

Creek Week Consumes Southern Colorado

By Kimberly Reeves

What do grocery carts, cigarette butts, straws, and abandoned bikes have in common?

These are just some of the things that our community volunteers cleaned up from our local watershed as part of the third annual Creek Week!

The watershed-wide Creek Week cleanup provides an opportunity for communities to give back and create a sense of place in their local parks, trails, and public spaces. The week-long initiative provides volunteer cleanups throughout El Paso, Teller, and Pueblo Counties throughout the Fountain Creek watershed.

In its three years, Creek Week has seen a consistent increase in volunteers, awareness, clean-up locations and trash removed from our watershed. During the inaugural 2014 year, there were over 625 volunteers who removed 6.7 tons of trash from the local waterways. Last year, those numbers increased to 1,550 volunteers that collected 9.4 tons of trash. From September 24th – October 3rd, 2016, Creek Week had 2,400 volunteers and discarded 14.5 tons of trash.

The University of Colorado Colorado Springs hosted their cleanup on Monday, Oct. 3rd in partnership with the Reisher Family Scholars. This scholarship is awarded to hardworking students who demonstrate academic excellence, financial need, and community involvement. The 25 scholars who were available on a Monday morning removed 22 bags of trash, one grocery cart and a rusted bike from the UCCS adopt-a-waterway site along Templeton Gap Floodway. Alex Greanias, Sustainability Office Recycling Coordinator who has helped with many clean-ups, noted that, "we wouldn't have been so successful in the amount of trash recovered from the local waterway without the valuable help of our volunteers."

The event was educational too. Most of the students didn't know they had access to the greenway trail from campus nor had they heard of the watershed-wide initiative. All of the volunteers said they had a positive experience and would like to engage in future Creek Week events.

Creek Week will continue its mission to bring the Fountain Creek watershed communities together to foster the health of our local waterways for its citizens and wildlife alike.

50 plus local and national businesses, public and private organizations, colleges, cities, and non-profits provided support in terms of materials for the volunteers (bags, gloves, garbage grabbers), money, committee planning hours, marketing materials, and volunteers. If you're interested in sponsoring or volunteering with the 4th annual Creek Week next year in any form, please visit www.fountaincreekweek.com/sponsor or email creekweeksoco@gmail.com.