

Covered bridge is back for Sunday's Triathlon

By **JASON BUTYNSKI**
Recorder Staff

The bridge. Ah, the bridge. Finally, it's back. After a three-year hiatus, the covered Pumping Station bridge on Eunice Williams Drive makes its long-awaited return to the Greenfield Lightlife Triathlon during the 32nd running of the annual race Sunday morning at the Green River Swimming and Recreation Area in Greenfield.

Fitness The most famous and picturesque part of the course has always been that covered bridge,

but the floods from Hurricane Irene in 2011 destroyed it and caused race officials to create an alternate route for the past three years. The bridge reopened this past fall, so now the triathlon can return to its original route, much to the delight of organizers and participants.

"I'm extremely excited, it's nice to have our traditional course back," Greenfield Recreation Director Christy Moore said. "I think the athletes are excited, too. They missed it. It's just so quintessential New England to have a covered bridge on the route. I don't know of any other triathlon that has a covered bridge on the route."

The only other obstacle standing in the way of a perfect course will be the water testing that must be done to check Green River bacteria levels. That will be performed this morning. Thus far during the swimming season, the Greenfield Recreation Department has not

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The race begins at 8 a.m. Sunday morning when the first heat of International Competition swimmers hit the water. The triathlon is split into two levels, the International and the Sprint. The International is the longer of the two events, comprised of a .63-mile swim, a 30.28-mile bike and a 7.19-mile run. The Sprint, which has more entrants because it's shorter, has a .31-mile swim, a 15.14-mile bike and a 3.09-mile run.

After the swim, participants exit the river



Recorder file photo/Micky Bedell

Volunteer Rick Roy (with megaphone) leads competitors into the swimming event last year during the 31st Greenfield Lightlife Triathlon at the Green River Swimming & Recreation Area. Roy, a longtime helper for the annual event, will likely again be in action when this year's event commences Sunday.

and head to the transition area before setting out on the bike course. That features athletes heading east up the hill on Nashs Mill Road before taking a left onto Leyden Road. After a long ride north on Leyden Road, athletes head onto Eunice Williams Drive, over the Pumping Station bridge, and then pedal the steep climb up the hill to Green River Road. Participants then head down Plain Road, staying left at the fork and onto Colrain Road before taking a left

back onto Nashs Mill. International swimmers do four laps, compared to two by Sprint competitors.

The running course is exactly the same for the International runners, who will do just one lap on the bike course. The Sprint runners take a different path, heading the opposite direction on Nashs Mill and taking a right onto Colrain Road and then bearing right at the fork
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and onto Plain Road. Runners will eventually turn left onto Meadow Lane and then left onto Colrain Road, which will take them back to Nash's Mill.

As is the case every year, Nash's Mill Road and Eunice Williams Drive will be closed to traffic from 8 a.m. until about noon. All other roads on the course are still open to traffic, but motorists are asked to take extra caution during the event.

Last season, North Conway, N.H., resident Meghan Skidmore put on a show by winning the women's division of the International Competition in 2 hours, 6 minutes, 36.2 seconds. Skidmore not only beat all the other women in the race, she also beat all the men, which is a rarity. It was the second time Skidmore had raced in the Greenfield event. She

won the women's Sprint Division in 2013 and finished fifth overall. She went on to compete in the World Triathlon Championships in 2013 in London, England, and finished 14th in her age group, best among American females. She is not yet listed on the Greenfield Triathlon website, but Moore said not all participants wind up on the list. The men's International winner from last season was Amherst's Keith McCormick, who finished in 2:07:03.5.

As for last year's Sprint Division, husband and wife David and Jennie Hansen from Rochester, N.Y., won their respective divisions. David Hansen was the top finisher in 1:06:31, while Greenfield native Dan Bensen came in second in 1:07:31, and Shelburne Falls native Gregory Shea came in third in 1:07:33. Bensen is the only one of the three known to

be coming back this season.

On the women's side, Jennie Hansen won in 1:08:31, while Conway's JoEllen Cameron was second in 1:16:26, and Easthampton's Megan Bilodeau took third in 1:19:11. Cameron will be back this season.

As always, spectators can watch the event free and will have numerous opportunities to view those who they are cheering for due to the loop format of the race. Anyone wishing to park in the lot at the swimming area must arrive early and will not be permitted to leave until after the event. Others are encouraged to park around North Parish School and Valley Medical Group on Conway Street and walk down to the river.

For more information log on to the race website at: Greenfield-Triathlon.com