

GLRF Regatta Advisory Group findings and recommendations of the meeting with Chicago Games Inc. sports director Nancy Harris on 25 August 2005

**Regatta Venues**

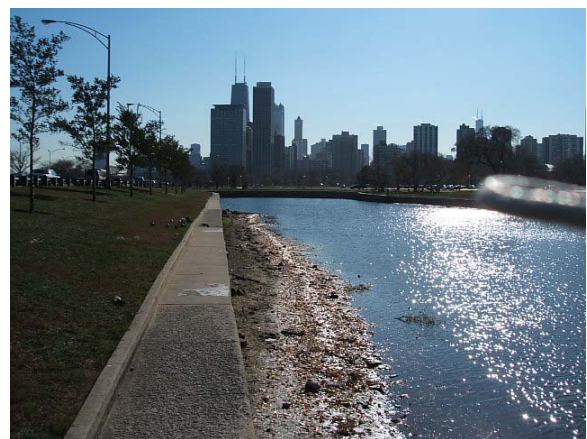
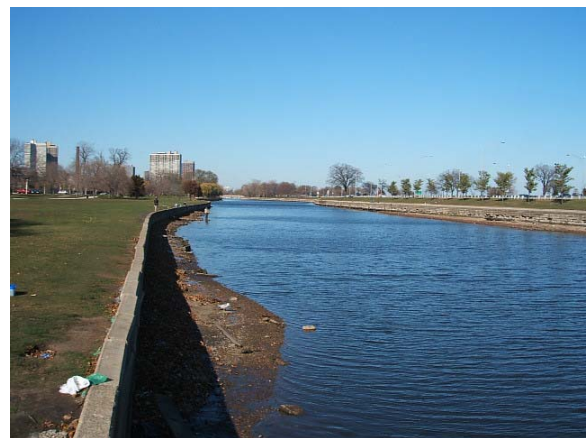
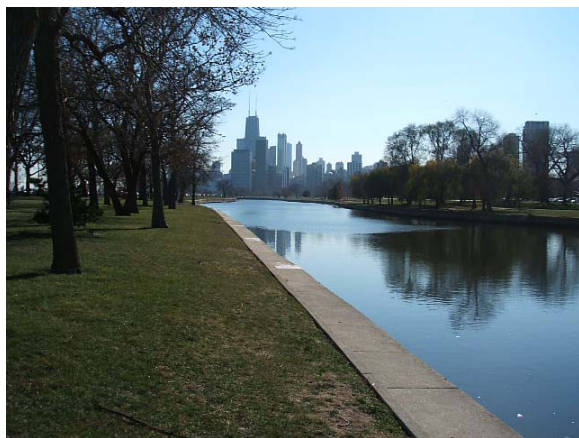
It is important to acknowledge that Chicago does not have any existing competitive regatta rowing venues. Organizing such a venue will be a major challenge.

Lincoln Park Club Lagoon

The original site selected for the regatta, and the current site of the annual Chicago Sprints rowing regatta, the lagoon is a narrow body of water that can accommodate only two lanes and appears to be so narrow that there isn't room for a return lane. The water level is connected to the lake. The depth of the lagoon depends on the height of the lake. As the lake level recedes, so does the amount of rowable water in the lagoon. The past two years have recorded consecutive rainfall droughts that have significantly affected the level of the lake.

The Chicago Sprints are held Henley style, i.e., two boats at a time racing against the clock. The Chicago rowers we talked to did not view this as a truly competitive venue, given the limitations of the Lincoln Park Lagoon. The constantly changing conditions make time comparisons fairly meaningless. The one advantage this site has is that it does exist within Chicago.

Hosting a full-scale regatta with all boat categories and all masters age groups would necessitate a much larger regatta venue with multiple lanes.



