

They're not rabbits, are they?

One mule became two last week, as the Anthracite Scenic Trails Association (ASTA) placed its participant in the "Miles of Mules" display that stretches for 165 miles through five counties. The route roughly corresponds to the old Delaware and Lehigh Canal corridor. While Dallas isn't exactly on the canal, ASTA officials thought this was a great spot for their mule, since the Back Mountain Trail will pass nearby when it is completed. The mule mannequin was decorated by Clarks Summit artist Pat DeVirgilis, who painted the four seasons, one on each leg, and a wreath of mountain laurel on the head. There are more than 150 mules in the display. The raw mannequins were purchased for \$2,000 each by individuals, businesses and non-profit organizations, who were responsible for their own decoration. The mules will be displayed until early October, and will be sold at an auction later that month. Proceeds from the sale of all the mules will be divided equally among the participants. The ASTA mule is positioned following one sponsored by Metz & Associates of Dallas.

POST PHOTO/RON BARTIZEK



Triathlon

(continued from page 1)

water," she said as she explained the water sampling is actually under someone else's job description. "This is just for kicks."

It seems Harris has been in the water in some capacity for as long as she can remember. From a swimming background, Harris' job overseeing much of the logistics of the swimming portion of the race is an ideal fit.

As a teenager she worked as a lifeguard at the Forty Fort and Jewish Community Center Holiday House pools. She went on to be a swimming All-American at East Stroudsburg University and set some national records along the way.

"In fact, the first year of the triathlon I was doing the Maui Channel Swim. I came home and saw it in the paper," she said.

She can't exactly remember how she started volunteering for the event, that happened too many years ago, she explained. Others have told her she started by carrying athletes' bags. In any case, she said it wasn't long before Maureen Devine resigned as swim coordinator and Harris assumed the position.

"We just try to get all the bases covered," she said. "I have the summer off, so I have the time to just sit and call." It's Harris' job to go to 12 different pools to sign up more than 40 volunteers to be timers, canoers, lifeguards and water station volunteers.

"There's a tremendous amount of anxiety where you worry about what could go wrong," she said.

Harris can coordinate things like canoes, life preservers and volunteers, but

"There's a tremendous amount of anxiety where you worry about what could go wrong."

Andrea Harris
Triathlon volunteer

it's the other variables, she can't control that cause concern.

The weather is one aspect that can go dangerously wrong. She said one year in the middle of the swimming portion of the event, a storm caused that leg to be cancelled.

"I was out on a boat in thunder and lightning. We couldn't abandon the swimmers, we stayed out there the whole time. It was frightening. There was this one guy out there doing the breast stroke," she said laughing. "He said he wasn't worried — well I was!"

Harris said with a grateful tinge of disbelief that there is a committee for just about everything. For example, "There is a whole little group that takes the air out of the orange (race) markers — Wayne and Maureen Devine, their kids and cousins."

The Wilkes-Barre YMCA carts canoes to the event all the way from Camp Kresge in Mountain Top and Moon Lake brings theirs as well.

Despite all the work, the camaraderie of the race committee that keeps her coming back year after year. "I just don't want to be off the committee; I really enjoy it," she said.

Clearing weeds one of many preparation tasks

By PAUL LAZAR
For The Dallas Post

HARVEYS LAKE — Thanks to some help by Ecoscientific Solutions, a Scranton-based ecology and landscape firm, the going at this year's Wilkes-Barre Triathlon on Aug. 3 might not be as tough as it has been in previous years.

On Sunday, Ecoscientific Solutions utilized a 3,000-pound aquatic weed harvester to remove problem plants in a portion of Harveys Lake that will be used in the swimming portion of the triathlon.

Viewed looking down into the water from the harvester, the weeds are thick and resemble an aquatic forest.

Ron Tussel, vice president of Ecoscientific, maneuvers the machine as easily as one operates an automobile.

"These come in all shapes and sizes," said Tussel of the harvester. "This one is handy for

getting into small places." Operated entirely by hydraulics, the harvester features a three-cylinder motor, the same type that is used in farm tractors.

Although the weeds do not pose an immediate threat to swimmers, those involved in the triathlon wanted to make the going as easy as possible for those competing.

"Pretty much that's the purpose of doing the harvesting," said Jim Harris, president of the triathlon association. "The presence of the weeds may spook some of the less-experienced swimmers."

In addition to making life easier for the triathletes, removal of the weeds should also make the beach and lake area more appealing to residents and swimmers alike.

After the weeds are removed from the lake and the harvester is full, they are loaded onto a

trailer. They are then shipped off to 5R Stables in Noxen to be used as compost.

Such weeds in the lake can allow for the growth of certain kinds of bacteria. New kinds of bacteria can be brought in by fish and other aquatic animals and also by boats that come from other lakes, resulting in plant growth.

"By harvesting the weeds, the entire ecosystem benefits," said Tussel. "It takes out the nutrients that can produce bacteria."

The bacteria that worried triathlon officials most was fecal coliform. The bacteria, carried primarily through warm-blooded animals, can make a person ill.

Tussel is quick to point out, however, that most lakes in the northeast are at acceptable bacteria levels. The biggest threat to swimmers is the presence of blue/green algae, a growth that can cause eye, nose and throat

infections and can be fatal to small animals.

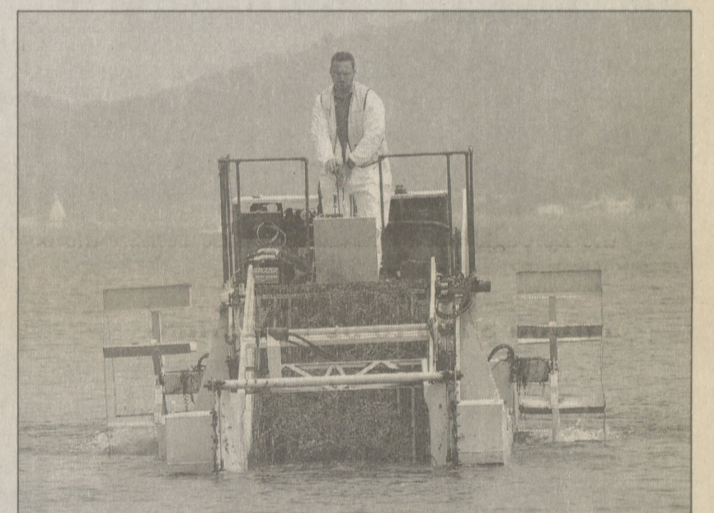
The harvester is pressure-washed after every use, and copper-based algicides are used to eliminate algae and prevent contamination of a new harvesting site with new seed pods.

Ecoscientific Solutions, which volunteered its time and services in the cleanup, is a sponsor of the Wilkes-Barre Triathlon and also serves as a contractor for the West Nile Virus Control Program.

The firm cleared out a 40-yard-wide, 100-foot-long lane for the swimmers. The weeds were sometimes so thick, the hardest part of the job was keeping the equipment working.

"But when it works well, it works well," said Tussel. "This is much better than working in an office."

This article appeared in original form in the Times Leader.



FOR THE DALLAS POST/PETE G. WILCOX

Ron Tussel of Ecoscientific Solutions used an aquatic weed harvesting machine Sunday to clear weeds from the shallow depths of Harveys Lake.

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