

Annual cleanup effort grows in scope

Saturday

Posted Sep 24, 2016 at 6:42 PM
Updated Sep 24, 2016 at 6:42 PM

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Mail Tribune

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Dozens of volunteers removed more than a ton of debris from Bear Creek along the Greenway in Medford on Saturday.

About 80 people signed up to participate in the Bear Creek Stewardship Day cleanup event Saturday morning, according to cleanup coordinator Craig Tuss with Rogue Valley Council of Governments. The local cleanup was part of statewide volunteer beach and riverside cleanup events organized in partnership with the nonprofit organization SOLVE.

At the beginning of the cleanup event, Tuss estimated volunteers would bag nearly two tons of trash for the city of Medford to collect by the end of the day. The high water mark was two tons collected in spring 2015, but Tuss said the amount of litter found along the waterway is declining.

"I think that's a good sign," he said.

Working with the city of Medford and ODOT, Rogue Valley Council of Governments has cleared out blackberry bushes along the Bear Creek Greenway path from Barnett Road to Highway 62 since 2014, according to Tuss. The removed bushes and decline in debris allowed the volunteers to cover more ground. Cleanup efforts, which had grown in past years to cover Bear Creek Park to McAndrews Road along the Greenway, were able to expand north of McAndrews for the first time Saturday.

"Every year we do a little bit more, and I think that's a good thing," Tuss said.

Volunteer Kevin Hoff of Medford said he participated for a second time because the cleanups are well organized, and the effort is a good way to help how he can.

"It's just part of helping the community," Hoff said.

As she gathered trash along the trail below the freeway, volunteer Lindsay Herberge of Medford, an employee of Starbucks, one of the cleanup event's sponsors, recalled participating in cleanup efforts in the Central Point area while she was in high school.

"It's nice to be able to continue doing that as an adult," Herberge said.

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