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Our view: Stop trashing the Spicket River

We extend our congratulations and thanks to the people of Groundwork Lawrence and the volunteers they recruited for their annual cleanup of the Spicket River.

And we say "Stop it!" to those who make the job necessary.

About 750 people walked the banks of the Spicket in the pouring rain last Saturday morning pulling debris from the river. By an odd twist of fate it always seems to rain on the volunteers. That's happened in five of the six years Groundwork Lawrence has organized the cleanup.

These hard-working, civic-minded people don't deserve such bad luck. Nor do they deserve the dirty job they do.

The amount and nature of debris the volunteers pull from the river is simply appalling. This year, they found and removed typical urban junk such as rusted bicycles and shopping carts. But some of the rubbish tossed in the river is just bizarre: a cut-open safe, a bath tub, a microwave oven, beds and a shotgun, still in its case. The group turned in the shotgun to police.

Then there are the auto parts of every shape, size and model. And tires, hundreds of tires.

"You could put a car together with all this stuff," Lawrence High sophomore Diego Murillo, 14, told reporter Crystal Bozek as he pointed to a pile of auto parts. "I'm serious."

Here's the problem: Groundwork Lawrence does this cleanup every year. And while the volunteers surely miss some debris, most of what they find likely has been tossed into the river since the previous year's cleanup.

People simply have to stop throwing their garbage into the river. If they don't know any better, they need to be educated about the health effects of pollution and the degradation of the environment. If they do know better, they need to be caught and fined severely.

It is especially heartening that there are so many young people among the volunteers. Among them were students from Lawrence High School, Phillips Academy in Andover, Merrimack College and Central Catholic High School. It's a sign that the younger generation at least cares about keeping the river clean.

Adults helped, too. Along with the members of Groundwork Lawrence were workers from New Balance, Lawrence Community Works and Andover-based Enterasys.

Congratulations and well done to them all.

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