

# AMERICAN RIVERS

## National River Cleanup® Organizer's Handbook



**American Rivers**  
*Rivers Connect Us®*



NATIONAL RIVER CLEANUP 2013 PHOTO CONTEST WINNER-  
ANTIETAM CREEK RUBBISH ROUNDUP 2013, ANTIETAM CREEK,  
SUSAN SIMONSON, HAGERSTOWN, MD



## American Rivers

*Rivers Connect Us®*

American Rivers protects wild rivers, restores damaged rivers, and conserves clean water for people and nature. Since 1973, American Rivers has protected and restored more than 150,000 miles of rivers through advocacy efforts, on-the-ground projects, and an annual America's Most Endangered Rivers® campaign. Headquartered in Washington, DC, American Rivers has offices across the country and more than 200,000 members, supporters, and volunteers. Visit [www.AmericanRivers.org](http://www.AmericanRivers.org), [www.Facebook.com/AmericanRivers](https://www.Facebook.com/AmericanRivers), and [www.Twitter.com/AmericanRivers](https://www.Twitter.com/AmericanRivers).

With more than 3,660,000 miles of rivers in America, almost everyone lives within a mile of a river or a stream. Unfortunately, each year millions of tons of trash end up in our nation's rivers.

This program was launched in 1991 to help keep our nation's rivers clean and trash free. Since it started, more than 1,149,900 volunteers have participated in thousands of cleanups across the country, covering more than 205,500 miles of waterways. These cleanups have removed more than 17 million pounds of litter and debris from America's rivers and streams.

*National River Cleanup®* provides support to individuals, organizations, and anyone interested in conducting a cleanup on their local river. If you are interested in holding a cleanup on your river, American Rivers is here to help. By registering your cleanup with American Rivers, you will receive free trash bags, assistance with online and print media coverage, volunteer promotion online and technical support.

This program is successful thanks to dedicated organizers like you and the generosity of our donors and sponsors who provide financial support, volunteer time, and online activism.

Thank you for partnering with American Rivers' *National River Cleanup* for your event. We are grateful for your commitment to keeping the nation's rivers clean and healthy for generations to come.



12TH ANNUAL RIVER TRASH ROUND UP, BIG & LITTLE ARKANSAS RIVER, LIBY ALBERS, WICHITA, KS



**American Rivers**  
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Planning Your Cleanup .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Site Selection.....	1
Site Selection Worksheet .....	3
Registration.....	4
Volunteer Recruitment .....	4
Volunteer Recruitment Worksheet.....	6
Volunteer Retention.....	7
Community Sponsors.....	7
Community Sponsors Worksheet .....	8
Publicize Your Cleanup.....	9
Plan to Celebrate .....	9
Waste Disposal Plan .....	10
Trash Collection.....	10
Supply Checklist.....	7
<b>Day of the Cleanup.....</b>	<b>12</b>
Before Leaving for Your Event.....	12
Arrival and Set-up .....	12
Cleanup Kick.....	12
River Cleanup Safety Tips .....	13
Protective Gear .....	13
On the Water.....	13
Handling Trash.....	13
Avoiding Hazardous Materials.....	14
Wrap Up and Celebrate .....	14
<b>Cleanup Follow Up .....</b>	<b>14</b>
Report your results and return liability waivers.....	14
Share your photos .....	14

Electronic versions and more information available online at [www.AmericanRivers.org/Cleanup](http://www.AmericanRivers.org/Cleanup)



# PLANNING YOUR CLEANUP

The success of *National River Cleanup* depends on dedicated community leaders like you. Thank you for planning a cleanup in your community!

By leading a river cleanup effort, you will make your river or stream a safer, healthier place for wildlife and people while providing a fantastic way to connect citizens to their local river or stream. Most people see for the first time the harm caused by litter, specifically in their waterway. They are transformed by a great sense of accomplishment after removing bags of trash and can see the results of helping the environment in a relatively short period of time. Cleanups also provide an excellent way to educate volunteers about other problems your river is facing. Whether it be run-off, sewage overflow, gas drilling, or invasive species, your captive audience will want to know “what else they can do” after the cleanup is over.

