

# Glow Swim After Action Report

## Objective

Glow Swim targeted teens and young families. Visitors were offered a unique opportunity to enjoy the beach after its normal closing time and participate in exclusive events (free of charge and open to the public). The objective was to get visitors who do not normally wear a lifejacket use to wearing one and to promote confidence in choosing to wear a lifejacket more often.



## Planning & Execution

Glow Swim included several organized activities including:

- An afterhours “Glow Swim” that required participants to wear an illuminated lifejacket. The swim took place in a small designated area at the Seven Points beach, during a specific time (2100-2200 hours). Similar to daytime swimming; there were no lifeguards on duty and swimming was “at your own risk”. However, Rangers checked swimmers in and out of the water to insure everyone was accounted for. Children could not participate without an adult.
- Fire truck and ambulance tours that educated participants about Raystown Lake drowning emergencies and how they can be prevented by wearing a lifejacket. The Corps partnered with the local Marklesburg Fire & Rescue Company who provided the tours and information to the public. They also provided emergency spot lights during the afterhours swim.
- An Illumination station where participants could decorate their lifejackets with glow sticks. The Corps provided glow sticks and partnered with SeaTow to provide 40+ loaner lifejackets. The cost to provide the glow sticks was \$200.
- A face painting station where participants received face and body artwork featuring glow-in-the-dark paint. The Corps provided the paint and partnered with NAEA to provide volunteers who painted participants. The cost to provide the paint was \$50.
- A patio dance party featuring professional DJ sound and lighting. The Corps partnered with the beach snack bar concessionaire who provided the DJ and kept the snack bar open late for the event.

These activities combined to create a casual party atmosphere that encouraged participation, but also delivered the water safety message effectively. It should be noted that this event would not have succeeded without the help from our partners.

The event was publicized via the website, bulletin board/office posters, community events calendar, Ranger invitations and campground announcement (via vehicle PA). Publicity steadily increased over the few weeks preceding the event.

## Results & Successes

Glow Swim was very successful- the turnout was triple what was expected! 257 people attended the event and 93 people participated in the Glow Swim. Over 20% of the swimmers were lifejacket wearing adults. Audience feedback indicated visitors enjoyed the unique opportunity and would definitely participate in a similar event in the future. People were comfortable wearing the lifejackets and understood the need to wear them more often.



Ranger Anderson explains how to properly size a lifejacket.

Almost all participants were staying in the Seven Points Recreation Area. A surprising number were overnight boaters / slip holders who walked over from the adjacent marina. Most participants were families with children and teens, but some young adults also attended on their own.

The partners were able to meet their needs which included: 1) Marklesburg could promote the underwater camera fund 2) SeaTow could promote their water safety goals and business 2) NAEA could promote their upcoming Chalk the Walk event at Raystown 3) The snack bar concessionaire could receive additional afterhours business.

**257 Direct Contacts**  
**20% were adults**  
**4 Partners involved**

### Lessons Learned

The high turnout was surprising and lead to the majority of our lessons learned. These included:

- The beach was at capacity upon normal closure. In order to control the glow swim and meet the objective of the event everyone was asked to leave the water, then sign in to re-enter the water for the glow swim. Some visitors were confused and it should be noted adequate signage and a Ranger who can make contact with everyone will be required to clear the beach prior to the Glow Swim.
- Promotion of the event should place more emphasize on participants bringing their own lifejackets. Although visitors were warned a small number of loaner jackets would be available on a first come, first served basis too many people expected to have a jacket provided. Obtaining more loaner jackets would be helpful, but the point is to get more people to wear THEIR lifejacket.
- The Ranger checking people in and out of the water was overwhelmed at times. A single point access would allow better control. Ropes, cones or other barriers should be used.
- More glow sticks/necklaces are needed. Because the price was cheaper to buy supplies in bulk, we planned on using half the supplies this year and saving the rest for the next year. Because of the large turnout we ended up using all of the supplies and eventually running out.
- Two Rangers were barely able to keep up with event requirements. Additionally, the most effective contacts were the result of one-on-one conversations with visitors about their experiences at the event and relating them to lifejacket use on the lake. In order to better meet the needs of the public and the objective of the event more Rangers/volunteers would be helpful.



This Glow Swimmer brought his own glow-in-the-dark hula hoop.

### Recommendation

It is recommended that this event continue on an annual basis given the following conditions:

- The partners are able to continue their support
- At least two Rangers and two volunteers can help staff the event, but more would be better
- \$400 can be provided for the purchase of supplies
- Adequate preparation time can be provided (recommend 2 hours the day of)

