

HORSETOOTH RESERVOIR

OPEN SWIM SUPPORT

By Dave Hustvedt

The nineteenth 10-kilometer *Open Water Swim* was held at Horsetooth Reservoir in early September. This year 86 contestants donned swimsuits, goggles and swim caps for the privilege of swimming in the Reservoir for two to five hours.

As always, each swimmer is accompanied by a support or rescue craft. These are usually kayaks, although canoes and SUPs are also used.

There is also a fleet, primarily of kayaks, that acts as rovers on the course. The rovers help participants and support craft get connected after the start of the race; it is a challenge for the support paddlers to see the race numbers written on the backs and arms of the swimmers as 40 or 50 of them splash by at the start.

The rovers also run interference between swimmers and power boats leaving the marina about halfway down the lake. Rovers at the end of the pack of participants invariably help herd one or two hypothermic or exhausted swimmers to shore for pick up by a power boat.



Dave at Lake Powell, wearing this year's volunteer t-shirt

The swimmers and support paddlers meet for dinner (usually spaghetti) in Fort Collins on Saturday evening before the race. At 5:00AM on Sunday they gather at the south end of the Reservoir to load boats on a truck and board buses for the trip to the north end. The race starts at 7:00AM with waves of nine swimmers leaving every 15 seconds. The support boats are staged out in the main lake where they eventually meet up with their swimmers. If a swimmer hasn't crossed the finish line by noon they are taken out of the water by rangers in power boats that also patrol the race course for support.

Lou Ann and I started accompanying swimmers several years ago. In the past three years I have been a rover which involves more paddling but is much more interesting. The race has a website [www.horsetoothswim.com] with more information and a sign up link for support kayakers.

Assisting with the race is a great way to put kayaking skills to use and to tell other paddlers about the Rocky Mountain Sea Kayak Club.