

# Caddo Lake regatta highlights paddling trails

Posted: Sunday, April 27, 2014

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The Third Annual Caddo Lake Earth Day Paddling Regatta exceeded organizers' and sponsors' expectations bringing in nearly 50 paddlers to take in the sights and sounds of Caddo Lake on Saturday.

Five out of 10 trails were highlighted this year — the Benton Lake Trail, Clear Lake Trail, Haggerty Creek Trail, Mill Pond Trail and the Old River II Trail—with proceeds from the event going toward maintenance of the trails.

“We’re really excited about the preregistration and the people who showed up,” regatta coordinator Stella Barrow said.

Paddlers from the area as well as from Dallas and Shreveport came out to show their support for Caddo Lake and help raise awareness of its numerous paddling trails available to the public.

Vanessa Adams, who was volunteering with one of the many sponsors of the event, said the amount of people who came out this year showed that they’re beginning to recognize the importance of the lake and the area. “People are learning to appreciate the natural world and nature,” she said.

Though there was no goal for money raised, both Barrow and Adams noted that it looked like they’d make money off of this event, which they hadn’t done in previous years.

Donna and Beth McCann have been participating in the annual event since it started and could only describe the trails and Caddo Lake as “magical.” The two paddled on the Clear Lake, Old River II and Benton Lake Trails.



“I love Caddo Lake. It’s one of the prettiest spots in Texas,” Donna said. “It’s magical; it’s different every time I see it.”

Sponsors of the event included BackWater Jack’s RV Park, Texas Master Naturalist Cypress Basin Chapter, Greater Caddo Lake Association of Texas, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, AEP, SWEPCO, Pirkey, Caddo Lake Cabins, Pat and ViAnn Sawyer, Texas Tees, Upshur Rural Electric, Panola-Harrison Rural Electric, Walmart in Longview and Marshall, Simmons Auto, Tractor Supply in Marshall and the Caddo Lake Institute.

Patti Webb, who is on the board of directors for Greater Caddo Lake Association, said they were participating in the event because they were for the betterment of Caddo Lake.

“The Greater Caddo Lake Association just tries to be involved with Caddo Lake and everything benefiting it,” she said. “We’re trying to get the word out about how our greenhouse is coming along and make more people aware of the problem and solution of salvinia. The more people know the more likely they’re willing to pitch in.”

Barrow reiterated the beauty of Caddo Lake and all it has to offer the public. “The lake is so unique,” she said. “There’s nothing else like this in Texas.”



Canoeists paddle toward a paddling trail Saturday near Backwater Jack's RV Park.



Photos by LES HASSELL