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# Interfering ‘floaties’ forced regatta to end early last year

By [Christine Donnelly](#)

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**Question:** A note about the Fourth of July Macfarlane Regatta in Waikiki (see Wednesday’s Kokua Line, [808ne.ws/291yzQz](http://808ne.ws/291yzQz)):

Last year our racing canoe was either in lane one or two near “the floatilla” and caught a wave. We were going a lot faster than normal when our adept steersman had to change course — while we were on the wave — to miss someone floating on a raft! I would not want to be hit by a six-man canoe traveling the speed of a wave! I believe OHCRA may have ended the race early to keep these sorts of accidents from happening. I am sure you could check with officials to find out whether this was the reason for the early end of the race last year.

**Answer:** We followed up with the O’ahu Hawaiian Canoe Racing Association, and race director Stan Dickson confirmed that dangerous interference by people partying on inflatables along the race course forced a premature end to the day’s events. A Honolulu Star-Advertiser story at the time said that the regatta was halted with seven races to go; more than 35 were completed.

Here is Dickson's response:

“In response to your inquiry: Yes, I did have to call off the Macfarlane Regatta last year (2015) because of safety concerns with multiple close calls from people on floaties heading out to the floatilla, impeding on our race course, and canoes having to avoid hitting them.

“Those same people were drinking and in some cases verbally abusive to our water officials when they asked them to stay clear of the race course. This was the first time in history this type of decision to cancel this regatta had to be made. The Walter Macfarlane race is the oldest regatta held in Hawaii to date and is hosted by Outrigger Canoe Club. Paddlers look forward to competing in this prestigious canoe surfing event because of its history ... and many tourists book their vacations during this period to experience and be a part of our culture. We will work closely with the Department of Land and Natural Resources to address this problem we had with the floatilla and rely on a safety plan that is in the best interest of our sport, its members and the public.”

The annual Walter J. Macfarlane Memorial Canoe Regatta is billed as the oldest outrigger canoe race in the world, having begun in 1943. You can read more about its namesake, history and past results at [808ne.ws/28RaOK3](http://808ne.ws/28RaOK3), a website devoted to Outrigger Canoe Club sports.