

Raft Race Gets Permit For August 1 Event

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By Tom Juergens

If Norelco's Connecticut River Raft Race captain Rich Nichols is right, there isn't a corporation in the state that can come up with a raft to beat the one built last year by the Norelco crew, said race organizer Ken Fischburg this week.

Fischburg passed on news of the Norelco challenge while announcing that the raft race's regatta permit has been promised by Coast Guard officials at Governor's Island in New York City.

Contrary to previous reports published elsewhere, that final permit was obtained with no difficulty, he said.

After six years of ending the

race in Essex waters, officials from the Coast Guard, the department of Environmental Protection, and state police met in New London last fall and recommended that the race be held in less congested waters. The race is ending, therefore, north of the East Haddam bridge.

The race has grown steadily from hundreds to thousands of participants in its last six years, creating more and more friction between some Essex residents and shopkeepers and those who came to town to witness or to participate in the event. But a **Gazette** survey of 15 Essex shopkeepers last summer showed that they generally favored the race.

The raft race will be run on a ten-mile course from Middletown to the Haddam Meadows state park at 10 a.m. on August 1. Entry fees are up from \$25 to \$30 this

year, but crew members will still be charged \$5 to participate. Proceeds from the raft race are donated to local charities. There will be no alcoholic beverages sold

this year, but T-shirts, food, and soft drinks will be available. This year's captain's meeting will be held July 12 at noon at the Saybrook firemen's field.