

Cleanups

Clean-ups do more than make a place look good. They protect aquatic life, curb pollution, and prevent the spread of disease. People treat trash-free areas with greater respect and care.

Building ownership is the key to a successful clean-up. Young people will tackle clean-ups with enthusiasm and creativity *if* they feel ownership for the place or for the process. So involve them in every step of planning. Make trash the subject of in-depth inquiry on the concerns of youth. Research history of the site. Investigate the sources of trash in order to figure out how to prevent pollution in the future. Tie the clean-up to a public education effort.

ACTION STEPS

1. Pick a site; ask for permission

Choose a place that needs a clean-up. It need not be next to water to prevent water pollution. Local resource agencies can help identify sites that need clean-ups, including dump sites. (See inside back cover.) Consider how much time you have to offer.

- ❑ Ask the land owner (public or private) for permission to clean-up the area. The city or county could help you figure out who owns it.
- ❑ Discuss access and likely sites to pile trash for pick-up.
- ❑ Confirm your school or organization's liability insurance coverage. (Check with your insurance agent. You may be able to add off-school/organization sites under a liability insurance rider. If so, you may need to give dates in advance.)
- ❑ If you want to put up a DNR sign for your group, get permission for that too. (See "Adopt-a-River" below.)



Artwork by Katherine Watson

2. Scout and map site

Take a notebook, pens, map, measuring tape, and colored plastic flags to mark hazards.

- ❑ Break into teams of four to six.
- ❑ Identify where trash is. Note concentrations or dump sites.
- ❑ Note hazards such as busy roads, steep embankments, deep water, or poison ivy.
- ❑ Note tires, car batteries, full "mystery" barrels, animal carcasses, and any other hazardous materials.
- ❑ Draw a map of the site, marking trash, hazards, pick-up sites, rest rooms, etc.
- ❑ Divide the map into work zones, one per team. Give each team a copy of the map with their zone highlighted.

3. Arrange for pick-up of materials

- Ask the city, county or other sponsors to haul trash away (or pay for a hauler).
- Discuss which materials will be recycled. Decide how to tag them for the hauler. Agree on who will receive income (if any) from recycled materials.
- Arrange with county waste management officials to pick up hazardous materials. For dead animals or medical wastes, contact local health or animal control officials. Adopt-a-River may help pay for tire disposal. Get an application in advance.

4. Get equipment

Agency partners or local businesses may give or loan equipment. "Adopt-a-River" can provide some items. (See box.)

- Garbage bags (at least one per pair of youth).
- Cotton work gloves for each person. (Must be clean but not necessarily new.)
- Complete first aid kit(s).
- Send home a "What to wear?" list for students: long shirts and pants, sturdy shoes, work gloves (if possible), hat (for sun), and rain gear
- Drinking water (essential on hot days). Two quarts per person/day; more if pop or Kool-aid.
- Arrange for snacks. A place to wash hands is a must.
- Locate the nearest rest rooms and get permission to use them. Port-a-potties may be necessary.
- Adapt/copy the "Clean-up Instructions" on the following page.
- Camera/video.

5. Arrange transportation

- Line up buses or cars. Give each driver directions to site and safety instructions.
- If students will walk to site, arrange for crossing guard teams.
- Collect completed permission slips. (See sample, page 34.)

6. Complete clean-up day

- Go over "Clean-up Instructions" (page 14) with group. Stress "Safety first!"
- Break into teams – one adult with each team. Hand out site maps, bags, etc. by team.
- Show where to put trash and recycled materials.
- End on time.

7. Reflect and celebrate

- Sort and count materials. (What percentage cans, bottles, paper, plastic, etc.?)
- Record count by bag or item. Photograph trash and workers.
- Award prizes for biggest, ugliest, funniest, weirdest, etc. items.
- Build a trash sculpture.
- Analyze sources of trash. (What evidence is there? What percentage blew in from a road or parking lot; dropped by partyers; washed down storm sewers; dropped by boaters; dumped; etc.?)
- Brainstorm ways to prevent future trash. Build on analysis of sources.
- Look for other pollution sources. (See "Reconnaissance," pages 25-32.)
- Send report to DNR Adopt-a-River.
- Educate others. (See "Public Education," pages 8-11.)

Join DNR Adopt-a-River

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Adopt-a-River program can certify your group's responsibility for a specific stretch of a stream, river, lake, or wetland. At a minimum, you must agree to clean up your stretch at least once a year for two years. Adopt-a-River will send a packet with detailed, helpful handouts such as, "What to Do About Waste Tires and Spent Batteries." They can provide free cleanup bags and gloves (you pay shipping), a video, grants for tire disposal, and advice. After your clean-up, you may request a certificate of recognition and a riverbank sign indentifying your group. Contact Paul Nordell, DNR Building, 500 Lafayette Rd., St. Paul, MN 55155-4052 (612) 297-8291 or (800) 766-6000 toll free (612) 297-5475 fax .

Clean-Up Instructions

1) SAFETY FIRST!

- Cross streets only with help from the crossing guard or an adult.
- Always wear gloves.
- Do not climb steep banks.
- Stay out of the water.
- Leave these items alone, and tell an adult:
 - Broken glass
 - Sharp metal or splintered wood
 - Dead animals
 - Needles
 - Barrels, cans, or buckets that are full
 - Spray cans
 - Heavy objects
- Walk around poison ivy. "Leaves of three, let it be!"
- Squat to pick up objects to protect your back. "Bend down, not over."

2) Let nature be natural

- Leave natural materials: logs, leaves, branches, sticks, etc. (Painted boards or bags of leaves are another story.)
- Do not dig up big items. Digging adds to erosion.

3) Recycle

Sort and set aside:

- Aluminum cans.
- Plastic bottles.
- Unbroken glass.

4) Pile it on

- Sort trash and recycled bags into the correct piles.

5) Ouch!

If you are hurt tell an adult sponsor right away. Even a small cut can become infected.

Adults note:

- In emergencies, call 911. Tell the organizers as soon as possible.
- Use the first aid kit.



Drawing by Elizabeth Johnson

Thanks!