

Proposed Changes to the USMS Open Water and Long Distance Swimming Rules 2017

A. Proposals Recommended by the Long Distance Committee (LD 3, 6, 8, 11, 15, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 30, 34, 38, and 42.

LD 3	302.2.3		page 68	Long Distance Committee		
Action:	Adopted	Defeated	Adopted/Amended	Tabled	Withdrawn	

302.2.3 Starting Line

B Water depth ~~f~~For swims starting from a platform (~~, or dock,~~ pier, or ship):

- (1) For platforms .75 meter or less above the water surface, the water depth shall be no less than ~~6 feet~~ 2 meters for the first 5 meters of the course.
- (2) For platforms more than .75 meter above the water surface, the water depth shall be a safe depth for the first 5 meters of the course as determined by the referee. Swimmers must enter the water feet first.
- (3) All swimmers in the pre-race safety meeting and before the start of each race/wave shall be advised of the depth of the water. Water depth markings on the starting platform or dock are recommended. Before the swim, ~~F~~the referee shall have this start area inspected for underwater hazards ~~before the swim~~ and ensure that the starting protocol is safe. The swim shall use an alternative method of starting if hazards cannot be eliminated or the start cannot be safe.

Rationale: Platform, pier, or dock height may vary considerably for swims that start from such objects, and our current 6-foot depth rule does not ensure that there would be sufficient depth or safe method of entry as swimmers enter the water. This proposal will make these starts safer. Note that this proposal is substantively separate from but not contradictory to the following proposal.

LD 6	302.2.5		page 68	Long Distance Committee		
Action:	Adopted	Defeated	Adopted/Amended	Tabled	Withdrawn	

302.2.5 Finish Line

A The finish line shall be specifically designated, ~~and~~ clearly defined, and easily visible from the water to swimmers approaching the finish.

Rationale: This proposal would require that finish lines are easily visible from the water, an important consideration that is not included in the present rule.

Rationale: Using similar language to 103.3, this proposal seeks to ensure uniform and high-quality safe and fair USMS-sanctioned swims. The USMS Open Water Committee has developed a certifying process (taking a short on-line course and a submitting a written test) for safety directors that was successfully throughout 2017, and has developed a similar process for referees for introduction in 2018. The emergency clause seeks to avoid incurring potential liability if a safety director or referee becomes indisposed.

LD 19 303.9/303.3.2A/303.3.3A pages 75 & 71 Long Distance Committee

Action:	Adopted	Defeated	Adopted/Amended	Tabled	Withdrawn
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303.9 DISQUALIFICATIONS

A disqualification can be made only by the referee, the starter or a judge within whose jurisdiction the infraction has been committed. Swimmers shall be disqualified if they: ...

303.9.5 ~~Receive assistance~~ Make forward progress by pulling, pushing, ~~or resting, or maintaining contact~~ on physical features and/or craft on or near the course, other than the bottom near the start and finish and at specified locations. ~~Incidental contact shall not be a basis for disqualification.~~ **Event hosts may choose to prohibit deliberate contact between swimmers and craft and/or physical features if it has been announced in the event information.**

Rationale: This proposal...

- (1) specifies the intent of 'receiving assistance' to be 'making forward progress';*
- (2) treats craft as a physical feature for the sake of this rule; and*
- (3) removes resting on a stationary object as a disqualifying offense, for swimmer safety.*

AND

303.3 ESCORTED SWIMS ...

303.3.2 Swimmers may receive the following assistance from any escort craft:

A Food or drink may be passed from escort craft to swimmer ~~as long as deliberate contact is not made between the two.~~

B ...

303.3.3 Swimmers shall not receive the following assistance from any escort craft:

A Swimmers shall not receive ~~flotation or propulsion~~ forward progress from any escort craft ~~nor make intentional contact with any craft.~~

Rationale: This proposal aligns 303.3.2A and 303.3.3A with proposed 303.9.5, and should be considered as a single item.

