



# One Million Revolutions

The Freshwater Trust Portland Triathlon

August 22, 2010



USA TRIATHLON CONSULTANT: KATHY MATEJKA

# One Million Revolutions

## The Freshwater Trust Portland Triathlon

### Overview

This event is the brainchild and collaborative outcome of years of vision and execution from the shared efforts of the race director and community forces. The river system surrounding and bisecting Portland, Oregon were long thought to be “dead” as a result of urban growth, industrialization and commerce that fouled the water to a point where living organisms could not be sustained. The event has captured the hearts of the local athletes and fostered a new way of thinking within the city about what a body of water (or other landmark of a community) can contribute to the well-being and health of its citizens. Social and civic changes aside, this event happens to be outstanding as an example of terrific event management from the participant’s first “touch” (noodling about the website info) to the final part of the race day (massage, food and beverage for all!).

### Course Layout

#### Swim

There were four waves at three minute intervals. The first two waves sent the Olympic distance athletes further up the river to the turn while the sprint and relay waves entered the water last. This resulted in a concentration of exits that were very well supported with catchers on the dock and abundant human-powered watercraft. Swim support was abundant: the number of lifeguards exceeded the USAT minimum standard, kayaks, motorized watercraft and paddleboards were well positioned through the course. The swim passed under two of Portland’s famous Willamette River bridges.

#### Bike

The bike course consisted of a number of loops depending upon the length of the race. Naito Parkway is a major downtown thoroughfare and it was closed to allow the cyclists to navigate out from the riverside park to the looped portion of the course. Law enforcement support was excellent and downtown traffic was not impacted adversely by the race. The looped roads were reported to be hilly and challenging, especially the second and third loops as fatigue began to set in.

#### Run

The run course was also a looped format and spectators could converge at the looping point to cheer on their family members and friends which was fun for everyone and certainly encouraging to the competitors. The run took participants along the riverfront trail which added to the urban feel.

#### Featured Course: Transition

Abundant signage helped guide the participants through the TA which can often be the most confusing aspect of an event. Entrances and exits were clearly marked, plenty of portable toilets were located strategically throughout the TA (and entire race venue) and the mount/dismount areas were clear and safe. Open racking was the order of the day and there was abundant space for all participants. There was

### Event Profile

*Race Director:* Jeff Henderson

*Location:* Downtown  
Portland, OR

*Date:* August 22, 2020

*Years sanctioned:* 4

*Discipline(s) offered:* Olympic  
distance triathlon

Sprint distance triathlon

Relay divisions for both



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no crowding and so it seemed the athletes were comfortable with setting up their gear without fear of items being moved, stepped on or otherwise mistreated. The transition area is the featured course for this event because of the spectacular setting in a broad open swale of a community park, nestled along the river. There is no crush for space so that all participants have plenty of space to set up and relax as they prepare to race. The second unique feature is the bamboo custom bike racks. Using the sustainable wood allows the RD to save funds for other needs and adds to the sustainability luster of this environmentally friendly event.

### Featured Aspect: Sustainability and Collaboration for a Greener Planet

Bringing this race into reality was a long and difficult path. From engagement with the Freshwater Trust to help the citizens and government of Portland understand that their rivers were not dead, that a safe swim as the foundation of an urban multisport competition could be possible and the coordination to close the river to shipping for hours while athletes swam under then pedaled and ran over the bridges was a staggering achievement. In addition, fitting into the cultural ethos of sustainability in a city known for forward thinking was a huge undertaking. Jeff Henderson is a 'puppet-master' of the highest order as he connected all the key players and brought his vision to create and nurture the most environmentally friendly race possible. Participants are encouraged to complete all transactions and communications electronically, to carpool or take public transportation to the race (or bike to it), finisher awards are EcoSteel refillable bottles, local CSA's provide fruit, the podium awards are uniquely repurposed rocks, bike gear cogs and spent tire tubes, and finally the photos within this report show the living finish line, recycled plastic scrim fencing and the bamboo bike racks. Small wonder the event earned Triathlete magazine's "Greenest Race in America" recognition. Now, in its fourth year, the race has been the catalyst for the Freshwater Trust 5k Run (shares race course and finish area) held on the triathlon's weekend in conjunction with the Portland River Fest. Children's art marks the boundaries of the race's venue and site, a wonderful and whimsical addition.



### Conclusion

It is easy to be green by supporting the events produced by One Million Revolutions. The Freshwater Trust Portland Triathlon is the greenest of the company's three annual multisport events and has been acknowledged by Triathlete Magazine as America's Greenest Race.

*"The event has captured the hearts of the local athletes and fostered a new way of thinking within the city about what a body of water (or other landmark of a community) can contribute to the well-being and health of its citizens."*

### Why to Do It: TOP 10

10. Abundant food for all: athletes, volunteers and spectators
9. Beer tent for the hot and thirsty finishers. Mmmmm.
8. Host hotel right across the street. Roll out to set up bike and then head back for the pre-race breakfast.
7. Swimmers travel under huge, cool drawbridges. The river is closed to shipping traffic for this race.
6. Race apparel incorporates bamboo and recycled fabrics.
5. Cool chicken logos to celebrate flapping, flailing and fun.
4. Superlative swim support.
3. Unique awards: repurposed rock, tire tubes and bike cogs. Different each year and definitely worth racing 'on the rivet' to earn.
2. Enthusiastic, knowledgeable race staff and volunteers