



**About Open Water Swimming:** Open Water Swimming is one of the fastest growing and most challenging sports on earth. Over 6,500 open water races take place each year worldwide in outdoor bodies of water such as oceans, lakes, and rivers. Special Olympics support athletes in their desire and determination to participate in this sport and keep pace with the rest of the world.

**Established at Special Olympics:** 2011

**Differences of Special Olympics Open Water Swimming:** Special Olympics Open Water Swimming is conducted under FINA rules. Special Olympics rules for Open Water Swimming provide modifications to conducts training seminars for athletes and coaches that advance them from pool training to the sport of open water swimming. This is accomplished through teaching and practicing OWS skills and techniques in the pool and safely transitioning to open water. The seminar targets both individual and unified open water swimmers, and also provides tools and skills to recruit athletes, ideas to create racing opportunities, and examples of building local partnerships to support and grow the sport.

### **By The Numbers:**

- In 2011, 20 Special Olympics Programs hosted Open Water Swimming competitions
- Since 2004, Athlete participation in Open Water Swimming
- Open Water Swimming competition are most frequently in Europe, South Africa and in Asia Pacific Region, where there are 54 programs, respectively

### **Events for Competition:**

- Individual Swimmer Competition
- Unified Teams

### **Associations/Federations/Supporters:**

Federation International National Association (FINA)

### **Divisioning at Special Olympics:**

Athletes in every sport and event are grouped by age, gender, and ability – giving everyone a reasonable chance to win. At Special Olympics there are no World Records because each athlete, whether in the fastest or the slowest division is valued and recognized equally. In every division, all athletes receive an award, from gold, silver, and bronze medals, to fourth through eighth place ribbons. This idea of equal ability groupings is the foundation for competition in Special Olympics and can be witnessed at all events, whether it's athletics, open water swimming, table tennis, football, skiing, or gymnastics. All athletes are given an equal chance to participate, perform, and be recognized for doing their best by their teammates, family, friends, and fans."