

Beach cleanup always yields huge pile of trash

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Brittany Krill, 10, of Jupiter, picks up trash on the beach with the Friends of Jupiter Beach. The volunteer group collects several hundred pounds of trash one Saturday morning each month. 'I love the beach,' Krill said. 'With so many things on the beach that can ruin our earth, some people really need to get out and help.' Saturday's cleanup yielded 561 pounds of garbage. Since September, the group has picked up 2,689 pounds of trash.

Trash collected by Friends

of Jupiter Beach

Sept: 767 pounds

Oct: 500 pounds

Nov: 504 pounds

Dec: 357 pounds

Jan: 561 pounds

JUPITER — Two spent cellphones, a broken surfboard, parts of a car engine and hundreds of bottles, cans and cigarette butts were part of the 561 pounds of trash that volunteers hauled off the beach between Jupiter Inlet and Marcinski Road on Saturday morning.

"You gotta get back in these bushes, that's where lots of people throw beer cans," said Sara Augerson as she reached for trash amid the seagrape trees just north of the Juno Pier. Tucked in her belt were two plastic bags — one for trash and the other for recyclable cans and bottles. "The amount of stuff people throw away is amazing," she said.

Friends of Jupiter Beach who scoured the coast for their monthly beach cleanup. The group formed about 14 years ago to promote allowing dogs on the beach.

This month's turnout was a little low because people were still on vacation. The largest recent turnout was in October, when more than 300 volunteers showed up, said member Lynne Gibbons.

The 5,500-member organization distributes free green and white plastic bags from 29 boxes along State Road A1A for dog owners to clean up after their pets. There are no dues. The group pays for supplies with donations and sale of Friends of Jupiter Beach T-shirts, hats and other promotional material.

"We keep the beach clean and the county allows dogs on the beach. So far, the arrangement has worked well," said Maida Remmer, a team captain.

In September, organizers began weighing the trash. Many were surprised at the amount — more than 750 pounds collected between 8 and 9:30 a.m.

"We started weighing the stuff to give people a perspective of how much trash is really out there," said Gibbons.

Surfers, fishermen, retirees and baby boomers, some barefoot, some with their children, made up the diverse crowd that gathered Saturday morning at Ocean Cay Park. After snacking on coffee, fruit and pastry set up by organizers, the volunteers donned white plastic gloves and red-handled scoopers and headed across A1A to go to work. Several bike riders shot them the thumbs-up sign as they whizzed by.

More schoolchildren are turning out at the monthly cleanups, said Remmer, and it's more than a desire to keep the beaches clean that's sending them there. Students receive credit toward their community service requirement, which looks good on a college application, said 15-year-old Grace Fisher, a ninth-grader at Cardinal Newman High School.

"I like the beach a lot. I want to do my share to keep it clean," said Fisher, who wants to attend the University of Miami.

A repeated complaint from volunteers was the large number of cigarette butts. Many voiced their support of Delray Beach's proposal to ban smoking on public beaches. A few suggested north county do the same.

"Cigarette butts are ugly as sin and they are dangerous to fish," said Augerson, an ex-smoker. "Banning smoking is something they should consider."

As the volunteers emptied their bags at the end of the collection, they turned in their gloves and scoopers. John Krill, a financial consultant who lives in Jupiter, smiled and said he found a \$20 bill. He used the money to buy a white baseball cap reading "Friends of Jupiter Beach" that was for sale next to the free coffee and slices of cantaloupe.

"This is how we support our cause," he said.

For information about Friends of Jupiter Beach, Call (561) 748-8140.