

The final chapter

By **CHRISTINE ROBINSON**

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Saturday marks the Platte River Revival, what long-time Casper resident and fisheries expert Fred Eiserman called the "final chapter" to cleaning up the North Platte River.

"It's not that this is the last thing that needs to be done," Eiserman said. "But over the last 50 years I've seen it change so much. In those times, people would say, 'Why not dump a car body in the river?'"

But as Casper begins to appreciate the North Platte River and what it has to offer, instead of dumping cars in the river, the city is pulling them out.

The Platte River Revival is a five-to seven- year project to remove Russian Olive trees, garbage, chunks of cement, tires and cars from the river, stabilize the banks, plant native vegetation and educate the public about keeping the river clean forever.

"We are raising awareness. If you don't know you are doing something, that is one thing, but if they do know, maybe they will care about it," said Jolene Martinez, the Platte River Revival coordinator.

Saturday's event is a volunteer day, for all Casper residents to help pick up Russian Olive pieces and litter, sort out recyclables and document the effort. There will be a lunch after the cleanup, rewarding those who dedicated half a day to beautifying a section of the Platte River.

The National Environmental Education and Training Foundation decided recently to hold National Public Lands day on Saturday as well, providing scores of volunteers and bringing more recognition to the project.

"This is going to be one of the biggest events we have been involved in," said Eve Bennett, outdoor recreation planner for the Bureau of Land Management.

Last year 100,000 volunteers worked in 1,100 municipalities across the U.S. This event has become one of the nation's largest hands-on volunteer efforts helping to improve and enhance America's public lands.

But the community is not finished cleaning up the North Platte River at sundown on Saturday. Margaret Teevens, infrastructure and maintenance coordinator for the city, said Casperites need to keep thinking about ways to beautify the river.

"There are some really simple things, like picking up after your pet and not throwing cigarette butts on the ground," Teevens said.

She said most people don't realize when they throw things in the storm drains, rain carries the items directly, untreated, into creeks and then the North Platte River.

Martinez said the best way to get people to realize the effect their actions have on the river is through education and involvement.

"We are going to get people committed," Martinez said. "Then they will see the connection between throwing things in their gutters and those things ending up in the river."

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