



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 19, 2024

CHICAGO RIVER SWIM RELOCATES TO LAKE MICHIGAN AT THE CITY OF CHICAGO'S REQUEST
Event Will Support ALS Research and Swimming Lessons for Children in Underserved Communities

WHAT: Inaugural Chicago River Swim will feature qualified swimmers navigating a course in Lake Michigan, beginning with a boat journey along the Chicago River

WHERE: Ohio Street Beach | 600 N. Lake Shore Drive, Chicago

WHEN: Sunday, September 22, 2024
6:30AM Athletes Board Boats at Chicago Riverwalk | Swim Begins 8:00AM | Details to follow

WEBSITE: ChicagoRiverSwim.org

CHICAGO, IL – The Chicago River Swim (CRS) has agreed to relocate this year's inaugural swim from the Chicago River to Lake Michigan at Ohio Street Beach, following a decision made by the City of Chicago.

The event, however, will begin on the Chicago River. Swimmers will be transported from the Riverwalk via boat to the Ohio Street Beach course.

This move allows CRS to pilot the event, demonstrating effective management and ensuring top safety standards for swimmers and spectators. The relocation aims to pave the way for the first open-water swim in the Chicago River in nearly a century, with hopes to hold the event in the river in 2025.

Despite the change in venue, CRS remains committed to its mission of raising funds for ALS research and providing swim lessons to 2,000 children in underserved Chicago communities.

"We had high hopes of swimming in the river this year, but we quickly learned the challenges involved in organizing a new event of this scale," said Doug McConnell, founder of A Long Swim and the organizer of CRS. "The city has worked with us to find a solution that allows the event to move forward, and we're using this opportunity to build momentum and refine our approach. Ohio Street Beach will provide a great setting for this year's swim, and we're grateful for the continued support as we aim to make history in the river next year."

McConnell, a Triple Crown marathon swimmer, has devoted his life to open-water swimming and raising funds for ALS research in memory of his father and sister, both of whom lost their battle with the disease. Through his organization, he has raised nearly \$2 million for ALS research at Northwestern.

Alderman Brian Hopkins, whose ward will host this year's event, expressed his support for the cause. "As someone who has lost a family member to ALS, I'm deeply committed to efforts that raise awareness and funds for this devastating disease. Hosting the Chicago River Swim at Ohio Street Beach, in the heart of our ward, not only highlights our beautiful lakefront but also unites our community in the fight against ALS. I'm proud to support such a meaningful event and look forward to seeing it evolve into something truly historic next year."

Although CRS is disappointed not to hold the swim in the Chicago River, the complexities of launching a first-time event are recognized, particularly around safety concerns. CRS carefully followed all procedures, submitting its application to the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) within the required timeframe and basing it on a Safety

Plan developed over several years, with guidance from the US Coast Guard, other authorities and similar events worldwide. After an initial denial by the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT), CRS accepted the compromise to relocate the event to Lake Michigan, prioritizing the best interests of its participants.

CONNECTION TO THE CHICAGO RIVER

Maintaining a link to the Chicago River remains essential to CRS. While the swim will take place at Ohio Street Beach, the event will begin along the Chicago River. On the morning of the event, athletes and spectators will board boats at the Riverwalk, taking a scenic journey along the river before reaching the swim venue. This approach honors the event's origins and offers participants a unique experience that showcases both of Chicago's waterfronts. The venue will retain much of the planned pomp and circumstance, including food and live music. The transition from the river to the lake underscores the ultimate goal: returning to the Chicago River in the future for a historic open-water swim through the heart of the city.

ATHLETES

CRS has drawn significant global interest, with 1,160 applicants from 39 states, 12 countries, and 56 of Chicago's 77 neighborhoods. From these, only 500 swimmers were selected, with 50% opting for the 2-mile swim, and 44% of them being female. Each participant was required to demonstrate prior open water swim experience. The roster includes former Olympians and accomplished swimmers who have conquered the Amsterdam and English Channel swims, as well as active triathletes in the IRONMAN and Chicago Triathlon circuits.

For athletes who no longer wish to participate due to the venue change, CRS is offering participants a choice to defer to next year and transfer their fundraising credits, or to opt-out and recoup their entry fees. Regardless of the venue, the mission of CRS remains the same: to provide charitable support for collaborative ALS research and to fund swim lessons for local, at-risk youth.

PHOTOS + SOCIAL MEDIA

Photos and videos can be found [here](#).

Facebook: facebook.com/chicagoriverswim | Instagram: @ChicagoRiverSwim | Website: ChicagoRiverSwim.org

Hashtags: #chicagoriverswim #ChicagoIL #openwaterswimming #ALS #alongswim #chicagoriverwalk #chicagoevents #explorechicago #OWS #owschicago #CRS #SwimForACure

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ABOUT THE CHICAGO RIVER SWIM

The Chicago River Swim (CRS) is a charitable event established by A Long Swim, a Chicagoland non-profit dedicated to raising funds for ALS research through open water and marathon swimming events. Inspired by successful urban swims in cities like New York, Amsterdam, Boston, Portland, and Paris, CRS seeks to transform perceptions of the Chicago River. While the inaugural event, set for September 22, 2024, will now take place in Lake Michigan instead of the river, it will serve as a pilot event with the goal of returning to the river next year. The event will feature qualified swimmers navigating the lake, while still maintaining a strong connection to the Chicago River, with hopes of swimming through its iconic bridges, Riverwalk, and skyline in the future.

ABOUT A LONG SWIM

A Long Swim is a nonprofit that designs and manages open water swimming events which raise funds for collaborative ALS world class research. It was formed in 2011, after siblings Doug McConnell and Ellen McConnell Blakeman's father passed away from ALS and Ellen was soon diagnosed with ALS. With Doug's knowledge as a world-class open-water swimmer (he has swum some of the most challenging waters in the world including the English Channel, Catalina Channel, Manhattan Island, and the Molokai Channel) and their conjoined goal of beating the disease, the siblings chose to use swimming as the vehicle to raise money for ALS. Since its inception, A Long Swim has raised almost \$2 million for collaborative ALS research at the Feinberg School of Medicine at Northwestern University.