

Girl Scouts help launch pet waste cleanup program

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PICKING UP AFTER YOUR pooch has gotten a lot easier with the start of a new pilot program aimed to reduce pet waste found in parks.

A program kick-off for the *Scoop the Poop* pilot program last month when Junior Girl Scout Troop 1308—complete with their screw drivers and nuts and bolts—helped outfit one of four Arcade Creek Recreation and Park District facilities with new pet waste bag stations.

The self-service stations are designed to hold recycled plastic bags donated and used by residents who frequent the parks.

“Park-goers are encouraged to bring along their used grocery bags,” said Janet Parris, public education and outreach coordinator for the county’s *Stormwater Quality Program*. “These bags will come in handy for residents who forget to bring bags for their pet’s waste.”

The installation of the stations is a cost-effective effort to keep parks, trails and, ultimately, local waterways free of pet waste. Sprinkler and rain runoff can carry pet waste bacteria into storm drains and eventually into local creeks and rivers—untreated—affecting fish and other aquatic habitat by decreasing oxygen and releasing unwanted ammonia into the water.

“Pet waste found on the ground is one of the leading



Junior Girl Scout Troop 1308 wants you to “Scoop the Poop.”

Photo courtesy Dept. of Water Resources

sources of bacteria in our local waterways,” said Parris. “We’ve developed a program where the community takes action towards reducing stormwater pollution.”

Seven pet waste stations will be installed as part of the test program, including stations at Hamilton Street Park, Arcade

Creek Nature Area, Arcade Creek Park and Holyoke Trail.

The pilot program, a partnership between the county’s Stormwater Quality Program, the district and local community groups, will run through the summer. The partners will evaluate its performance and decide whether to expand it to other park districts in the area.