

RIVER CLEAN UP GUIDE

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STEP 1: ORGANIZE YOUR RIVER CLEANUP

- **Choose a Site**
 - First, look for an area where there is a big need to clean up
 - Second, walk at least a stretch of the area to see how accessible it is for a group cleanup effort. Tips for choosing a site can be found in the **Helpful Hints** section of this guide. If you need help finding a cleanup site, please contact a local watershed association.
- **Choose a Day and Time**
 - We suggest: September 25-26. WORLD RIVERS DAY
 - Saturday's and Sunday's are normally best for river cleanups. Select the date at least 2 months in advance so you have time to prepare and recruit. The length of cleanup is up to you – a few hours, a half-day, or an all-day event with lunch, but more importantly HAVE FUN!
 - If you choose an all-day event, ask a local radio, TV station or newspaper to do coverage of the event. Ask a local restaurant or grocery store to sponsor it by donating lunch and snacks for participants. Ask your Rotary Club Members to Sponsor and promote their businesses by sponsoring the event
- **Get the Permits needed** and permissions from the Land Manager
Communicate with private land owners or with the local government for public lands for your cleanup. Ask if the local government or agency wants to help sponsor the event by providing trash bags or disposal.
- **Arrange for Trash and Recycling Removal**
 - Start with Your Local Waste Management Company
 - Tell them about your project and explain that it's a volunteer community service effort.
 - Ask if they want to sponsor the effort by hauling away the garbage for free or at a discounted price.
 - Ask about proper disposal of special/hazardous materials
 - Learn the location of the nearest dump and recycling center.
 - Make sure your drivers understand the time commitment to properly dispose of everything.
- **SAFETY:** Maintain proper social distance (Follow the local COVID prevention guidelines)

STEP 2: RECRUIT

You want to recruit lots of volunteers for your cleanup, but may need to do teams of four, depending on your community's regulations. The more people you have, the greater your impact! To recruit, consider:

- Asking your Rotary Club Members, their friends, families, neighbors, co-workers, community groups, local scout troops and environmental organizations, schools, universities, firefighters, police departments, National Guard, Paramedics, etc. Invite different organizations to get involved.
- Reaching out to outfitters and outdoor stores to post your event at their store
- Asking canoe/kayak clubs to hand out flyers to their members
- Enlisting boat owners to join your team and pick up litter further out in the depths of the river

STEP 3: PROMOTE YOUR EVENT

- Promote the cleanup in your community. It might inspire others to join or start a project of their own!
 - Promote it online through your club's pages (website, Facebook, Instagram, etc); In your local public announcement outlets Radio, News Papers, TV; seek a no cost promotion of the event; avoid creating any more litter
 - Get news coverage of your event -- Call or email local reporters in advance and let them know about the cleanup and invite them to interview the volunteers and share their experience of the cleanup.
 - Involve a local VIP - Invite your District Governor, invite the other clubs (Rotary, Rotaract, Interact) in the District to join forces. Invite the local mayor, your congressional representatives, or other celebrities who might attract a crowd. Ask them to appear, or even join your cleanup; it is good publicity for them and for you. Make sure to emphasize the specific time with their schedulers and provide whatever details they need.

STEP 4: CLEANUP DAY!

- Preparations
 - Check water levels to make sure it's still safe for volunteers!
 - Look at the weather for the day. If heavy rain or severe weather is forecasted, you should postpone your cleanup.
 - Fully charge your cell phone before leaving home! Volunteers, reporters, VIPs and vendors may need to reach you throughout the day.
 - Prepare remarks to kick off the event as well as to conclude the day.

- Set up!
 - Arrive at least an hour before the scheduled start time and bring a few friends to help set up.
 - Post directional signs for the event so participants can easily locate it.
 - Check to make sure the area is safe, and there aren't any hazards.
 - Look for a safe place for people who will be helping from boats put-in and take-out.
 - Set up a check-in station, with media and volunteer sign-in sheets. Make sure you have each participant sign an acknowledgement-of-risk statement upon check-in (Use a release of liability form that is approved by your local community or country) And for precaution, it's worth collecting participants' cell numbers too. Follow all privacy laws as stated by your local government.
 - Establish a base of operations, near your check-in area, with:
 - Water and other refreshments
 - Extra pairs of sturdy work gloves, in various sizes
 - First aid and safety, if paramedics are on call make sure everyone knows how to reach them.
 - Trash bags and cleanup supplies
 - Life jackets if needed, and perhaps extra paddles, for boaters
 - Flyers, fact sheets, "health" status of the river and any other information relevant to your effort
 - If you are collecting both trash and recyclables, make sure each volunteer has a bag for each. This will save time at the end of the day.
 - If you are using a commercial trash collector, or having catering, please call ahead to confirm they will arrive on time.
- Kick off your cleanup!
 - Provide brief remarks to get your event off to a good start.
 - Acknowledge and thank VIPs in attendance and give them a chance to say a few words
 - Greet and thank VIPs when they arrive and introduce them to cleanup leaders and volunteers
 - Make sure you know when they are scheduled to leave so you can properly send them off
 - Talk about the importance of the river and helping the environment
 - Emphasize safety!
 - Outline what people shouldn't pick up (leaky batteries, chemical containers, sharp items like needles, knives, or firearms) If folks come across these items, they should notify a cleanup supervisor or law enforcement
 - Go over the schedule for the day

- Identify the cleanup supervisors and provide their cell phone numbers for quick access
- Make sure everyone has a map of the area and knows where to focus

STEP 5: WRAP UP

- At the end of the cleanup, be sure:
 - To separate all the trash from recycling (steel, aluminum, plastics, glass, etc.). Pay attention for materials that might need special disposal.
 - To organize the identified commercial waste disposal service or volunteers with pickup trucks to haul all the materials.
 - All your volunteers check out. Use the same sheet you used for check-in.

