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JobbieNooner organizers plan encore event

By Amanda Lee, Macomb Daily Staff Writer

September 04, 2002

Officials have adapted new guidelines that will force boaters at Gull Island to keep an open channel to the island for police and emergency personnel.



Macomb Daily file photo by David Dalton

Apparently one day just isn't enough.

The organizers of one of the summer's most notorious events -- the JobbieNooner -- have opted for an encore presentation and they've set the date for Saturday.

The original JobbieNooner was held June 21 on Gull Island in St. Clair County. More than 8,000 people visited the Lake St. Clair island for the annual event, which has become infamous for drunken behavior and public nudity.

A large police presence was on hand to monitor the June event and St. Clair County Lt. William J. Krul said police will also be around to monitor the late summer version.

"We're going to do what we need to do to control the crowd," he said.

In late August, Clay Township Supervisor Joseph H. McKoan wrote the Army Corps of Engineers, owners of Gull Island, to complain about the event.

The corps replied with a letter of their own last week.

"The use of Gull Island periodically becomes a controversial and emotionally charged issue," wrote Lynn Duerod of the corps' Public Affairs Office. "Be assured we will act on the facts to balance the concern for safety

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and illegal activity with basic American rights and freedom."

Krul said he, and several other officers and officials, met with representatives of the corps Tuesday afternoon to discuss the issue.

"(Officials are) going to take a very strong stance if they see problems," Krul said.

He also pointed out that new guidelines agreed to by the corps will force boaters to keep an open channel to the island for police and emergency personnel. If things don't improve -- or get worse -- Krul said it will be up to the corps to decide whether another event will be allowed next year.

"At this time there will be no 'no trespassing' signs erected," he said. "However, we do want to be able to provide people with public safety."

Law enforcement groups participating in patrols will include the St. Clair County Sheriff's Department, Macomb County Sheriff's Department, Clay Township Police Department, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Natural Resources and the St. Clair Shores Police.

Macomb County Sheriff Mark Hackel said his department will supply mutual aid backup, but cautions that it's impossible for a handful of officers to crack down on delinquent behavior. He said the threat of mob retaliation would officers, whether uniformed or undercover, in a potentially dangerous scenario if they tried to make individual arrests.

For his part, Krul is neither confirming nor denying reports that undercover officers will be on hand to watch for drug and alcohol abuse.

Representatives from Mothers Against Drunk Driving warn that the JobbieNooner is just an accident waiting to happen.

"Everyone does something after the fact, but I would hate to have to wait until there's a tragedy to crack down on what's going on out there," said Cathie Brophey of the St. Clair/Sanilac County Chapter of MADD.

Brophey, who became involved with the group after her son was killed by a drunken driver, said her group is urging a proactive response to problems at Gull Island.

"It's not just that they're operating a boat while intoxicated, but at some point they are also getting off that boat and into a car," she said. "That puts you and me and everyone else in danger. It's not something that should just be overlooked."

The JobbieNooner originated several years ago when a group of people decided it would be fun to skip work for a day. Each year since the group started the event, attendance has continued to climb. Officials estimated the 2002 crowd almost doubled the 2001 crowd.

June's JobbieNooner party netted 11 arrests and four emergency medical runs.

Staff Writer Jameson Cook contributed to this report.

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