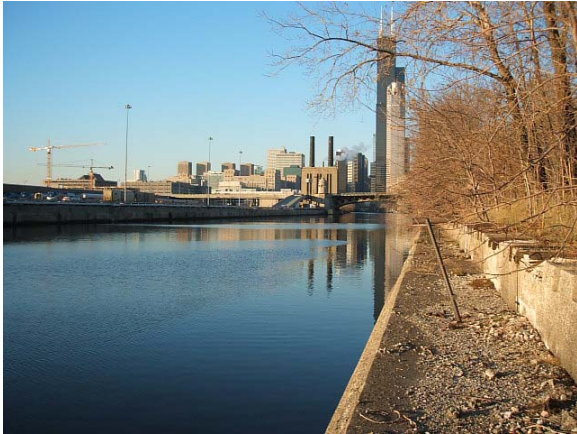
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Chicago River - The Chicago River flows through the city, including the downtown area, making it a desirable venue for public access and exposure. The river is contained by 6 to 12 ft vertical walls for most of its flow through Chicago, making launch and recovery impossible without a sizable investment in a very long temporary ramp (to accommodate the wall drop) and sizable dock (to accommodate multiple boats launching or recovering). Any structure extending into the waterway would also need the approval of the Army Corps of Engineers.

Most all of the Chicago River is directly part of the shipping channel or feeds into the shipping channel. The shipping channel is very active and cannot be shut down. The shipping traffic generates powerful wakes, which bounce off the vertical river walls resulting in wave amplification and increased risk for boat capsizing. Buoying any course will be a real challenge because barge, commercial, and private traffic whisks up and down the river continuously. One pass with a barge and all of the buoys would be gone. The river curves frequently, with very few stretches available for a straight-line, 1,000 meter course. The river is narrow when attempting to accommodate a 4-lane course with a fifth lane for boat traffic. It isn't clear that there is a stretch of the river that can accommodate such a course and fifth lane. The Main Channel is wide enough to handle a 4-lane course but just isn't long enough to accommodate 1,000 meters. It would be nearly impossible to limit boat traffic on the main channel, except for early mornings. Launch and recovery areas for crews are extremely limited.



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Crystal Lake - Susan Urbas, a highly regarded local and national rowing figure, suggested hosting the regatta about 1.5 hours outside of Chicago, on Crystal Lake. She knows a rowing official there, and that there was a relatively new rowing club operating there (i.e., Crystal Lake Rowing Club). Crystal Lake may have an area large enough to accommodate a 6-lane 1,000 meter event. Chicago organizers might be able to elicit the help of local rowing club and community groups to help with running the regatta. But it would be necessary for Chicago to provide free shuttle service to Crystal Lake for the regatta and for practice. The major draw back is that the event would not take place within the City of Chicago and thus would have limited exposure.

Follow up meeting between representatives from the Crystal Lake Rowing Club and GLRF on Friday, November 18, 2005 at 6:30 am at the lakefront:

The facilities are well suited to host a rowing regatta. A large, beachfront building is situated at one end of Crystal Lake and is collocated at the launch and recovery area. The building's Great Room could accommodate registration, a regatta committee, volunteers, and race officials. There is a large parking lot across the street from the building to stow boat trailers as well as a beach vehicle access to unload boats for pre-staging for rigging, launch and recovery. There are two bathroom facilities attached to the building, one with showers. The building has a built in outdoor retail food service facility. The finish line narrows at the far end of the lake, affording attractive spectator viewing. The lake can accommodate 8 lanes and 1,000 meters. Existing docks, boats, and floating barges could be used for handheld starts, and obtaining funds for buoys appears feasible since it would benefit the local community going forward. A large adjacent gazebo/stage could serve as a picnic area, and presentation of medals.

Crystal Lake Rowing Club is eager to get on the Illinois map as THE competitive regional rowing venue of choice. Chicago rowing clubs have requested to host regattas there and the Crystal Lake Rowing Club sees the Chicago Gay Games Regatta as a perfect opportunity to showcase their venue. They used the word serendipitous to describe the smaller size of the regatta since it would permit the club to focus on putting on a well-executed rowing event.

There are some challenges - three different government bodies share jurisdiction of Crystal Lake and getting approval to host a regatta would need some time. To host a regatta, Crystal Lake Rowing Club has to see the financial benefit for them, and to demonstrate the benefit for the local community. This implies outside, direct local rower participation.



