

East County Citizens' Alliance (MELANIE WILSON)

My civic group, East County Citizens' Alliance, engages volunteers in community projects in east Clark County. For four years, one of those projects has involved cleaning litter from SR-14 from Washougal to E. Vancouver under the state Adopt-a-Highway Program. More than 50 community volunteers have participated in this work with us, and together we have collected tens of thousands of pounds of trash. It is hard to overestimate the volume of plastic water and soda bottles and beer/hard cider cans that we find discarded along the highway. The plastic beverage containers degrade over time and drain into culverts and then into the wetlands bordering the Columbia River. I'm attaching a few photos so you can see a fraction of what we see every time we send a team out on this perpetually trash-strewn roadway. If these beverage containers had any monetary value, fewer of them would be tossed out of windows and fewer would end up falling to pieces and polluting our waterways. This is why we strongly support a beverage redemption program.

As to the draft Ecology study, we believe there should be more than one option in localities for beverage container redemption; those options should be convenient; and the public should perceive them as being safe. One state legislator told us two years ago that people using redemption centers in Oregon were "bad" (meaning, apparently, that he suspected they used drugs). We of course disagree with him on several levels. However, his view may unfortunately be widespread. The state will need to combat the sense that a redemption program would primarily benefit unsympathetic populations of people and the notion that redeeming containers could itself be dangerous. Placing redemption machines in busy, well-lit places like grocery stores would be an excellent start.



Metal beverage containers cleaned from 1/3-mile segment of SR-14 in Camas, June 9, 2025.



Plastic water bottles, SR-14 in Vancouver, April 23, 2026.



Trash, including plastic water bottle, over storm drain on SR-14 in Camas, March 9, 2024.