



Waterway Cleanup Logistics

Get the Facts

The rivers and lakes of our country provide recreation, drinking water, agricultural irrigation, and beauty. Unfortunately, many of our waterways are polluted. Everything from harmful bacteria to old tires contributes to substandard water quality and affects our ability to enjoy the outdoors.

There are **two primary tasks** that make organizing a waterway cleanup different from a traditional roadside cleanup. The first is that obtaining property owner permission can be more difficult. Some waterway cleanups cover considerable distances and obtaining permission can be complicated, because you may have to work with many different property owners. The second challenge is providing for the safety of your volunteers. Larger bodies of water and waterways may require boats and volunteers entering the water.


A good first step is to use your Community Appearance Index to identify hot spots in your community for cleanup.

Walk along the waterway and take notes, if possible, on a map, of all the trashed areas. USGS topographical maps can be downloaded for free at <http://www.usgs.gov/pubprod/> or they can be purchased at outdoor recreational stores or from your county conservation district. Be aware that high waters and spring flooding may move or add debris.

Things to note:

- Invite others to join you.



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- Don't feel that you must clean the entire waterway in one day.
 - Target a section that's easy to do.
 - The more difficult sections won't seem as monumental once you've gained experience and have community support.
 - The trash didn't accumulate in one day and it may take more than one cleanup to remove.

Prioritize the Behaviors

Now that you've been a sustainable sleuth and gathered all your evidence. You need to identify what behaviors you'd like to change with your event.

If you're hosting a litter cleanup, what key message do you want to resonate most with attendees and participants?

You can consider the following call-to-actions:

1. A community-wide cleanup helps focus attention on the litter problem that continues to plague our environment.
2. Who can help reinforce and spread your message?

Develop & Implement Action Plan

Identify Location

Suggested Cleanup Locations:

- Ditches along rights-of-way
- Detention ponds/areas
- Riverbanks
- Lakefronts
- Creeks
- Bayous
- Drainage areas
- Areas that carry water


Safety is important as these areas may be slippery and may attract animals and snakes. Please use caution around water and provide supervision to youth.


Determine Who Will Participate

If entry into the waterway is necessary to remove trash, individuals with professional training, such as divers and rescuers, should be used. Be sure to designate these people ahead of time.

Divers are especially helpful in securing heavy items which should be pulled from the water by more powerful sources, such as tractors, horses, teams of volunteers, or special equipment.

Military reserve units sometimes get involved with community service projects. These men and women are trained to work together and know how to handle special situations and respond in





emergencies. Invite representatives of each group to your waterway prior to the cleanup. They need to become familiar with the cleanup areas so they can determine what tools and equipment will be necessary for the cleanup.

Tools and Safety Equipment

- Fishing nets to collect litter unable to be reached by hand
- Mesh bags or 5-gallon buckets should be considered, since litter and debris collected during a waterway cleanup may be wet and will be heavy.
- Litter pickers/grabbers
- Rakes or grab pole
- Gloves
- Personal flotation device for volunteers conducting cleanup activities via boat or near water.

Evaluate Impacts

Volunteer groups will be responsible for keeping track of the total number of bags of clothing collected to include in your report.

How will you measure the behavior change impacts and specific community improvements?

- **Results Worksheet**
- **Reporting Instructions**
- **Volume to Weight Conversions**

Provide Feedback

- Say “Thank You”
 - What’s the most successful and what can be improved upon?
 - Who should be consulted on this step?
 - How do you communicate that to community leaders and stakeholders?
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