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Crystal Lake and the Chicago River - Chicago organizers might achieve both a safe, competitive venue and public exposure by hosting a “tour row” through Chicago on the Chicago River and a regatta on Crystal Lake. Susan Urbas liked this idea and offered to partner through the Chicago River Rowing and Paddling Center with the Chicago Gay Game Organizers for the tour row. This seemed like a workable solution, especially if Gay Games participants could pay one fee and participate in two events.

## **Regatta Organization**

Regattas are hosted almost every weekend in the United States from March until November. Every one of them is a moneymaking event for the hosting club. The regattas succeed because they draw a large number of participants. Rowers participate because they know the event will be organized by knowledgeable rowing officials, the races will start on time, and there will be competitive crews to race.

Regattas are profitable events because a local rowing club or organization hosts them, the race officials are free, the water facility is free, and the waterside and dockside facilities already exist. For crews, a regatta is not an expensive event because clubs trailer their own boats, the regatta registration fee per participant is in the range of \$30 - \$60 per rower, the event is usually regional and lasts one or two days, and it is usually held on a weekend, when rowers do not work.

The Chicago Sprints is hosted by the Lincoln Park Boat Club and is a profitable event. The regatta is held on a Saturday and Sunday.

The Chicago Gay Games plans to run the rowing regatta over four days, from Monday – Thursday. It would make more sense to keep the regatta length to a maximum of two days with one day of practice. Timing the regatta closer to the weekend and towards the end of the Chicago Gay Games would encourage more rower participation. Some crews would then be able to participate in both the Chicago Gay Games and the Montreal World Outgames. Adding to the challenge is the timing of the Chicago Sprints, which will be held on the opening weekend of the Chicago Gay Games.

To make a regatta worthwhile for rowers, the course length needs to be a full 1,000 meters for a masters event. Regatta racecourses are developed with an even number of lanes. For a side-by-side sprint race, a course needs to have four lanes, and for the scope of categories offered for the Chicago Gay Games regatta, 6 or 8 lanes is more realistic. Although not essential, a buoyed course is important to make a regatta course competitive and fair.

The location and accessibility of the boat launch and recovery area is essential for the timely launch of races. In the proposed heat and final format for the Chicago Gay Games Regatta, boat turnover will be much higher as multiple crews will use the same boats, especially if the boats are rented. Therefore, the boat launch and recovery needs to be close to the start or finish line.

In a regatta with a busy event schedule, race starts must run with precision, with just minutes between events. Having a handheld start ensures that races will start punctually and will not require a restart. Hosting a regatta on a lake eliminates some of the challenges posed by river currents.

Boat storage and security is essential for visiting crews and rental boats. The location needs to be close to the regatta boat launch and recovery area to allow crews time to load and unload trailers and to carry the boats, rigging, and oars. Non-regional crews will need to know whether class A competitive boats will be made available for rental.

## **Regatta Structure**

Every regatta must publish in advance a set of policies and procedures for the conduct of the regatta and the competition categories. Rowers will need to know under which sets of rowing rules will they compete and how they will be modified. Listed below are some of the items that should be considered and a policy defined for them:

- A. Governing Racing Rules – USRowing?
- B. Officiating
- C. Transgender policy
- D. Masters age categories
- E. Averaging for masters A category, i.e., concern as to ability to boat 8's if we can't include under 27 year olds in the boat provided that boat maintains age average.
- F. Number of entries for a race to make.
- G. Handicapping of races, e.g., if not enough for a given category?
- H. Any limits on the number of events that a person can enter?
- I. Medaling when less than 4 entries, i.e., 2 entries = 1 medal, 3 entries = 2 medals?
- J. A cap and/or a minimum of registrations (i.e., red book says to reconsider the event if less than 80 participants)?
- K. Refund policy if regatta scratched
- L. Refund policy if a boat category is scratched
- M. Awarding of medals – when and where, i.e., at dock or at night

## **Regatta Race Schedule**

A published race event schedule is a critical part of the planning and registration process. Rowers need to know what events will be offered in which category before they register. Offering a blanket list of boat categories is not specific enough. Listed below are some of the categories that will form a defined, specific event schedule:

- A. Event categories, e.g., 1x, 2x, 2-, 4x, 4-, 4+, 8+?
- B. Mixed categories
- C. Adaptive categories
- D. Open events
- E. Novice events