

Volunteers help clean up a 'shut off' Great Falls in Paterson [video]

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PATERSON — More than 50 area residents fanned out across Paterson Great Falls National Historic Park on Tuesday to scoop up cans, bottles and bags, hoping to instill in the children volunteers the value of a clean environment.



MICHAEL KARAS / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Workers clean up near the falls on Tuesday, Aug. 25, 2015.

The cleanup required redirecting the water flowing from the waterfalls through the hydroelectric plant so Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission employees could walk the rocks atop the falls and clear tires, branches and other debris. For the dozens of children volunteering, the message was “it’s important to clean up after yourself,” said Sarai Perez, a seasonal park ranger.

The cleanup came on the National Park Service’s 99th anniversary and was hosted by the Great Falls Youth Corps, the Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission, the Great Swamp Watershed Association, the Passaic River Institute and Paterson Great Falls rangers. Afterward came environment-themed educational activities, such as a station to test water quality from the falls.

Destiny Torres, 8, said it was hot in the late August heat and humidity, but “I wanted to help,” she said, and picked up cups, diapers, bottles, cigarettes, spoons and plates. She later went to the face-painting booth, where she had a purple flower painted on her face. Alysia Chitty, 5, her face painted like a white cat, picked up cans, bags and water bottles. “We’ve got to keep our Earth clean,” she said.