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# MEMORANDUM

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Date: April 8, 2021

To: The Honorable Chair and Members  
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: C.H. Huckelberry  
County Administrator 

Re: **Proposed Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation Aquatics Program for the Summer 2021**

Please see the attached proposal from Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation regarding the aquatics program. The proposal identifies various locations where the County operates pool facilities within the community and the planned mitigation measures associated with COVID-19.

I have approved the proposed aquatic program of the department for the summer of 2020/21 and look forward to implementing these programs in accordance with appropriate accepted protocols from our public health agency.

CHH/mp

Attachment

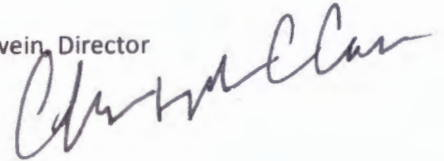
c: Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator for Public Works  
Francisco García, MD, MPH, Deputy County Administrator & Chief Medical Officer,  
Health and Community Services  
Terry Cullen, MD, MS, Health Department Director  
Chris Cawein, Director, Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation

## MEMORANDUM

Date: April 5, 2021

To: CH Huckelberry, County Administrator  
Carmine DeBonis, Deputy County Administrator

From: Chris Cawein, Director



Subject: **Proposed Aquatics Program – Summer 2021**

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Attached you will find a proposed strategy from NRPR Recreation staff to advance our Aquatics Program for the summer of 2021.

As illustrated in the proposal, there are several key elements of the strategy, as briefly summarized below:

1. We will continue to closely monitor aquatic industry standards as well as federal, state and local requirements and guidelines to inform our strategy and adjust as appropriate;
2. We are proposing to open our nine pools on the traditional opening date of Memorial Day weekend with days and hours generally consistent with previous years, but recognize the need for flexibility depending on staffing issues and COVID trends;
3. In all cases, our facilities and programs will be operated well below bather load capacity and the Health Department recommended limit for outdoor gatherings (presently at 200 persons);
4. Highly structured programs such as Swim Team and Swim Lessons will be emphasized at our facilities and conducted in a modified, adaptive format so as to reduce larger group gatherings at pools;
5. Some non-structured programs such as Open Swim and Family Swim will proceed with on-going monitoring and low capacity limits, although other recreational aquatics programs that could lead to larger group gatherings in more confined areas will not be advanced during the summer of 2021; and,
6. Splash Pads, although unstructured and unsupervised, operate well below Health Department gathering limits and cater to very young children (a population less vulnerable to COVID) and therefore are proposed to be opened on May 1.

I believe that the proposed strategy for our Aquatics Program is a well-reasoned, flexible and safe approach to re-commence our aquatics programs for the summer of 2021. As stated in the document, several of our structured Aquatics programs require us to open registration in the next few weeks in order to proceed. History indicates that these programs will be immensely popular once the registration window opens on April 27.

Therefore, unless otherwise instructed, we plan to proceed in accordance with the planned Pima County NRPR Aquatics reopening strategy as summarized herein. We will continue to consult with the Health Department to maintain all appropriate Health and safety protocols and determine if additional Aquatics Program or facility adjustments are required as we move closer to the actual facility opening dates.

### Attachment

C: Dr. Francisco Garcia, MD, MPH, Deputy County Administrator & Chief Medical Officer  
Dr. Theresa Cullen, MD, MS, Director, Pima County Health Department



## MEMORANDUM

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Date: April 2, 2021

To: Chris Cawein, Director

From: Joe Barr, Division Manager  
Grant Bourguet, Program Manager

**Subject: NRPR Request to Move Forward with Aquatics Program-Summer 2021**

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We appreciate the approval granted in January 2021 to resume the lifeguard hiring process, and we are now well-positioned to resume the Aquatics Program in summer 2021. As reiterated to you in previous correspondence, NRPR has kept all aquatic facilities in good shape over the past year, and we are once again poised to open pools and splash pads this upcoming summer, with various modifications needed to meet local standards for aquatics operations during what is projected to be the tail end of the pandemic.

Staff have been closely monitoring aquatic industry standards and guidance as well as federal, state and local regulatory requirements and guidelines for pool and splash pad re-openings. Specifically, our approach is informed by guidance from the CDC, American Red Cross, and the Aquatics Coalition, a national coalition comprised of more than 20 water safety and competitive water sports organizations <http://www.aquatics-coalition.org/>. Additionally, staff are working closely with our aquatic partners (YMCA, Flowing Wells Unified School District, and Marana Unified School District) to develop safe and unified strategies for reopening.