LD 20 303.11/303.11.1 page 76 Long Distance Committee

Action:	Adopted	Defeated	Adopted/Amended	Tabled	Withdrawn
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303.11 INCOMPLETE RACE SWIM

303.11.1 The event director, safety director, or referee shall have the authority to determine if the

start of a race is to be postponed. The referee and/or safety director shall have the authority to stop a race in progress. Only the event director shall have the authority to cancel ~~the~~ a swim or event.

Rationale: This allows event directors to cancel a swim without necessarily canceling a multi-swim event.

LD 22	303.11.3		page 76	Long Distance Committee		
Action:	Adopted	Defeated	Adopted/Amended	Tabled	Withdrawn	

303.11.3 In swims with cutoff times, the entry information shall state whether swimmers who have not finished by the cutoff time will be advanced to the finish line, considered to be officially finished, or disqualified.

Rationale: Finish status for these circumstances should be determined long before the swim and clearly stated before entry.

LD 23	303.12.1		page 76	Long Distance Committee		
Action:	Adopted	Defeated	Adopted/Amended	Tabled	Withdrawn	

303.12.1 Any protest arising from an open water event ~~competition~~ (other than National Championships—refer to article 307.7.9) shall be made to the ~~event director-referee~~ within 30 minutes after the release of results at the venue for an open water event. If results are not released in a timely manner, a protest may be made to the event director in writing within 3 days after all swimmers are notified of the release of results. If the protest is not resolved, the protester may appeal in writing ~~within 10 days of the swim for adjudication promptly~~ to the LMSC. If the LMSC does not satisfactorily resolve the protest, the protestor may appeal in writing ~~for adjudication promptly~~ to the USMS Long Distance Committee chair.

Rationale: This proposal creates a standard path for protests for non-championship open water swims that is comprehensive, clear, and fair to all, using parallel wording (where applicable) to proposed 305.8 and 307.7.9.

- (1) Under 303.8.1C, “The referee is responsible for the fair conduct of the swim”, so the referee—not the event director—should be responsible for resolving protests at an open water venue (this change is also proposed in 307.7.9 for national championship events).*
- (2) If open water event results are delayed at the venue, it adds a mechanism for protest by directing protests after the event and away from the venue to the event director.*
- (3) It shortens the time frame for protest to 3 days after swimmers have been notified of the release of results.*
- (4) It gives flexibility to the time frame for appeals.*
- (5) It eliminates redundant phrasing—“appeal” implies “adjudication”*
- (6) It adds a path for protests—previously nonexistent—for non-championship long distance pool events (which include non-championship postals).*

LD 24 **304.1** page 76 **Long Distance Committee**

Action:	Adopted	Defeated	Adopted/Amended	Tabled	Withdrawn
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304.1 NONCOMPETITIVE SWIMS

Noncompetitive swims are those in which ~~time or swimmer~~ placement ~~may be recorded~~ is not included in results.

Rationale: Definitional clarity. This also resolves potential conflict between 304.1 and 304.1.2.

LD 26 **305.8 new** page 78 **Long Distance Committee**

Action:	Adopted	Defeated	Adopted/Amended	Tabled	Withdrawn
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305.8 PROTESTS

Any protest arising from a long distance pool event (other than National Championships—refer to article 307.7.9) shall be made to the referee within 30 minutes after the release of results at the venue. If results are not released in a timely manner, a protest may be made to the event director in writing within 3 days after all swimmers are notified of the release of results. If the protest is not resolved, the protester may appeal in writing promptly to the LMSC. If the LMSC does not satisfactorily resolve the protest, the protestor may appeal in writing promptly to the USMS Long Distance Committee chair.

Rationale: This proposal creates a standard path for protests—previously nonexistent—for non-championship long distance pool events that is comprehensive, clear, and fair to all, using parallel wording (where applicable) to proposed 303.12 and 307.7.9.

LD 27 **306.4 new/307.7.4** page 78 **Long Distance Committee**

Action:	Adopted	Defeated	Adopted/Amended	Tabled	Withdrawn
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306.4 ELIGIBILITY

All swimmers in national championship postal events must be currently registered members of USMS or a FINA-member national governing body on or before the day of their swim.