## Why Conduct a River Cleanup?

Cleaning a river helps solve the problem that millions of tons of trash cause every year. Trash is more than just an eyesore, it contaminates our drinking water and threatens the lives of all people, wildlife, and communities who depend on clean water. It is also a great way to meet your neighbors and get some fresh air.

## How Much Time Will It Take?

The amount of time will depend on how long your cleanup will be and how many people will be participating. Most cleanups require approximately ten hours for preparation, recruiting volunteers and conducting the event. The cleanup event can last anywhere from a few hours to a full day. Smaller cleanups may take less time, larger ones more.

## How do I get started?

American Rivers makes it easy for you to get involved. This *National River Cleanup* Handbook will provide all the information you need to organize a river cleanup. Start by selecting a site for your event.

## SITE SELECTION

If you have any questions about your local site, please contact us at [NRC@AmericanRivers.org](mailto:NRC@AmericanRivers.org) or (877) 347-7550.

Selecting the right location is important. You should consider the number of volunteers, convenience and accessibility of the cleanup location, and size of the cleanup.

When selecting your site:

- Find a heavily littered area.
- Stay away from areas that have existing or potential safety hazards such as chemical containers or steep or unstable banks.
- Walk the area to see how accessible it is for a group cleanup effort. Find a good spot for your check-in station where volunteers will check in and obtain supplies and a place for your wrap-up celebration. Try to stay away from busy roads or areas difficult for your volunteers to access.
- Be sensitive to the ecosystem. Plan a cleanup near mass transportation, or make sure there is suitable parking and encourage carpooling.



- Decide if you will conduct a cleanup along the shoreline, in boats or both. If your group will be boating—identify safe “put in” and “take out” locations.
- Consider the size of the site. If the site is large, identify smaller sites within the location which can be managed by individual team leaders.
- Determine who will be participating. If your event will be family friendly, pay special attention to proximity to roadways, bridges or other areas where children might be particularly vulnerable.
- Ensure restroom availability.

Before making any definite plans, determine whether the land is public or private, and if you’ll need permission to host your cleanup. Often a quick internet search will give you this information. If it is not clear who owns or manages the land, call your county auditor or land title office.

Federal agencies, like the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Forest Service, or state parks often manage public land. When asking

for permission to use the land, also ask for donations of supplies, disposal services and/or publicity.

When discussing the cleanup with private landowners, focus on the positives. Explain that you want to improve the environment and participants will be respectful of the property. If you start by registering with American Rivers, you can also mention that the cleanup is part of American Rivers’ *National River Cleanup* program, a nationwide effort to beautify rivers across the country.

Contact your local farmers market and ask for permission to sign-up volunteers for your cleanup during market hours. Use the National River Cleanup Volunteer Sign-up Form to gather potential volunteer contact information in person.

Use the Site Selection Worksheet in the National River Cleanup Organizer Toolkit to keep track of potential cleanup sites!

If you have any questions about site selection or need help finding a cleanup site, please contact a local watershed association or outfitter. Or contact American Rivers at [NRC@AmericanRivers.org](mailto:NRC@AmericanRivers.org) or (877) 347-7550.



COOPER RIVER FEST 2013,  
COOPER RIVER, LEONA FLUCK,  
HADDON, NJ

## SITE SELECTION WORKSHEET

Site selection is an important first step in planning your river cleanup. Use this worksheet to compare your notes from your site visits side-by-side. Remember these key things to look for when you visit your potential river cleanup site: -How heavily littered is the area? -Are there any safety hazards? -How accessible is your cleanup -Is there easy access to parking or public transportation? -How many volunteers can this site use? -Is this site on private property? -Will this cleanup be along the shore, in boats, or both?

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

LOCATION: \_\_\_\_\_

NOTES ON SITES: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

LOCATION: \_\_\_\_\_

NOTES ON SITES: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

LOCATION: \_\_\_\_\_

NOTES ON SITES: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

LOCATION: \_\_\_\_\_

NOTES ON SITES: \_\_\_\_\_



## REGISTRATION WITH AMERICAN RIVERS

After you have determined the date and time of your event, register to add it to our online map of cleanups nationwide. This will allow people to find and participate in your cleanup. (Events can also be marked private.) In addition, events that are registered four weeks before their date will receive free trash bags and other day-of materials.

