

# PNS Letter of Support for S.P.L.A.S.H

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Feb 3, 2008

## *Andy Hathaway, PNS General Chair*

Letter to S.P.L.A.S.H. pool campaign in Bellevue from PNS General Chair, Andy Hathaway

Pacific Northwest Swimming, (PNS), the Local Swim Committee of USA Swimming, fully supports and endorses the concept of a new regional competitive pool complex. To facilitate the building of such a facility we lend our support and encouragement to a partnership between schools, cities, government agencies, and local businesses to make this longtime dream a reality. We support a location for a regional-size facility in the greater Bellevue area.

Since the 1950's, in various forms, Pacific Northwest Swimming has been the primary organization for competitive swimming, as one of more than 50 geographic divisions of USA Swimming. The Northwest has a reputation for excellence in swimming circles, and since the 1930s our swimmers have regularly competed in regional, national, international and Olympic competition.

The PNS clubs number approximately 50 throughout Western Washington and a large number of those clubs are based in the Eastside. There are upwards of 5000 individual athlete members in the PNS and a substantial number of those are residents of Eastside communities. PNS competitive programs encompass all levels of swimming from Novice competitors to World Ranked Elite swimmers that have won Gold Medals in Olympic competition. We welcome swimmers of all levels, who enjoy the discipline and exercise that swimming provides, and we find that many of our swimmers use it as a cross-training regimen and as a break from high impact sports such as soccer, football, track, etc. At all levels, this youth swimming participation teaches them a valuable lifelong sport, as well as water safety skills - important in our communities that are surrounded by water.

Unfortunately, though our membership has grown with the population of the Eastside, public indoor swimming facilities have not kept pace, and a severe shortage of pool capacity limits participation throughout the Eastside and actually throughout the Pacific Northwest. Bellevue alone is short about six public pools, according to nationally recognized park standards. Evidence of this abounds:

- Our annual meet schedule is highly dependent on pool availability. With no long course pools available on the Eastside and only three public facilities, local Club and High School teams, not to mention the general public, have only limited access to water time. Eastside pools at Juanita and Hazen High Schools are aging and are solidly booked with activities each week.
- High school league championships are held at the Mary Wayte Pool on Mercer Island, which is severely overcrowded, and high school meets are held late at night or cut short because of other renters' contracts in overcrowded, shared facilities.
- High school district 3A championships are held at the University of Washington intercollegiate pool, which was built in the 1930s. While state of the art in the 1930s this 6-lane, 25-yard facility is today unsuitable for championship competition. The UW itself rents space at the King County Aquatic Center for competitions – additionally there's no warm-up/warm-down area at UW.
- High school water polo, a very popular and fast growing sport, is forced to play and practice after 8:30pm at the Weyerhaeuser King County Aquatic Center, which is an hour or more roundtrip for most Eastside participants.
- The Midlakes Summer Swim League, a very popular and fast growing eastside competitive swim organization with upwards of 4,000 participants, must now hold its annual summer Championship meet at the Weyerhaeuser King County Aquatic Center (WKCAC) in Federal Way. With 26 member clubs, including diving teams and water polo players, Midlakes remains the lowest priority renter at WKCAC.
- With not one public facility in the city of Bellevue suitable for competitive swimming meets and a shortage of indoor, community/private owned facilities on the Eastside, two of the four Bellevue public high schools train outdoors during the winter months (August thru February) at Midlakes pools. Neighbors have complained to local cities of this year-round usage at summer-only facilities, regarding violations of their noise and usage permits.
- When hosting meets, all four Bellevue high schools have to schedule and rent pool time at Mercer Island and Juanita. With meets scheduled on school days, Bellevue high schools frequently don't finish their meets until 9:30pm.
- Several of the year-round Club teams on the Eastside have turned away large numbers of youngsters each year, due to a lack of pool space. During September, when summer clubs close their facilities, youngsters look to the year-round clubs to further their interest in competitive swimming. The demand is there the pool time is not.
- The Pacific Northwest Swimming community thanks [S.P.L.A.S.H.](#) for your efforts that recognize the need for such a long course facility located in the greater Eastside. The competitive swimming community joins with the entire aquatic community in the support of a much needed multi-use facility located on the eastside.

Sincerely,  
Andy Hathaway  
General Chair  
The Pacific Northwest Swimming Board