

# PEQUANNOCK GETS A CLEANUP



ANDREW TANGEL/STAFF

Jim Sloan pulling a shopping cart from a channel along the Pequannock River during Saturday's 12th-annual cleanup effort.

# Volunteers reclaim the river

By **ANDREW TANGEL**

STAFF WRITER

BLOOMINGDALE — The hunt was on Saturday for the strangest junk polluting the Pequannock.

Volunteers, 42 of whom turned out for the Pequannock River Coalition's 12th annual cleanup Saturday morning, were up for an award for pulling out the odd-

est piece of trash from the scenic waterway dividing Passaic and Morris counties.

It wasn't the dim sense of glory, however, that drew these environmentalists outdoors on a soggy weekend morning under gray skies and pouring rain.

They wanted to clean the Pequannock, their collective and, for some, literal back yard that somehow has become a

repository for beer cans, old appliances and — as was discovered Saturday — broken shopping carts and motorcycles.

The volunteers met at 10 a.m. in Sloan Park on Main Street in Bloomingdale and then, armed with trash bags and grabbing sticks, fanned out along a 5-mile stretch of the Pequannock, from Riverdale to West Milford.

By noon, Jim Sloan, who played along

the river as a kid and has a passion for its upkeep, was covered in sweat and muck.

"The river and I are one. We're buddies," the 59-year-old Sloan said, not long after he pulled two shopping carts from a now-dry channel along the river through which water was once diverted to mills in Butler.

The Pequannock, along with the

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ANDREW TANGEL/STAFF

Glenn Oleksak of Butler gathering trash from the Pequannock River as part of the 12th-annual cleanup effort.

# River: Cleanup

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Wanaque and Ramapo rivers, feeds into the Pompton River, a major tributary of the Passaic River. Much of the Pequannock watershed supplies Newark's drinking water.

The river also veins through a lush ecosystem that is home to bears, deer and other animals, a habitat shared by neighborhoods.

Viktoria Preziosi, 35, and her three daughters cleaned up a wooded area along the river behind her home on Arch Street in Butler.

"You don't want to see a bunch of garbage," she said.

Ross Kushner, executive director of the Pequannock River Coalition, which co-sponsored the event with the Borough of Bloomingtondale, estimated that volunteers

pulled a few thousand pounds of trash from the river on Saturday. That's assuming each person hauled out a few 30- or 40-pound trash bags, not to mention old tires.

The river seems to have less junk to pull out than it did 12 years ago, Kushner said. "It gets a little easier each year," he said.

But volunteers found their fair share of junk this year, including corrugated metal roofing, a rusty oil drum, a mattress, a small oven and a car battery.

"We never run out," Kushner said.

The award for the "most interesting trash," as judged by Kushner, went to the finders of a lone ice skate, a pickax and a push mower.

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