More people, more trash: Why people are having to clean up outdoor attractions

Increased littering in public places as more people enjoying free time

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NEVADA CITY, Calif., CONWAY, N.H. — With free time in abundance because of the pandemic, outdoor parks and attractions have become more and more popular. And unfortunately, this can have a detrimental impact on the environment.

Christina Cozzens, a hiker, organized an event in New Hampshire where 100 people came together for a cleanup of White Mountain National Forest.

"I would go to say that we probably had between 275 to 300 pounds collected today," she said.
What did they find? "Tires and metal scraps and subwoofers," said Cozzens.

And on the West Coast; "Somebody put a small grill with hot, smoking coals under the bridge unattended. So I poured water in it, I took care of it," said Maia Grenell, a local from near the South Yuba River, an area in California that has seen an increase in tourists from the pandemic. Locals in the area believe outsiders are not treating the area with as much respect as they should.

"The amount of garbage from non-local residents is absolutely concerning to me. This is our home, this is our backyard, this is my backyard and I have to pick up every day after people and it’s really sad," said resident Samantha Rodriguez.

Melinda Booth, executive director of the on-river advocacy group South Yuba River Citizens League, says tourism to the area is up 25%. The group has posted signs in the area, reminding visitors how important it is to clean up after themselves.

"With the increased visitation, we’re seeing so much more garbage. People are not caring for the place as much as we’d like to see," Booth said. "We have some concerns that it’s maybe being loved to death."

Watch how people across the country are helping to keep public spaces clean in the featured video above.