

50 Years Old! Gasquet Raft Race has biggest turnout to date

July 17, 2019



The Gasquet Raft Race turned 50 this year and it celebrated the milestone with its biggest turnout ever.

A total of 339 people floated the 2 ½-mile course, from the convergence of the Smith River's north and middle forks to the Mary Adams Peacock Bridge.

"It is the one major event that Gasquet has every year that all of Del Norte County looks forward to," said event coordinator Gina Bowen.

"We even have people that this is their third year coming from England.

"I know there are also people that come from Medford, from the Bay Area, our master of ceremonies comes from Chico, and the band comes from Oregon. So we have a scattering of followers."

The Gasquet Raft Race seems to keep expanding. This year's participation edged out last year's total of 304 racers, which organizers said was likely a record at the time.

"I think the reputation of the event overall is just a fun, worthwhile, local, long-standing event," said assistant event coordinator Shara Sonderlund.

"So people get involved and look forward to it.

"Over the years, she said, "it has grown and people get to where they plan for it. Some of the people have been working on their boats for two months, which is pretty cool."

Although the event is called a race, it's also a parade of sorts. Many of the participants put their time and energy into working for the coveted "Best Decorated Raft" and "Best Costume" prizes.

This year, due to the impressive turnout of costumes and themed rafts, Sonderlund said, they decided to supplement the awards.

"Normally, we do just one "Best Costume" prize and one "Best Decorated Raft" prize," she said. "But because we had such a good turnout, and so many people who actually decorated and made costumes, we decided to do three prizes for the costumes and two for the rafts.

"It was just too hard to decide. There were too many good ones."

Master of ceremonies Paul Nelson said he, too, was impressed with the many, different-themed floats.

"They are awesome, as every year," Nelson said. "We have chickens, we have Vikings, we have cows, we have clowns, we have George Washington crossing the Potomac.

I would say this is probably one of the best races we have had."

After completing their float, a goodly number of the participants headed to the American Legion Post #548 building in Gasquet for the after-party.

Bowen said that she was excited to have two bands playing this year, providing music from 10 a.m.-6 p.m.

"The party at the Legion is very family-oriented," Bowen said. "We have things for the kids to do, so the whole family comes in for an outing and they have food, they play games, they get to do a whole bunch of things. It's a fun event."

The Gasquet Raft Race is a fundraiser for the local American Legion and although Bowen said they were still counting the proceeds, she believes that set a record as well this year.

RESULTS

Best Decorated Raft

1st — Vikings

(Gastineaus)

2nd — Team Castaways

Best Costume

1st — Boat Full of

Captains

2nd — Circus of Screams

3rd — Flock of

Chickens

Race Winners

Kayaks 12-35

Turner #2

Kayaks 36 & Up

Scott Bowman

Oar Driven Rafts 12-16

Kainani Spring

Oar Driven Rafts 17-40

The Splashers

Oar Driven Rafts 41

& Up

Red Rocks - Byron

Hand Paddle 12-16

Georgia Seymour

Hand Paddle 17-40

Brooke Kaemingle

Hand Paddle 41 & Up

Tyler Kennedy

