

CLEANING UP THE STANISLAUS

Dishwasher among trash taken from river along Ripon banks



Jeff Shields, front, Jim Spooner, center and Francis Anthony work together to unearth a discarded dishwasher that was lodged in the banks of the Stanislaus River.

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They didn't find the proverbial kitchen sink but a small band of volunteers hauled a discarded dishwasher from the Stanislaus River while cleaning up a three-mile segment that passes through Ripon.

The list of items a dozen volunteers pulled out from the river as well as along the banks between the Highway 99 bridge and the Jack Tone Road

parking lot Saturday included a motorcycle, tires, diapers, sleeping bag, numerous discarded flotation devices, Bic lighters, broken bottles, and more.

"We filled up eight of the rafts we found with full garbage bags and then some," said Jeff Shields, who along with his wife Mary, organized the event. The couple is already planning on organizing a larger cleanup next year and making it an annual, event with the goal to possibly clean the Stanislaus River from Knights Ferry to Caswell State Park.

Saturday's event was sponsored by the South San Joaquin Irrigation District in cooperation with the City of Ripon and the Stanislaus Resource Conservation District.

It is part of a wider Northern California effort taking place this Saturday to clean trash and recyclables from Sierra watersheds. The effort coordinated by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy is dubbed "The Great Sierra River Cleanup."

Since its inception seven years ago, the cleanup effort has brought together nearly 29,000 volunteers. They have removed in excess of 800 tons of recyclables and trash from along and in Sierra rivers. The 2,500 miles of river they've cleaned helps provide 60 percent of the state's developed water supply. The Sierra effort is held in conjunction with the California Coastal Cleanup Day. Shields said the time of year picked for the cleanup allows volunteers to work with low water flows. The Stanislaus, he noted, was moving at a low enough volume that it was safe to walk across in many spots. If you are interested in helping expand the South County cleanup effort in 2017, contact Jeff or Mary Shields at 209.599.3641.

If you are interested in joining a cleanup effort this Saturday, Sept. 17, you can go to www.sierranevada.ca.gov/our-work/rivercleanup and click of the list of 2016 coordinators. That will provide phone numbers for various contacts helping coordinate volunteers on other north state rivers.