STEP 6: CELEBRATE AND SAY THANKS!

- Celebrate!
 - When your cleanup is finished, it's time to celebrate! Have a picnic, cookout or lunch for volunteers, or if you're all too tired and dirty, invite people to a celebratory event on another day!
- Say thanks
 - Follow up with volunteers after the event to say thanks again for making the cleanup a success.
 - If you had any civic leaders, VIPs or reporters attend, send a formal thank you note with photos of your event and stats about your cleanup. This is a great gesture that might be helpful in engaging them for future events. This may also be helpful in starting a discussion about political action on river and stream protection!

STEP 7: INSPIRE AND EMPOWER OTHERS

- KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK!

HELPFUL TIPS TO KEEP IN MIND

- Things to Keep in Mind when Picking a Site
 - Safety first! Look for areas that are far from busy roads without steep banks, waterfalls, dams, mossy rocks, etc.
 - Be sensitive to the ecosystem. Smaller streams might be damaged by heavy foot traffic from a group clean-up. Also, be mindful of any protected areas nearby.
 - Make parking easy. Be sure to scout out potential parking areas for participants.

- Find a central meeting place. You'll need an area where you can set up a "base of operations" for check-in, supplies, etc.
- Make the Clean Up Fun! BUT SAFETY COMES FIRST!
- Know the limits of your group. Be it age, skill or comfort level with the tasks at hand; don't ask your volunteers to do more than they are able.
- Inform parents and guardians that they are responsible for the supervision of their children. Do your best to see that each child has adult supervision.
- Proper Dress
 - Insist that volunteers wear work gloves. Even benign trash may be the adopted home of a biting or stinging insect, snake or other creature.
 - Dress for the weather and the task. Long sleeves and pants help protect skin from poisonous plants, bug bites and sunburn. Even in hot weather, lightweight long sleeve shirts and pants are strongly recommended.
 - Encourage participants to wear hats and work boots (preferably waterproof), or waders; sneakers and sandals are discouraged.
- Check the Weather, Know your River's Level and What the Level Means
 - If heavy rain is forecasted, you should postpone. Rivers – and especially smaller streams – can rise rapidly during heavy rain.
 - If water levels are above average, do not attempt your cleanup, postpone it until water levels are safe.
- Set the End Time Well Before Dark
 - Allow extra time to wrap up the event so it concludes before nightfall.
- Identify and be Aware of the Risks in the Outdoors
 - Snakes, insects, poison ivy, poison oak, other wildlife, etc.
 - Extreme weather (heat, cold, sun, wind).
 - Know where the closest medical facilities are.
- Use Common Sense
 - If it sounds, looks or smells dangerous, it could be. Don't touch it and notify a cleanup supervisor. Remember, no one has to pick up anything they don't want to.
 - Sharp items like needles or glass can be placed in an empty detergent bottle and thrown away with the regular trash.

SAFETY TOOLS FOR YOUR CLEANUP

- First Aid Kit
 - You should always have a standard first aid kit on hand for any cleanup events. For larger cleanups, consider bringing several kits as your group might spread out. Check if anyone in your group has first aid/CPR training or is a medical professional.
- Protective Gear
 - Protect your group from hazards by encouraging everyone to use:
 - Work gloves
 - Work boots with hard soles

- Personal Flotation Device (life-vest), if on a boat
 - Sunscreen
 - Insect repellent
 - Hand sanitizer
- Hydration is important
 - Everyone should bring a bottle of water and some snacks to maintain their energy. Promoting this reduces plastic waste.
 - Organizers should have bottles of water for those who don't come prepared.
- On the Water
 - If people in your party are boating, follow these ground rules to help the trip go smoothly and safely:
 - ALWAYS WEAR YOUR Life Jacket
 - Appoint a "Lead" Boat (Front) and "Sweep" Boat (Rear)
 - Ask people to stay behind the lead and in front of the sweep. The lead and sweep should be more experienced boaters, and should both be equipped with first-aid kits.
 - No diving or jumping into the water, no deliberate boat tipping, etc.
 - Stay within sight of each other: If you can't see the last boat in the group stop until you can.
 - Appoint someone to make decisions in case of an emergency, as decisions by consensus don't always work in emergency situations.
 - Identify and Avoid Hazards: Look out for strainers (trees and debris buildups in the water). Also watch for drops, dams and other more difficult river features. Rivers are dynamic! Features may have changed since you first scouted the river when planning the cleanup.
 - Have an Emergency Plan: Prepare a tip sheet with emergency phone numbers and evacuation routes.
 - Steer away from fishermen, swimmers and other boaters
- Avoid Hazardous Materials
 - If you or another cleanup supervisor has been alerted to any hazardous materials, contact the state's Department of Environmental Management, Pollution Control or like agency IMMEDIATELY.
 - Drums or containers may contain toxic waste.
 - Needles and other biohazard waste are dangerous.
 - Handle these items with caution: broken glass, aerosol cans, gas cans and other containers with chemical residues or traces of volatile materials.

- Never handle found live ammunition or explosives – immediately alert the authorities if these items are discovered during your cleanup.
- Wear all safety gear if handling hazardous materials such as glass and metal containers.