RIVER CLEANUP

Cleanup Manual

for small-medium actions by volunteers

How to organize your own cleanup

Hi there!

It's great that you're organizing a cleanup or thinking of doing so!

We wrote this document to make your experience as smooth as possible. Please keep in mind that all of the actions below happen in an ideal scenario. It's perfectly fine to go about your cleanup differently or leave out certain steps. That's why we have put the most important parts of the process in **bold**. We hope you have an amazing experience as an organizer!

1. Preparation

Location & Route

- **Choose a location along your river or in your neighborhood** where there is trash that can be cleaned up safely.
- You can either clean a certain zone like a park, field or well-defined piece of riverbank, or you can take action while walking along a route.
    - If you choose to work with one or more zones, make sure you can describe or show the participants which area they are expected to clean. A map helps here.
    - If you choose to make a route, a map is definitely needed. You can easily map out a route using Google Maps.
        - Keep your route(s) between 2 and 5 km. People walk slowly while picking litter.
        - Try to make your route into a loop so the participants will automatically end up where they started.

Date & Time

- You can **choose a date & time to your own liking**. The cleanup usually takes about 1.5-2 hours.

- Keep in mind that you will have to be at the cleanup location a bit earlier than the participants to prepare the cleanup and stay a bit longer to pack everything up after the cleanup.
- If the river or body of water you're cleaning along is influenced by tidal currents, keep that in mind and try to plan your cleanup at low tide.

Registration on website

By now, you probably already registered your cleanup on the website. That's great!

If you still have to **register your cleanup**, you can do so through **this link.**

- You can always change the cleanup details (like the date or start time) by accessing the event page. You can find your events by loging in or accessing your profile by clicking the button on the top of the website. Simply select the event by clicking it and edit the details.
- It's nice to put the event's timing and any material (for example, rubber boots, sunscreen, reusable water bottle) that the participants should bring in the description.

Promotion

The more participants you have, the more waste will be collected! So **inviting as many people as possible** to your cleanup is super important.

Here are some ways to promote your cleanup:

- Send the link of the event to all your friends, family members, colleagues, neighbors, and others.
    - You should have received these in an email shortly after registering your cleanup on the website
- Make a Facebook event for your cleanup and invite all of your friends on Facebook.
- Share the link or Facebook event on any other social media channels that you have.
- Post about your cleanup in local Facebook groups.
- Email your local city council and ask if they could put the event on the calendar of local activities.
- Email local organizations, clubs, or schools and ask them to join your cleanup.

Material

For Cleanups with 10 people or more, River Cleanup can provide materials such as gloves and bags.

You can **order material through this link**. The order needs to be placed **at least 3 weeks before the event**.

Think ahead about other things you might need at your cleanup such as:

- a first-aid kit
- clothing & shoes appropriate for cleaning up
- tools like fishing nets, shovels,... (depends on the area)
- a table or bench to easily hand out materials
- a scale to weigh the bags
    - We recommend using a luggage scale with a hook. You can tie a knot in the bags, hang them on the hook, and easily weigh everything.

River Bingo

If there are children joining your cleanup, you can let them play River Bingo! You can find the bingo sheet in the attachments of this document.

You can give the River Bingo to children along with a pencil or marker. If they find all the items on the Bingo sheet, you can have the group give them a round of applause, sing them a song, or give them a little surprise at the end of the cleanup.

City approval

It is important to us that all cleanups have the necessary approval of their town or city. Please **check with your local authorities** what needs to be arranged in order to do a cleanup.

Waste collection or disposal

After the cleanup, the **collected waste must be disposed of properly, to ensure it will not end up in nature again**.

You can either:

- Contact your local authorities or waste management organization and ask them to come pick it up. Emphasize that you are doing the local community a favor, and they will often be happy to help for free.
- Arrange for a private waste management company to come pick it up.
- Transport it to a waste management facility yourself.

