

### **Open Water Swimming at Walden Pond State Reservation**

While persons may engage in open water swimming at Walden Pond, swimmers assume full risk and responsibility while engaging in this activity. Each swimmer is responsible for personally assessing the risks before engaging in open water swimming and for complying with rules described below. A personal assessment checklist is available at the swimming kiosk. Open water swimming is an inherently dangerous activity. In case of emergency, call 911.

DCR provides a guarded waterfront area during the designated "swimming season" between Memorial Day and Labor Day. The guarded area is delineated by ropes and buoys extending from Main Beach to Red Cross Beach. During that period, DCR also establishes a buoyed area just outside of the roped swimming area where swimming is prohibited. DCR encourages all swimmers to use the guarded swimming area at Main and Red Cross beaches and observe the roped off barriers, and to swim at Walden Pond during the swimming season. DCR staff do not guard any areas beyond the roped area or outside of the swimming season.

Walden Pond is over 100 feet deep in areas and a half-mile in length. All swimmers, but especially Open Water Swimmers, should recognize that swimming distances in deep water is inherently dangerous and may exceed a swimmer's physical and psychological limits. Open water swimming is a challenging endurance sport and should never be attempted by individuals who have not trained for or prepared for the activity.

#### **Open Water Swimming Rules**

DCR allows open water swimming outside the buoyed swim areas during park operating hours under the following conditions:

- Swimmers must follow all directives of DCR Lifeguards and other DCR personnel.
- In order to ensure lifeguard focus remains on designated swim areas, between Memorial Day and Labor Day, open water swimming is only allowed during park operating hours when lifeguards are not on-duty. Outside of the lifeguard season, open water swimming is allowed during all park operating hours.
- 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.
- Swim 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.

Safe open water swimming requires preparation, proper equipment, training and good judgment. Experienced open water swimmers recommend that all open water swimmers follow the best practices below at all times of the year:

#### **Open Water Swimming Best Practices:**

- Conduct an open water swimmer self-assessment on a regular basis to gauge their current capabilities for endurance swimming. (Copy available at guard station)
- Always swim with a partner.
- Wear a white or brightly colored swim cap to help make you more visible to others.
- Always inform others of your swimming route and expected return.
- Know your limits and swim close enough to shore to safely exit if you become tired, experience cramps or other conditions develop requiring you to exit the water.
- Wear a wet suit when water temps are below 70 degrees.
- Note the current location and course of fishermen and boaters and anticipate location of fishing lines to avoid interference or entanglement.
- Be alert and look up often: during a swim, lift your head and look for obstacles, other swimmers, watercraft or other water users. When safe, go around the obstacle.
- Do not swim in poor weather conditions.
- Do not use prohibited flotation equipment including, but not limited to, noodles, rafts, soccer or basketballs, unapproved vests, inflatable arm bands, etc.
- Do not swim if you are ill or have a medical condition that makes swimming unsafe.