

Event separates the litter from the river

Emily Lindstrand Tuesday, August 22, 2017



Rafters, divers and walkers welcome at annual 'Down the River' cleanup on the Clackamas

Have you ever wondered what an awards ceremony for the most obscure piece of litter in the Clackamas River is like?

To find out, participate in the 15th annual Down the River Cleanup event. Organized by the Clackamas River Basin Council and We Love Clean Rivers and scheduled for Sunday, Sept. 10, the event typically brings between 200-300 volunteers to a section of the Clackamas River between Estacada and Oregon City. For the 20 mile stretch, they work on the water in raft and kayaks, underneath the water in SCUBA gear and along the land neighboring the river to clear the area of litter.

More than a decade ago, an "explosion of trash" on the river was the impetus for the event. "The event was born out of a need within the river usership," said Suzi Cloutier, Outreach and Stewardship Specialist for the Clackamas River Basin Council. "And it's been such a great turnout of events. It's really brought the river litter down considerably."

Many volunteers participate in the event each year, and since 2003, more than 34 tons of trash — the approximate weight of one grey whale — has been removed from the river.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO - Participants are triumphant after collecting litter from the Clackamas River during the Down the River cleanup several years ago. This years event is scheduled for Sunday, Sept. 10.

For those who are interested in adding to that number, there are many ways to participate. It doesn't matter if you wish to get your feet wet or keep them dry — there is a place for everyone.

"You can pick up trash from the ground or float down the river and participate that way," Cloutier said, adding that she also enjoys seeing the scuba diver participants that the event draws. "I love seeing bubble shapes come up from underwater with bags of trash."

Participants can start out between 7:30-9:30 a.m. at the Lower Boat Ramp at Milo McIver State Park, 24101 S. Entrance Road, Estacada; Carver Park, 14888 S. Springwater Road, Oregon City; Barton Park, 19009 S. Barton Park Road, Boring; Riverside Park, 17298 S.E. Water Ave., Clackamas; or Clackamette Park, 1955 Clackamette Drive, Oregon City.

Once the work on the river is finished, participants are invited to a complimentary barbecue from 2-5 p.m. at Barton Park, complete with live music and an awards ceremony for the most memorable pieces of trash that was discovered.

"Folks can bring in their most interesting trash and share stories," Cloutier said. "There are awards for the most unique, funniest, biggest and most valuable pieces." She recalled that one year, someone found half of a drift boat stuck to another drift boat. Other memorable finds include everything from an old reclining chair and a king-sized mattress to a heart-patterned bikini top and a wrestling cape.

"I love seeing folks challenge themselves to bring big and obscure things off the river," Cloutier said. **Go "Down the River"**