

Entries Pouring In For River Raft Race

GAZETTE
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ESSEX - With less than a month remaining before the deadline for entries, the Race Committee for the Fourth Annual Great Connecticut River Raft Race report they have received 90 registrations from prospective "rafters," a figure that already tops last year's total of 57 entries.

Ken Fischburg, who heads the Race Committee, said by mid-July he expects to have almost 150 rafts signed up to compete in this year's event.

"We haven't received entries from 40 or 50 boats that raced last year. They're probably too lazy to send it in, but time is running out," Fischburg said.

He said the committee has been planning for more than a month for the upcoming regatta that starts at high noon, July 22, at the Deep River town landing and runs about seven miles downriver to Knotts Island off Essex.

"I've met with town officials of both Deep River and Essex just to let them know what's going on, and to make sure everything is okay. Everyone's pretty excit-

ed," Fischburg said. He said one of the new entries this year is from Chuck's Steak House out of their main office in Rocky Hill.

Bob Spagnola, who is in charge of promotions, said he has sent about 50 advertisements for the race to newspapers throughout New England.

Spagnola said as a show of local cooperation the Terra Mar in Old Saybrook has said it will offer a reduced rate to racers who have come from out of state for the weekend. He announced that a permanent trophy, donated by Yachting World in Essex, will be awarded for the first time this year to the winner of the race.

Some other new features to this year's event include a Lion's Club concession on Knotts Island that will sell beer, hot dogs and hamburgers, as well as a ferry service back and forth from the island and Steamboat dock.

"Everyone pretty much ends up on the island," Spagnola said.

Plans have been made for participants and spectator parking at the Vinal Tech School, and buses

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Raft Race Expanding

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will run the people from their down to the river.

The race has grown at an annual rate of almost 300 per cent - tripling from just seven rafts the first year to 10 in 1976 to 57 last year. Last year's regatta was won by Morningstar II, a raft with a paddlewheel powered by two bicycles, oars, a sail and a dragon's head with a blinking light.

Proceeds from the race go to charities. This year the three charities include the Newington Children's Home, Ducks Unlimited, and the Ben Haven School for Retarded Children.

There is a \$20 entry fee and an additional \$5 per person per crew that is paid the day of the race. The deadline for entry is July 9. All entries should be addressed to P.O. Box 110, Old Saybrook.