

SUMMARY: CLEAN-UP, WOODLAKE AREA AMERICAN RIVER PARKWAY, Jan. 17, 2021

On 1-17, five volunteers worked with the County Camp Crew to clean up 12,000 pounds (12 dump truck loads) of trash from a dozen or so homeless sites and four, abandoned camps in the American River Parkway near Northgate Blvd. and the American River. We worked four hours using a variety of hand tools, a Bobcat steer loader with a claw bucket, and four dump trucks.

The week before I handed out trash bags and notified campers of the upcoming cleanup. For the most part, the campers were cooperative, filling many of the bags before we got there making them easy to remove. As well, a few campers were available during the cleanup to direct us as to what to remove. However, a number of camps were unoccupied when we got there. Despite the fact that all these camps are illegal (no, the Boise decision did not make the camps “legal”) and they were surrounded by many hundreds of pounds of trash, we did not remove any of it owing to campers’ “property rights”.

Items we did remove included a lawnmower, two couches, upholstered chairs, two box-spring mattresses, several microwaves and televisions, many bicycle frames and wheels, and numerous needles. As well, there were vast quantities of clothing including many jackets; sleeping bags, blankets, and pillows; and numerous unopened cans of food including chile, beans, corn, soups, green vegetables, Spam and the like. As one camper noted “Cars come by here all the time giving this stuff to us.....but so much of it just gets dumped”.

Thanks so much to the five intrepid volunteers and to the superb Sacramento County Camps Crew: it is always an honor to work with you. (BTW: there is but one crew to clean and maintain 28 miles of Parkway. There used to be two crews and equipment, but their budget was cut during this time of increased homelessness.



Work area for cleanup Jan. 17, Woodlake trailhead, American River Parkway.



View of camps and debris (removed) on the western end of the work area as seen from the Highway 160 bridge. American River in foreground.



Some of debris (removed) for an abandoned camp site seen in the photo above. This site had many needles, bicycle parts, and discarded, unopened cans of food. Flood waters inundate this level.



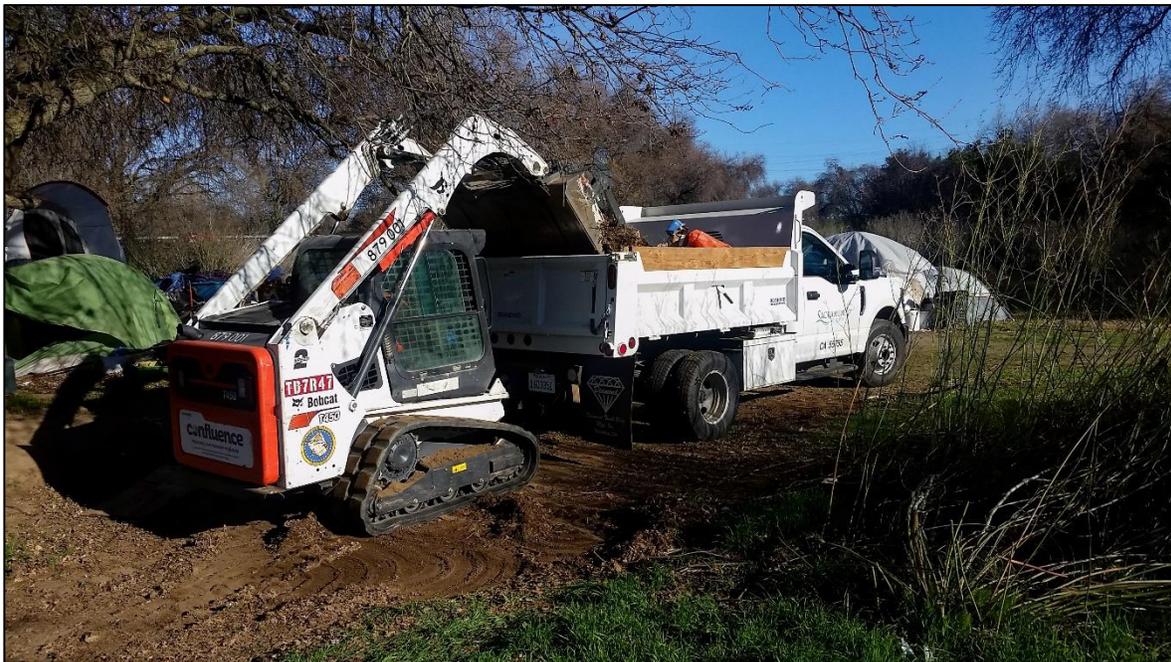
Bobcat steer loader with a claw bucket removing trash piled by hand. This was then driven to the dump trucks on the flat area above. Many trips are required to clean a campsite.



Although this camp is illegal, none of the debris seen here could be removed because we did not have permission of the "owner". American River in background.



Dismantling an abandoned camp identified as such by adjacent campers. Tent was full of trash and decomposing matter.



Removing trash from occupied camps at the direction of the residents, some of whom had filled bags provided the week earlier making our work much easier. In four hours, we filled 12 truck loads, each weighing about a ton.



A few of the needles removed from abandoned camps. Needle container was ours.



Some of the debris that “couldn’t” be removed because the owner was not there to give permission, so it was left at the site.