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'Great Sierra River Cleanup' happens tomorrow



Mike Sweeney

2 weeks ago

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Most people who visit California waterways treat them with respect and leave no trace of their visit. Unfortunately, a small percentage of poorly evolved losers leave behind mountains of trash in the form of beer bottles, tires, plastic bags, used diapers, cigarette butts, etc. This garbage chokes our streams, lakes and even the ocean itself. Thankfully, we have more winners than losers on this planet, so activities like the Great Sierra River Cleanup are born. This year, the Cleanup takes place this Saturday, September 17, and we have several local opportunities to participate in it.

The Cleanup is always scheduled for the third Saturday in September and, in the past seven years, almost 30,000 volunteers have worked together to remove 800 tons of trash and recyclables from Sierra Nevada waterways. This effort is coordinated by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, in conjunction with California Coastal Cleanup Day, and thereby serves to promote healthy waterways from the mountains to the sea. The Coastal Cleanup was initiated by the Northcoast Environmental Center in Humboldt County many years ago and has become an international event. It is the largest volunteer effort in support of the marine environment in the world. (Last year, eight tons of trash and recyclables were removed from beaches, rivers, bays and estuaries in Humboldt County alone).

East Bay Municipal Utility District is sponsoring Cleanup efforts on the banks of the Mokelumne River and at Camanche Reservoir. Work begins at 8:30 a.m. and will stop around 12 p.m. Camanche Recreation Company is providing volunteers with a free BBQ lunch at 12:30 p.m., at Camanche South Shore. A drawing will be held after lunch, with a variety of great outdoor recreation prizes up for grabs, including a two-night stay in a Big Basin State Park cabin. Visit ebmud.com to register to volunteer and for specific meeting sites. You can also call EBMUD Ranger Laura Sparrowk for more information, at (209) 772-8260. Wear long pants and sturdy shoes and remember to bring a hat, sunglasses, work gloves and sunscreen. Drinking water will be provided.

The local Foothill Conservancy is also participating in the Cleanup and they too will provide volunteer opportunities from 8:30 a.m. to noon on Saturday. Their two Cleanup locations are on the North Fork of the Mokelumne, at Highway 26 and at Electra Road/Big Bar. Visit foothillconservancy.org for more information and specific directions to the work sites, or call Carolyn Schooley, at (209) 223-3508. The FC website makes it easy to complete the required registration and liability forms online prior to volunteering.

Cleanup Days like the ones described here bring communities together. They help us remember that regardless of our political affiliation, we all want healthy waterways for our families and especially for our children. It will take the scientists awhile to figure out how to clean up the millions of tons of garbage already in the ocean. In the meantime, we can at least reduce the garbage in our waterways by working together to clean up them up, one piece of trash at a time.

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