### Why Register my Cleanup with American Rivers' National River Cleanup?

American Rivers' *National River Cleanup* is dedicated to helping our organizers plan and implement a well-run cleanup. To do that, American Rivers provides supplies, tools, and support to every registered cleanup. We help increase participation by listing your cleanup on our online map and by exposure through our magazine, email, and social media. Another important reason to register with American Rivers is data collection. Understanding the amount and type of waste that is being picked up is necessary to identifying key legislative and educational tools to reduce our waste.

## VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT

The more people at your event, the greater your impact can be.

### Who Can Help?

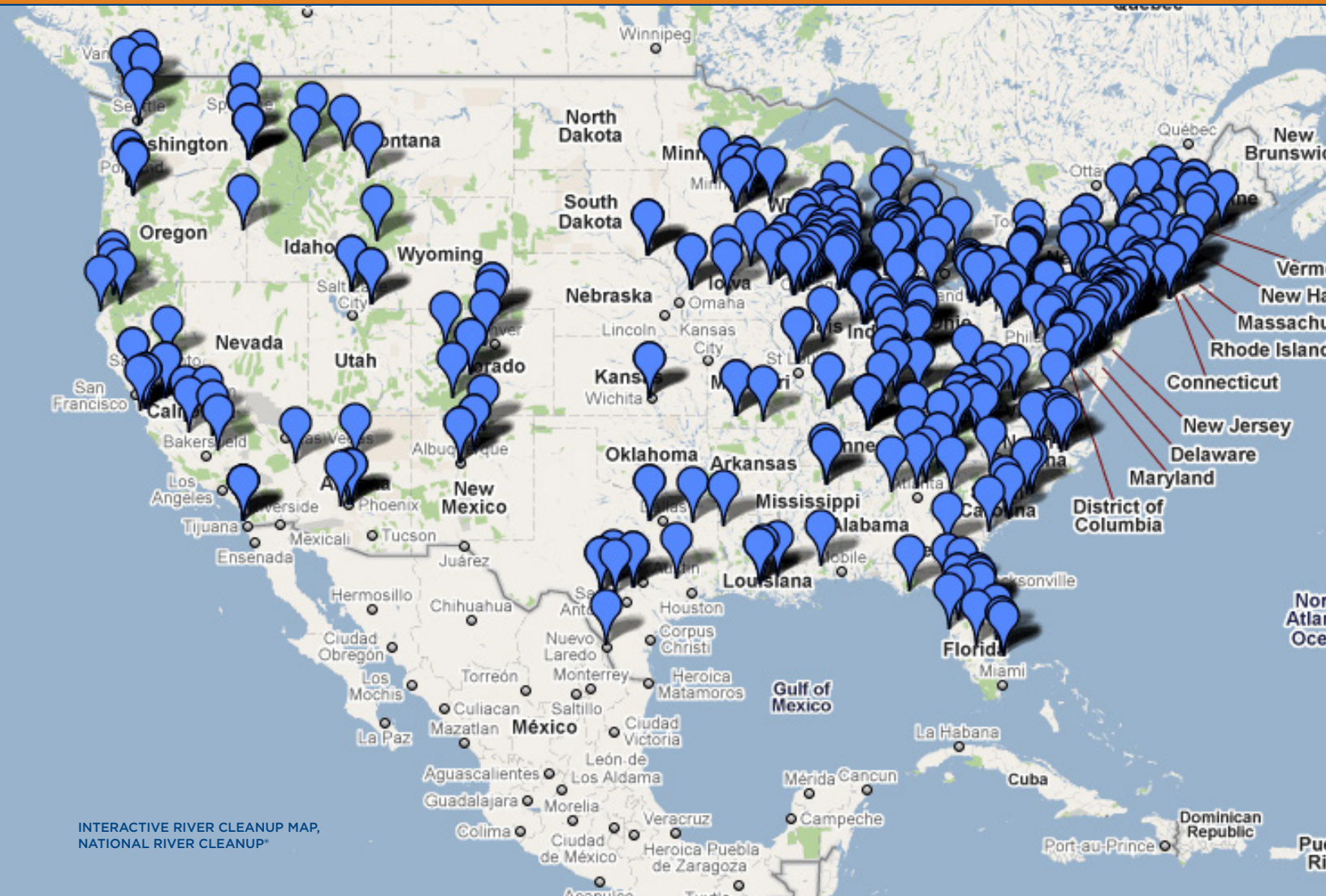
Anyone and everyone. Most volunteers should expect to be able to walk and/or boat along a riverbank or beach and pick up litter, however there are many jobs that do not require significant physical activity. These include handing out supplies, on-site registration, organizing lunch, and volunteer outreach. Encourage everyone, regardless of ability or age, to participate in the manner in which they feel most comfortable.