AND

307.7.4 Eligibility

A Swimmers with one-event registrations shall not be eligible to compete in open water and postal national championships, nor shall they be eligible for records, All-American status, or any other USMS special awards.

~~**B** All swimmers in national championship postal events must be currently registered members of USMS or a FINA member national governing body on or before the day of their swim.~~

Rationale: Section 307.7.4B should be moved to 306.4 because this requirement applies to all postal swims—not just national championships—and thus should be moved to the “Conduct of Postal Swims” section. Renumber after 306.4.

LD 28 **306.4.1/306.4.4** page 78 **Long Distance Committee**

Action:	Adopted	Defeated	Adopted/Amended	Tabled	Withdrawn
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306.4 MULTIPLE SWIMMERS PER LANE

304.4.1 ~~In pools that are less than 50 meters,~~ No more than two swimmers shall share a lane.

306.4.2 Drafting shall not be permitted.

306.4.3 When two swimmers are sharing the same lane, they shall conform to articles 102.10.4A(6)(a)-(b).

~~**306.4.4** In pools that are 50 meters or longer, the referee shall establish procedures to prevent drafting if more than two swimmers are sharing a lane.~~

Rationale: When more than two swimmers share a lane, the LDC finds it difficult to imagine any practical procedures that would prevent drafting. Therefore, this proposal would eliminate this issue by limiting the number of swimmers who could share a lane to two.

LD 30 **306.10.1/306.10.2** page 79 **Long Distance Committee**

Action:	Adopted	Defeated	Adopted/Amended	Tabled	Withdrawn
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306.10.1 In distance-based events, the person or relay swimming the fastest time shall be declared the winner. If two or more swimmers or relays achieve the same time, a tie shall be declared.

306.10.2 In time-based events, the person or relay swimming the farthest shall be declared the winner. If two or more swimmers or relays swim the same distance, a tie shall be declared.

Rationale: This corrects the previous omission of a method of determining place for relays in postal events.

LD 34 **307.7.9** page 83 **Long Distance Committee**

Action:	Adopted	Defeated	Adopted/Amended	Tabled	Withdrawn
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307.7.9 Protests

A Any protest arising from an open water championship event competition shall be made to the event director-referee within 30 minutes after the release of results at the venue for an open water event. If results are not released in a timely manner, a protest may be made to the event director in writing within 3 days after all swimmers are notified of the release of results. If the protest is not resolved, the protester may appeal in writing within 10 days for adjudication promptly to the Long Distance Committee chair.

B Any protest arising from a postal championship event shall be made to the event director in writing within 3 or 14 days after all swimmers are notified of the release of results for a postal event. If the protest is not resolved, the protester may appeal in writing within 10 days for adjudication promptly to the Long Distance Committee chair.

Rationale: this proposal creates a standard path for protests for all championship swims that

is comprehensive, clear, and fair to all, using parallel wording (where applicable) to proposed 303.12 and 305.8.

- (1) Under 303.8.1C, “The referee is responsible for the fair conduct of the swim”, so the referee—not the event director—should be responsible for resolving protests at an open water venue. Since postal swims do not have referees for the overall event, the event director would remain responsible for resolving protests for postal swims.*
- (2) If open water event results are delayed at the venue, it adds a mechanism for protest by directing protests after the event and away from the venue to the event director.*
- (3) It shortens the time frame for protest to 3 days after swimmers have been notified of the release of results.*
- (4) It gives flexibility to the time frame for appeals.*
- (5) It eliminates redundant phrasing—“appeal” implies “adjudication”*

LD 38	307.12.1		page 85	Long Distance Committee	
Action:	Adopted	Defeated	Adopted/Amended	Tabled	Withdrawn

307.12.1 A swimmer shall earn points in each open water and long distance national championship event in the following manner: 1st: ~~22~~ 11 points, 2nd: ~~18~~ 9 points, 3rd: ~~16~~ 8 points, 4th: ~~14~~ 7 points, 5th: ~~12~~ 6 points, 6th: ~~10~~ 5 points, 7th: ~~8~~ 4 points, 8th: ~~6~~ 3 points, 9th: ~~4~~ 2 points, 10th: ~~2~~ 1 points.

