

- EMBARGOED UNTIL SUNDAY, JULY 14 -

SWIMMABLE CITIES

Media Release: Paris inspires a new global wave of climate action with launch of first ever Swimmable Cities Charter

In the lead up to the Paris Olympics, a set of common principles have been published to empower decision-makers, actors and grassroots activists in the international Swimmable Cities movement. These principles have already been adopted by a diverse group of founding Signatories, representing 30 cities and 16 countries around the world.

Facilitated by the Swimmable Cities steering group, comprising leaders from Australia, Europe and the UK; the purpose of the Swimmable Cities Charter is recognising the interconnections between the Rights of Nature and the Right to Swim (human rights).

Positive ripple effects are already being seen with municipalities like the City of Rotterdam (Netherlands) aligning the Charter to their urban waterfront redevelopments, City of Yarra (Melbourne) linking the Charter to community climate action, and not to mention +Pool (New York) harnessing the Charter in their water policy leadership.

The diversity of signatories shows the power of grassroots movements to bring people together around a simple but visionary goal. This includes a range of stakeholders, including local municipalities, government agencies, civil society organisations, community groups, private enterprises, universities and cultural institutions.

Despite the urban swimming movement currently being dominated by Global North and Euro-centric worldviews, the Charter is hoped to spark new intersectional conversations and meaningful action that creates greater diversity and representation. An example of the embracing Indigenous Peoples' rich ecological knowledge is the Charter's inclusion of 'Mother Earth', mirroring the Kunming-Montreal UN Global Biodiversity Framework.

The Charter builds upon recommendations within the Swimmable Cities Handbook (2023), which was published by Melbourne-based consultancy Regeneration Projects as part of their role as an Actor in the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

Leaders within the Swimmable Cities movement, such as the members of the Pan European Urban Bathing Network (self-proclaimed 'water nerds'), are showing the world that building climate resilience and achieving Nature Positive goals requires a 'whole of society' approach, well beyond the traditional silos of the conservation sector.

Swimmable Cities is now focused on celebrating river swimming during the Paris Olympics, and planning an international Summit in Paris during the northern Spring, 2025.

Aspiring signatories can express interest at the alliance's website: swimmablecities.org.

Swimmable Cities Charter

10 PRINCIPLES:

[FOUNDATIONAL VALUES]

1. THE RIGHT TO SWIM:

Safe, healthy and swimmable waterways should be accessible to all people.

2. ONE HEALTH, MANY SWIMMERS:

Swimmable urban waterways are vital to the liveability of cities and communities, as shared civic places that promote the health of people (physically, mentally, spiritually) and the health of Mother Earth.

3. URBAN SWIMMING CULTURE:

Urban swimming culture is a unique expression of life in cities and communities, reflecting the distinct interplay of sports, recreation and tourism in each given place, as well as natural and cultural heritage.

4. WATER IS SACRED:

Urban swimming should celebrate natural waterways as living, integrated entities that nurture communities, promoting universal accessibility and peaceful coexistence inclusive of religious, cultural and gender diversity.

[ENABLING CONDITIONS]

5. REWRITING THE RULES:

Urban waterway swimming should become part of a new status quo in public access standards, challenging accepted conventions such as industrial uses and stormwater pollution, with governing authorities swiftly amending legal and regulatory frameworks to enable citizens access to its benefits.

6. DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION IN SWIMMING PLACES:

Urban swimming places and experiences should be planned, designed, made and operated through inclusive, integrated water management approaches; with managers ensuring universal access via community-led programs for learning how to swim in natural waterways and ecological literacy.

7. RECONNECTION & RESILIENCE:

Urban swimming places and experiences should be invested in as an innovative way to enable resilient communities to adapt and thrive in a changing global climate, environment and economy.

[SHARING BENEFITS]

8. NEW ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Urban swimming development models should balance social, cultural, ecological and economic values, creating new jobs, careers and livelihoods in regenerative professions and industries.

9. SHARING WELLBEING BENEFITS, CULTURE & KNOWLEDGE:

Urban swimming should create wellbeing benefits to local citizens, ecosystems and economies; enhanced by the respectful sharing of Indigenous, traditional and Western water culture knowledge.

[CATCH ALL]

10. STEWARDSHIP FOR TODAY, TOMORROW & FUTURE GENERATIONS:

Urban swimmers are stewards responsible for protecting the health of their local waterways, working alongside Mother Earth's closest carers, such as Indigenous peoples, rangers and waterkeepers as well as urbanists, architects, social changemakers, educators and policy-makers.

Swimmable Cities, alliance Steering Group

Matt Sykes, Regeneration Projects - Convenor

Ana Mumladze Detering, Pan European Urban Bathing Network & SVDK Vienna

Chris Romer-Lee, Studio Octopi, Thames Baths & Future Lidos

Sibylle van der Walt, Metz Ville d'Eau

Tim Edler, Flussbad Berlin e.V.

Jerome Castex, Libres Nageurs

Resources

Web - www.swimmablecities.org (Live on 14th)//

Insta - [@swimmable_cities](https://www.instagram.com/swimmable_cities) // LinkedIn - [here](#)

MEDIA KIT - [here](#)

Swimmable Cities Charter (full version) - [here](#)

Swimmable Cities Handbook (2023) - [here](#)

Swimmable Cities alliance update (2024) - [here](#)

Photos - [here](#), Logos - [here](#)

Media Contacts

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LOCATIONS

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Africa - Romy Stander - roomys@nandos.com

Key terms

#SwimmableCities - Hashtag for the international urban swimming movement

Swimmable Cities Charter - A set of common principles designed to empower decision-makers, actors and grassroots activists in the international urban swimming movement.