Start promoting the cleanup in your community by:

- Posting fliers on all local community boards. Look for them at libraries, grocery stores, coffee shops, high schools, dorms, etc. Reaching out to all types of retail outlets to post your event information in their store. Visit **www.AmericanRivers.org/Cleanup** to download a sample flier.
- Contact your local farmers market and ask for permission to sign-up volunteers for your cleanup during market hours. Use the National River Cleanup Volunteer Sign-up Form to gather potential volunteer contact information in person.
- Asking friends, families, neighbors, co-workers, community groups, local scout troops, schools, and environmental organizations to get involved.
- Asking outdoors clubs such as hiking, bird watching, climbing, paddling, to get involved and spread the word to their members.
- Enlisting boat owners to join your team and pick up litter further out in the depths of the water.
- Post a cleanup "blurb" on area online calendar of events, daily newspapers, free weeklies, neighborhood listserves and city blogs. Be aware that these deadlines vary.

When you register with American Rivers your cleanup will be posted on the interactive National River Cleanup map, given its very own online volunteer registration webpage where your cleanup information will be posted, volunteers in your area can register for your event, and you can communicate with registered volunteers.





**What should volunteers expect?** Prepare your volunteers by letting them know what time to arrive, what to wear, and what to do in the case of inclement weather on the day of the cleanup.

*What to Wear:*

- Clothes that can get dirty or wet
- Sturdy shoes (no sandals or flip-flops)
- Long pants or high boots to avoid scratches
- Gloves

*What to Bring:*

- Sunscreen
- Insect repellent
- Snacks
- Reusable water bottle
- Hand sanitizer

In the case of inclement weather, include a rain date or cancellation information, such as a phone number to call before the event begins.



**VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT WORKSHEET:**

Now that you've selected your site and set a date for your cleanup you can begin inviting your community to volunteer! Use this worksheet to keep track of the methods you've used to invite volunteers to your cleanup. Don't forget to set a date to follow up with email lists, friends, family, neighbors, or local groups you invite to remind them to RSVP to your event!

ORGANIZER BEST PRACTICE: Keep track of how many volunteers responded to the different outreach methods. You can use this information to find more volunteers when planning your next river cleanup!

OUTREACH METHOD: \_\_\_\_\_

ORG/PERSON/LOCATION NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

DATE OF INITIAL OUTREACH: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE OF FOLLOW UP: \_\_\_\_\_

OUTREACH METHOD: \_\_\_\_\_

ORG/PERSON/LOCATION NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

DATE OF INITIAL OUTREACH: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE OF FOLLOW UP: \_\_\_\_\_

OUTREACH METHOD: \_\_\_\_\_

ORG/PERSON/LOCATION NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

DATE OF INITIAL OUTREACH: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE OF FOLLOW UP: \_\_\_\_\_



## VOLUNTEER RETENTION

On the day of your cleanup you will have a group of volunteers excited about keeping their river safe and clean. Keeping your river cleanup volunteers active and engaged after the cleanup is just as important as getting them there in the first place. Provide your volunteers with an action that they can take at the end of the cleanup.