Assembling a Team

If your cleanup is very small, it's possible to organize everything by yourself. If you're expecting **over 10 people, we suggest you assemble a team** to help you.

Some roles you can assign are:

- Photographer
    - This could be someone with a smartphone or a basic camera.
- Guide
    - If you have more than one group, another guide can stay with the second group.
- Home-base responsible
    - If you have a starting location where you hand out material and people may leave their bags or other belongings, it's important that someone stays at this location to keep an eye on things.
    - This person can also be responsible for first aid. It's a good idea to keep a first aid kit at the starting location.

Preparing the celebration

People who take action deserve to celebrate! Our favorite way to thank everyone for their hard work is with a nice drink. We understand that this might be a bit over budget for some, so here are some low-budget ideas to celebrate:

- Put on some fun music when people are coming back from the cleanup.
- Ask a local musician if they would be willing to perform free of charge at the end of the cleanup since it's for a good cause.
- Invite everyone for an enthusiastic group picture with their bag.
- Thank each person individually for their help.
- Gather the group at the end to announce the total weight of the collected waste and give a round of applause.

2. The day of the Cleanup

The entire event, from set-up to breakdown, usually takes about 4 hours. Depending on the location or the scope of your event this could differ. It's a good idea to create a playbook with a timeline on how you want to organize your event.

Briefing of your team

Make sure your team knows what is expected of them, what each of their responsibilities are, and what the timing of the day is.
Some topics to discuss are:

- Plans of the day & timing
- Tasks & responsibilities
- Safety measures
- Zones & routes: Who is going where?
- Sorting: How will you be sorting the waste today?

Set-up

It's best if **the cleanup material is laid out before the participants arrive** so you can easily hand it to everyone. This picture shows how we prepare our table for cleanups. We usually hand out our gloves first, then bags, and then grabbers.



Handing out material

Give each person a pair of gloves, a bag, and a grabber (if you have those). If there are different types of bags for different types of waste, it works best to give each person 1 bag and tell them to team up with someone with the other type of bag.

If you are using River Cleanup materials:

- Gloves: the color of the rim indicates the size
    - white is large
    - yellow is medium
    - pink/purple is for children
- Bags:
    - The light blue bags are for all types of plastic
    - The dark blue bags are for residual waste
    - The yellow bags are for cigarette butts
    - If you can, use a bucket to collect glass

Taking pictures

Please **take pictures of your Cleanup**! You can appoint one volunteer to be the photographer of the day, even if it's just with a phone. The most important picture of the day is the group picture. **Always take a group picture** at the beginning or end of your cleanup while everyone is wearing gloves. There is an example below.

The imagery we show on our social media channels is based on the following principles.

- **Smiling faces & positivity**: we depict people smiling, showing a thumbs up, or cheering loudly for what they have just accomplished.



- **Focus on the people** rather than the waste/garbage bags.





- Variation: try to alternate between a big group of people, an individual, a nice scenic river, close-ups,...









Briefing of volunteers

It is **very important that your participants know what to do** and why they're doing those things. Here are some topics to go over with them:

- Make them feel welcome & thank them for joining.
- Introduce yourself and your team (if you have one).
- Tell them why it's important that you're doing a cleanup at your location.
- Explain and/or show the zones or routes.
- Explain the sorting system that you will be using.
- Tell them what time they should be back at the starting point.
- Go over the **safety guidelines** with them.
    - Gloves are always worn on both hands during the action.
    - Dangerous or sharp objects are always left behind and are not touched.
    - In case of an injury, immediately address a team member for disinfection.
    - Heavy objects are only removed if this can be done in an ergonomic way.
    - Bottles or jars of liquid should not be opened. Keep them closed in the bag.
    - Always wash hands before eating and drinking after the cleanup.
    - Do not go into the river without specific permission from the organizer or guide.
    - Volunteers only go where they are comfortable, don't endanger yourself.
    - Watch your step while cleaning.
    - Respect the traffic rules.
    - Keep a close eye on (your) kids.