Rationale: This divides the number of points by half, providing (1) simpler addition, (2) possible increased motivation due to smaller point spread, and (3) identical scoring to 103.19.3 (scoring for USMS pool championships) and 307.9.1C (scoring for “other” open water & long distance championships).

LD 42	308.1.6		page 85	Long Distance Committee	
Action:	Adopted	Defeated	Adopted/Amended	Tabled	Withdrawn

308.1.6 USMS records for postal swims may be established by using a swimmer’s split time in an individual event if:

- A** The split is swum as an initial distance within an event,
- B** The swimmer completes the full distance of the event,
- C** The intent to record a split time is brought to the attention, in writing, of the event director at the time of entry in the longer event, and
- D** ~~At least two dedicated handheld~~ A stopwatches or electronic timing system ~~are is~~ used to record the record split in accordance with article 306.5.

Rationale: This proposal matches the timing standards in this article with the timing standards for postal swims in article 306.5, and adds reference to that article. It also changes the word “watch” with the more accurate term “stopwatch” used consistently throughout the rule book.

B. Proposals Recommended as Amended by the Long Distance Committee (NONE).

C. proposals NOT Recommended by the Long Distance Committee (NONE).

D. Housekeeping proposals Recommended by the Long Distance Committee (LD 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 21, 25, 29, 31, 32, 33, 35, 36, 37, 39, 40, 41, 43, and 44).

LD 1	302.1.3		page 68	Long Distance Committee		
Action:	Adopted	Defeated	Adopted/Amended	Tabled	Withdrawn	

302.1.3 At the discretion of the event host, open water events may be competitive ([article 303](#)) and/or noncompetitive ([article 304](#)).

Rationale: Housekeeping: to assist officials, this proposal lists the pertinent article for each category of swims.

LD 2	302.2.2A (3)		page 68	Long Distance Committee		
Action:	Adopted	Defeated	Adopted/Amended	Tabled	Withdrawn	

A (3) A swim of 5 kilometers or greater shall not begin if the water temperature exceeds 85° Fahrenheit (29.45° Celsius). A swim of less than 5 kilometers shall not begin if the water temperature exceeds 87.8° Fahrenheit (31° ~~Celsius~~[Celsius](#)).

Rationale: Housekeeping: correcting misspelling.

LD 4	302.2.3		page 68	Long Distance Committee		
Action:	Adopted	Defeated	Adopted/Amended	Tabled	Withdrawn	

302.2.3 Starting Line

B For swims starting from a platform or dock, the water depth shall be no less than 6 feet for the first 5 meters of the course. [The referee shall inform All swimmers in the pre-race safety meeting and](#) before the start of each race/wave ~~shall be advised~~ of the [water](#) depth [at the start of the water](#)....

Rationale: Housekeeping: Substitutes active voice for passive voice and removes redundant phrase. Note that this proposal is substantively separate from but not contradictory to the preceding proposal.

LD 5	302.2.4		page 68	Long Distance Committee		
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circumstances warrant.

C Referee—The referee is responsible for the fair conduct of the swim. The referee... shall be responsible for:

- (1) ~~Shall have authority over all~~ officials, including instructing and assigning officials, enforceing all applicable rules, deciding all questions related to the conduct of the swim, and adjudicating protests.
- (2) ~~Shall ensure~~ Ensuring that all swimmers are briefed about safety procedures, the course, site-specific rules, and other necessary information about the conduct of the swim.
- (3) ~~Has the authority to bar~~ Barring, ~~remove~~ removing, or ~~take~~ taking other appropriate action with any swimmer who acts in an ~~unsportsmanlike~~ unsporting or unsafe manner within the swimming venue.
- (4) ~~Has the authority to disqualify~~ Disqualifying any swimmer violating event or USMS rules or safety procedures.
- (5) ~~Has the authority to modify~~ Modifying the manner in which the swim is conducted, ~~change~~ changing the course or distance, ~~delay~~ delaying the start, or ~~stop~~ stopping a swim in progress if circumstances warrant.

Rationale: Housekeeping: maintaining parallel structure throughout 303.8.1 and substituting gender neutral wording.