A few action ideas are:

- Is your organization hosting another event or cleanup in the near future?
  - Have an interest sheet and ask volunteers to sign-up to get more information from you.
- Photo Petition: Make a sign with the name of your cleanup and organization and ask volunteers to pose for photos with the sign. Tell volunteers to visit your website or social media page where you will post the photos later.
  - One option is to bring a dry-erase board and ask volunteers to write down why they want clean water on the sign.
  - You can also share the photos with your elected officials in the form of a photo collage or on social media to show them that their constituents care about your river.
- Is your organization currently advocating on any issue?
  - Have pre-written letters or post cards to elected officials ready for your volunteers to sign to show their support for your work.
- Visit [AmericanRivers.org/take-action](https://AmericanRivers.org/take-action) to use an American Rivers action for your volunteers or contact the National River Cleanup Manager at [NRC@AmericanRivers.org](mailto:NRC@AmericanRivers.org) or (877) 347-7550.

**ORGANIZER BEST PRACTICE:** Keep an eye out for volunteers at your cleanup who seem especially passionate about or interested in keeping the river clean. Talk to them about other ways they can regularly volunteer or approach them to see if they would be interested in helping to plan your next river cleanup.

## COMMUNITY SPONSORS

One way to gain publicity in the community and reduce the cost of a river cleanup is to partner with local businesses to sponsor your river cleanup. Your area outfitter shop might be an obvious first choice but there are ways for all types of businesses in town to get involved. Sponsorship can range from financial gifts to a wide variety of in-kind donations including donating boats for the event, purchasing t-shirts, providing cleanup supplies like gloves, providing lunch or refreshments for volunteers, or helping to cover the costs of waste removal and disposal. Your local business can benefit from the publicity they will receive at the event and they can provide their employees with the opportunity to register and volunteer at your cleanup.

Offer to place the sponsor's logo on your flier and be sure to thank them for their support on the day of your cleanup!

These are just some suggestions though, feel free to be creative when talking with your local businesses about how you can work together to hold a successful cleanup and improve the community.

You can get help with how to approach a potential sponsor from the National River Cleanup Manager at [NRC@AmericanRivers.org](mailto:NRC@AmericanRivers.org) or (877) 347-7550.

Use the Find Local Sponsors Worksheet in the National River Cleanup Organizer Toolkit to help keep track of your potential sponsors!

**COMMUNITY SPONSOR WORKSHEET:**

Keep track of which local businesses you have contacted and who you have spoken with as you work to find sponsors for your cleanup. It's good to keep a list of your cleanup needs nearby when contacting businesses so that you can tell them exactly what you need for your cleanup.

CLEANUP NEEDS: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF BUSINESS: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF CONTACT AT BUSINESS: \_\_\_\_\_

POSITION AT BUSINESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CONTACT INFORMATION: \_\_\_\_\_

NOTES: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

CLEANUP NEEDS: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF BUSINESS: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF CONTACT AT BUSINESS: \_\_\_\_\_

POSITION AT BUSINESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CONTACT INFORMATION: \_\_\_\_\_

NOTES: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## PUBLICIZE YOUR CLEANUP

Garnering media attention can be very beneficial to your cleanup, especially as you prepare to engage the community. Media attention will help raise awareness as well as draw additional volunteers.

As you plan media your outreach campaign, here are some things to keep in mind:

- American Rivers provides a press release template which you can customize and e-mail to reporters and bloggers who may cover your event. Visit [www.AmericanRivers.org/Cleanup](http://www.AmericanRivers.org/Cleanup) to download a press release template. If you have an event web page or Facebook page, include a link to your event.
- Invite reporters and bloggers to attend the event.
- Mention any sponsors and/or politicians who may be attending.
- Encourage your attendees to post information about your event on their social networks, and encourage live posting or tweeting during the event.
- Follow up after the event with statistics on trash removed, a general summary of the day and any photos. (See page 13.)
- Set up an internet alert (such as Google Alerts) to track any media coverage you may receive.
- Keep copies of all media you receive. You'll be able to use them the following year to help secure sponsorships and encourage elected officials to participate.

## INVITE ELECTED OFFICIALS

Inviting elected officials is a great way to draw attention to the river and highlight its importance to your community. Visit [www.AmericanRivers.org/Cleanup](http://www.AmericanRivers.org/Cleanup) to download a sample invitation.