Cleanup

Time for your Cleanup! **Pick up anything that is not organic material** and collect it in the right bag. Try to stay with your group as much as possible in case anyone has questions.

Go back to the starting point with some time to spare so you can welcome back participants and tell them where to put their bags for weighing.

Weighing & sorting

Please, sort and weigh plastic and residual waste separately. Depending on the local circumstances, you might be able to sort the residual waste in more categories (for example: glass, paper, metal,...). If it is a possibility, please do so to raise the chances of the river waste being recycled.



It's a good idea to ask a few participants to help you with the weighing process. **One person can weigh the bags, while another writes down the numbers**. In the end, you can calculate how much plastic and residual waste was collected, and announce it to the group!

If you do not have a scale available, **count the number of full bags** per waste category. You will be able to put this information on the website.

Celebrate!

Time to celebrate! Take a moment to talk to the participants about their experiences. Celebrate however you see fit, and thank everyone for joining.

End

Pack up your material and leave the cleanup location better than you found it!

Have a moment to debrief with your team if you have one. What did they think of the action and organization? What could be improved next time?

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3. After the Cleanup

Update participants & weight

Please update the number of participants and the amount of waste collected at your event on the website. This helps us keep track of all the amazing actions going on around the world.

You can count the number of participants in your group picture or count your total group at the beginning of the event.

Upload pictures/videos

Please upload your best pictures of your event to the web page of your event. We would love to see what your event was like!
Please send any extra pictures, cheering group videos, or testimonial videos to community@river-cleanup.org so we can share your achievement with the rest of our community on our social media platforms.

Post & tag on social media

If you or your participants make a post about the Cleanup, **please tag @rivercleanup**. We would love to see and share your experience.

Feedback

Do you have any feedback for us? Or do you want to tell us about your experience organizing a cleanup? You can email community@river-cleanup.org, and we will be happy to connect with you.

Good luck with your cleanup!
The River Cleanup Team

4. Attachments

A. River Bingo



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B. Safety briefing (extended)

As the coordinator, you are responsible for overseeing the group's safety and ensuring that all safety measures are followed. Before starting, inspect your cleanup area for potential hazards such as dead trees, branches, pits, or slippery surfaces, and inform participants of any risks.

Before the Cleanup:

1. **Give a clear Safety Briefing**: Ensure that all participants receive a safety briefing in their preferred language. Focus on safety and read the following instructions aloud. Be sure to address any latecomers with a separate briefing.

Safety Guidelines:

1. **Wear gloves:** Always wear gloves on both hands during the cleanup.
2. **Avoid dangerous objects:** Do not touch or pick up dangerous or sharp objects. Leave them where they are.
3. **Injury protocol:** In case of an injury, immediately inform a team member for disinfection and first aid.
4. **Handle heavy objects ergonomically**: Only move heavy objects if you can do so safely and without straining yourself.
5. **Keep bottles or containers losed:** Do not open bottles or jars found during the cleanup. Keep them closed and place them in your bag.
6. **Hand hygiene:** Wash your hands thoroughly before eating or drinking after the cleanup.
7. **River safety:** Do not enter the river without specific permission from the organizer or guide.
8. **Personal comfort:** Work only in areas where you feel comfortable and avoid putting yourself at risk.
9. **Watch your step:** Be mindful of your footing while cleaning.
10. **Respect traffic rules:** Follow all traffic rules when working near roads.
11. **Supervise children:** Keep a close eye on any children involved in the cleanup.

Additional Tips:

- **Emergency contacts:** Ensure that everyone knows how to reach emergency services and the event coordinator.
- **Weather preparedness:** Brief participants on weather-related precautions, such as staying hydrated or protecting against sunburn.
- **Communication:** Make sure that everyone has a way to communicate in case of an emergency, such as a whistle or mobile phone.
- **Hydration and breaks:** Encourage participants to stay hydrated and take regular breaks.

Feel free to adapt these points based on the specific needs and conditions of your event.