

Lake Appreciation Day Was as Successful as Ever

by Matthew Jurjonas

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Editor:

On Saturday July 16, at Dutch Charlie in Ridgway State Park, the Lake was appreciated by locals and visitors from as far away as Texas and Sweden. Lake Appreciation Day was a fabulously organized event to celebrate our lake and watershed, put on by Arlene Crawford of Ridgway State Park and The Uncompahgre Watershed Partnership, with help from Friends of Ridgway State Park and the Tri-County Water Conservancy District. The day fit in with the National Lake Awareness Month of the Environmental Protection Agency, meant to draw attention to the importance of our lakes and reservoirs. Lakes and reservoirs provide us with drinking water, irrigation water, energy, recreation, wildlife habitat, and flood protection. The event was also part of the Lets Move Outside Campaign that promotes being out of doors and physical activity.

If lying on the beach and eating hotdogs and sno-cones (which sold out as usual) wasn't enough for you, there was a multitude of other options to explore – from learning how to cast a fly rod with the Gunnison Gorge Anglers, guessing the clarity of the water with a secchi disk and looking at plankton from a net tow with Andrew Madison and Erin Warrem of the National Park Service, to going on a boat tour with the Park Ranger and exploring the reservoir. There were hourly raffle prizes for the kids, which they managed to take over and announce themselves. The raffle was almost as popular as the enviroscape model Matthew Jurjonas of the UWP used to demonstrate how pollutants move through the watershed. As eager hands sprayed “rain water” down on the watershed, the cinnamon (loose soil), peppercorns (cow poop), and soy sauce (motor oil) moved into the streams and the reservoir to the evident dismay of the young observers. Of course H2O Joe, the giant blow up water quality symbol, kept his watchful spectacled eyes on the day's festivities.

The thunderstorms stayed away and allowed the beach volleyball and swimming to run well into the afternoon. The State Park celebrated another record attendance day for the summer. Lake Appreciation Day remains as popular as ever and continues to bring people out for a day in the sun with ketchup, mustard, and lots of learning. Thanks again to Friends of Ridgway State Park and Tri-County Water Conservancy for making it possible.

– *Matthew Jurjonas, Uncompahgre Watershed Partnership Outreach Coordinator*