



Captain Roger W. Wheeler, Honor Administrator, United States of America, 2026



Captain Roger W. Wheeler was instrumental in adding another United States competition in the World Professional Marathon Swimming Federation (WPMSF) race series. The WPMSF founded in 1963 and succeeded by the International Marathon Swimming Association in the late 1980s) promoted, educated, and furthered the interests of the sport of open water swimming and professional marathon swimming in particular. Prior to 1968, all races were held in countries excluding the United States. Captain Wheeler organized (officials, prize money, spectators, etc.) the Rhode Island races. Atlantic City, New Jersey was later added.

Under his management, the first John E. Fogarty Memorial Distance Swim took place on 24 August 1968 at Sand Hill Cove State Beach renamed the Captain Roger W. Wheeler Beach in 1970 after his death. The Rhode Island races included several IMSHOF Honorees over the years, including: Abdel-Latif Abou-Heif, (Egypt) and Horacio Iglesias (Argentina) - 1968, 1969, and 1970; Johannes "Johan" Schans (Netherlands) - 1969, and 1970; Linda McGill, MBE, OAM (Australia) – 1968; Régent Lacoursière (Canada) – 1969, and 1970; Patty Thompson (Canada) – 1969; Jim Doty (USA) – 1969; and Dennis Matuch (USA) – 1970.

He is one of the namesakes of the International Swimming Hall of Fame's Irving Davids/Captain Roger W. Wheeler Memorial Award which recognizes contributions to the administration of open water swimming since 1971. This is one of the most prestigious awards in marathon swimming. Captain Wheeler was the creator of the Rhode Island State Life-Saving system in the 1930s. In 1935, he was named director of the Division of Lifesaving for the State Department of Public Health for Rhode Island. During World War II, he served in the Army in Mississippi where he designed a life jacket that became standard equipment in the Army and Air Force. Later he was awarded the Army Commendation Medal for creating rescue procedures.

[Expanded Biography \(Openwaterpedia\)](#)