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Valley Water News

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A RECORD-BREAKING CALIFORNIA COASTAL CLEANUP DAY

5d ago  Adopt a Creek, California Coastal Cleanup Day



As she walked along Coyote Creek, Alie Victorine shared her motivation for protecting the creek she believes to be the jewel of San Jose. The long-time South Bay resident was leading a group of about 30 other volunteers carrying trash bags that would soon be filled with litter.

“We are not only saving our birds and wildlife here,” Victorine said. “We’re also saving the sea turtles. Everything flows to the bay.”

Victorine was one of the thousands of volunteers who turned out across the state on Sept. 21 to participate in Coastal Cleanup Day. California’s largest volunteer event is organized statewide by the California Coa



Commission, and locally by the Creek Connections Action Group.

This year's action was, once again, a huge success. In Santa Clara County, a record-breaking 2,166 volunteers participated in the cleanup at 47 different sites. They collected more than 53,297 pounds of trash and cleaned 58 miles of creeks. Overall, almost 60,000 volunteers responded to the call to action, gathering 469,100 pounds of trash from California's waterways.

At a cleanup site in Cupertino, one of the youngest volunteers was excited to help weigh the trash bags and determine how much litter was collected. Avin, a first-grade student at Gussie M. Baker Elementary School in San Jose, helped weigh trash at last year's event and was hoping to do the same this year. He came to the event prepared with his own clipboard and helped write down the results.

"He is very excited about saving the environment," said Avin's dad, Divyesh Jain.

Valley Water educators visited Alvin's school when he was in kindergarten to talk about the impact of marine pollution. Since then, he has been keenly aware of the way litter travels from streets to creeks.

"We're proud of the big turnout by our volunteers for today's Coastal Cleanup Day," said Valley Water Board Chair Linda J. LeZotte, who joined several of the cleanups. "The volunteers in the South Bay have demonstrated that people can come together to keep our streams clear of

harmful pollutants.”

The origins of Coastal Cleanup Day date back to 1985, when the focus was on the removal of litter from California’s beaches and oceans. Since then, the movement has steadily moved inland to include urban waterways. Since most of the marine debris that we find on our beaches starts as urban litter, the goal is to “stop trash where it starts.”

Santa Clara Valley tributaries flow into the San Francisco and Monterey Bays, taking all the pollutants, debris and trash accumulated upstream with them. This toxic flow poses a significant threat to vegetation, wildlife, and humans. In addition, more than five decades of growing urbanization means more runoff — bringing even more trash and debris — into local storm drains, many of which empty into our streams and eventually into the bay.

“In addition to contaminating water, and harming birds and wildlife, trash and debris can block our creeks and cause flooding,” LeZotte said. “Litter travels from streets to storm drains, from creeks to rivers, and eventually reaches the sea.”

Protecting our shared bay was the goal of a friendly competition between the mayors of Oakland, San Francisco, and San Jose. Dubbed the “Battle for the Bay,” all three cities were eager to show that they could have the highest turnout of volunteers and pick up the largest amount of trash.

“We are going to demonstrate the power of volunteers

here in San Jose and throughout the South Bay,” Liccardo said to a crowd of about 150 volunteers gathered at Coyote Creek for the event kickoff. “Our creeks are critical to our future. We need to preserve and protect them.”

With a turnout of 3,000 volunteers, San Francisco was victorious during this year’s cleanup, but Mayor Liccardo remains committed to making the competition a yearly battle.

The cleanup event also attracted scores of high school students.

At Coyote Creek near Capitol Expressway and Los Lagos Golf Course in San Jose, one teen volunteer said she was there to protect the environment.

“We live nearby, and we are aware of the trash,” she said.

Another student at the cleanup was Justin, a member of Valley Water’s Youth Commission, which sponsored and participated at a cleanup site.

“We want to help clean up,” Justin said. “It is important to be here. We are passionate about nature. There is a lot of energy in this community among young people.”

Rudrika Randad, a seventh-grade student at Kennedy Middle School in Cupertino, is so interested in preventing water pollution that she developed an app to help reduce and prevent excess plastic usage through motivational games and quizzes.

“Children and young adults are the future of this planet, and we are the ones who will have the biggest impact on Earth,” Rudrika said.

As the day’s operation started, Victorine, who for five years has co-organized quarterly cleanups at Coyote Creek, led her group of volunteers to a former homeless encampment located along the creek. After working for three hours, she and her group left the once litter-strewn site beautiful and pristine.

“We are so grateful for our volunteers, but we want people to remember that they can do this every day,” said Victorine, a member of [Keep Coyote Creek Beautiful](#). “Even if you are just walking down a path, you can pick up some trash.”

The effort in Santa Clara County is spearheaded by the Creek Connections Action Group, a consortium of public agencies and non-profit organizations that share a goal of protecting Santa Clara County’s waterways. Since the group’s inception, in 1995, thousands of volunteers have participated in hundreds of cleanups, removing thousands of pounds of trash each year from creeks, rivers, and lakes.

The group is currently chaired by Ricardo Barajas, from Valley Water.

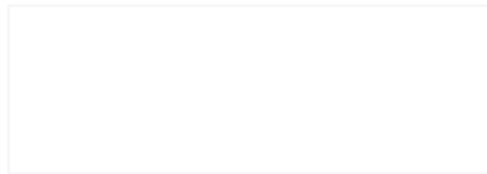
“This is not just an issue that we can solve in one day,” Barajas said. “This is why we also have the Adopt-A-Creek program, which is an opportunity for people to engage with their local creek year-round.”

Finishing up his garbage tally, Avin was eager to jump in again to clean his local creek. With his clipboard, gloves, and tongs, he has all he needs to make sure that he will make a difference protecting the California waterways and coastline that his generation will inherit.

We invite you to be part of the solution to water pollution by signing up to volunteer or join the [Adopt-A-Creek Program](#).

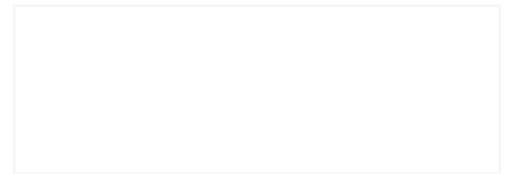
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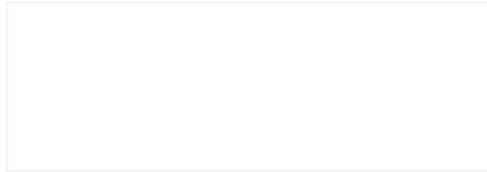
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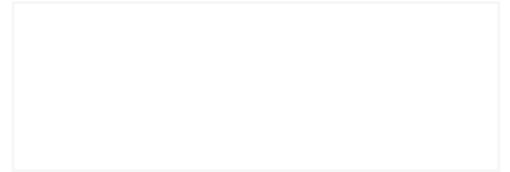


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