- Invite the mayor, your congressional representatives, or others who might attract a crowd to speak briefly during your opening remarks and introduction and/or to join the cleanup.
- Make sure to nail down a specific time with their schedulers and provide whatever details they need.
- Be sure to include in your press release if a member of Congress, government or an elected official plans to attend your cleanup. You can work with the official's press office, as well as get help from American Rivers. Contact the *National River Cleanup* Manager at [NRC@AmericanRivers.org](mailto:NRC@AmericanRivers.org) or (877) 347-7550.

## PLAN TO CELEBRATE

Offering lunch during or after your event is a great way to thank your volunteers and build camaraderie. If you choose to include lunch at your event, ask a local restaurant or grocery store to sponsor your cleanup by donating lunch and snacks for participants. We encourage you to work with restaurants that support local farmers, which reduces your carbon footprint. If you're not able to supply food, but still wish to provide a lunch experience, encourage volunteers to bring a bagged lunch.

Volunteers will have just finished removing many plastic bottles, aluminum cans, styrofoam take-out containers, and plastic silverware from the river, so it's important that the lunch does not create significant amounts of additional trash. Visit [www.AmericanRivers.org/Cleanup](http://www.AmericanRivers.org/Cleanup) to download the Trash-free Lunch Guide.

- Bring reusable items – such as non-disposable water bottles – that can be used during and after the cleanup.
- Provide food with minimal packaging that is made out of recyclable or compostable materials.



- Buy items in bulk rather than with individually wrapped packaging, which is a major source of litter pollution.
- If it is necessary to purchase plates, bowls, cups, and flatware, get plant-based, compostable products. Plastic flatware is not recyclable in most areas.
- Avoid Styrofoam. It cannot be recycled in most areas and is not biodegradable.
- Ask your food provider to wrap sandwiches and side dishes in foil rather than plastic wrap. Foil is recyclable in most areas.
- Label trash cans and recycling bins to ensure on-site recycling and educate volunteers about the importance (and ease) of waste reduction and proper disposal.

If possible, consider composting your lunch materials.

## WASTE DISPOSAL PLAN

Free trash bags from American Rivers will be delivered at least two weeks before your event if registered four weeks in advance. If you do not need trash bags from American Rivers, please still register with us and share your cleanup data.

## TRASH COLLECTION

At least two months in advance of your cleanup, contact your local waste management company. Tell them about your project and explain that it's a volunteer community service effort.

Ask your contact:

- If the company would be willing to sponsor the effort by hauling away the garbage for free or at a discounted price.

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TRINITY RIVER, STEVE CAMPBELL, FORT WORTH, TX



- What the proper disposal and cost of special/hazardous materials like batteries, tires, or chemical containers is.
- If they recycle. If they do not, reach out to local recycling haulers as well (see below).

## Recycling

If the waste management company does not recycle, contact your local recycling facility to determine recycling practices for your area. Have different bags for recycled items to make waste separation clear to your volunteers.

Some recycling centers don't accept recyclables pulled from a shoreline area. Even if they don't

accept recyclable material from cleanups, separating your trash gives your volunteers an idea of the amount that "could have been" recycled and also provides useful data. These are powerful numbers for a follow-up press release and media coverage. During your welcome and introduction, let your volunteers know what is considered "recyclable." It varies from state to state but is typically steel, aluminum, plastics, glass, and paper.

If you are unable to secure free waste pick-up, consider recruiting volunteers who are willing to haul the waste to the nearest landfill, incinerator and/or recycling center. Make sure your drivers understand the time commitment and materials needed to properly dispose of everything.

## SUPPLY CHECKLIST

Below is a checklist of useful supplies for your cleanup. Use this in the weeks leading up to your event to be sure you are fully prepared when the big day arrives.

