)
- Swimmers with disabilities may park at the boat ramp and may enter at the designated open water swimming entry/exit area.
- Open water swimmers must respect other pond users including boaters, fisherman and other swimmers and actively avoid interfering with their recreational use at all times of the year.
- Competitive open water swimming events are not allowed at any time.
- Group or "Shotgun" starts, even for training activities, are not allowed at any time.

Open water swimming is an inherently dangerous activity, and should not be attempted by individuals who have not trained or prepared for the activity. Swimmers assume full risk and responsibility while engaging in this activity, and are advised to use extreme caution when swimming, always adhere to safety protocols, and use best practices to prevent potentially tragic outcomes. Personal assessment checklists are available at the swimming kiosk, and in event of an emergency, visitors should immediately alert park staff and/or call 911.

The beach and designated swim area remain open to all visitors.

Where: Walden Pond at Walden Pond State Reservation in the Town of Concord

When: Beginning Friday, July 9, 2021, and continuing indefinitely.

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