### **Summer 2021 Aquatics Strategy:**

As you are well aware, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, NRPR elected to not open our pools or splash pads for our normal aquatic programming during summer 2020. Because we did not open in 2020, approximately 50% of the NRPR lifeguards inevitably departed for other job opportunities and will not return. Upon approval from County Administration to resume hiring lifeguards in January 2021, NRPR has aggressively trained, hired, and retained a number of staff for the upcoming summer, with additional sold-out lifeguard trainings in Tucson and Ajo forthcoming in April and May.

Regardless of these recruitment and training efforts, it is unlikely all lifeguard positions will be filled this summer, most notably our Water Safety Instructors. Given we may have staffing challenges, it will be prudent for NRPR to focus our efforts this summer on core aquatic programs and modify programming hours while we concurrently train new lifeguards and WSIs throughout this summer in an effort to rebuild our aquatics program for normal operation by summer 2022.

Equally important this upcoming summer is determining the total number of participants which should be allowed in our aquatic facilities at any one time at this stage of the pandemic. Before setting a participation limit, it is imperative to understand the distinction between 1) program capacity, 2) bather load capacity, 3) facility occupancy:

- 1) **Program capacity** is determined by program objectives, appropriated funding, and staffing levels.
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- 2) **Bather load capacity** is determined by Pima County Health Code, which is the number of total participants allowed in the pool at one time. This number is strictly regulated, and posted on site. Additionally, bather load is limited to no more than 25 persons for each lifeguard on duty during normal operations, and therefore is reduced if less than the normal number of guards is available.
- 3) **Facility occupancy** is determined by building code and includes all available space within an aquatic facility including the pool, pool deck, grass areas, ramada areas, etc.

Generally speaking, NRPR traditionally has operated virtually all of its aquatic program capacities well below bather load capacity and facility occupancy for a number of safety, funding, and program objectives reasons. For instance, Open Swim and Family Swim, the two largest daily capacity programs offered, are **estimated at less than 63% of bather capacity and less than 20% building occupancy** for each aquatic facility. It is worth noting not all aquatic facilities reach program capacity for Open Swim and Family Swim on a daily basis. The only outlier NRPR aquatics event where bather load and building occupancy can be readily approached are **multiple-team swim meets**, which are **not being recommended this summer**.

Pool Facility	Program Capacity								Bather Load Capacity	Facility Occupancy
	Open Swim	Family Swim	Swim Team (per practice)	Swim Lessons (per class)	Water Aerobics (per class)	Party Zones	Junior Lifeguarding (per class)	Lap Swimming		
Ajo	125	125	48	6	15	N/A	10	3	200	799
Catalina	50	50	32	6	10	N/A	10	N/A	100	334
Flowing Wells	125	N/A	56	6	N/A	N/A	10	3	200	1,011
Kino	100	100	32	6	N/A	N/A	10	N/A	150	916
Los Niños	75	75	40	6	N/A	50	10	N/A	150	583
NWYMCA-Thad Terry	125	125	48	N/A	N/A	50	10	3	200	1,338
Picture Rocks	75	75	N/A	6	20	N/A	10	N/A	100	908
Manzanita	125	125	48	6	N/A	50	10	N/A	200	1,030
Wade McLean	125	125	63	6	N/A	50	10	3	200	1,720

Pool Facility	Pool Surface Area Square Feet	Pool Deck/Grass Area Square Feet	Total Pool Facility Square Feet
Ajo	5,066	10,464	15,530
Catalina	1,439	4,581	6,020
Flowing Wells	6,399	13,245	19,644
Kino	4,851	12,283	17,134
Los Niños	4,515	7,386	11,901
NWYMCA-Thad Terry	5,614	18,385	23,999
Picture Rocks	4,375	12,305	16,680
Manzanita	5,392	13,834	19,226
Wade McLean	6,345	23,893	30,238

As of March 26, 2021, the Pima County Health Department (PCHD) Public Health Advisory recommends that outdoor gatherings should be limited to 200 people and occur in settings and venues where social distancing is possible. From this perspective, ordinary operation of NRPR's unstructured swimming pool programs (Open Swim and Family Swim) is acceptable because of the large physical space available and the architectural design of these facilities, which encourages people to spread out to various areas with grass and shade.

Staff-led classes (water aerobics, swim lessons, and junior lifeguarding) are under the direct control of staff and can be effectuated by coordinating small groupings of ten or less people and utilizing techniques and PPE (face shields) that aquatics staff have been training with over the last 9 months. Similarly, swim team can be effectuated by dividing the participants into cohorts of 10 or less with specific lane assignments and coaches at opposite ends of the pool for odd and even lanes, so that each cohort is continually kept away from the other cohorts to the greatest extent possible. As previously mentioned, traditional multi-team swim meets will not be offered. Instead, structured intersquad swim meets will be held at each pool, with best times and other accomplishments shared across teams electronically via social media.

