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(Neb.) - Sandhills Journey Scenic Byway Hosts 5th Annual Polar Bear Tank Race

By: John Thayer Posted at: 03/05/2012 04:44 PM

MULLEN, NE - Thedford and Mullen were the place to be on March 2nd and 3rd for the annual Polar Bear Tank Race hosted by the Sandhills Journey Scenic Byway and the Sandhills Motel/Glidden Canoe Rentals of Mullen.

Twenty-three teams participated in the race which is held as a fund raiser for the Byway. Racers came from seven states including Nebraska. Contestants from South Dakota, Missouri, Colorado, Illinois, Tennessee and Florida enjoyed the weekend's festivities which included a welcome reception, cash bar by Brahmer's of Thedford and a chili cook-off on Friday night in Thedford.

Eleven entries competed in the Cook-off with the winner being "Bohemian Chili" entered by the "Brew Crew" team of Crete, Dorchester and Wilbur, NE.

Best Chili Name was awarded to the Sandhills Chamber of Commerce in Hyannis for their "Phiesty Phirey, Pheasant Phenomenon. Viki Davis and Peg Fosdick-chefs.

Best Decorated Table was won by the "Hyannis Sisters", Jeanne Davis and Carolyn Henderson for the "Gallina Blanca" Mexican theme.

On Saturday morning, the contestants were treated to a warm breakfast served by the Mullen Commercial Club in the Consolidated Telephone building in Mullen before boarding the Glidden busses to the entry point on the Middle Loup River. The racers sported fantastic costumes and rousing spirit as they floated or raced down the river in the cold temperatures and periodic snow flurries.

The winning team was "The River Rats" of Chadron, Hay Springs and Mullen with a time of 1:03:42. The team members are Adrian Jensen, Nick Brost, Dan Avery, Trent Walz, Tim Barkley and Tony Corbin.

The Best Decorated Tank award went to the "Polar Bear Parrotheads"-Lori McMullen, Laura Martini, Ann Collier and Michelle Sterkel. Best Costume Award was "Pokey and the Bandits"-Wade Marsh, Eric Donahoe, Trevor Glidden and Jesse Jacobs. The teams were treated to a hamburger lunch provided by Nebraskaland National Bank of Mullen and a prime-rib supper at the awards banquet later in the evening catered by the Rustic Bar and Grill of Mullen. Brenda Masek presided as the Mistress of Ceremonies for both evenings. Additional sponsors were the Middle Loup River Ranch (Tom Witt), Hooker County Visitors Committee, Thomas County Visitors Committee and Larry and Peg Bostron for the tanking launch site.

The contestants had a wonderful time and applauded the many volunteers and sponsors it takes to put an event on such as this, "We had a great time," said one tanker. "We will come back again and again!"

For more information on the Sandhills Journey Scenic Byway visit: www.sandhillsjourney.com and for photos and information on the Polar Bear Tank Race visit: www.facebook.com/PolarBearTankRace