

March 4 Bike Path Cleanup, a Huge Success!

How in the world can a litter pick up session be a success? . . . more litter than ever seen before? . . . diamond rings and gold coins found hiding in the grass by the path? No, this was a success because 1) more helpers than ever turned out, fifteen altogether, and 2) the weather was so wonderful we could enjoy each other's company as we ambled along collecting and bagging all the . . . stuff.

On the section of the North Bank Bike Path that the ENHS has adopted, between the Ferry Street Bridge and the Washington-Jefferson Street Bridge, the majority of users are recreational bicyclers, joggers and walkers. With this population there just isn't the amount of trash build-up as there is in more urban parts of the bike trail system. Part of what makes this section so underused is probably that it parallels a freeway for half its length, not something to endear it to bike path enthusiasts who like natural settings. From a litter point of view, more than half the nasty litter we had to deal with came as blow-over from the freeway.

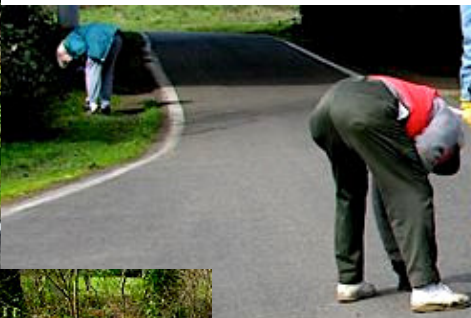
We didn't find all of the pathway litter to be unpleasant. This time of the year the alders are in bloom, and their pollen catkins are starting to be sprinkled over the ground and trail. Cottonwoods are just barely starting to expose their catkins. The ones we picked up were young, not yet elongated to shed pollen. These were not naturally dropped like the alders, but wind blown from the last storm. Violet and bittercress blooms, along with emergent green shoots, gave promise of more to come. With most of the vegetation still without leaves, we could enjoy the wildlife of the river bank. We noticed that city crews had beaten back the blackberry and cut English ivy from the trees.

For me, the highlight of the annual bike path cleanup is grooming the licorice fern stump. We began doing this many years ago, inspired by Marge Zane who first noticed it. Having nothing to do with litter, grooming this stump is an aesthetic enterprise that Marge started and that she works diligently at every year. Connie and I helped to clear off dead leaves and pull back the dead grasses and blackberry vines so all can enjoy the ferny stump--it simply glows green in the morning light. I imagine that few passersby are conscious of the careful attention that's been given to this botanical gem, but that its beauty radiates into their souls and uplifts them subliminally I know.



Part of the success this year of collecting trash to fill at least six large garbage bags, along with the tire and the broken shovel and the canisters of cement, is the positive reinforcement from the cyclists, joggers and walkers who pass us and call out, "Thanks for doing this!" It is gratifying to hear, and we hope the notion will be contagious and some of those appreciative souls will themselves turn out for community beautification efforts.

The ENHS thanks Tom, Herb, Ron, Jerry, Ann, Doris, Judy, Ray, Marge, Melody, Jim, Chuck, Reida, Connie and David. Maybe next time your name will be among these?
David Wagner



Most assumed the proper position for bike path cleanup.

Ray
Doris, Herb
Connie
Marge



But in any group,
There's always one
Who just doesn't get it.

Melody