### Necessary Items

- Trash Bags - Regular trash bags are provided by American Rivers if you register four weeks in advance. If you do not need trash bags from American Rivers please still register with us and share your cleanup data. Trash Bags for recyclable items will need to be purchased locally or donated.
- Gloves - Volunteers can bring their own, or local groups or businesses may donate. It is a good idea to have a few extra pairs the day of the event. American Rivers recommends gloves with a plastic or rubber coated palm for safety and easy gripping when wet.
- Liability Waiver - Bring as many copies as there are expected volunteers. (See page 14.)
- Trash Grabbers (*optional*) - Some volunteers find plastic trash pickers or "grabbers" helpful in reaching difficult areas, and to prevent excessive bending and stooping. Avoid the steel-tipped, piercing variety if children are present.
- Empty laundry detergent container to be used as a "sharps" container.
- First Aid Kit - It is imperative to have a First Aid Kit at all volunteer events. They can be purchased cheaply at any drugstore. It's also helpful to identify any members of your group who may have first aid, CPR or first responder training.
- Reflectors or vests (*optional*)
- Table for volunteer check-in and supplies
- Volunteer sign-in sheet (Visit [www.AmericanRivers.org/Cleanup](http://www.AmericanRivers.org/Cleanup) to download a volunteer sign-in sheet.)



# DAY OF THE CLEANUP

## BEFORE YOU LEAVE FOR THE CLEANUP SITE:

- Check the weather for the day and the water levels to make sure it is still safe for volunteers. If appropriate, implement your Inclement Weather Plan.
- Make sure you have everything from your checklist.
- Fully charge your cell phone. Volunteers, reporters, VIPs and vendors may need to reach you throughout the day.
- Confirm the location/arrival of food and supplies.
- Confirm the arrival of trash collectors and caterers.

- Volunteer and VIP contact sheet
- Customizable Press Release for any press on site – Visit [www.AmericanRivers.org/Cleanup](http://www.AmericanRivers.org/Cleanup) to download a sample invitation.
- “State of the River” information for volunteers to take with them
- Data Results\* (See page 15)
- Have an emergency plan: prepare a tip sheet with emergency phone numbers and evacuation routes.
- Directional signs
- Boats/Canoes/Kayaks/Personal Flotation Devices (*optional*)
- Camera (for pre and post pictures)

\* To be returned to American Rivers after completion of cleanup.

## ARRIVAL AND SET-UP

- Arrive at least one hour before the scheduled start time. Plan ahead to have a few volunteers meet you there to help set up.
- Post directional signs for the event.
- Set up a check-in table with volunteer sign-in sheets. Have each participant sign a liability waiver as they arrive. (See template page 14, signed liability must be returned to American Rivers after the cleanup.) Include:
  - Extra pairs of sturdy work gloves
  - First aid and safety materials
  - Trash bags and cleanup supplies
  - Spare personal flotation devices if boating (i.e. life jackets)
- If you are collecting both trash and recyclables, make sure each volunteer has a bag for each.
- Take a final look for potential safety hazards. Block off areas as necessary.
- Post directional signs for the event.
- Station volunteer(s) at the put in and take out area(s) to assist boaters (if applicable).
- Take before pictures so you can see the results of all your hard work!

## CLEANUP KICKOFF

Opening remarks are a great way thank everybody that is involved and to get your volunteers excited. This is also the time to provide direction and any final safety tips.

- Thank everyone for coming. Let volunteers know that they are part of a larger effort coordinated by American Rivers’ *National River Cleanup*.
- Acknowledge and thank elected officials in attendance and give them a chance to say a few



words. Always have elected officials speak early in the program, and introduce them to speak in order of importance.

- Acknowledge and thank all sponsors (if appropriate).
- Talk about the importance of the river and helping the environment. (Visit [www.AmericanRivers.org/Cleanup](http://www.AmericanRivers.org/Cleanup) for river fact sheets.)
- Identify any team leaders.
- Emphasize to everyone: don't be afraid to ask for help; don't try to lift heavy objects alone.
- Outline what people should not pick up (leaky batteries, chemical containers, sharp items, etc). If volunteers come across these items, they should notify the cleanup organizer or team leaders.
- Go over the schedule for the day, including the location to meet back up at the end of the cleanup and where to place the bagged and loose trash.
- Make sure everyone knows where to focus their efforts and when to stop.

