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## Thousand Springs Festival draws record crowd

**Blair Koch - Times-News correspondent | Posted: Monday, September 28, 2009 1:00 am**

HAGERMAN - Not even a down economy stopped people from attending the 17th annual Thousand Springs Festival of the Arts, held Saturday and Sunday at Ritter Island in Hagerman.

More than 2,200 people attended the festival on Saturday, beating single-day attendance records, said Southern Idaho Land Trust Board Member Jack Kulm. Sunday's attendance numbers weren't immediately available. Given the current economic climate and declining attendance at other festivals and fairs this year, Kulm said the land trust, which sponsors the festival, was ecstatic with the weekend's turnout.

"We're pleasantly surprised," Kulm said. "I think that people who have come to the festival in the past have made a point of being here."

Twin Falls resident Bob Sojka has attended Thousand Springs Festival since its inception.

He said the top-quality artisans, great food and swinging music keep him coming back.

"It's a pretty place," Sojka said. "The quality of crafts is a draw; it's all stuff I don't do at home, so it's all fun to see. My favorite aspect of the festival is the music, when they get it cranked up. I really enjoy the jazz groups."

Quality artisans are a major draw to the festival, for both attendees and vendors. This year the island had 70 juried artists on display.

Judy Bondo, who traveled from Nevada, said she's been selling her handcrafted rugs at Ritter Island for four years, with the festival being one of her favorite stops.

"I heard this was a fun place to go but the fact that we are all juried artists with handcrafted items made in America keeps me coming," Bondo said. "You never know what to expect, as far as attendance or sales, but there is always new interest and even return customers. That's neat."

The event is the biggest fundraising effort made by the Southern Idaho Land Trust every year. The nonprofit organization's mission is to provide homeowners with voluntary opportunities for preserving and protecting land from development. As of this year SILT has preserved 900 acres from development.

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