COPPER HARBOR - Some people were listening to science talks. Some were paddling in canoes. Others were simply eating grilled corn and looking out over the water.

But all of them were celebrating Lake Superior.

Copper Harbor held its third annual Lake Superior Day celebration Sunday.

The event is one of numerous celebrations of Lake Superior Day taking part along the lakefront, many in Wisconsin and Minnesota. Organizer Don Kilpela conferred with Lisa Radke, who has become a spokesperson for Lake Superior Day celebrations, about what events to include.

"I call this an environmental awareness picnic activity, celebrating the greatest lake in the world," he said.

People could get out on the lake with canoe races, kayak demonstrations and educational trips aboard Michigan Technological University's research vessel, the Agassiz. At the dock, people could operate remotely operated vehicles used by Tech's Great Lakes Research Center.

On land, the crowd could listen to presentations on aquatic invasive species and the Edmund Fitzgerald or live music, all the while eating hot dogs and pie.

Children could also paint a model freighter, dubbed variously the USS Gitche Gumee or the USS Donny.

It was Grace Robinson's favorite part of the day.

"I love painting," said the Mt. Pleasant, Michigan 8-year-old, dabbing a sun on the starboard stern.

For the canoe races, several teams set off for a buoy parked a short ways off. There was a short delay on account of a group of baby ducks.

On the return trip Kilpela's canoe capsized just short of the dock. The water was "fantastic," he said.
Two of the racers were Matt Yohe of Calumet and his daughter Megan Yohe, 11.

"It's a wonderful thing to be in a small community like Copper Harbor," he said. "It's nice to have the people come out and support it."

Megan's favorite thing was operating the submarine and "scaring the ducks." Her second-favorite was returning to the Agassiz, where she brushed up on some Lake Superior knowledge she'd forgotten.

She loved seeing so many people invested in the lake, she said.

"They all really care about it ... it's my first year here, and I didn't think so many people would come," she said. "There's a big crowd, and it's fun."

Kyung Huh of Houghton was entertaining visitors from Ulsan, Korea. The day gave them a good opportunity to get on Lake Superior, or see it from an ROV, as her friend's son Jihun Lee was doing.

"They are super-excited and are really appreciative of the environment we have here," she said. "It's nice weather, not super muggy. This is the perfect day."

Kilpela had wanted to hold a Lake Superior Day in Copper Harbor for a long time. The problem was finding the ideal location with an unobstructed view of the lake.

The inspiration came from Don Kauppi, who suggested holding it on the Sixth Street boardwalk.

"We closed off the road, and this is it," Kilpela said. "That changed everything."

Last year's event drew about 250 people. About two hours in, this year's had also drawn a good crowd, despite competition from a mountain biking race and historical reenactments at Fort Wilkins, Kilpela said.

He's already thinking about the fourth Lake Superior Day.

"We're looking to get a bigwig like the governor of Michigan maybe next year," Kilpela said.