



From: Rhode Island Canoe and Kayak Association (RICKA)

Date: September 20, 2019

Subject: Lower Pawtuxet River Trash Cleanup Report

On Sept. 14, a dozen members from RICKA volunteered to help clean up a 6-1/2 mile stretch of the lower Pawtuxet river from Knight St. in Warwick, RI to Rhodes on the Pawtuxet in Cranston, RI just before the river empties into Narragansett Bay. The on-water cleanup team consisted of 9 boats (5 canoes and 4 kayaks). The Pawtuxet River Authority Watershed Council (PRAWC) assisted, providing reaching tools, a dumpster, and came equipped with a flat bottom boat planned to be used to off-load trash from our boats. Launching from the end point near Rhodes, the boat was unfortunately unable to navigate upriver to us. After 2-1/2 miles, 2 hours of collection, and no means to off-load our haul, the team, with their boats



overwhelmed with trash (see photos), had to reluctantly bypass trash for the last 4 miles. On that stretch of river, we saw some of the worst debris fields including at least 3 areas where the debris fields (collected by fallen trees) could have filled an empty canoe each. Adding to our challenge, it rained in the last part of the trip and we decided it would be too difficult to tally our collection. Therefore, although the distance and time are confirmed based on GPS tracking, our collection report is based on estimations from our collective observances.

Cleanup Report:

In the 2-1/2 mi collection, each of the dozen volunteers collected the equivalent of a garbage bag filled with smaller debris that included:

- hundreds of water bottles, nip bottles, sports-drink & soda bottles
- next on the list were scores each of Styrofoam cups, wine bottles, cans, glass bottles, plastic plates, wrappers, grocery bags, aerosol cans, plastic vegetable containers & pots, pieces of Styrofoam, and sports balls
- other smaller items included medicine bottles, baggies, ribbon, straws, mylar balloons, bleach bottles, textiles/shoes, fertilizer bags, gallon containers, misc. plastic bins, parts of plastic tarp, and canvas signs



In addition to the dozen garbage bags of small debris, we collected larger items such as:

- dozen 10/5/3-gallon plastic landscaping containers
- 3 large plastic tubs
- a large Styrofoam tub
- part of a kiddie pool
- multiple large slabs of Styrofoam
- large plastic baby push buggy



All that was collected was estimated to weight about 250 lbs (photo does not include much of the recycled items that was separated out).

It is estimated we bypassed an additional 500 lbs of small debris in the last 4 miles of the trip. Larger items we bypassed included:

- ~ 40-50 tires
- large mattress
- multiple plastic pools/parts of pools
- multiple half buried containers (in excess of 10 gal)
- multiple orange construction barrels
- multiple yard fencing sections

Most of the trash that was collected is avoidable litter but thanks to the efforts of RICKA volunteers with assistance from PRAWC, 250 lbs of that litter will not find its way into Narragansett Bay and the ocean. Other positive notes are that we did not see or collect any sharps (i.e. hypodermic needles). The river water was clear with a couple of exceptions of areas that were copper color from whatever was rusting below and areas that were blue/green likely concentrated areas of algae. Additionally, we saw no dead animals other than a few fish but rather saw lots of teeming wildlife including multiple turtles, small mouth bass, herons, a spotted sandpiper, an osprey, kingfisher, and a couple hawks to name a few.

Regards,

Gary Powers
RICKA Member at Large

CC: Pat Larder, RICKA President
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