

PICTORIAL 8/19/50

# State wants raft race moved to another site

By CATHERINE CASSARA

Despite agreement on the part of Coast Guard and state officials that this year's raft race was better than those of previous years, Connecticut River Raft Race organizers have been requested to find another site for future races.

Even with the improvements, Coast Guard Lt. Michael Conway said last week that this year's race was still considered a hazardous event and impossible to control. As a result, unless changes are made, Conway said it is not likely the organizers would receive the necessary permits again.

The verdict on the race came out of a meeting last Thursday morning attended by representatives of the Coast Guard, the state Department of Environmental Protection, the state police and raft race organizers.

Foremost among the changes the officials are requesting is the re-location of the race. In the past the race has begun in Deep River and ended on Nott Island. Conway said the official concern over that course is twofold.

First, the state would like to get the race out of the heavily traveled river channel. Second, and more important, it does not want the race to end on Nott Island or any island. Instead, the state would prefer the finish be at a point where there would be adequate access and parking and where the situation could be controlled by local and state police, Conway said.

Though the race itself went off well this year, the channel between the island and the Essex docks was

crammed with boaters in every manner of craft. Some of the boaters were inebriated and few had taken adequate safety precautions.

Conway said one canoe had to be turned back because it would have turned over in the rough water, jeopardizing the lives of its passengers, among them three small children.

While the atmosphere was cooperative for most of the day, Conway said that after 6 p.m. the crowds, particularly those on the island, became disruptive and difficult. The problems arose not with the race people so much as with the spectators.

Though all three agencies had boats in the river there was no way for them to keep the situation under control and protect the inebriated spectators risking life and limb in the river.

In the future, Conway said, the authorities will ask that no outboard motors be allowed near the race, that the race course should be located where it does not interfere with marine traffic and that the course be shortened.

Though no new location was settled on at the meeting, Conway said state officials expressed a preference for a location no farther south in the river than East Haddam. Conway said the race organizers have been asked to submit their proposal for next year's race well in advance of the race to allow the Coast Guard to confer with the DEP and the state police before any decision is made on the necessary regatta permit.