## RIVER CLEANUP SAFETY

It is important to prepare your volunteers for the hazards they might encounter on the cleanup site. Below you will find tips for on and off the water as well as how to handle various types of materials in your cleanup area. Instruct volunteers that when they are in doubt, they should notify the organizers and/or team leaders instead of handling the materials themselves. Visit [www.AmericanRivers.org/Cleanup](http://www.AmericanRivers.org/Cleanup) to download a sample safety speech.

### Protective Gear

Protect your group from hazards by encouraging everyone to use:

- Work gloves
- Sturdy shoes with hard soles
- Life vest if on a boat

- Sunscreen
- Insect repellent
- Hand sanitizer

### On the Water

Boating volunteers should follow these guidelines:

- Always use a Personal Floatation Device.
- 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, slow down or stop.
- Appoint at least one person on the water to make decisions in case of an emergency, as decisions by consensus don't always work in emergency situations.
- Have an emergency plan: Prepare a tip sheet with emergency phone numbers and evacuation routes.
- 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.
- Steer away from fishermen, swimmers, and other boaters.

### Handling Trash

Garbage can be dirty, rusty, slimy, and sometimes sharp. Use caution when handling trash to avoid cuts and abrasions. Emphasize to everyone: Don't be afraid to ask for help; don't try to lift heavy objects alone.



## Avoid Hazardous Materials

If you discover hazardous materials contact your state's Department of Environmental Management, pollution control or like agency immediately. Do not attempt to handle hazardous materials on your own. Hazardous materials need to be taken to special processing facilities.

Examples of hazardous materials:

- Drums or containers that may contain toxic waste.
- Needles and other biohazard waste.
- Handle with caution: broken glass, aerosol cans, gas cans, and other containers with chemical residues or traces of volatile materials.
- Live ammunition or explosives. Do not handle! Immediately alert the authorities if these items are discovered during your cleanup.

## WRAP UP AND CELEBRATE

After your volunteers have collected all the waste and brought it to the designated area, separate the trash and recycling. Make all the requested data estimates for the Data Results Form (see page 15). Gather your volunteers and take a few pictures to document all your hard work! Help load the waste into the vehicles of volunteers who are hauling it away, if applicable.

The picnic celebration is the perfect opportunity to thank your volunteers. Share your estimated data with them so they have immediate results of their hard work to take home with them.

## POST CLEANUP

### FOLLOW UP

After your event, it is important to thank all your volunteers and guests. Send thank you notes to elected officials and reporters. Include photos and statistics on trash removed, and maintain this contact list for next year's events.

### REPORT YOUR RESULTS AND RETURN LIABILITY WAIVERS

Report your results to American Rivers. We will showcase results in national reporting and statistics. Submit cleanup data at [www.AmericanRivers.org/Cleanup](http://www.AmericanRivers.org/Cleanup).

Return signed liability waivers to American Rivers via:  
Fax number: 202-347-9240 Attn: *National River Cleanup* Manager

Email

Address: American Rivers  
Attn: *National River Cleanup* Manager  
1101 14<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, Suite 1400  
Washington, DC 20005

### SHARE YOUR PHOTOS

Submit your favorite pictures to American Rivers' annual photo contest at [www.AmericanRivers.org/Cleanup](http://www.AmericanRivers.org/Cleanup). Share photos on your social networks and tag us to share.



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Thank you to the sponsors of National River Cleanup®



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*Rivers Connect Us®*

**National Office:**

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**Regional Offices:**

California  
Great Lakes  
Mid-Atlantic  
Midwest  
Northeast  
Northwest  
Northern Rockies  
Southeast

**About American Rivers:**

American Rivers protects wild rivers, restores damaged rivers, and conserves clean water for people and nature. Since 1973, American Rivers has protected and restored more than 150,000 miles of rivers through advocacy efforts, on-the-ground projects, and an annual America's Most Endangered Rivers® campaign. Headquartered in Washington, DC, American Rivers has offices across the country and more than 200,000 members, supporters, and volunteers. Visit [www.AmericanRivers.org](http://www.AmericanRivers.org), [www.Facebook.com/AmericanRivers](https://www.facebook.com/AmericanRivers), and [www.Twitter.com/AmericanRivers](https://www.twitter.com/AmericanRivers).



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