



Don Campbell / HP staff

Litter is pictured Wednesday at Tiscornia Beach. On Oct. 10 students from Lake Michigan College collected almost 3,000 pieces of trash on the beach, most of it plastic, and removed more than 900 invasive plants, St. Joseph city commissioners heard Monday.

Trashy Tiscornia

LMC students find litter, invasive plants on beach

By **JOHN MATUSZAK**
HP Staff Writer

ST. JOSEPH — Sun, sand and cigarette butts.

Those are some of the things that are plentiful at Tiscornia Beach, according to two Lake Michigan College instructors whose students conducted a clean-up of trash and invasive species in October.

People might come for the surf and sand, but they probably don't appreciate walking around the almost 3,000 pieces of trash students collected, LMC sociology professor Michelle Stone told city commissioners Monday.

"People are putting down their beach towels on a trash heap. I don't want to go to a trash-dump beach, and I don't think anyone else in this room does, either," said Stone, who teamed with Sharon Klemm, a public speaking instructor, to organize the Aldo Leopold public service project.

They named the project

after the father of environmental ethics, who emphasized humanity's connection to the earth, Klemm said.

Klemm said she considers Tiscornia "my beach" and was bothered by the number of invasive species covering the dunes. Stone was bugged by all the garbage scattered around.

The two problems provided an opportunity for students to get involved with the community.

They teamed with the Alliance for the Great Lakes, based in Chicago, to provide data on beach conditions.

Greg Grothous, St. Joseph's parks and grounds superintendent, provided support by providing trash cans and pavilion space, and residents helped out, as well.

The group arrived at Tiscornia Beach on Oct. 10. In three hours, seven students gathered 2,848 pieces of trash, most of it pulled out of the dunes. This included 524 cigarette butts,

284 plastic bottle caps, and 141 plastic cigar tips. Plastic made up the large majority of items found.

They also collected 11 articles of clothing, an attachment from a vacuum cleaner, four condoms, a hypodermic syringe and a wooden dock.

Stone said they were just skimming the surface. Another group held a beach clean-up Sept. 19 and picked up almost as much trash, she said.

While these students were trolling for trash, others were uprooting invasive plants.

They pulled up 919 plants, weighing 125 pounds. About three-quarters of it was spotted knapweed, distinguished by its purple flowers. Other unwanted plants included ragweed, Queen Anne's lace, and common evening primrose.

These same plants are found at Jean Klock Park and Lions Beach, Klemm said.

At the end of the project, the students said they felt

an increased sense of responsibility to the environment.

This is just the first step, Stone emphasized. "What are we going to do to re-educate the public?" Stone asked. "That's the hard part."

People don't even think of a cigarette butt as trash, and toss them away without thinking, Klemm said.

One of the options for students as they complete the course in December is to write a speech and offer recommendations for St. Joseph City Commission, Stone said.

Commissioners encouraged to return with any suggestions for keeping the beaches clean.

Commissioner Jeff Richards commented that the city might need to send a strong message that littering won't be tolerated.

He said Dearborn has a \$500 fine for littering "and Dearborn is a very, very clean town."

Contact: jmatuszak@TheHP.com, 932-0360, Twitter: @HPMatuszak