As per general CDC guidance, all participants and staff in all NRPR aquatics programs will be directed not to share personal items, such as water bottles, towels, etc. and all programs will be scheduled to accommodate additional cleaning shifts and wipe-down of high-touch surfaces. Signage and program materials requiring self-wellness checks will be implemented, but on-site temperature checks for the public will not be offered.

Importantly, because we expect less than a full complement of lifeguards and swim instructors, staff are not recommending that NRPR offer the water aerobics program, which is usually taught by community center coordinators, who are not expected to be available this summer. Additionally, staff are not recommending Party Zone rentals, whereby customers reserve a picnic area, because such rentals involve unstructured groupings of people, as well as an expectation for food sharing. Similarly, movie nights and the Ghost Ship inflatable will not be offered.

While we expect and are hoping for continued downward trends in local COVID-19 infections, as well as continued progress towards widespread vaccinations, if conditions change for the worse, modifications to unstructured program capacities (open swim and family swim) can be made at any moment, based on direction from PCHD. For example, program capacity for open swim and family swim could be reduced at all sites by 25% or 50%. Structured fee-based programs, such as swim team and swim lessons, cannot easily be reduced once participants have registered. Therefore, in a worst-case scenario, such classes may need to be canceled and refunded. Information stating such will be provided upon registration.

Upon thorough review of Center for Disease Control (CDC) public swimming cleaning and sanitation guidelines, including the already-approved NWYMCA Thad Terry pool pandemic operational plan, current state and local regulations, COVID-19 in-service staff trainings, and projected summer staffing levels, below are NRPR's proposed programs and modifications/precautions for summer:

**Aquatic programs offered this summer**

- Open Swim
- Family Swim, weekends only
- Swim Team, intersquad swim meets only
- Swimming Lessons
- Junior Lifeguarding
- Splash pads

### **Aquatic programs not offered this summer**

- Party Zone rentals
- Birthday parties
- Group camp swim
- Multiple-team swim meets
- Water Aerobics, due to staffing shortage
- Movie Nights
- Ghost Ship inflatable

### **Health and Safety precautions/modifications still in effect**

- All non-bathers must wear masks inside the pool facility, per Pima County resolution 2020-96
- Occupancy is limited
- People wishing to enter the pool should expect to wait in line
- Physical distancing must be adhered to. Stay at least 6 feet from other households
- Half-hour sanitation periods scheduled between major programs, cleaning per CDC recommendations

### **Hours of Operation and Participation**

As previously stated, NRPR will need to modify, adjust, and adapt historical program times, daily participation, and operating hours to align with current staffing levels. Generally speaking, the hours of operation will be Saturday through Thursday, and the pools will be closed on Fridays (same as past summers). We encourage the public to check our website [www.pima.gov/pools](http://www.pima.gov/pools) for current operating hours and programs.

We understand the pandemic is ongoing, and that mitigation (including cleaning efforts) along with program participation levels may need to be adjusted throughout the summer. While we can increase and/or decrease the number of program participants depending on the status of the pandemic, to avoid any public and staff confusion, we intend to keep the overall operating hours of each aquatic facility constant throughout the two month summer operation.

### **NRPR Splash pads:**

Splash pads are an unstructured and unmonitored recreational activity primarily intended for young children and families. While splash pads are busy throughout the day, staff observations indicate that general usage is typically well below the current 200 person limit for gatherings set by PCHD. Additionally, because NRPR has a robust maintenance program to ensure proper cleaning and chlorination of splash pads, and because CDC has established chlorinated water is not a vector for disease transmission, and young children are not a high-risk population for COVID-19, staff recommend the re-opening of County splash pads on May 1, 2021.

If the local community experiences an increase in COVID-19 cases, and PCHD consequently reduces the recommended limit for outdoor gatherings, splash pads may immediately be closed until conditions improve.

### **Summary**

We certainly recognize that we are not out of the woods yet with this pandemic, and we will continue to vigilantly monitor the status of the pandemic moving forward, adjusting our training and public programs accordingly.

With it now being April, to ensure we have a successful and safe swimming operation this summer, it is time critical to transition to registering summer program participants so we can plan, schedule, and train staff accordingly. NRPR is therefore requesting permission to start registering aquatic programs beginning April 27, 2021 with the intent to open the County swimming pools in a modified format on May 29, 2021.

I appreciate your consideration of this request to allow NRPR to move forward with the 2021 aquatic program.