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Photo submitted by CYRCL

Hundreds of hardy volunteers will be working with SYRCL at the 20th annual Yuba River Cleanup on Saturday, Sept. 16.

Crucial to the success of the event are the volunteers who sign up to work at the dozens of sites along the Yuba and Bear River watersheds. SYRCL is expecting that more than 800 volunteers will come together this year to remove more than 10,000 pounds of garbage from the waterways.

Most of the volunteers have been participating in the Cleanup for years. Site choices range from family friendly such as Deer Creek or Oregon Creek, all the way to more challenging sites such as Golden Quartz Day Use Area and Jones Bar.

Veteran volunteers know that the hunt to rid the river of trash can always be surprising. Along with micro-garbage like cigarette butts, bottle caps and shards of glass, large and outlandish items such as

## Tons of fun at annual Yuba River Cleanup

SYRCL, volunteers prepare to work and then celebrate at Pioneer Park

Imagine a pile of trash and garbage the size of a Boeing 757-200 and you get an idea of the 100 tons of refuse South Yuba River Citizens League (SYRCL) volunteers have removed from local waterways over the past 19 years.

The Yuba River Cleanup event, now in its 20th year and scheduled for Saturday, Sept. 16, is one of the largest of its kind in the Sierra region, utilizing the efforts of 800 volunteers at dozens of sites.

Last summer, volunteers removed nearly 1,500 pounds of recyclables and 9,000 pounds of trash from around 80 miles of river, creek and lake shoreline at sites within the Bear and Yuba watershed.

The South Yuba River Citizens League organization began in 1983 with a small group of local citizens concerned about future dam plans. They also wanted to ensure that local rivers and waterways would remain clean, safe and trash free as more people sought to enjoy the natural beauty of these areas.

Over the years the nonprofit has remained focused on the surrounding rivers and watershed with programs such as the Annual River Cleanup, River Ambassadors, an award-winning River Monitoring program, salmon tours for students, school assemblies, restoration projects from mountain meadows to the Lower Yuba, and the Wild and Scenic Film Festival. The Yuba River Cleanup is one of its biggest events and includes a volunteer appreciation party in Pioneer Park on the same day.

washers, trailers, cars and mattresses have been recovered. Removal of the accumulated trash from the area depends on the site.

"We partner with a number of community organizations and land managers to coordinate removal," said Frieda Slain, community engagement coordinator. "A number of these sites are managed by PG&E, Tahoe National Forest, California State Parks, Bureau of Land Management, Army Corps of Engineers and Donner Summit PUD. We also work with Waste Management. Depending on the site, they will leave a dumpster, or we will bag it up and leave it in a place that's convenient for pickup and the land manager will come in and dispose of it."

Many of the more easily accessible sites, such as Highway 49 or Bridgeport, are known for having an above average accumulation of

trash, and this is where the River Ambassadors program has been effective in informing river-goers of responsible treatment of the area.

"SYRCL River Ambassadors are stationed at four of the most popular river crossings during the summer months – Highway 49, Edwards, Purdon and Bridgeport," Slavin said. "The River Ambassadors are volunteers who have been through our training program. They are friendly faces who are ready to engage river-goers with information about pack-it-in and pack-it-out, games for kids, doggy bags, recycling and so on.

They are also there picking up litter and trash and helping others. We've just implemented a Litter Getter program for kids where they get rewarded with stickers and a book for helping get litter."

River Ambassadors also work closely with California State Parks personnel to discuss problem situations or what needs to be done at various locations.

In this 20th anniversary of the Cleanup, the theme is Throwback, where volunteers are encouraged to dress in vintage SYRCL T-shirts or other '80s-'90s gear." A lot of the volunteers going out to the sites often dress up, and we've seen some pretty wild outfits," said Slavin, laughing. "We like to do fun themes and this year we're suggesting people come dressed in throwback outfits. It's pretty wide open and depends on what you define as throwback."

Slavin emphasized that volunteers are still needed to work on the many sites, but that it would be a good idea to check the site map at [yubariver.org](http://yubariver.org) to understand the different difficulty levels required.

"One of the greatest challenges is the diversity of terrain of the watershed," Slavin said. "So last year, we implemented a map with the icons to help people, especially those with families. We also have targeted areas that really will need four-wheel-drives. We want to make sure it's safe and we're sending out the right volunteers."

After the Cleanup, volunteers are invited to the Volunteer Appreciation Party in Pioneer Park, Nevada City, from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. to enjoy music by Scott Nice and Ayla Nereo, happy helpers and a no-host beer garden.

Those registered by Sept. 11 will receive a complimentary lunch. For more information about SYRCL, the Yuba River Cleanup, volunteering, donations or sponsors, call 530-265-5961, or go to [yubariver.org](http://yubariver.org).