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New Ritter Island State Park hosts Thousand Springs Festival

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New landlord, same party.

The Nature Conservancy turned over its Thousand Springs Preserve at Hagerman to the state of Idaho last December - and a \$1 million management endowment fund.

The 310 acres became Ritter Island State Park, containing two miles of riverfront and some of the most scenic springs and falls in the Thousand Springs area.

So this fall, the Southern Idaho Land Trust - which has been sponsoring the Thousand Springs Festival of the Arts as a fundraiser - is celebrating on the public's land.

"The festival includes artists from around the region, musicians, local food specialties and local wine, children's activities and regional history displays," said Julie Pence, SILT's executive director. "It is one of southern Idaho's most notable events."

Pence expects between 3,500 and 4,000 visitors and 150 volunteers.

There will be about 75 artists and artisans on hand, selling paintings, ceramics, glass, rugs, jewelry, wood and metal sculptures, pottery, candles, furniture and other items.

Now in a transition phase, the park is normally open only for a few hours on weekends, so the festival presents a chance for people to enjoy the scenery and learn the history of Ritter Island.

The Conservancy bought the property in 1986 from the Ritter family, which used it for a private hunting and fishing retreat. The island contains the home and historic barn built by Minnie Miller, a Salt Lake City businesswoman who purchased the property in 1918 to create a state-of-the-art dairy and the world's finest herd of Guernsey cattle.

The festival began in 1992 with the caretakers of Ritter Island at the time, Chris and Mike O'Brien. They used it as a fundraiser to help maintain the facilities on the island, which includes the largest intact springs along the Middle Snake River.

The springs burst out of the canyon walls in an area that provides habitat for a fish species found nowhere else, the Shoshone sculpin, as well as other fish species, raptors, waterfowl, herons, eagles and migrating songbirds.

Participating artists include Shelley Tyree, Nancy Morris, Troy Henson, Gene Sherman, Jerry Kencke, Harry and Karen Williams, Rod Mathis, Richard Morris, Eva and Doris Schrimmer, Kevin Sybrowski, Jack Folker, Rich Kenny, Cindy Barrie, Tom Dickeson, Doug Leatham, Angie McBride, Chuck and Mary Thomason, Robert Olson, Jerry Dejournett, Mark Davis, Mark and Kathleen Peterson, Janie Mack, Joy Pleticha, Polly Barrett, Sheryl West, Bill and Joan Elam, Bill and Florence Beck, Gerrie Guidry, Thomas Batey, Bob Rodman, Heather Mingus, Marie Meyer, Barbra Winkler, Virgil Andrews, Paula Taylor, Ibrahima Faye, Cyndi Douglas, David and Kristi McDonald, Valerie Rich, Will and Jody Meeks, Jackie Plastino, Tami Auferheide, Candace Kilgrow, Ilse Hylton, Patty Button, Charlotte Hopkins, Sharon Freeman, George Mosier, Kathy Mennega, Jacob Novinger, Glenn Dilworth, Sandy Francsak, Delores Maret, Iris Boyd, Roy Mason, Lola Ward, Judy Bondo, Andy Sewell, Laura Johnson and Ed and Teresa Burnett.

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