LD 21	303.11.2		page 76	Long Distance Committee		
Action:	Adopted	Defeated	Adopted/Amended	Tabled	Withdrawn	

303.11.2 If a race is stopped and swimmers are removed from the water for their safety, the referee shall determine if the race is to be restarted, ~~cancelled~~, or considered official. If the referee determines the race to be official, article 303.9.2 may be waived and the referee shall determine the order of finish of the swimmers on the course.

Rationale: Housekeeping: removing a conflict with 303.11.1, which states that only the event director may cancel an event.

LD 25	305.4/305.5		page 77	Long Distance Committee		
Action:	Adopted	Defeated	Adopted/Amended	Tabled	Withdrawn	

305.4 CUMULATIVE RELAYS

Cumulative relays are composed of groups of swimmers from the same USMS-registered club entered in the individual swim. Cumulative relay swims may be contested on a total time/distance or point system basis.

305.5 SEQUENTIAL RELAYS

Sequential relays shall consist of two or more swimmers from the same USMS-registered club as specified in the entry information. The relay members shall rotate in the same order throughout the

event. The time or distance each swimmer is required to spend in the water shall be specified in the entry information. The composition of mixed-gender sequential relays is governed by 302.5.2. Relay exchanges are governed by articles 101.7.3C and 101.7.3H.

Rationale: Housekeeping: maintaining parallel language with 302, which refer to sequential relays in open water events.

LD 29 **306.9.1** page 79 **Long Distance Committee**

Action:	Adopted	Defeated	Adopted/Amended	Tabled	Withdrawn
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306.9.1 Each entrant shall be responsible for the validity of the split times and/or the final time/distance submitted.

Rationale: Housekeeping: improving clarity.

LD 31 **307.2.2G-I** page 80 **Long Distance Committee**

Action:	Adopted	Defeated	Adopted/Amended	Tabled	Withdrawn
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307.2.2 At the discretion of the Long Distance Committee, national championship events may be awarded in the following categories: ...

G Postal one hour Championship (in a pool 25 yards or longer)

H Postal 5 and 10 kilometer Championships (each event swum separately on a 50-meter course in a pool)

I Postal 3000 and 6000 yard Championships (each event swum separately on a 25-yard or 25-meter course in a pool)

Rationale: Housekeeping: parallel wording with 307.2.2A-F.

LD 32 **307.2.3A** page 80 **Long Distance Committee**

Action:	Adopted	Defeated	Adopted/Amended	Tabled	Withdrawn
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A Cumulative relay competitions shall be contested in postal championships and may be contested in other championships. Recognized relays shall be three-person women's relays, and three-person men's relays, and four-person mixed gender relays with two women and two men. Exceptions for open water national championships may be granted by the Long Distance Committee chair.

Rationale: Housekeeping: removing ambiguity of the previous wording.

LD 33 **307.7.5 & 6** page 82 **Long Distance Committee**

Action:	Adopted	Defeated	Adopted/Amended	Tabled	Withdrawn
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307.7.5 Individual Age Groups—Age groups in individual open water swims ~~for men and women~~ shall be ~~18-24, 25-29, 30-34 ... (five-year age groups as high as necessary)~~ the standard USMS age groups in article 303.1.3.

307.7.6 Relay Age Groups—~~Age groups in relay open water swims for men, women and mixed~~

~~relays shall be 18+, 25+... (10-year age groups as high as necessary), the age of the youngest relay member determining the age group.~~

Rationale: Housekeeping: combining articles for conciseness and lack of repetition with 303.1.3. Renumber after.

LD 35	307.10.3		page 84	Long Distance Committee		
Action:	Adopted	Defeated	Adopted/Amended	Tabled	Withdrawn	

307.10.3 A USMS championship patch shall be awarded to each individual champion and each ~~scoring~~ member of a championship relay. An individual champion shall receive only one patch per event.

Rationale: Housekeeping: removing unnecessary and potentially confusing word.

