



[Brown] has a financial incentive to want to bust up homeless camps by the river. He is an EWEB commissioner and heavily involved in EWEB's riverfront development project."

John Brown says, "This is laughable. I have absolutely zero financial interest in what is being discussed. ... Only in Eugene can people twist the truth and good intentions to make someone look bad. I really wish they would join me in the fall on a riverbank cleanup."

The persistent "snitch" worry comes from concerns that the Hobbit hut occupants would call the police to report on homeless campers, but Brown says involving police has not been part of the discussion. "We were merely asking if a vet wanted to keep an eye on the river, and if needed, warn someone setting up a camp in an environmentally sensitive area that it is illegal to camp within 100 feet of a Class 1 stream with protected species and which is a drinking water source for humans."

Cleanups are happening on local rivers. Michelle Emmons, Eugene-Springfield coordinator for Willamette Riverkeeper (WK), says she's not tracking the Hobbit huts idea. "Most of the homeless folks I work with are more interested in having the city support 'safe spots' in exchange for a variety of work, including river cleanup activities," she says. "These safe spots, with a longer 'lease' of three to six

months, would help folks save enough money to get into transitional housing instead of having to move every two weeks."

Meanwhile, Emmons says she and her WK River Guardians organized several cleanups along the river around I-5 and Knickerbocker Bridge this spring. "ODOT and I are working very closely to try to keep these areas clean, but the recent surge of summer transients and recreational users has made individual efforts almost impossible," she says. A larger cleanup from Clearwater Park to Alton Baker Park is in the works, tentatively Aug. 8. The annual Great Willamette Cleanup between Oakridge and Portland is scheduled for Oct. 3.

The annual McKenzie River Cleanup was July 11, and the volunteer effort pulled tons of garbage, tires, boat parts and hardware from the shallows and along the banks. Organizers don't have exact numbers yet, but "some participants indicated they found less trash this year on their boat routes," says Larry Six, executive director of the McKenzie Watershed Council. Local fishing guides along with the McKenzie Flyfishers and other groups participated.

And this week, July 30, crews from the Lane-Metro Youth Corps will be working with Lane County Parks cleaning up sections of the McKenzie River, removing invasive species from riparian areas and picking up litter. — Ted Taylor

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