

Litter large and small pulled from Cache Creek

Coast and Creek Cleanup Day draws dozens

By Jim Smith

jsmith@dailydemocrat.com @newsie2001 on Twitter

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About 80 volunteers participated in the Coastal Cleanup Day at Cache... (Deo Ferrer-Daily Democrat)

One of the first pieces of trash pulled from Cache Creek early Saturday was a tractor.

Gina Martin, who helps manage the 130-acre reserve west of Woodland, marveled at the find while showing the photograph posted to Instagram on her mobile phone. The yellow and green plastic tractor fit neatly in the hand of a young volunteer who recovered it from the creek and promptly tossed it in a trash bag.

The small toy would become just another piece of litter collected from the creek, said Martin. The Conservancy annually participates in the Coast and Creek Cleanup Day held during the latter part of September.

In contrast to 2013, when rain reduced the number of volunteers, Saturday's mild weather drew 81 adults and youngsters who carried bags and buckets into the trees, reeds and creek gravel looking for anything "unnatural." Other groups walked the roadsides picking up bottles and cans.

"Think of it as a scavenger hunt," urged Martin before trash teams were sent off to pre-assigned locations. "If you see anything hazardous (like paint) leave it alone and we'll come back and get it" but otherwise collect and separate trash from recyclables.

The collection effort also came with a few warnings: "Watch out for poison oak," said Martin. "If it's 'leaves of three' let it be. Also watch out for snakes. There aren't many out there but be careful."

The snake warning was emphasized by one of several Boy Scout leaders from Troop 464 and 499, who told the Scouts to back away if they heard a rattle.

While the cleanup may have looked low-tech — with bags and buckets carted by volunteers who retrieved trash one gloved-hand at a time — it was also coordinated by organizers using mobile phones and urging everyone to use hashtags and post their findings to any of four online sites collecting information for future use such as #CCNP, #literati, #oceanlove and #trashselfie.

Because of the statewide drought there wasn't much water in Cache Creek this year, making it easy for trash collectors to get to places that otherwise might have been inaccessible.

Also because of the drought, there was less trash than usual because fewer people have visited the area other than motorcycle, or off-road vehicle riders. Some of those riders left beer and soda bottles as well as other detritus.

But there was still stuff to be hauled away mainly dozens of discarded tires, the occasional appliance but primarily a lot of plastic and glass bottles and other generic litter. One of the more interesting objects found, however, was an old Sacramento Bee newspaper rack.

More than 100 bags of trash — 2,100 pounds worth — and 25 bags of recyclables — 200 pounds — were collected along six miles of the Cache Creek banks and 4 miles of surrounding county roads, according to Martin.

Countywide, more than 300 volunteers cleaned up 10 miles of waterways and 12 miles of roadway, picking up more than 6,000 pounds of trash and 1,000 pounds of recyclables.

The local event is part of the California Coastal Commission's 30th Annual Cleanup Day, the largest volunteer trash cleanup in the world, according to organizers. The event originated as a way for people to pick up trash and debris that has accumulated on the state's beaches and eventually expanded to include creeks, and the shorelines of lakes and rivers.

In addition to Cache Creek, other local cleanup sites were the city of Davis ponds, Putah Creek sites near Winters, Putah Creek Fishing Access, the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area, West Sacramento at the Barge Canal and Lake Washington, and the Clarksburg Boat Ramp. The cleanup day was organized and supported by the Cache Creek Conservancy, city of Davis, Putah Creek Council, Putah Creek Trout, River City Rowing Club, Lake Washington Sailing Club, Yolo County Flood Control & Water Conservation District, Yolo County Public Works and the Delta Protection Commission. Waste Management and Vacaville Sanitary provide support for this event.

There were also more than few incentives offered locally as well. Martin promised pizzas after the cleanup was completed. Additionally, Rubio's was offering a free taco at its restaurant in Natomas. But the largest prize — and the reason the photograph was posted on Instagram — was a drawing for a luxury vacation to someone who came up with the most interesting photograph.