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Stashing the Trash on the Clackamas River

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As warm weather returns to the Clackamas River Basin each summer, locals and day-trippers flock to their favorite river. Easily accessible to the Portland-metro region, the Clackamas River is a popular attraction throughout the summer recreation season for picnicking, fishing, boating, floating, or just plain hanging out. Unfortunately, this means more people and more trash that threaten fish and wildlife, drinking water and the scenic beauty of this waterway. The Clackamas River Basin Council (CRBC) is working to change all that by engaging the community in watershed stewardship.

The Stash the Trash campaign, one of CRBC's flagship programs since 2006, provides reusable litter bags to help people **be the solution** in helping to keep river shores and recreation areas free of trash. Each year, in partnership with Clackamas County and Oregon State Parks, CRBC distributes approximately 6,000 Stash the Trash bags between Memorial Day and Labor Day to Carver Boat Ramp, Barton Country Store, Barton Park, Riverside Park, and Milo McIver State Park. The bright red-orange bags are hard to miss, hanging on stands near boat launches for recreation users to grab and go. Whether tubing or barbequing near the river, these bags encourage us all to pack out what we take in and the sturdy mesh material can be easily rinsed and reused.

More than ever, people are championing for a cleaner, safer river. An advisory group spearheaded by Clackamas County is working to do just that. The Clackamas River Basin Council is helping to coordinate education efforts aimed at raising awareness and knowledge of the river's values for drinking water, recreation, fish and wildlife habitat, as well as building individual responsibility towards stewardship.

This year an added component to the Stash the Trash campaign has involved expanding the partnership with Clackamas County Parks and We Love Clean Rivers to include the Pacific Jet Boat Association and Clackamas High School volunteers (Green Team, Key Club, National Honor Society). Student leader Amber Harvey coordinated the construction of additional Stash the Trash stands by shop students at Sabin-Schellenberg Center. These stands are being placed along riverside properties between Barton and Carver, making bags available throughout the floating stretch in addition to the parks and complementing the additional garbage bins that are placed and maintained by the Pacific Jet Boat Association. Student volunteers as well as the National Charity League, led by co-coordinators

Amber Harvey and Emily Holland, periodically replenish bags and collect trash along river banks and around stands, and also assist at county park kiosks to distribute Stash the Trash bags and encourage good behavior.

Why do volunteers step up to make a difference? In Amber's own words, "About two years ago, when I floated the Clackamas, the amount of trash astounded me! Every bank in sight was covered with beer cans, beer bottles, chip bags, cigarettes and an assortment of other litter. Considering that I, as well as all the salmon depending on the river, drink that water, I couldn't believe it was so dirty. I knew I had to do something."

You can do something too. Join fellow river users to stash trash and recyclables at appropriate containers where you launch and take out at parks or better yet, haul it out with you! Good behavior is contagious so set an example for others to follow and we can all make it easy to preserve the health and beauty of our river.

Stash the Trash is funded by Clackamas County, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, Dump Stoppers, Clackamas River Water Providers, Clackamas County Soil and Water Conservation District, Oregon State Parks, We Love Clean Rivers, Water Environment Services CCSD#1, and the Department of Environmental Quality.

The Clackamas River Basin Council (a 501(c)(3) nonprofit) fosters partnerships for clean water and to improve fish and wildlife habitat and the quality of life for those who live, work and recreate in the watershed.

For more information, contact Morgan Parks at morgan@clackamasriver.org or 503-303-4372 x 101.

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