LD 36	307.11.2		page 84	Long Distance Committee		
Action:	Adopted	Defeated	Adopted/Amended	Tabled	Withdrawn	

307.11.2 The members of the highest placing USMS ~~team~~ relay in each age group of each open water and long distance pool national championship event shall qualify as USMS Long Distance Relay All-Americans.

Rationale: Housekeeping: throughout the part 3 rules, the LDC has replaced the word “team” with the word “relay” in this context.

LD 37	307.11.3		page 84	Long Distance Committee		
Action:	Adopted	Defeated	Adopted/Amended	Tabled	Withdrawn	

307.11.3 The event host shall submit the name, age, date of birth, club affiliation, time or distance, and USMS membership number for each competitor achieving All-American status to the Long Distance Committee chair ~~in accordance with the USMS event contract.~~

Rationale: Housekeeping: removing unnecessary wording.

LD 39	307.12.3		page 85	Long Distance Committee		
Action:	Adopted	Defeated	Adopted/Amended	Tabled	Withdrawn	

~~**307.12.3** — If a swimmer participates in two age groups in the course of a year, the points earned shall be counted in the older age group. If a swimmer swims the same event in two different age groups, only the higher finish will be counted.~~

Rationale: Housekeeping: HOD approval of 301.4 (age group determination) in 2016 makes this obsolete. Renumber after.

LD 40	308.1.1		page 85	Long Distance Committee		
Action:	Adopted	Defeated	Adopted/Amended	Tabled	Withdrawn	

308.1.1 Individual and relay ~~national~~ USMS records will be maintained in quarter-mile straightaway swims (1-mile and 2-mile) and time/distance pool events (1-hour, 3000-yard, 6000-yard, and

5- and 10-kilometer postal).

Rationale: Housekeeping: Replaces the term “national” with the correct term “USMS”.

LD 41	308.1.2 & 3		page 85	Long Distance Committee		
Action:	Adopted	Defeated	Adopted/Amended	Tabled	Withdrawn	

308.1.2 To be considered for a ~~national~~ USMS record, individual participants and relays must enter and complete the swim in a sanctioned event, ~~with results routed through the event host to the Long Distance Committee chair.~~ conducted in compliance with USMS rules.

~~**308.1.3** Open water and long distance records shall only be permitted from events conducted in compliance with USMS rules.~~

Rationale: Housekeeping: Combines previous 308.1.2 and 308.1.3, replaces the term “national” with the correct term “USMS”, and removes unnecessary language concerning process. Renumber after.

LD 43	Various		pages 67-85	Long Distance Committee		
Action:	Adopted	Defeated	Adopted/Amended	Tabled	Withdrawn	

Replace “race” for “swim” in 302.2.3, 303.3.3, 303.9.4, 303.10.1, 303.11, 303.11.1 (3x), 303.11.2 (2x), and 307.7.8. Replace “pre-race meeting” with “pre-swim meeting” in 302.2.3 and 307.7.3.

Rationale: Housekeeping: using consistent language. Due to our long history of making rules by committee, the words “race” is used interchangeably with “swim” throughout the part 3 rules. The Long Distance Committee prefers “swim” (acknowledging that non-competitive swims are not properly “races” by definition), and has chosen “swim” many times throughout this section of the rule book.

LD 44	Various		pages 67-85	Long Distance Committee		
Action:	Adopted	Defeated	Adopted/Amended	Tabled	Withdrawn	

Replace “virtual” for “postal” in 301.2.2 (3x), 301.4, 305.3, 305.3.1, 305.3.4 (3x), 306 Title, 306.2.2, 306.4, 306.8.1, 306.8.2, 306.9, 307.2.2G, 307.2.2H, 307.2.2I, 307.2.3, 307.6, 307.7.4, 307.7.9, 307.9, 307.9.1A, 307.9.1B, 307.12, 307.12.2, 308.1.1, and 308.1.6

Rationale: Housekeeping: updating outdated rules language. The term “postal” is now inaccurate (USMS not accept entries posted by snail-mail for current postal championships, and most other postal hosts don’t either), and is thus confusing to members. The LDC recommends replacing “postal” with “virtual”, a term already used by USA-Swimming to describe similar events swum locally but compiled nationally.