

Alligator Information

The planning committee and event leadership of the inaugural TryCharleston half and sprint triathlon has taken proper steps and extensive precautions to address the potential alligator issue.

We have been remiss in not sharing this process, and as a result our participants have viewed TV broadcasts and read newspaper accounts that have been sensationalized and exaggerated, thus creating unnecessary concern.

Since we have begun sweeping the lake for potentially threatening alligators, we have only seen one small alligator in the lake. A local TV station was at the lake Monday for two hours and could not find any alligators, so when they aired their report they used a picture from a local garden of alligators. It showed piles of them on top of each other. This is not the case at the KOA Campgroup Lake. Ron Russell, owner of Gator Getter, will *relocate* any potentially dangerous alligators. *No alligators will be killed because of the TryCharleston.* No one from TryCharleston or Gator Getter has ever said that alligators will be harmed during this process, and we do not know where the media received this information. Again, no alligators will be killed because of the TryCharleston.

TryCharleston leadership is not new to event organization. Our committee has over 90 years of total experience in competitive bicycling, running, and swimming events. WE PUT THE NEEDS and SAFETY of participants FIRST AND FOREMOST.

We spent many hours surveying the lake for safety points before we asked the owner for permission to use it. We NEVER, in the many hours before, since, and during several surveys, have seen an alligator. In fact, there are tent sites on the edge of the lake, and there are cabins within 10 yards of the lake. There has NEVER been an aggressive encounter with an alligator at KOA. Three years ago, campers used to feed a “pet” alligator, and because of this it was removed and relocated. In the history of the facility this is the only alligator story we can uncover.

Please ask the writer of the article in the paper and the reports on TV if they saw any alligators at KOA. THEY DID NOT! We encourage you to visit the lake yourself if you'd like to. It is beautiful, and it is an ideal location for an event like this.

What has TryCharleston done to assure the overall safety of participants?

1. We will have a boat on the lake with Dr Paul Deaton on board in case of emergency.
2. We will have three jet skis with life guards to deal with any emergency quickly.
3. We will have certified life guards on the water during the Swim.
4. We have walked the lake at the entry and exit points to confirm safety.

5. We have been snorkeling at these points as well to feel for any unsafe “footings.”
6. We have hired, at the recommendation of the Department of Natural Resources, a professional Alligator Firm.
7. HE WILL NOT KILL any alligators. Alligators will be relocated.
8. Ron Russell, owner of Gator Getter, has over 20 years of experience with alligators and the safety of the public.
9. He has had firsthand need for a crisis chaplaincy, so he wants to see this event grow and produce large benefits and financial rewards for the Coastal Crisis Chaplaincy. He has a passion for the Chaplaincy, so this is not just a job for him.
10. He has surveyed the lake several times and will continue to do so up until the start of the event.
11. SetUpEvents.com is not new to lake swims. They are the professionals. They carefully inspected the lake 8 months ago, and have been back several times to closely examine the lake. By participating in a SetUpEvents.com event you are in for a highly professional and extremely well-organized event. SetUpEvents.com would never risk the safety of participants or their awesome reputation. This is their life and livelihood. SetUpEvents would not stage this event if there was an obvious or unreasonable risk to any participant.
12. TryCharleston has divvied up the responsibilities of each of the three legs of the race with experienced and highly-regarded community leaders. Shannon O’Brien is heading up the water with an in-depth and vast team of experienced swimmers; Charles Fox heads up the bicycle section; Ellen Steinberg heads up the running section. All have the highest focus and regard for participant safety.
13. We started meeting with the Mount Pleasant Police Department and the Charleston County Sheriff’s Office and speaking with SC DOT, the Highway Patrol, and DNR almost a year ago. We have had several detailed and extensive meetings and have ridden the routes with Law Enforcement Officers (LEO) several times. The Coastal Crisis Chaplaincy offers extensive support to officers in need and in situations that occur far too often. The LEO’s also have a keen passion for the event and want to see it grow and prosper. LEO is an active and supporting partner of TryCharleston, and they are going above and beyond to assure a safe course and event.

Bottom line: We care! We Care a great deal! The number one focus, priority, and effort is SAFETY. There is no compromise or effort that is being withheld to assure the safety and well-being of our participants. Our goal is to have a fun, successful, and well organized event; to achieve this we have to provide the highest level of security and comfort for our participants.

Questions: Please call Charles at 843.303.3334. Or you can email Charles@CharlestonMarathon.com. We will go above and beyond to assure you are comfortable and relaxed about TryCharleston.