

Burning Man plagued by ticket drama

By Ed Fletcher, Sacramento Bee

Organizers of the iconic counterculture event Burning Man are scrambling to solve a crisis that some fear threatens the very fabric of the event.

The problem has left perhaps 75 percent of the longtime participants who traditionally provide the creative spark for displays and activities without a ticket. The event is held annually at a remote site in the Black Rock Desert of northern Nevada.

The crisis resulted from attempts to solve issues from last year, when, in addition to the normal problem of computer servers crashing as thousands of people rush to buy tickets online, the event sold out for the first time.

With the event increasingly becoming a bucket-list activity, organizer Black Rock City LLC set out to create a more egalitarian method for distributing tickets and thwarting scalpers.

Black Rock's solution was to distribute 40,000 of the 58,000 tickets through a lottery. Applicants had two weeks to apply for up to two tickets. Demand far outpaced supply.

The result: "A full-on fiasco," said Steve Jones, author of "The Tribes of Burning Man."

The new system made it easier for folks not willing or able to sit at a computer for hours. But many say that same convenience also made it easy pickings for scalpers.

Read the whole story