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Ijams River Rescue Removes 17.4 Tons of Trash from Area Waterways March 21

(KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE, 4/2/2026) – The 37th annual Ijams River Rescue on March 21 brought together 584 volunteers to clean up 39 sites, removing an estimated 34,800 pounds (17.4 tons) of trash from the Tennessee River, creeks, streams, and shorelines in Knox, Anderson, Blount, and Sevier Counties.

Volunteers collected 1,273 bags of trash as well as 114 tires and large items, such as traffic barrels, shopping carts, broken windows, and a riding lawnmower. Other finds included 40 feet of barge line, 125 square feet of docking, two toilets, medical equipment, a box of shotgun shells, underwear, and a full plate of food that had been abandoned on a bench.

“It was a beautiful day, and we were absolutely thrilled with the turnout. I can’t express how grateful we are to all of the people and partners who made this event possible.” Ijams Volunteer Manager Brandy Cox said. “It’s sad that we still find so much trash in and along our waterways, but it’s heart-warming that so many people are willing to help remove it during Ijams River Rescue and the many other cleanups that happen in our communities throughout the year.”

“It’s always interesting to see what volunteers find during this event. One group found a U.S. flag still on the pole and a Christmas tree stand with the tree still in it,” she added.

This year’s cleanup surpassed the 2025 Ijams River Rescue, which removed an estimated 17.2 tons of trash and large items from 34 sites in Knox, Anderson, Blount, and Loudon counties.

The 37th annual Ijams River Rescue was made possible thanks to City of Knoxville Stormwater Engineering, Dow, First Horizon Bank, Tennessee Valley Authority, Borderland Tees, Brunswick Boat Group, Knoxville TVA Employees Credit Union, Vulcan Materials Company, Old Sevier District, and Tailwater Properties.

Additional partners included Keep the Tennessee River Beautiful, Keep Blount Beautiful, Keep Sevier Beautiful, Little River Watershed Association, City of Knoxville Waste Management, and Knox County Waste Management.

Ijams Nature Center is a 320-acre nonprofit educational center in the heart of Knoxville and serves visitors of all ages, stages, and abilities. Its mission is to encourage stewardship of the natural world by providing an urban greenspace for people to learn about and enjoy the outdoors through engaging experiences. Ijams features 14 miles of hiking and mixed-use trails, a public access river dock, swimming, boating, biking, and so much more. Hundreds of world-class educational programs and events are coordinated and offered annually. Ijams’ grounds and trails are open every day from 8:00 a.m. until dusk. For more information, visit ijams.org or call 865-577-4717.

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NOTE: Event photos are posted in a Facebook album at <https://www.facebook.com/ijamsnaturecenter>.