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River celebration 'a great cleanup all the way around'

By Lil Spinks, West Nassau Correspondent

About 525 people from Nassau and Baker counties in Florida and Camden and Charlton counties in Georgia took part in the St. Marys River Celebration, an annual one-day cleanup of the St. Marys River on Saturday, said organizer Dean Woehrle.

Woehrle said he wished there was some way to thank all of the sponsors and volunteers for their continued support. Citing an example, he said it wouldn't do any good for volunteers to pick up all the garbage and debris if there wasn't someone to haul it all off afterward, and that the Sand Hill Recycling Center has never let them down in doing that in addition to providing the dumpsters at no cost.

"I just can't say enough good things about them," he said.

This year's event was co-sponsored by the St. Marys River Management Committee, The Nature Conservancy, Nassau County Farm Bureau, Keep Nassau Beautiful, White Oak Plantation, Baptist Medical Center Nassau, The News-Leader/Nassau County Record, the Nassau Soil and Water Conservation District, Sand Hill Recycle Center and Paul Schwend.

Volunteers provided their own rakes and dip nets and heavy gardening or dishwashing gloves to scour the river, its tributaries and adjacent land and woods.

"That was a great cleanup all the way around," he said.

According to Woehrle, volunteers picked up an estimated 45,000 pounds of garbage, including a mannequin's leg, fish aquarium, deer head, valid driver's license, tires and beer bottles, underwear, a pot, crab trap floats, doll, life preserver ring, work glasses, roof from a small building, a couple of water heaters, microwave oven, the lower half of a two-piece bathing suit and several worm buckets.

Woehrle said 28 tires were found at the St. George Bridge alone, but that worm buckets and beer bottles are the two most found items.

The 20 cleanup sites and their captains were the Boy Scout Camp - Barbara Yarborough; Stokes Landing; St. George Bridge on SR 2 - Mitchell Crawford; Tompkins Landing - Chuck and Christine Nelson; Traders Hill - Trish Gramajo and The Nature Conservancy; US 301 Bridge for 4 X 4s only - Nels Parsons; Scotts Landing - Steve Beck and the St. Marys River Fish Camp; Camp Pickney - Melinda Chesser and Keep Charlton Beautiful; Prospect Landing - Jeannie Scott; Kings Ferry - Marie Carter; Temple Landing - Dr. Rick Walsh; White Oak Plantation - Jim Wildes; US 17 Bridge - Terry Temples; Egans Creek - Beverly Lawrence; Shave Bridge - Keep Nassau Beautiful; Lofton Creek - Donnie Rominger; Mills Creek Landing - Andrea Anderson and Amy Vansickle; St. Marys, Ga. - Conrad Grube and the St. Marys Saltwater Fishing Association; Edwards Road - Billy Kittrell and The Nassau County Bass Association and Dark Entry Creek - Bob Merck.

Following the cleanup, 423 volunteers attended a celebration at White Oak Plantation from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., feasting on hot dogs, hamburgers, cheeseburgers, salads and all kinds of desserts and beverages.

Woehrle said a contest has begun to develop a new T-shirt for next year. Designs should be submitted to Dean Woehrle at the Nassau County Farm Bureau, P.O. Box 5007 in Callahan, by Feb. 1, 2008.