

# Montana Swimming

April 8, 2003

Ms. Donna Gaukler  
Director, Missoula Parks and Recreation Department  
100 Hickory Street  
Missoula, Montana 59801

Dear Ms. Gaukler,

On behalf of the over 1100 swimmers and volunteers of Montana Swimming, I would like to encourage you and the Missoula Parks and Recreation Department to keep open this summer and subsequent summers Higgins Pool in McCormick Park.

Missoula is home to two USA Swimming/ Montana Swimming member clubs – Missoula Aquatic Club (MAC) and the Missoula YMCA Swim Team (MYST) -- with over 200 swimmers total. USA Swimming is the National Governing Body for the US Olympic swimming movement. Both MAC and MYST have numerous swimmers with exceptionally fast times and qualify many swimmers each year for regional, western zone, and national competitions.

Practice time in competitive pools is always a concern for any team. During the summer months, USA Swimming teams compete in 50-meter long course pools. Higgins Pool is one of five long course pools available to USA Swimming teams in the state of Montana. Both Missoula teams practice in Higgins Pool. To remain competitive in the long course season, swimmers need to practice in the longer pool. Practice in a 25-yard or 25-meter pool may cover the same distance, but the workout is not the same.

MYST is utilizing the available practice time at the YMCA now. MAC has had a difficult time adding additional practice time at Grizzly Pool because the pool is heavily used. Both teams would like additional practice time. Both teams vitally need practice time in a long course pool. Also, several swimmers from across Montana come to Missoula during the summer months to train with these two teams. Amber Walter of Kalispell, an outstanding national level swimmer who will compete for the University of Maryland next fall, trained with MAC last summer. Why? She needed to train in a 50-meter pool and Kalispell doesn't have such a facility.

MAC is also the host team for the Missoula Firecracker swim meet held annually the last weekend in June. Teams from Montana, Idaho, Washington, Wyoming, and Utah come to Missoula to compete at this excellent three day meet. In addition, several teams from Canada also come to Missoula for this meet. So far this year, I have received requests from four Canadian teams for information on the Firecracker meet.

With 350 to 450 plus swimmers competing at the meet plus their families, this is a significant economic boost to Missoula. Families need motel rooms and food and, of course, we go shopping while in Missoula. My family has attended this meet for several years. The quality of the competition is outstanding. The pool is fast and well maintained. It would be a severe blow to the swimmers in Montana and the surrounding areas if this meet was not held and the pool closed.

I have also heard various reports that Missoula is considering enclosing Higgins Pool allowing it to remain open year round. Again, I would like to encourage you in this endeavor. I believe the pool would be fully utilized and it would be a huge boost to the swimmers and community of Missoula.

I would like to urge you keep open Higgins Pool and support the swimmers of Missoula and Montana. The advantages are numerous. Swimming is an excellent lifelong sport. If I may be of any further assistance to you, please do call on me.

Sincerely,

**Susan Huckeby**

General Chair, Montana Swimming

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