

Open Water Report, Oct 2012, by Dave Holland, Open Water Chair

In September 2012, Sandra Denius of the Alleghany Highlands Chamber of Commerce (Covington, Va) contacted me about the possibility of bringing an open water swim to Lake Moomaw, a large body of water in Alleghany and Bath counties in the western part of the state. Lake Moomaw has 43 miles of shoreline, is about a mile wide (east-west) and 12 miles long running north-south. The average depth is 80 feet, but it gets as deep as 150 feet at the intake tower. The southern half lies in Alleghany county and the AH Chamber of Commerce is interested in hosting the open water race there, most likely from Coles Point Beach. They want draw attention to the unique beauty of the area and make it a popular destination for outdoor enthusiasts and athletes. The lake has been the venue for the Bath County triathlon for the past 12 years, attracting 250-300 participants.

On October 8, I met with Sandra, Teresa Hammond (Executive Director), and her husband, Rusty Hammond, who gave us a tour of the lake in his motorboat on a cold rainy morning. The lake is very popular with fisherman and we noticed about 15 trucks with empty trailers when we arrived at the boatramp at 10:30am. Rusty took us to a finger of the lake that extends from Coles Point to the Gathright Dam intake tower, a relatively quiet section (“no wake”) that was about a ½ mile in length and 500 feet wide. Using GPS, we measured out a potential one-mile course starting at the Coles Point beach and extending around the point and down this branch to the intake tower, where you must turn around at a set of 3 buoys. Total distance out and back was about 1 mile. The beach is spacious, and in close proximity are a bathhouse with bathrooms and showers, a picnic area, and a parking lot with roughly 140 spaces. It’s an ideal site for an open water swim. Elevation is 1582 feet above sea level, and the scenery is spectacular as it’s surrounded by mountains.

Lake Moomaw and Gathright Dam are located on the Jackson river, 43 miles upstream from its confluence with the Cowpasture river, which forms the upper James. The city of Covington (with lodging and restaurants) is 19 miles downstream (or about a 30 minute drive on US 220).

Teresa and Sandra are willing to co-host a 1-mile open water race there with VMST, possibly in August 2013. They would provide the bulk of the volunteers, while VMST (and perhaps another western team like in our LMSC) would provide technical and administrative support related to the planning, sanction application, online registration, and some key volunteer positions. Teresa and Sandra are contacting the Forest service, campgrounds, and local water rescue teams (Falling Springs) to secure permissions/ permits/ volunteers.

Teresa and Sandra asked me about an “open water series”. We had one involving Reston, Jack King, and CGL about 8-10 years ago, whereby each participant who did all 3 open water races in one summer received a special award. Reston is hosted by Reston Masters, which is in the Potomac Valley LMSC. Jack King and CGL are both are hosted by VMST.

Proposal

Assuming that VMST and/or another team within our LMSC can co-host an open water event at Lake Moomaw in August 2013, I propose that we introduce an “Virginia Open Water Summer Challenge” whereby any USMS swimmer who participates at each of these events:

- Jack King ocean swim- Va. Beach- Eastern Tidewater region- June
- Chris Greene Lake cable swim- Charlottesville- Central piedmont region- July
- Lake Moomaw swim- Covington- Western highlands region- August

would receive a special award.

I’d like to ask that the LMSC provide the funding, in the amount of \$200, to purchase awards (i.e.custom towels or bags) to recognize the folks who do all three events.



Teresa Hammond, Dave Holland, and Sandra Denius at Lake Moomaw, Oct. 2012