SEASONAL SPRUCE UP

Tom Vitale spray paints a large tree to cover up the existing graffiti. Vitale and volunteers came out to clean up the trails around the Village at Grand Traverse Commons on Thursday. The Grand Traverse Conservation District tries to organize work bees to get the community involved in cleanup. They covered up graffiti, removed trash and cleared paths.

Volunteers needed for spring cleaning parks, rivers, islands

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TRAVERSE CITY — Local organizations are kicking off the season with spring cleanups.

One of the first events is the Grand Traverse Conservation District’s annual Earth Day Volunteer Work Bee on April 22. Parkland technician Max Miller said they maintain the Miller Creek Nature Reserve, a trail system located behind Grand Traverse Crossing Mall.

“We’ll be picking up litter in between Home Depot and ALDI,” he said. “It’s kind of this urban area. There’s also a good amount of native seedlings we’ll be planting — up to 200.”

The seeds will help combat the erosion along the trail banks, Miller said.

About a mile of hiking is involved, but Miller said this should not deter attendees.

“We hope for between 15 and 20 people,” he said. “It’s on Earth Day. It’s the time of year to be giving back to our local parks.”

Boardman River Clean Sweep Founder Norm Fred said he and volunteers removed about 4,000 pounds of trash and other debris.

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from the woods near the Grand Traverse Commons last spring.

“As far as we could tell, it had never been cleaned up,” Fred said. “There was a mountain of trash. It was so heavy we used a golf cart.”

Boardman River Clean Sweep will host its second annual Kids Creek/Grand Traverse Commons Cleanup on May 12. Fred said they chose Mother’s Day weekend because they work along Kids Creek and “every kid has a mother.”

Fred said he hopes there are enough volunteers to split into two groups; one for each trail through the woods. All ages are welcome and should wear long sleeves and pants, Fred added.

Fred started the Boardman River Clean Sweep in 2004, when he and a couple others did a trial cleanup. The next year, 80 people showed up for the Annual Boardman River Clean Sweep.

“Most of the people that come bring their own boats,” Fred said. “The downtown part is fairly easy ... but the Boardman River is not an easy river to paddle. It’s dangerous.”

That is why, Fred said, this event is mainly open to adults. However, kids — and other non-paddlers — can help clean the landings at Hull Park, near Boardman Lake.

Fred said they have seen all kinds of trash — from shoes and the ever-present plastic to larger objects like picnic tables and shopping carts floating in the river or lining the banks.

Fred recognized the need to host this and other spring cleaning events every year.

“If we don’t do it, it’ll just go back to the way it was very quickly,” he said. “The rivers are very clean and we’re very proud. It was not like this when we started.”

The Ma-Me-Ne-Sewong Garden Club is also seeing progress because of the annual work bee on South Island, one of the five in Long Lake. The club has maintained the island since it began in 1977.

Kathy Tulgestke, programs and publicity chair, said the group will take their pontoon from Setter’s Cove to the island. Tulgestke said they found much waste in the past, a lot of which is campfire residue.

The goal is to leave the island ready for public use, she added.

“We make it more natural,” she said. “We just enjoy the beauty of the island. The islands are awesome.”

Prospective volunteers can find more information on spring cleanup events through organizations’ websites. Registration is often required to attend.

Spring cleanups:

- April 21, 10 a.m. to noon, Spring Work Bee with TART Trails.
- April 21, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., Glacial Hills Spring Work Day. Bring gloves, hand saws and water.
- April 22, 9 a.m. to noon, Earth Day Volunteer Work Bee at Miller Creek Nature Reserve with the Grand Traverse Conservation District. Bring sturdy shoes, work gloves and water.
- April 22, noon, Boardman River cleanup at Hannah Park with Grand Traverse Guide. Bring waders, trucks, garage bags and trash claws if possible.
- April 28, 10 a.m., Beach Cleanup at Keith J. Charters Traverse City State Park with Grand Traverse County 4-H
- May 12, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., second annual Kids Creek / Grand Traverse Commons Cleanup at Veterans Park with the Boardman River Clean Sweep
- May 26, 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., 14th Annual Boardman River Clean Sweep
- May 31, 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., 11th Annual Plate River Cleanup with the Benzie Conservation District. Bring water.
- June 9, 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Seventh Annual Betsie River Clean Sweep at Benzonia First Congregational Church with the Benzie Conservation District. Bring a boat, paddle, life jacket and water.
- June 13, 10:30 a.m., work bee on South Island in Long Lake with the Ma-Me-Ne-Sewong Garden Club. Bring garbage bags if desired.

Arranged by the Record-Eagle

DETERMINATION

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