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Cleanup Day draws hundreds to coast

By Carina Woudenberg Sep 20, 2017

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Coastal Cleanup Day was a big success in San Mateo County and around California. Carina Woudenberg / Review

Many visitors drawn to Coastsides beaches on Saturday traded picnic food and beach towels for gloves and buckets — happily picking up trash for the 33rd annual Coastal Cleanup Day.

“(It) makes you feel good,” said Jo Chamberlain, executive director for Coastsides Land Trust.

The international event provides an opportunity for volunteers to pitch in to improve the health and appearance of their local beaches, streams and other community locations.

The Coastside Land Trust organized the cleanup at Poplar Beach where dozens of volunteers picked up glass bottles, fish hooks, tennis balls and other debris. In just a few hours, volunteers had collected 733 pounds of trash, Chamberlain reported at the conclusion of the event.

The volunteers all had their own reasons for coming to that particular spot, but all seemed to share a goal of leaving the place better than they found it.

Emma Rodrigues, a senior at San Ramon Valley High School, traveled with her dad from their East Bay home to earn some volunteer credit for school.

This was Rodrigues' second time participating in the event and she noted that Poplar Beach seemed a lot cleaner than the bayside beaches she has pitched in to clean before.

Dan Zurita and his wife, Virginia Villegas, live in San Francisco. They were in Half Moon Bay for a wedding later that afternoon and decided to make the most of their morning by coming to Poplar Beach for the cleanup.

Zurita noted that most of their weekends are taken up with various errands and chores, and it felt great to take the time to do something good for the planet.

Similarly, Placerville resident Juline Aguilar pitched in to help alongside a group of people who had come out to the Coastside — some from as far as Utah — to celebrate a birthday party. They decided to start out the festivities by participating in the cleanup event.

Aguilar noted that the group found many interesting items, including a pelican carcass and various parts of a car that appeared to be buried in the sand.

Poplar Beach was not the only Coastside location where volunteers gathered to collect trash.

More than 150 volunteers worked to pick up trash at Pillar Point and 40 pitched in to clean up Mavericks Beach, reported Celine Gerakin, who organized the event through her volunteer work with the Pacifica Beach Coalition. The California Coastal Commission, which sponsors the event, calls it the largest annual volunteering event in the state. There were dozens of groups working on cleanup projects across the Bay Area.

“It went wonderfully on our side,” Gerakin wrote in an email to the Review afterward. “Over 6,300 cigarette butts were picked up.”