

# Coast Guard Refuses To Rescind Essex Raft Race Permit

By CLAUDIA VAN NES

ESSEX — The Coast Guard won't rescind its permit for the Connecticut River raft race this summer but Coast Guard officials have assured that Selectman Richard Riggio will patrol the river that day, Riggio said Wednesday.

Town officials, Main Street residents and businessmen have opposed the race, which attracted 100 home-

made rafts last year. Thousands of spectators trespassed on private property last year and crowded the town without shopping at any local stores, Riggio said. He said he had hoped the race wouldn't be held this year, but expecting that it would be allowed, he has been working to restrict visitors on race day, planned this year for Aug. 4.

Riggio said organizers, who have

agreed to reduce the number of rafts from an anticipated 200 to 100 rafts and to post signs on River Road, West Avenue and South Main Street to discourage visitors.

Constables also will be posted at the three entrances to town to tell potential spectators that there is no room to park in town and there will be no boat service to Knott Island, as there was last year.

The race ends at the island across

Essex Harbor and each year an after-race party has been held on the island.

Last year, the Lions Club ran a beer concession. This year, the Tritown Jaycees have applied for the concession permit, but Riggio said organizers have agreed a permit won't be issued in an attempt to limit the number of partygoers.

More constables will be posted

around town, but Riggio conceded it will be difficult to tell who has come to town to shop and who has come in to catch a boat ride to Knott Island.

Crowd problems will be aggravated this year because the parking lot at Steamboat Dock and the dock itself are off limits, Riggio said. The Connecticut River Foundation is restoring both facilities and won't permit cars or people on the dock, the

foundation curator, Brenda Milkofsky, said Wednesday.

The only available space for watching the race is the small town dock and boat launching area, which Riggio said needs repairs and "is not in the best shape."

The Coast Guard told Riggio this week it will provide two of its own patrol boats and that Coast Guard auxiliary members also will be on the river to monitor the race.