Swimmable Cities - An alliance of diverse organisations which have signed the Charter.

Swimmable Cities 'Steering Group' - A small governance group which led the development of the Charter, and are supporting implementation of recommendations within the Swimmable Cities Handbook (a document published by Melbourne-based consultancy Regeneration Projects, Actor in the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration)

Founding Signatories

AUSTRALIA

City of Yarra

Sydney Water

Parramatta River Catchment Group, Sydney

Regen Melbourne

Regeneration Projects, Melbourne

Löyly Studio, Melbourne

Nicole Larkin Design, Sydney

Yarra Pools, Melbourne

AUSTRIA

Forschungsbereich Hochbau – Konstruktion und Entwerfen, Institut für Architektur und Entwerfen, TU Wien

IG Architektur, Vienna

Schimmverein Donaukanal, Vienna

BELGIUM

Outdoor Swimming Belgium vzw

Pool Is Cool, Brussels

Waterland vzw

Zwembarestad, Ghent (& Amsterdam)

CANADA

Swim Drink Fish, Toronto

CHILE

La Loyka

CHINA

College of Architecture & Landscape Architecture, Peking University, Beijing

DENMARK

Foundation for Environmental Education - Blue Flag programme, Copenhagen

Pond Cph, Copenhagen

FRANCE

Les Ourcq Polaires, Paris

Nageurs du Prado, Marseille

Les Libres Nageurs, Marseille

Metz Ville d'Eau, Metz

GERMANY

Design Campus, Kunstgewerbemuseum, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden

Flussbad Berlin e.V., Berlin

Isarlust e.V., Munich

HUNGARY

Valyo, Budapest

IRELAND

Cork Lido CLG

NETHERLANDS

City of Rotterdam

World Waternet, Amsterdam

Foundation Amsterdam City Swim

Leisurelands, Arnhem

Swimmable Rivers, Amsterdam

SOUTH AFRICA

Water for the Future, Johannesburg

SWITZERLAND

S AM Schweizerisches Architekturmuseum, Basel

UK

The Outdoor Swimming Society

Lewis Pugh, Plymouth

Studio Octopi, London

Thames Baths, London

Oxford Bathing Places Coalition, Oxford

The People's Pool, Liverpool

Future Lidos

River & Rowing Musuem, Henley-on-Thames

USA

Waterkeeper Alliance (global), New York

Urban Rivers, Chicago

+Pool, New York

Human Access Project, Portland

Charles River Conservancy, Cambridge MA

Timeline

October 2023 – [Swimmable Cities Handbook](#) published by Regeneration Projects as an introductory tool for decision-makers, actors and activists. This includes a mix of recommendations to further the movement, including a Summit in Paris in 2025.

Feb 14 – Swimmable Cities alliance 'Steering Group' organically emerged amongst actors in UK, Europe and Australia to start implementing Handbook recommendations. Decision was made to start with a Charter of core principles to empower communities.

March 22 2024 – [World Water Day](#) – Online exchange between leaders in Melbourne and Toronto shows potential for wider inter-city collaboration and knowledge-sharing.

June 5 – [World Environment Day](#) – 20+ Movement actors united online to hear updates from Paris and share its ripple-effects, to Johannesburg and beyond.

June 22-30 – [World Bathing Day](#) – SPLASH with Paris!!! Synchronizing with the much talked about inauguration swim of Anne Hidalgo (Mayor of Paris) in the River Seine, international actors are invited to swim with politicians and journalists - to promote global peace and unity, to provide visibility for their own local urban waterways and to energise the Swimmable Cities movement

July 14 – [swimmablecities.org](#) – A new alliance website goes live, *media embargo lifts*.

July 16 – Official ONLINE Launch event – the Founding Charter signatories announced, supporting a new wave of action for the urban swimming movement.

July 26-Aug 11 – [Paris Summer Olympics](#) – Open water swimmers and triathletes to swim in the River Seine. Key dates: July 30, 31, Aug 5.

Apr / May 2025 – Swimmable Cities Summit, Paris – plans are now underway to run the inaugural international Summit in Paris (after the Olympics), with the purpose of supporting knowledge-sharing, relationship-building and innovation exchange between leaders in the movement.

WHY THE PARIS OLYMPICS IS SO SIGNIFICANT?

The Games will mark a turning point in the relationship between major cities and their waterways. Two milestones will create a lasting memory for a whole generation!

1. Athletes swimming in the River Seine (for the first time in around 100 years) and,
2. Three natural river baths to be made on the Seine (for the wider public in 2025).

To make this possible, the City of Paris, Mayor Anne Hidalgo and the wider Paris region have mobilized over 1.4 Billion Euros, enormous administrative and technical efforts for over ten years to clean up the River Seine, restore water quality and constantly monitor it by using digital technologies. These efforts are likely to change the perception of rivers, ports, beaches, lakes and wetlands in cities all over the world - Urban waterways are more than stormwater drains or open sewage pipes! When ecologically restored and regenerated, urban waterways provide biodiversity and health (mental, physical & spiritual) for citizens in this time of global warming.