

ANNUAL RIVER CLEANUP



For more than 30 years, people who care about the McKenzie River have gathered for a day each summer to pick up trash from its banks and waters between Blue River and its confluence with the Willamette River at Eugene. Scouring the 55-mile river section by boat and on foot, volunteers have collected everything from beer cans to refrigerators over the years.

According to Ken Robinson, of the McKenzie River Guides Association, the river cleanup goes back about 30 years to a time when locals conducted a whitewater boat parade on the river each summer. The river guides became concerned about the growing accumulation of trash along the McKenzie as more people recreated on it, and its impact to their businesses and the McKenzie's pristine environment.

Out of that concern came the Annual McKenzie River Cleanup. At first, McKenzie River Guides Association members did most of the trash collection. Later, the McKenzie River Fly Fishers and the McKenzie Watershed Council joined them as collaborative partners. Other sponsors of the event include McKenzie Mist, Lane County Parks, McKenzie Disposal Service LLC, Stop Oregon Litter and Vandalism (SOLV) and Mountain View Farm.

"It's really evolved into a partnership," commented Robinson. "And that's good." Robinson notes that most of the trash tends to be along the banks where public access by foot is easiest, such as at boat ramps, popular fishing locations and adjacent to trails. Less trash is usually found around boat-accessible only areas.

In addition to aesthetic considerations, removing trash from riverbanks and from the water helps keep harmful substances from entering the environment, which can cause problems for fish, wildlife and people.

The Annual McKenzie River Cleanup is a great way to help keep the McKenzie River environment clean and green, meet other like-minded people and spend the morning in a beautiful setting. Hal Legard of the McKenzie River Fly Fishers, a group that has been around since the 1960s, sums up the spirit of the Annual McKenzie River Cleanup the best: “The reason the McKenzie River is such a good place is that there are a lot of people who watch over it and take care of it.”

The McKenzie River clean up is sponsored by the McKenzie River Guides Association, McKenzie River Fly Fishers and the McKenzie Watershed Council.

To learn more about the projects and activities of the McKenzie Watershed Council, contact watershed council coordinator Megan Finnessy at (541) 687-9076.